Minutes

Attending: Kristen Ablauf, Jason Bates, Steven Brunn, Mary Gallagher, Sioban Harlow, Marian Krzyzowski, Greg Marquis, Larry Root (chair), Brian Talbot, Ada Verloren (staff to committee)

Absent: Ana Quinones

Former committee member Aria Everts also attended the meeting to tell the committee about MSA Peace and Justice Commission’s Fair Tees Program.

1. Approval of minutes

The committee approved the minutes of the January 28, 2008 meeting.

2. New Era

The committee took note that the Teamsters and New Era resolved their differences through the collective bargaining process and reached a three-year collective bargaining agreement on February 11. Although the Teamsters indicated that the union’s concerns were met, the WRC is still continuing with its investigation. The reason for this continuing investigation apparently has to do with actions such as promotions that took place before the agreement was reached and are not subject to collective bargaining. Committee members had several questions, including the following: Is there still a call for an investigation from a group that felt harmed? Are the same complaints being investigated by the NLRB? Is there remediation going on? If there are ongoing violations of the Code of Conduct it would seem as if the WRC would be able to justify its investigations. The committee will review WRC’s report when it is completed.

3. FLA Enhanced Licensee Program Pilot

The committee reviewed results of licensees’ self-assessment, including ratings, a letter for a company with weak performance, and a letter for a company with strong performance. The committee would like more information about FLA’s time line for following up with companies.

In thinking about UM’s objectives in asking licensees to document compliance, the committee discussed the dilemma presented by the fact that the licensees participating in the FLA’s pilot did so with the understanding that the data was being collected in order to help them improve compliance, not to make licensing decisions.

4. CLC initiative on integrating code compliance information into the licensing process in a formal and systematic manner

The committee took note that CLC has organized a joint task force of approximately 15 universities (including U. of M.) to pool resources of licensing directors in an effort to have a more significant impact on the compliance efforts of the FLA and the WRC. These universities all have large licensing programs and deal with many of the same licensees. CLC has formulated a draft questionnaire to be used with both new applicants, and licensees who come up for renewal. This questionnaire has been submitted to both the FLA and the WRC for their comments. Based on this questionnaire, CLC will design a grading system to provide guidance to participating schools. CLC will make a recommendation regarding new applicants and applicants for renewal. But individual schools will decide what grade to accept.

CLC’s initiative appears to be an important step into fulfilling the President’s charge to the committee to work with peer institutions and to incorporate compliance requirements into licensing agreements. After the committee receives information from new applicants in the fall, it will see the main areas in which there is no compliance.

Kristen will distribute CLC’s questionnaire to committee members.

5. MSA Peace and Justice Commission's Fair Tees Program

Aria Everts presented an initiative of the MSA Peace and Justice Commission (PJC) intended to provide a practical way of connecting student organizations with two fair trade producers that produce “Fair Tees.” Working with two producers that focus on fair production processes, PJC has provided student groups the option of purchasing T-shirts made under good labor conditions. Despite somewhat higher costs, student groups have been willing to pay more for T-shirts made by fair and environmentally responsible sources.

The committee discussed the possibility that these producers might be able to apply for a restricted license, which could be helpful down the road. There may be schools or programs that would be potential buyers for those two fair trade producers (or others?) if they could use UM “marks.” This could help increase sales for the co-op or other fair trade producers.

The next meeting of the committee will be on Monday, March 31, 8:30-10:00.