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Anti-Sweatshop/Human Rights Policy

Editor's Note: See View the ['Sweatshop' article](#).

Anti-Sweatshop/Human Rights Policy

The University of Michigan, the nation's leading college or university in the sale of licensed apparel and other goods, is committed to ethical and legal business practices. Accordingly, for the past several years, we have been actively participating in the national dialogue designed to eradicate sweatshop conditions surrounding the manufacturing of products publicly associated with this University.

As reported previously to the Board of Regents, for the past 17 months the University has served on a task force of colleges and universities affiliated with the Collegiate Licensing Company. The task force is completing work on a code of conduct for licensees that will help guarantee safe, healthy and fair conditions for workers who produce these licensed goods. The University also has engaged in discussions with the U.S. Labor Department, the Apparel Industry Partnership and the newly-formed Fair Labor Association, non-governmental entities and the many private and public sector parties who have joined the dialogue.

These issues have provoked sustained concern from many parts of our community: students, including the Michigan Student Assembly, have spoken out and demanded that the University take a position on eliminating sweatshops and ensuring fair working conditions for those who produce University of Michigan-Marked goods. We, therefore, wish to articulate the University's principles on these important human rights issues.

Principles:

1. Code of Conduct. We believe firmly that workers in this country and abroad who help produce licensed goods bearing the insignia or name of the University of Michigan, should be treated humanely and fairly and should work under healthy and safe conditions. Accordingly, we will endorse the task force's recommendations that a Code of Conduct for all licensees include important provisions, many of which are supported by national or international law and deeply held norms. These provisions aim to ensure:

- Compliance with all applicable national laws;
- Compensation standards, including payment of the higher of the minimum wage or local prevailing wage;
- Humane limitations on the required hours of work;
- Premium rates for overtime work;
- Limitations on child labor, consistent with international and national law;
- Prohibition of forced labor;
- Safe and healthy working environment;
- Nondiscrimination in employment based on gender, race, religion, age, disability, nationality, or ethnic

origin;

- Prohibition of harassment of employees; and
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining.

2. Commitment to Implementation. We also believe firmly that ensuring that these provisions (and others as described below) are followed will require commitment and follow-through, not only by this institution, but by other colleges and universities and many interested parties. We, therefore, will join appropriate associations, consortia, or other groups that will work to ensure compliance by licensees and manufacturers. As the task force draft recommendations recognize, it will be necessary to create a system of independent monitoring across many different countries. Licensees will be expected to verify and monitor compliance, but we can be confident of the results only if outside, credible sources confirm that the conditions are being met.

3. Anti-Sweatshop Advisory Committee. We will establish an Anti-Sweatshop Advisory Committee composed in equal proportions of students, faculty and staff to study these important issues. Students will be appointed in consultation with the Michigan Student Assembly and faculty will be appointed in consultation with the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs and the Academic Program Group. This advisory committee will advise University administrators on issues including the Code of Conduct for licensees, the monitoring system, and may sponsor fora, studies or other educational or informational efforts. The Advisory Committee should submit its initial report to the President within 12 months of the committee's appointment, and shall submit short update reports quarterly until that time.

4. Public Disclosure. We believe that members of this community, and consumers of University of Michigan licensed merchandise, should know that these goods are manufactured in compliance with the Code of Conduct. We will require our licensees to provide full disclosure as expeditiously as possible under existing contracts and as a condition of future contracts. Accordingly, we will advocate that the task force move promptly to provide full public disclosure of company names, production and manufacturing locations for licensed products. The Anti-Sweatshop Advisory Committee should make any recommendations to achieve this objective in its report.

5. Compensation Standards. We believe that, as a matter of human rights and human dignity, workers engaged in the production of licensed goods should receive wages that meet at least their basic needs. This concept has been sometimes referred to as a "living wage". In many instances, such a wage level would exceed the minimum and/or prevailing wage. However, defining a wage level or levels (across different countries and locations) presents significant challenges: it is widely held that there is no current consensus on these compensation levels. Nevertheless, we believe it is fundamentally important to engage in that process to define wage level(s) for workers engaged in the production of licensed apparel that would meet at least their basic needs and be consistent with human rights.

Accordingly, we will join in appropriate research studies with sister institutions and governmental entities such as the United States Labor Department and international groups and organizations, to determine guidelines that could create appropriate wage standards. Through these studies and in consultation with the Advisory Committee, the University will work to identify a wage level(s) for workers employed by our licensees consistent with human rights and our University values. Based on that information, we will work to implement a policy that will ensure that our licensees compensate workers at a wage level(s) consistent with basic human rights and dignity. Additionally, we will advocate that the task force, the Apparel Industry Partnership's Fair Labor Association and other national and international organizations explore this topic to determine how and where the Code of Conduct might be modified to reflect the payment of wage level(s) consistent with human rights.

6. Women's Rights. The vast majority of workers making licensed goods are women who may be vulnerable to exploitation or coercion. We, therefore, will advocate that the Code of Conduct should explicitly protect women with respect to equal pay, equal treatment and equal rights, as well as ensure their reproductive health and freedom during pregnancy and maternity leave. We will require our licensees to ensure that women employees receive fair treatment and are free from coercion or exploitation. The Advisory Committee should consider this issue in its report.

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