

University of Connecticut
Office of the President

January 17, 2006

TO: The University of Connecticut Committee on Sweatshop Labor, Professor Waldo Klein, Chairman, Professor Boris Bravo-Ureta, Mr. Michael Crutchfield, Assistant Professor Shareen Hertel, Professor Mohamed Hussein, Mr. John Schreiber, Professor Blanca Silvestrini, Mr. William Simpson, Mr. Timothy Tolokan, Dr. Julie Bell-Elkins

FROM: Philip E. Austin

SUBJECT: Charge to the Committee

The University of Connecticut has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to work toward equitable and humane treatment for all those involved in the production of goods that bear the University insignia. We are, in fact, recognized as a national leader among institutions of higher education in this regard. We are eager to maintain that distinction.

Over the past several years many UConn students, faculty, and members of the staff have been engaged in this issue. Their advocacy has been an important asset in our efforts. Two task forces, one appointed in 2000 and the other in 2005, reviewed specific aspects of the sweatshop problem and presented useful recommendations, most of which are now embedded in University policy and practice.

This is, however, an extremely complex issue with legal, cultural, academic, economic, and operational dimensions. No one university can resolve the sweatshop problem alone. We can, however, make a significant contribution, particularly when we work in concert with other institutions committed to common goals. In any event, the University of Connecticut, as a public university with a commitment to human rights, has a deep obligation to take practical, realistic steps to address this concern.

The Task Force on Sweatshop labor appointed last year recommended that I “appoint a standing committee, including a staff member, to ensure that (the Task Force’s) recommendations are enacted and enforced.” The establishment of this committee fulfills that mandate. I appreciate Professor Klein’s willingness to serve as chair and the members’ agreement to serve. I also appreciate Dr. Julie Bell-Elkins service as the staff resource for the committee, and her acceptance of the designation as the University’s day-to-day “point person” on these issues.

I ask the committee to serve as the University's principal policy body on sweatshop concerns, advising me and other members of the administration with operational responsibility on actions we can and should take to fulfill both our specific commitments relating to UConn and to advance our broader goal of helping to alleviate sweatshop conditions in the United States and abroad. Specifically, I charge the committee to:

1. Review the codes of conduct under which the University operates in this area to promote consistency with our goals and practicality of implementation.
2. Examine our relationships with other universities, national and international organizations, and others, to determine how we can work together to best meet our common objectives.
3. Encourage and support academic research in this area.
4. Encourage and support student awareness through a variety of means, including curricular development, campus dialogue, and ongoing communication.
5. Provide guidance and advice to assure that the University maintains its position as a leader among institutions of higher education committed to the eventual elimination of sweatshops across the globe.

I leave it to the chair and members of the committee to determine how best to fulfill this charge. I ask that you report to me on a quarterly basis and more frequently as needed on your findings, and I assure you of my ongoing attention to your recommendations.