

The Grinnell College Apparel Purchasing Committee Annual Report for the 2004-2005 academic year

Committee Members

Committee members during 2003-2004 included:

Jan Morrill, Elisa McCool (students)

Cecilia Knight, (Faculty) Evelyn Freeman (Faculty), John Kalkbrenner (VP for College Services, and committee chair) & Cassie Wherry (Bookstore Manager)

Committee activities this year

The 2004 -2005 academic year was the second year in which the committee existed. Good progress has been made this year. The order of business has been to review the College's apparel purchasing procedures and to make sure that the college is not currently purchasing any items manufactured under sweatshop conditions.

There are two units on campus that do most of the apparel purchasing. Those units are the Bookstore and the Athletics Department. In the case of the Bookstore, Cassie Wherry has required vendors to provide a written document outlining their commitment to not deal in merchandise produced under so called "sweat shop" conditions. These documents are often referred to as a "code of conduct". Cassie has a book containing dozens of such "code of conduct" letters from vendors with which the Bookstore does business.

Regarding the Athletics Department, the situation is more complex. Coaches order apparel for their teams from intermediaries, not from original manufacturers. So, it is difficult to know exactly what company manufactures items.

The committee decided that the best approach would be to contact all retailers from whom the Athletics department buys and request a code of conduct letter. This will make retailers more aware of the growing concern about the sweatshop issue and will, in turn, make them pressure their suppliers toward compliance.

The committee has worked with the Athletics Department to put in place procedures for contacting all retailers from whom they purchase apparel. Also, the committee crafted a letter and supporting materials to be sent to such vendors.

The Committee looked into the issue of licensing the Grinnell College logo and name for printing on various apparel items. At this time, the college has no licensing agreements and therefore this is not a concern for the committee.

This spring, the committee turned its attention to other college departments that also purchase apparel. Discussions with the Dining Services Department and Facilities Management have revealed that they are in compliance. However, the committee has yet to request codes of conduct from the vendors doing business with Dining and FM. That will be an activity for the committee in the fall of 2005.