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UI student wins Weston International Human Rights Essay Competition

The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR) announced recently the winner of the annual Burns H. Weston International Human Rights Essay Prize. The competition is intended to promote understanding and the continuing advancement of international human rights, as well as honor Weston, the former and founding director of the UICHR and an internationally renowned scholar in international human rights law.

The \$1,000 prize in the graduate and professional student category went to student Rebecca Bowman for her essay "Lubanga, the DRC, and the African Court: Lessons Learned from the First ICC Case." Bowman is a dual-degree student originally from Monticello, Iowa. She is pursuing a Juris Doctorate in law and a Ph.D. in higher education at the University of Iowa.

Bowman's initial interest in the International Criminal Court began from her experience volunteering with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees in Kakuma, Kenya and Washington, D.C. Having traveled through many countries in Africa as well as other regions including two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Turkmenistan, Becky became intrigued in concepts of international governance and human rights.

"I feel very fortunate to have had these amazing opportunities, and I am excited to share my experience through writing about the changing context of Africa's judicial structure," Bowman said. She hopes to continue her research in international law and politics in the future.

Amy Weismann, deputy director of the UICHR, said several entries were received for the initial competition.

"All involved in this process were impressed and inspired by the commitment to human rights scholarship within the study body demonstrated by these submissions," Weismann said.

A faculty committee reviewed the essays as blind submissions. "The reviewers considered the quality of writing demonstrated and the substantive contribution to human rights scholarship, among other factors, in their selection process," Weismann said.

An award recipient in the undergraduate category was not selected this year.

Weston is the Bessie Dutton Murray Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus at the UI College of Law, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1966. Weston has spent the bulk of his career teaching, writing and working on behalf of human rights. A substantially revised third edition of the textbook "Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action," edited by Weston and Richard Pierre Claude, will be published this year. Weston founded the UIHCR as an outgrowth of activities

surrounding "Global Focus: Human Rights'98," the world's largest academically based commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "Global Focus: Human Rights '98" brought many Nobel laureates, dignitaries, scholars and other important international human rights figures to Iowa City.

An annual event, the Burns H. Weston International Human Rights Essay Prize will accept submissions again during the 2008-2009 academic year. The UI Center for Human Rights will announce eligibility guidelines and application deadlines in the fall. For more information, call or e-mail the UICHR, 319-335-3900 or amy-weismann@uiowa.edu.

The UICHR is affiliated with UI International Programs, which consists of a number of offices, centers, academic programs, research projects and services. Organized under the associate provost and dean for international programs, these units serve to further internationalize the campus and community and promote global scholarship, research and teaching.