

TO: The University at Albany Community

FROM: Carlos E. Santiago, Officer in Charge and Provost

DATE: February 10, 2004

SUBJECT: New University Anti-Sweatshop Policy

It gives me great satisfaction to report that the University at Albany has adopted a new policy aimed at ensuring that goods bearing University insignia, and certain other goods purchased by the University itself, are not produced under sweatshop conditions.

The new policy is an outgrowth of the work done by the Task Force on Sweatshop Labor that President Hitchcock established in April 2000 and reflects, in part, changes in state law that enable the University to align its purchasing practices with its commitment to social justice.

The new policy affects the University's purchase of textiles, apparel and sports equipment in particular, and incorporates in the decision-making process two key features: the Statement of Principles for Worker Rights that was developed by the Task Force on Sweatshop Labor and the requirement that the purchase of any emblematic textiles, apparel or sports equipment must be from companies licensed by the Collegiate Licensing Company.

"The University at Albany is committed to the principle of humane working conditions for workers all over the world who are involved in the manufacture of goods bearing the University designs, trademarks, service marks, logographics, symbols and other indicia. The University recognizes that freedom of association and collective bargaining, living wages and benefits, involuntary labor, child labor, health and safety, discrimination and the rights of women are legitimate concerns for the workers producing these goods," says the Statement of Principles for Worker Rights in its introduction.

The full statement, which articulates the University's expectations for manufacturers' labor practices, has been for the past several months the centerpiece of the University's collegiate licensing agreement, through which rights are granted for the manufacture of products bearing the University's emblematic marks. The University's new purchasing policy builds on that significant recent development.

As you may recall, students at UAlbany and campuses across the nation spearheaded a drive a number of years ago to end deplorable working conditions – "sweatshop" labor – in a number of nations around the world, particularly in the manufacture of collegiate apparel. At the time, New York State law did not permit the University to consider sweatshop manufacturing conditions in its purchasing decisions.

This changed with passage of legislation in 2002 and 2003. State Law now requires all State entities to add a statement to their bid documents indicating that they will not enter into contracts for the purchase of textiles, apparel or sports equipment

unless bidders are able to document that the goods were manufactured in compliance with all applicable labor and occupational safety laws, including, but not limited to, child labor laws, wage and hour laws and workplace safety laws.

The law also gives the University and its not-for-profit affiliates the option to decide, on the basis of local determination of what constitutes appropriate labor standards, that a prospective supplier of textiles, apparel or sports equipment is not a responsible bidder under the State Finance Law. Amending the University's purchasing procedures to incorporate explicitly the Statement of Principles for Worker Rights, and also incorporate a requirement that any emblematic textiles, apparel or sports equipment purchased by the University must be collegiate licensed products substantially advances UAlbany's efforts to assure that products bearing University insignia are manufactured under safe, healthy and fair working conditions.

The University's new policy governs purchases made with both state and research funds, and I am encouraging our not-for-profit affiliates to adopt a similar, but even more expansive, approach, by purchasing only collegiate licensed products when seeking any goods bearing the University's emblematic marks. Our goal is to assure that the University and its affiliates do as much as possible to ensure worker rights and humane working conditions.

At this time, it is my further pleasure to announce that the recent legislation has also cleared the way for the University to become a member of the Worker Rights Consortium and the Fair Labor Association, which are the pre-eminent non-profit organizations committed to the improvement of working conditions worldwide. Accordingly, the University is moving ahead to affiliate with both of these important organizations.

I am especially grateful to the student, faculty and staff members of the Task Force on Sweatshop Labor, led by School of Social Welfare Dean Katharine Briar-Lawson. The Task Force carefully examined the issues and through its work, particularly in developing the Statement of Principles for Worker Rights, is helping the University achieve its goals in this important area.