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'U' won't renew its contracts with Morgan, plans to set new policy

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CARMEN JOHNSON
Daily Staff Reporter
Published April 6, 2003

In an attempt to pressure Morgan Services Inc. to change the way it treats its workers, the University will not renew its long-term contracts with Morgan, according to a letter it sent to out to the company Friday. Morgan - a company that allegedly manages its workers unfairly - provides laundry services for several University departments.

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- said they consider the letter a victory. But they added that the University only refused to approve long-term contracts.

"Because the University may extend short-term contracts as necessary, this letter will only have a temporary impact on the labor dispute. We are uncomfortable with the University's ability to call any contract short-term," SOLE member Jenny Lee said.

But Coleman stated in a letter to SOLE members that terminating the contract is "the wrong course of action at this time (for several reasons). These include the lack of institutional guidelines that address purchasing relationships," referring to the proposed taskforce that will propose guidelines.

One of the four contracts the University holds with Morgan expires in June. Two other expire in September, but the contract to provide services for the Business School's Executive Residence does not expire until November 2004.

Peterson said SOLE members had an important impact on the relationship between the University and Morgan. "The strong letter of non-renewal to Morgan and the creation of a taskforce are important accomplishments that would have not been proposed by Coleman without the students' voices," Peterson said.

Lee said the taskforce might be dominated by the interests of the administration. "Although I'm still positive about the taskforce, Coleman will be appointing the members and the student representative will be chosen through (the Michigan Student Assembly)," Lee said.

Morgan CEO Richard Senior has not responded to the letter yet. But Senior has previously said that SOLE misrepresented the working conditions at the Toledo plant, like poor health insurance.

The letter states that the University will not approve any long-term contract renewals until a taskforce makes recommendations for a new purchasing policy that fits with the mission and values of the University. The taskforce will be formed by the end of the term, University spokeswoman Julie Peterson said.

Once guidelines have been established, the University will decide whether Morgan complies with them and will decide whether to terminate its contracts, according to the letter, sent out by interim Chief Financial Officer Timothy Slottow.

Members of Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality - who have been meeting with University officials since October in hopes of ending the contract with Morgan



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Karen Burnett an international representative of the United Needletrade, Industrial and Textile Employees, which represents the Toledo workers, said she was pleased by the University's action.

"The University is taking a stand in the fight that the company that should be treating its workers better," Burnett said. "It's a good message to the workers, too."



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