



# Statement Regarding FLA Student Committee, From National U.S. Student Organizations

April 30, 2012

As four national U.S. student organizations representing more than 4 million students on over 300 college and university campuses, we are writing to express our profound dismay in response to the recent announcement by the Fair Labor Association (FLA) of its intention to form of a “University Advisory Council Student Committee,” a misdirected attempt to pacify growing University concern about the FLA’s track record of failure in upholding the rights of workers producing our college-logo apparel.

The announcement of an FLA student committee comes at the height of the FLA’s international notoriety and public discontent in the university community over the organization’s ineffectiveness and track record of failure to enforce Universities’ codes of conduct. In this context, students find the announcement of the committee deeply offensive, and can only infer that the FLA’s intentions are to utilize students as a tool to distract from the systematic and ongoing labor rights violations in factories producing college-logo apparel that the FLA remains silent on or even attempts to defend.

For over a decade, the FLA has claimed that its theoretical influence over apparel companies stems from its intimate relationship with them, even to the extent that companies govern the organization on the FLA’s Board of Directors. Yet, the contrary has proven to be true; the FLA’s relationship with the companies who fund and control it has inevitably led the FLA to defend companies at the expense of hundreds of thousands of workers. The FLA has either defended its member companies committing egregious labor rights violations, or refused to investigate workers’ complaints entirely.

For years, students have engaged with our universities, made our concerns and suggestions clear, and have given the FLA the benefit of the doubt that the organization would implement reforms that would enable it to actually defend the rights of workers making our apparel. Unfortunately, the FLA’s recent announcement demonstrates the organization’s lack of seriousness in addressing their track record of failure, and solving the inherent conflict of interest in the organization’s governance that continues to prevent the FLA from holding corporations accountable for severe labor rights abuse.

If the FLA was serious about engaging students, the organization would simply do what students have been respectfully suggesting for the last 15 years: address the fundamental conflict of interest in its governance structure by removing corporate representation from its board. Instead, the announcement of the student committee is a disappointing step backwards for the FLA. Affiliate members of our organizations refuse to participate in a tokenizing student committee created by an organization that has impeded progress on critical workers’ rights issues in the production of college-logo apparel. In light of the FLA’s misplaced priorities, we continue to call on Universities to disaffiliate from the FLA and to affiliate with the only truly independent labor rights monitor in the world, the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC).

We encourage university administrators who want to be more attentive to students. The best way to do this is by collaborating directly with student activists on your campus who are bringing critical issues to your attention.

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**Teresa Cheng, International Campaigns Coordinator, United Students Against Sweatshops**  
**Victor Sanchez, President, United States Student Association**  
**Joe Parker, National Coordinator, Student Farmworker Alliance**  
**Maria Louzon, National Coordinator, United Students for Fair Trade**