Student Relations Advisory Committee

Revised Minutes

19 March 1999


ABSENT: Alphonse Burdi, Marty Gold, Shivani Gupta, Colin Heitzmann, Donald Heller, Bruce Karnopp, Susan Pritzel, David Schoem, Brett Schulman, John Su

GUESTS: Frank Cianciola, Associate Dean of Students; Keith Molin, Retired Senior Associate Athletic Director

I. OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Simpson, serving as committee chair in Dr. Burdi’s absence, called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. Vice-President Hartford distributed copies of the CLB’s Code review and SOLE’s resolution statement to the apparel industry.

III. MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 1999 MEETING

The minutes of the February 19, 1999 meeting were approved without correction.

IV. FOCUS TOPIC: PIERPONT COMMONS RENOVATION PROJECT

Frank Cianciola, Associate Dean of Students, began discussion by giving the committee an overview of the Pierpont Commons Renovation Project. The project includes the development of the Commons and the area within a fifteen minute walking distance of the Commons. The main objectives of the project are to meet unmet needs of the community and to improve existing programs, services, and facilities. The planning committee and members of the University community have already proposed several ideas. The funding scope of the project is $2 million, $1,600,000 of which is available for actual construction. Mr. Cianciola explained that since the project now has an architect and a budget, the planning schedule has been accelerated. Recommendations from different University groups, such as our committee, is crucial for the renovation of Pierpont Commons.

Mr. Cianciola announced that there will be a series of town hall meetings to present the community with the proposed ideas of the project and to engage them in discussion. The discussion generated from these meetings will be sent to the Pierpont Renovations
Planning Committee, who will compare these ideas with the project’s budget and then determine what plans will be feasible.

The meeting dates are as follows:

Wednesday, March 31, 3:00-4:30 in the Pierpont Commons Boulevard Room

Tuesday, April 13 and Wednesday, April 14 (date and time to be announced)

The committee thanked Mr. Cianciola for this time.

V. FOCUS TOPIC: COLLEGIATE APPAREL LICENSURE ISSUE

Keith Molin, Retired Senior Associate Athletic Director, and Peter Romer-Friedman, leader of Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality were invited to speak to the committee about the collegiate apparel licensure controversy and the recent student protests surrounding this issue. At the time of this meeting, however, SOLE was holding a sit-in in the president’s office and Romer-Friedman was unable to attend.

Mr. Molin began discussion by giving the committee a brief history of the clothing licensure issue. The Collegiate Licensing Company is an Atlanta based company that licenses, leases and collects royalties of products bearing college logos, including products bearing the U-M logo. After the national media began focusing on the relationship between sweatshop labor and the apparel industry a few years ago, the CLC convened and made a task force. This task force, with which Mr. Molin has been working the past seventeen months, is comprised of thirteen large universities (including Michigan) whose products are licensed through CLC. At the same time, students from these schools became involved with the issue of sweatshop labor and formed the organization, United Students Against Sweatshops.

One goal of the Intercollegiate Task Force has been to devise a code of conduct for the apparel industry. They advocate full public disclosure of the apparel manufacturers. However, Mr. Molin cited some complications associated with the public disclosure issue. First of all, monitoring labor is difficult because the producers often do not know where their goods are manufactured or from where the companies sub-contract their labor. Secondly, the University of Michigan licenses over six hundred companies to fabricate “Michigan” products. If the University records all documents, they will be subject to public disclosure with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Mr. Molin explained that this situation could possibly develop into a bureaucracy of filing information.
The student movement against sweatshop labor has taken the form of sit-ins and protest rallies across the country. The U-M’s group is Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality (SOLE). The dissent between the student activists and the Intercollegiate Task Force University lies in the code of conduct for the apparel industry. The students of SOLE and MSA have drafted a resolution statement for the apparel industry, demanding full public disclosure and a living wage for employees. However, the term, living wage, remains problematic for the University, which finds the phrase too abstract. It is this reason precisely that is forcing the students to continue the sit-in in President Bollinger’s office. At the time of this meeting, President Bollinger had signed a Statement of Principles in agreement with the disclosure and independent monitoring issues. The Statement does not yet speak of living wage nor human rights, though it does promise that the U-M will work with other groups to study these issues. In addition, Mr. Molin stated that the Task Force has agreed to undergo a study to determine a proper definition for a human rights living wage.

The discussion concluded with many committee members voicing support for the student activists. The committee thanked Mr. Molin for his time and efforts.

With no further business on the table, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. Several committee members proceeded directly to the Fleming Building to view the student sit-in. During our meeting, however, the University and SOLE came to agreement over the resolution statement and the sit-in was disbanded at noon.