Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights  
University of Michigan  

Minutes—Meeting of April 19, 2002  

Present: David Deeg, Louis Green (by phone), Sioban Harlow, Kevin Kolben, Larry Root, and Steven Rosenberg  

Absent: Kristen Ablauf, James Hines, Rob Howse, and Veronica Johnson,  

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes from the meeting of March 15. A number of additions were noted and the resulting draft will be circulated to the Committee for approval.  

Discussion of the WRC. The Committee noted the accomplishments of the WRC, particularly their role in helping to resolve the Kukdong problems and their more recent reports of positive interventions in other foreign factories producing licensed products. It was noted that the process with New Era has raised a number of questions concerning the process of engagement. The Committee discussed the potential for complications when a monitoring effort is undertaken during an impasse/strike associated with collective bargaining. For example, the difficulty separating code issues from strike issues. In light of the strong effects of this report on campuses, it was suggested the more thought should be given (and perhaps more university involvement) in determining the most effective procedure/methods of engagement.  

The Committee discussed the WRC’s governing structure. Questions were raised about how the Advisory Committee is selected and how their representatives on the Board are selected. The Committee also talked about how the educational goals the member universities are being furthered by the WRC.  

Summarizing the specific questions raised:  

1. Are there clear rules for engagement with regard to allegations of code violations? If so, what are they?  
2. How was the Advisory Committee constituted? How are new members selected? How are the representatives of the Advisory Committee to the WRC Board selected?  
3. How are those involved in investigations selected and trained? What is the role of volunteers in contrast to paid staff or consultants in investigations?  
4. Are the formal guidelines for separating distinguishing and articulating perceptions, opinions, and evidence?  
5. What is the progress in developing an international network so that workers know that they have a “safe” way of raising concerns about possible violations of codes of conduct? How has information about possible violations come to the attention of the WRC?  
6. What educational opportunities exist within the WRC and its affiliates for students at the member universities?  

Proposal concerning monitors for the purpose of the licensing contract. The Committee discussed the issue of implementation with regard to the contract language that has been recommended and accepted concerning the enforcement of our code. In that language, there is reference to agents for the purposes of monitoring our code of conduct. The following proposal was approved by a majority vote (5-1):  

We recommend that the University name the WRC and the FLA as two authorized monitoring agents as per the newly developed contract language recommended by the Committee on March 15, 2002.  

Proposal for committee to explore a program for training monitors. The Committee addressed a topic raised in our last meeting, concerning the importance of developing qualified monitors for labor standards and the potentials of the University to create educational opportunities in this area. The following proposal was unanimously approved:  

We recommend that the University constitute a committee with resources to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a certification or degree program to meet the need for labor standards monitors.  

Upcoming meetings. This meeting was the last scheduled meeting of the academic year. Further meetings may be scheduled as needed.