

**Notes Compiled from the Community Discussion on  
Licensing Practices at UNC Institutions  
November 5, 2014 (5:30 pm – 8:00 pm)  
at the Center for School Leadership and Development  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina**

## Discussion Group Notes Organized Around Questions Posed

**Question 1:** How should the licensing practices of the University of North Carolina and its constituent institutions support our shared goal of workplace safety?

- Is this a single-issue decision (Bangladesh), or should it be approached more broadly?
- UNC-CH has a big interest [60% of licensing revenue] – should this be a campus decision vs General Administration (GA)?
- GA doesn't have students
- GA could monitor and share best practices with other campuses
- Will GA decision create caps or minimums? Don't want a lid or constraint on campus activity. Will GA decision be enabling, vs. constraining?
- Bangladesh may be the first of many other countries
- Licensing is someone's job [on each campus] – agencies (Fair Labor Association (FLA), Workers Rights Consortium (WRC)) could be facilitators

**Question 2:** What information does the University of North Carolina and its constituent institutions need to ensure that our workplace safety objectives are being advanced and met through licensing practices?

- This question is difficult to answer without particulars – differ by industry, political jurisdiction, needs & concerns of various campuses
- Key way of trying to answer – how we use services of the licensing agencies and other organizations
- Pressure to join one (FLA, WRC) but not both, though they compliment one another and are not competitors
- There's a concern that inspections don't pick up all issues
- Concern that workers can't unionize and are not free to speak out
- We don't know what we don't know until there's a problem
- We [NCSU] evaluate our licensees on willingness and capacity (and adherence), and rely on FLA / others to manage it for us (identify issues, remediate as necessary)
- WRC takes more of a "gotcha" approach. FLA says "let's address issues".
- What is ongoing capacity at GA to do this? Or will they rely on lead campuses?
- We get reports from FLA & WRC – they are the boots on the ground
- Companies have too much at stake to ignore FLA & WRC

- The issues are broader than Bangladesh – companies move – so the framework needs to be broadly applicable

**Question 3:** Are the protections afforded by the Fair Labor Association (FLA), Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), labor codes of licensing entities such as Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC), and individual university labor codes inadequate to ensure worker safety in Bangladesh?

- *The group didn't have comments on this question, but, see the comments at question #4 below*

**Question 4:** What metrics-based evidence is there to show that the **Accord** improves (or does not improve) safety for workers in the apparel industry in Bangladesh? What evidence is there to show that the **Alliance** improves (or does not improve) safety for workers. What about evidence regarding other approaches? Please develop a list of items for the Accord, the Alliance and any other recommended approach.

- Not sure we have evidence that either (Accord or Alliance) is effective
- Inspections are a first step to identify problems
- Have problems been fixed?
- It's a timing issue – will some solutions be implemented in 3-6 months, or longer?
- It's a resource issue – e.g. no one makes fire doors in Bangladesh, so they must be brought in
- No good social science way to do a study of the Accord vs. the Alliance vs. nothing
- Accord & Alliance need to broaden their sphere [beyond Bangladesh], or we go back to FLA/WRC
- Broadening could be too superficial
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a system level decision? What's in it for our campus? Don't know what to say to colleagues who ask this question?
- Would like to be able to sell this approach to colleagues as beneficial. They will ask "how does this serve the academic mission"? Public service / public good are important, but there's a concern about financing our stuff on the back of these licensing practices
- We want to hear rationale (for GA engagement) beyond "we're a 17 campus university"
- UNC-CH sees this (GA decision) as a potential constraint – dictate imposed that impinges on academic mission
- What is GA thinking about their role vs. the campus role? How can they perform this function without relying on campuses?

**Question 5:** What are the strengths of the Accord and the Alliance? What are the weaknesses of the Accord and the Alliance? What can be improved about each?

- A committee at UNC-CH spent lots of time going through this (Accord vs. Alliance) and produced a long report [that should be reviewed / considered]
- UNC-CH is a national leader – peer institutions have acted on this, so we should look to them, and be part of the national conversation (not just UNC system conversation)
- One question re: the Accord vs. Alliance – how much volume coming out of Bangladesh is tied to each? Also, what’s the definition of “factory”
- It’s not as simple as the Accord vs. Alliance.

Alliance

Strengths	Weakness
Raise awareness for worker’s issues	Does not provide workers with a voice
Funding mechanism is solid thru membership dues	They are not legally binding
	Significantly fewer companies involved thru the accord

Accord

Strengths	Weakness
Legally binding	Need more membership
Successfully identified problem within factories and shutdown factories	
Independent inspections	
No corporate bias	
Allows worker input	
Workers play role in implementation	

Improvements

Alliance: Can be improved if they become legally binding

Accord: Greater support from universities and greater credibility

- WRC is a monitoring agency. A tool that can be used to ensure worker’s rights
- UNC is a subscriber to WRC
- UNC should follow WRC’s recommendations
- WRC doesn’t provide “protection” it provides information to universities.
- Alliance provides metric based information

Process

- What’s the decision-making process? Who’s engaged? 17 Chancellors, or campus representatives who are very knowledgeable about this subject.
- Need a dialogue with GA, not just input then its response
- Whatever GA does needs to take existing campus initiatives & activities into account

- We've had a similar experience in the past where a number of campuses had their own policies on research misconduct; and as a result of dialogue GA developed a policy which resulted in more consistent campus responses.

**Three concluding, questions and / or suggestions of interest to the participants were:**

- (1) What is the case for GA taking a primary role here? Why was this initiative undertaken in the first place?
- (2) What is the relationship between GA and the campuses going forward? GA is not equipped to do this. Will they develop an enabling approach? Share best practices? What about information transfer? Is the UNC-CH committee still empowered to carry out its other labor rights initiatives, etc.
- (3) The participants expressed a real interest in finding a way for The University System to play a responsible role in protecting workers rights / safety on a global basis; although the mechanism by which the system can act was not clear.