President’s Advisory Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights
November 21, 2008, 8:30-10am
B-631 SSWB

Minutes

Attending: Kristen Ablauf, Brad Farnsworth, Siobán Harlow (Chair) via conference phone, Brian Talbot, Ada Verloren, Leigh Wedenoja, Matthew Welch, Nancy Vander Kuyl (staff to committee).

Absent: Amy Cocuza, Allen Hicken, Peter Jacobson

1. Welcome, Announcements, Review of Agenda

The LSHR group will begin a CTools site. It will be set up so committee members can post to the site. Items of particular importance will continue to be sent via group email. Matthew Welch, who was not able to attend the first meeting, introduced himself. He is a graduate student member from the Business School and Erb Institute.

2. The October 28 2008 Minutes were approved.

3. December meeting set for Wednesday December 10, 12-1:30pm

4. Operational Leadership. Licensing/CLC) Initiative: Corporate Social Responsibility and Supply Chain Compliance Questionnaire/Assessment of code of conduct compliance as part of licensing decisions

Kristen Ablauf, the UM Licensing Director, also introduced herself. She manages requests for use of the UM logo. She reviewed the licensing structure at UM. The University partners on this issue with the Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC) that assists with marketing, and the legal contracts. Kristen discussed her ongoing work with the CLC and the key goals and problems of building a model licensing program that might better incorporate compliance in licensing decisions. She reviewed the questionnaire that had been developed to assess compliance and brought up the issues that have been arising about how UM and/or the CLC might actually implement a compliance rating system.

Issues include: How would information be incorporated into a licensing decision? Should CLC take the lead role on this? If so, what would be appropriate? How would they use the data? Would they apply a scoring system? CLC would need to enlarge its staff and increase its role. What additional information is needed to undertake/implement such a review. Additional discussions with the FLA are taking place to look at how to coordinate the CLC effort with the FLA Enhanced Licensing Program. It was noted that CLC has not been involved in monitoring previously.

The FLA completed its pilot Enhanced Licensing Program to gather information on the capacity to implement and enforce codes of conduct that licensees currently have in place. 91 licensees completed the pilot and it will now be rolled out to all FLA 800 affiliate licensees. A training portal is under construction which will offer training in key areas identified through this process to be problems. Key areas identified in the pilot included how to evaluate an audit and how to develop a remediation plan.

Discussion ensued about how UM might further discussion. UM could hold a forum on the roles of the FLA and the CLC on this issue. Heeral Coleman will be asked to join a future meeting by phone. The committee would like to gain more information about the program and the training capacity of FLA. Additional issues raised included: How much influence does a small licensee have on remediation plans? Does FLA have adequate resources to meet the training needs? How does the University make use of the information portals. Sioban will follow up with Heeral Coleman.

5. Enhancing Curricula and Educational Opportunities in the Area of Labor Standards and Human Rights

The committee agreed that an education subcommittee for this group would be beneficial to its goals. An initial compilation of courses currently available on campus at the graduate and undergraduate level was provided to the committee for input and feedback (i.e. what courses should not be on the list, what courses are missing).

The Center for Ethics in Public Life has agreed to sponsor a forum on a topic from the LSHR. The committee suggested as possible topics ethical purchasing, ethics of local versus global food purchasing (might focus on the UM cafeterias). Sioban and Leigh will meet with John Chamberlain.

Farnsworth introduced an experiential learning proposal to the committee. A few years ago, the business school did a series of student projects with garment factories in Bangladesh. Their local partner was an NGO run by a very capable local national who has since relocated to Ann Arbor, who may be an ideal person to negotiate and place students in garment factories and CSR-related NGOs in Bangladesh. Similar projects could be developed in nearby countries, such as Cambodia and Vietnam. The committee suggested that should such a program be developed students should bring their experience back to the University, by for example participating in a public forum, an on-going speaker series or presenting in an appropriate class. This proposal would target graduate students initially in areas such as Public Health, SNRE, SSW, Business or PP. Once established it could incorporate undergraduate students.

While this would bring in an interesting component to what is currently offered at UM and could work through existing educational structures, timing may be critical as many students are currently defining their internships. Sioban and Brad will discuss further and report back to the Committee.

6. Compliance issue: Jerzees de Honduras

The committee sent a letter to the company last month. Scott Nova of the WRC requested that he be permitted to share our letter with other universities that were interested in seeing model letters, and permission was granted. The FLA has contracted for an independent audit of the decision to close the factory. The committee discussed potential next steps. Licenses are renewed annually at UM and Russell will be reviewed in March. Need to begin discussion of our potential actions with the company at the beginning of 2009 as renewal packages are being prepared to be sent out. We will request updates from the WRC and FLA about the situation for the December meeting.