

A Resolution in Support of the Buy Your Values UCLA Campaign to Push UCLA to Carry Worker-Friendly and Environmentally Sustainable Apparel

WHEREAS, Buy Your Values UCLA is a student-run campaign to bring worker empowerment, worker democracy, and environmental justice to UCLA's licensed apparel retail and to educate the student body on the importance of pushing for a more ethical future;

WHEREAS, the global garment industry is heavily reliant on a mass workforce, in some countries making up a majority of the workforce both in factories as well as in home-work;¹

WHEREAS, the industry has purposefully outsourced production away from countries with higher minimum wage floors, stronger collective bargaining laws, and more stringent worker protection rights, which has led to particularly awful violations of workers' health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic;²

WHEREAS, the effect of the global garment industry, specifically the onset of fast fashion, has led to an industry which contributes 20% of the world's wastewater during the toxic dyeing process, plastic microfiber pollution of our oceans, and excessive consumption of clothing (much of which ends up in landfills);³

WHEREAS, UCLA Trademarks & Licensing's purpose is to "Promote, protect, and enhance the UCLA brand's reputation by thoughtfully managing and controlling the use of the UCLA® brand name on consumer products and ensuring that "UCLA" appears only on quality products that are produced under fair, safe, and humane working conditions";⁴

WHEREAS, 1998, the University of California, like many other universities in the late 90s, adopted a Code of Conduct to address supply chain transparency and minimum standards for workplace safety, after the organizing of United Students Against Sweatshops, US college students organizing in solidarity with garment workers;⁵

WHEREAS, the Code enforces standards regarding: wages and benefits, child labor, forced labor, health & safety, nondiscrimination, women's rights, harassment and abuse, and freedom of association and collective bargaining, through monitoring organizations such as the Worker Rights Consortium and Fair Labor Association;

WHEREAS, the Code acts as leverage to hold companies accountable for meeting these standards, but many of our licensees do not meet these standards throughout the supply chain, and while some companies make genuine efforts, others are not willing to further investigate their suppliers;

WHEREAS, there exist companies which meet higher environmental standards through small-batch production and recycling/upcycling measures and higher worker empowerment standards through clear collective bargaining agreements and cooperative worker-ownership;

¹ <https://www.wiego.org/garment-workers>

²

<https://www.wiego.org/blog/worlds-most-vulnerable-garment-workers-arent-factories-and-global-brands-need-step-protect>

³ <https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/7/20/the-impact-of-fast-fashion-on-the-environment>

⁴ <https://asucla.ucla.edu/licensing/>

⁵ <https://asucla.ucla.edu/licensing/social-responsibility-and-engagement/>

WHEREAS, one of the few licensees to live up to the Code was Alta Gracia, a living-wage, unionized garment factory in the Dominican Republic, which had to close its shutters during the pandemic;

WHEREAS, the Code currently states no benchmarks specifically regarding environmental rights or protections, as researched by the Sustainability Action Research UCLA Licensing Team last year;⁶

WHEREAS, in 2020, UCOP created the UC Sustainable Practices Policy,⁷ which was said to govern UC-wide procurement and operations sustainability standards, but had little to say about textile, garment, and apparel procurement;

WHEREAS, the Buy Your Values campaign, housed in the USAC Facilities Commission, has put on several panels & workshops over the past two years, featuring partners from Alta Gracia, Carolina Textile District, UCLA Trademarks & Licensing, Ethix Merch, Garment Worker Center, Refine LA, Labor 411, and the Student Labor Advocacy Project;

WHEREAS, in February 2021 we released a student-directed survey with 150+ responses, with notable findings being that cost, aesthetics, and ethical production constitute top factors when purchasing, and that clearer identification and greater availability/variety would make students more open to purchasing ethical products;⁸

WHEREAS, in March 2021, we began discussions with UCLA Trademarks & Licensing and the UCLA Store on our current demands, which included the development of a small pilot program to order increasingly greater quantities of products meeting certain labor and environmental standards;

WHEREAS, beginning in May 2021, we began organizing in solidarity with the Garment Worker Center's campaign to pass SB 62, also known as the Garment Worker Protection Act, which sought to close piece-rate wage loopholes and strengthen enforcement of labor laws;

WHEREAS, in December 2021, we refined our campaign goals around a selected few companies to pitch to the UCLA Store and Campus Store, which meet higher standards of worker democracy, worker empowerment, and environmental justice, and to amend the Code of Conduct to include environmental provisions;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, the USAC affirms its support for the efforts of the Buy Your Values UCLA campaign to bring ethical and sustainable options to UCLA retail, and to amend the current Code of Conduct;

FINALLY LET IT BE RESOLVED, the USAC affirms to sign onto the letter of support to be delivered to the UCLA Store and Campus Store as a measure of campus-wide support for this effort.

⁶ <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ASUCLA-Final-Report.pdf>

⁷ <https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/3100155/SustainablePractices>

⁸  ASUCLA-ServicesCommitteePresentation