President’s Advisory Committee
On Labor Standards and Human Rights

MINUTES
December 3, 2018, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM
R4020 Ross School of Business

Attendees: Ravi Anupindi (chair), Khaled Eid, Monika Johnson, Paul Labute, Richard Neitzel, Safia Sayed, Kiyoteru Tsutsui, Emma Waitzman, Kristen Ablauf, and Stephen Yaros (staff to committee)
Absent: Omolade Adunbi
Guests: Steven Mangan, Senior Director, Michigan Dining

Committee Business

Chair Anupindi called the meeting to order at 11:10 am. Minutes from the November 12, 2018 meeting were discussed. MJohnson moved to adopt the minutes and KTutsui seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Research and Educational Leadership

Chair Anupindi informed the committee that two individuals wrote to President Schlissel in October 2018 regarding the results of an April 2017 PACLSHR-sponsored student report titled, Responsible Procurement Project: Review of Findings for Food and Electronics. In the letter to President Schlissel, the authors made several specific requests regarding the implementation of several recommendations from the report. President Schlissel responded to the two individuals by stating that he would be referring the issue to the PACLSHR for review and a possible recommendation to him on next steps.

Chair Anupindi shared the letter and President Schlissel’s response with the committee and a discussion ensued. The committee decided that more research was needed as a follow-up to the 2017 report, so it was agreed that two research assistant positions would be funded by the committee to look further into the issue over the course of the winter 2019 semester. Chair Anupindi also mentioned that it could be possible to bring in a guest speaker during one of the committee’s winter 2019 meetings to further elaborate on the topic of the report.

Chair Anupindi informed the committee that he would send a letter to President Schlissel informing him of their intended actions.

Chair Anupindi also mentioned that the one-day conference on responsible University food procurement that he is helping to plan is still on track for Spring 2019. Five students are helping with the planning and execution of the event.
Operational Leadership

As a follow-up from the committee’s November 12, 2018 committee meeting, KAblauf began a discussion regarding a recent letter the Athletic Department received from a University of Michigan licensee. The licensee in question, Acushnet, provides UM logo clothing and equipment to the UM golf teams. In the letter, Acushnet informed the University that it will no longer be a member of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which is a requirement for all UM licensees. The question for the committee is how to respond to the licensee and what should their status be with the University of Michigan moving forward.

Chair Anupindi stated that there are several potential options in terms of the licensee’s status. The committee could decide to grant an exception to Acushnet and continue to allow them to produce goods with the UM logo while not being a member of the FLA, the committee could decide to only allow the licensee to produce items with the UM logo for internal use (not public retail), or the committee could pursue cutting ties with the licensee all together. A committee discussion ensued.

Some members felt that UM should not compromise on the FLA membership requirement, as granting an exception weakens the FLA. Others felt that many licensees that are members of the FLA do not fully put into practice the core principles of the FLA, but are still permitted to sell UM logo products because they “check a box”. Should UM be engaging with licensees that have strong social responsibility practices but do not belong to the FLA? Chair Anupindi mentioned that an exception to this rule was made in the past with Levi Strauss, whose request to produce products with the UM logo was granted even though they were not FLA members. At the time, the committee felt that Levi Strauss’ social responsibility practices were strong. There was also some committee discussion on what FLA membership does for UM’s licensing operations.

It was determined that next steps involve procuring more background information regarding Acushnet’s relationship with the University, the potential impact to the golf team and retail sales if UM ended its relationship with the licensee, and detailed information about past UM licensees who have received an exception to the FLA membership requirement. Once this information has been procured and shared with the committee, the conversation will continue and a committee decision will be made.

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 pm.