

Labor Licensing Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes December 8, 2006

Attendance:

Student Reps: Joel, Molly

Administration: Cindy, Dawn, LaMarr

Faculty Reps: Dennis, Jane

Academic Staff: Gary, Michelle

Guests: Fair Indigo: Rob, UBS: Kevin and another associate, John Wiley, Chancellor.

Key Summary Discussion Points:

1. Report/Consultation with Chancellor: Fair Indigo: this item blended with next.
2. Fair Indigo Discussion. Bob Bass was unable to attend, so co-owner Rob (insert surname) represented the company. Rob explained the history behind this business which opened in Sept 2006 in both retail stores and by catalogue. Four owners, formerly associated with Lands End, did 18 months of research in other countries in pursuit of factories that provided what they deemed a fair wage to their workers. While fair trade companies exist for commodities, their research was unique in its effort to locate sites for the manufacture of apparel. In sum, that research revealed 6 factories and 6 co-ops (primarily family run operations that met the fair wage criteria). The owners set up contracts with these 12 sites, which are each visited quarterly by one/combo of the owners, so that an ongoing, personal, and closely monitored relationship can emerge. Questions by those in attendance were answered as follows:
 1. Rob acknowledged that the model his company is pursuing is different toward global justice is different from that of the DSP Consortium. While the DSP promises results using multiple criteria eventually, Fair Indigo fulfills a niche to support an immediate market that pays a fair wage to the workers.
 2. First quarter results were not yet tabulated given the start up date of September.
 3. Fair Indigo is what Bob termed agnostic with regards to the formation of unions: certainly, each site's workers have the ability to form a union if they choose, the Fair Indigo owners are not against that, but they view a union as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.
 4. The Fair Indigo business plan at this juncture, is to help these 12 sites grow, by giving more orders to these players. The owners do not want to reveal where the sites are specifically, as locating them represented much effort and is the signature of their inception. The 5 year (dream) plan would be to have transparency in being able to include a tag or other way to track the factory of manufacture. The owners are committed to improving the lives of workers in other ways: such as the provision of daycare for children of factory workers, or the opportunity for education. Provost Wiley confirmed that any arrangement for merchandise orders placed with/through Fair Indigo as a pilot operation should be viewed as an endorsement of this second model, not to replace but to compliment the University's commitment to furthering the DSP implementation.
 5. Bob, and two University Book Store representatives arranged to meet and discuss a product or two that could serve as the pilot.

3. DSP Consortium

1. Outreach.

1. More top revenue generating schools are needed at the table to engage and encourage; UW-Madison is the highest of those campuses in attendance and we are #15 on the revenue roster.
 2. More organization in the communication with peer institutions is needed. Massive confusion about what and who is doing what. Thus, communiqués to date have included erroneous and/or conflicting info reaching administration at some schools which may be interfering with bringing these schools on board.
 3. A key agenda item at an upcoming meeting is clarifying what the DSP is and advertising what is the current consensus version.
2. WRC has sent a business letter of review to the US Justice Dept; usually this takes a 4-6 month turn around time, and while it does not guarantee complete protection because private parties can file claim, it is a necessary and important step as the precedent is no other such approved plans have gone to trial.
 3. Walkaways. There is a danger that companies may try and walk away at the end of the three year contract. An example reason they may opt to do so is that workers at a factory may have chosen to become unionized during the first 3 year contract, and so costs went up. Comments were made that at times reasons are given to walkaway (i.e. Union or labor cost) as a smoke screen. Thus, it is important that there be some language included in contracts to provide a notice of intent to leave.
4. AAU meeting John Wiley sought to give us a context for how the issue of DSP involvement will be perceived by administrators of the the 60 largest research institutions of higher learning in attendance. Factors to note: at each meeting, approximately 1/3-1/4 of the attendees are brand new, 100% of the attendees will be considering the DSP as one of about 100 issues to be discussed, it won't be regarded as the most urgent or the highest priority by many, at the table there will be 1-2 labor aggressive leaders and 1-2 business conservatives. Thus, convergence on an action plan will not likely be forthcoming from that single meeting; however, it is a topic worth bring up
 5. Report on Current student organizing drives on other campuses. Some of the students on the Purdue campus were on day 22 of the hunger strike, one of them hospitalized as of 12/8/6. This is the first sit-in in Purdue's history. Words of concern for students' health there were voiced by many.
 6. Factory Updates: Joel reported that Rising Sun had degenerated with physical assaults to workers, \$515,000 dollars still unpaid in back wages. Steve&Barry locked out 1200 workers, shut down the factory.
 7. Next meeting—Friday Feb. 23 Noon-1:00pm 69 Bascom: Joel, Chair; (??) Notes
 1. Debrief Feb 1-2 meetings of the DSP working group w/brands.
 2. Update on the WRC Board Meeting;
 3. Guest at invite of LeMarr per announcement at Nov meeting?

Submitted, Michelle Quinn 2-11-07