President’s Advisory Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights
December 10, 2008, 12:00-1:30pm
1794 SSWB

MINUTES

Attending: Kristen Ablauf (via conference phone), Amy Cocuzza, Brad Farnsworth, Siobán Harlow (Chair, via conference phone), Allen Hicken, Peter Jacobson, Brian Talbot, Ada Verloren, Leigh Wedenoja, Matthew Welch, Nancy Vander Kuyl (staff to committee), three observers.

Absent: None

1. Welcome, announcements, review of agenda, review and approval of November 21, 2008 minutes

2. Winter term meeting dates/time –
   - Jan 21 2:30-4:00 – need to change this date, two members unavailable
   - Feb 18 2:30-4:00 – confirmed
   - March 11 2:30-4:00 – confirmed
   - April 8 2:30-4:00 – confirmed

3. A CTools site has been set up for CoLShR members and contains information on committee administrative matters, a file on relevant curriculum identified to date, FLA & WRC reports and documents and documents relevant to Russell Athletics.

4. Enhancing Curricula and Educational Opportunities in the Area of Labor Standards and Human Rights
   a. Hosting a session of the Winter 2009 Center for Ethics in Public Life Symposium Series. Sioban Harlow, Leigh Wedenoja, John Chamberlin and Nancy Vander Kuyl met on December 9 to discuss the ideas for a symposium suggested at the November CoLShR meeting. We fleshed out ideas related to the potential topic “What does ethical purchasing mean?” that might explore the tension between aspiration versus assurance. Speakers might reflect on how different companies/institutions implement ethical purchasing in a complicated world. Leigh summarized the discussion and passed out a handgun listing names of possible local panel speakers. Further discussion of the idea took place and committee members made several recommendations including
      - how to create a provocative debate if the panelists represent fair trade companies and organizations;
      - the value of exploring the ethics active versus passive assurance once the decision is made to purchase ethically;
      - the issue of considering the environmental effects of global purchasing and tie it in with the concept of sustainability in addition to labor standards;
      - the ethics of local versus global purchasing.

   It was suggested to consider a speaker from a nationally recognized company that claims fair trade and sustainability (i.e. Patagonia), from Knights Apparel or UM Professor Olivier Jolliet; a speaker from UM housing; Business School Faculty CJ Prahalad or Anil Karnani.

   b. Proposal for Graduate Student Internships — Brad Farnsworth reported that Azad will be travelling to Bangladesh and will speak to various NGO’s about their interest. He will meet with Brad and Sioban when he returns. It may still be a possibility to set up a pilot program during winter term/late spring for some programs (e.g. School of Social Work students).

   c. Define Educational Goals
      The committee discussed what the educational goals might be for new activities relevant to Labor Standards and Human Rights as per the President’s charge to the committee this year. A discussion ensued that clarified several points. First, at the undergraduate level, it was suggested that identification/development of relevant curricular offerings should be broadly framed to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to topics such as labor standards, the impact of globalization, global business, development, poverty, health and welfare, and human rights. Committee members expressed concerns about mandating what other departments’ curricular offerings should be in these areas, but gaps could be identified. Students can have a difficult time locating relevant courses because they are not easily identified in the course listings, class description and the actual class content may differ, and courses may not be offered for several years. SOLE has found that students want to more about social justice issues. Committee suggested
      1) develop a searchable database (models include database created for the Graham Institute on environmental issues which covers course listings and faculty, cost $20-30 thousand). If an online searchable database were created then curricular gaps might be more evident;
      2) create a model curriculum possibly sponsor pilot courses (as has been done for human rights);
      3) enhance public dialogue on campus on these issues through symposia (model is the area centers use of seminar series to engage a group of faculty and students across the campus).
      4) perhaps encourage Professors and GSI’s to incorporate social justice lectures into existing courses.

      Brian Talbot described a model that he has used at the Graham Institute model where graduate/undergraduate students are hired to enhance activities and coordinate events/group on campus related to sustainability but are not considered employees of the Graham Institute.

   d. Review of UM Current Curricular Offerings
      The latest revision of courses identified to date was distributed to the committee and committee members were requested to review/delete/add courses in their areas of knowledge.

5. Operational Leadership
   a. FLA – Enhanced Licensing Program: Heeral Coleman will join the January call to describe the program and provide the committee an opportunity to answer questions.

6. Program Updates on Jerzees de Honduras,
   a. Email update were sent from the WRC and FLA. WRC reiterated its concern and noted that lay-offs were proceeding. The FLA has employed two independent monitors. It received the draft reports. Questions were raised about when the FLA report would be released and whether we would see the auditor’s reports or a summary of the report from the FLA, with some members wanting to see the FLA report before deciding upon additional recommendations. The committee discussed a timeline for decision making and agreed to consider actions in January. Kristin reported that the deadline for taking action, given the multi-year contract is March.

   Action items:
      - Enquire what action other schools have taken
        o WRC: Sioban
        o USAS: Leigh
        o Communicate with peer institutions: Sioban
      - Invite Stan Bies to January Meeting (Sioban)
      - Clarify action that can be taken on the contract and date it must be taken by (Kristen)
8. New Business – Possible future symposium topic on labor rights issues related to services (eg call centers, x-ray reading, etc).

Meeting adjourned at 1:25.