

President's Advisory Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights

NOTES

April 22, 2021, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Remote (Meeting held over Zoom)

Attendees: Ravi Anupindi (chair), Kristen Ablauf, Khaled Eid, Alexis Handal, Leila Kawar, Allison Kolpak, Paul LaBute, Junghoon Park, Joon Lee (staff), Steve Yaros (staff)

Absent: Christian Davenport, Amanda Kaplan

Guests: Marney Coleman, PACLSHR Winter 2021 Research Assistant

Grace Hermann, PACLSHR Winter 2021 Research Assistant

Ashley Bernard, Director, Ethical Supplier Engagement Program (ESEP), Sumerra

Chair Anupindi called the meeting to order at 2:31 pm and welcomed committee members to the last meeting of the academic year.

Winter 2021 RAs M. Coleman and G. Hermann (RAs) joined the meeting and presented on their research during the winter 2021 semester. The research involved studying the impacts of COVID-19 on domestic farm and meat processing workers. The student team used desk research and interviews with experts to gain insights. They found that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities within the food system. The vulnerabilities they reviewed fell broadly into six categories: labor trafficking, wage theft, child labor, unsanitary working and living conditions, unenforced worker safety standards, and fear of retaliation. These vulnerabilities resulted from a combination of weak labor laws and eroded labor protections. The implications of the pandemic on farmworkers and meat processing workers included concerns about the health and safety and financial security of the workers as well as their families and communities that these workers live and are employed in.

The RAs presented four recommendations for enhanced worker protection:

- 1) Implement a Federal OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard;
- 2) Advocate for federal, state, and local policies that build worker power;
- 3) Strategize for innovative approaches to vaccine distribution among workers in farm labor and meat processing sectors; and
- 4) Change employment law to move toward a "just cause" termination standard.

The RAs also presented several recommendations relevant for university procurement teams at large:

- Incorporate education about ethical and sustainable food procurement into university dining halls;
- Formalize a structure between universities and trusted, third-party organizations in labor

and procurement to facilitate ongoing professional learning as well as collect data and ultimately monitor compliance around ethical procurement practices;

- Enhance existing RFPs to include questions about labor standards and human rights;
- Enhance institutional sustainability goals by expanding definitions of sustainability to include language around labor standards, worker health, and worker well-being;
- Support university dining procurement coalition building within an existing structure with the ultimate goal of coalescing around an enforceable, values-driven procurement framework and universal set of ethical procurement/codes; and
- Develop systems/structures in institutional procurement that give weight to ethical and sustainability criteria in the competitive bidding process.

A Q&A discussion ensued, and the PACLSHR thanked the RAs for their time. Chair Anupindi then proceeded with the next item on the agenda.

Sumerra¹ representative A. Bernard joined the meeting to discuss Sumerra's partnership with the U-M on ensuring ethical sourcing among U-M licensees. For the purposes of the discussion, ethical sourcing was broadly defined as a cycle involving various pillars: prevent issues, detect issues, and correct issues. It was described as a cycle, as issues may be recurring, requiring repeat action for certain groups. A. Bernard mentioned that Sumerra works closely with PACLSHR member K. Ablauf in her role working with U-M licensees. Sumerra's Ethical Supplier Engagement Program (ESEP) involves auditing and training U-M suppliers and working with them to improve upon their working conditions for workers. Sumerra also works with U-M licensees through the SMAQ² program. A Q&A discussion ensued. Chair Anupindi thanked A. Bernard for her time.

The committee proceeded to approve the February 2021 meeting notes, and K. Ablauf provided a few updates regarding licensing. Although it is difficult to forecast next year's sales, she shared that there is a sense of optimism among peer institutions that post-pandemic royalties should recover, as the COVID-19 pandemic situation continues to improve.

Chair Anupindi thanked the committee members for their past year of work and provided an update that A. Kaplan will be graduating this year. The process of soliciting nominations for a replacement student member is underway. Discussions ensued on what the PACLSHR can continue to focus on in the coming year. Chair Anupindi and J. Lee encouraged committee members to continue sharing further thoughts on the PACLSHR via email moving forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

¹ Sumerra is a Global Compliance Company that assists Brands, Factories, Licensees and other Organizations in creating Sustainable Supply Chain practices (<https://www.sumerra.com/>)

² Sustainable Manufacturing Assessment Questionnaire (SMAQ) is an on-line questionnaire that measures the quality and depth of an organization's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program.