Minutes for Labor Standards and Human Rights Committee
December 7, 2000

Present: Kristen Ablauf, Alan Deardorff, Louis Green, Veronica Johnson, Kevin Kolben, Larry Root, Steve Rosenberg, Scott Trudeau

Not Present: Sioban Harlow, Rob Howse

The meeting began with a review of the charge from the President. It was noted that a request concerning disclosure of manufacturing locations was received from the WRC. This was communicated to the CLC (which provides the disclosure information to the University) with a request for their input. Other universities are also working with the CLC for the provision of information in a uniform manner.

The charge from the President included the issue of the monitoring of compliance with codes and addressing any complaints that may arise concerning licensees. The charge also included research and education on globalization and labor. It was noted that one potential role for the Committee could be to identify important research topics which could be addressed by teams of faculty and students. There may also be courses specifically related to globalization and labor, which can draw upon the strengths of the University. It was noted, more generally, that there may be a number of areas in which the University can use campus expertise to address broad issues of globalization. In that context, the Committee can serve as a central group for identifying and supporting such research.

The Committee then turned to the draft Code of Conduct. The suggestion was made that the current code be sent to the President and that the issue of how to deal with other existing codes not delay this recommendation. Others on the Committee felt that the process of examining and finalizing the draft UM code was based on an understanding that its relationship to other codes (and the possible "recognition" of other codes) was part of their decision-making process. It was noted that the Committee initially sought to consider U.M.’s draft code in comparison with several other codes (including FLA, WRC and CLC). The Committee had begun to look at the individual items in the draft code in comparison with the comparable provision in these other codes. At that time, however, it was decided that the Committee would first focus on the University’s draft code language and then return to comparing that draft with other code language.

An alternative approach was discussed in which the Committee would decide whether other major codes were acceptable and unacceptable in terms of their protection of worker rights and an individual, case-by-case approach would be used only if a licensee requested substitution of some other code. Under this approach, contractual language would be developed that indicated that the UM’s code reflects our preferred standards but that if a licensee has already implemented an acceptable alternative code, that could serve as a substitute.

The Committee agreed to review other key codes (e.g., WRC, FLA, CLC, SA8000, and WRAP) prior to the next meeting and, at that meeting, to discuss which of these codes represent are acceptable and which are
unacceptable for protecting worker’s rights. If any of these other codes are determined to be acceptable, the Committee will also discuss ways to operationalize a preference for the U.M. Code.

The next meeting will be 8:30-10:00, Tuesday, December 19. The December 14 meeting has been cancelled.

Respectively submitted,

Larry Root