**College Council on Community Policy Minutes**

**February 3, 2012**

**Members Present:** Susan Levin, Brent Durbin, Vera Shevzov, Daniel Kramer, Mairin Brady, Scott Morin, Ashavan Doyon, Sherry Wingfield, Donna Safford, Danielle Ramdath, Stacie Hagenbaugh, Pamela Nolan Young, Robert Smith, Scott Graham, Laura Smiarowski, Samuel Masinter, Kendra Danowski, and Barbara Williams.

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1. **Discussion of Coca-Cola**

* The conversation today will focus on concerns regarding Coca Cola and inviting the company to participate in the RFP process.
* Guest speakers:
  + - Lesley Gill, Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, Vanderbilt University (recommended by Darcy Buerkle) – via conference call.
    - Ray Rogers, Killercoke.org – also via conference call.
    - Allison Arbib, Verite – in person. This organization helps companies and other stakeholders fully understand labor issues, overcome obstacles, and build sustainable solutions into their supply chains, benefiting companies and workers alike.

1. **The Primary Issues:**

The primary issues that were cited in the committee’s previous recommendation to not renew our contract with Coke were the labor rights issues in Columbia and the water rights issues in India.

One panelist told us that in Columbia in the 1990’s, trade unions said that Coke was working with paramilitary organizations. In 2005-6 the paramilitary organizations were demobilized. However, it was suggested that the organizations have not disappeared, but have been reorganized and that the intimidation and violence toward laborers still persists.

A second panelist cited several incidents of intimidation and violence toward laborers in Columbia that have occurred since our previous investigation of these issues. In India, a plant was shut down in 2007 after an investigation into the depletion of groundwater and pollution. Coke was fined $48 million dollars in this incident.

It was also noted that Coke does require their bottlers / subcontractor to follow their Code. How it is evaluated is unclear.

Allison Arbib offered some suggestions as to how to evaluate a company’s level of responsibility:

1. Evaluate the company’s Code of Conduct.

* Does the company have policies about forced labor, child labor, etc.?
* Does the company promote unionization of laborers?

1. How far down the supply chain does the Code of Conduct apply?

* For example, are the bottling plants that Coke uses in different countries required to follow the Code of Conduct?
* Additionally, even if Coke is not legally responsible for the actions of bottling plants or subcontractors, are they morally or ethically responsible?
* In order to really evaluate a company’s practices, it is necessary to do “on the ground” research.

Daniel Kramer asked the panel to compare Coke’s practices with other corporations, such as Pepsi. One panelist responded that Coke has had the most law suits of the comparable organizations. Another panelist agreed, but stated that Pepsi has had legal issues in Columbia, too.

Brent Durbin asked what evidence could prove that Coke (or any company) has improved. One panelist suggested that unionization of laborers would show improvement. Another suggested that successful litigation (disproving charges brought against the company) would be evidence of improvement. A third panelist suggested that the best evidence of improvement would be a higher level of transparency within the company. For example, if a company reports all findings of an investigation, including negative findings, that would show improvement. It is also important for the company to report how it plans to address any issues, as well as underlying issues, and to follow up after the issue is resolved (like Apple did).

In general, the CCCP committee wants to know if it will make any difference if Smith chooses not to allow Coke on campus again. The general response from the panel was yes, it does make a difference. Smith would be setting an example and joining a number of other colleges that have chosen to ban Coke. Additionally, it would help prevent Coke from building their brand identity within the college-aged group.

1. **Discussion Wrap-up:**

At our next meeting, a Coke representative will address the same issues in Columbia and India that were discussed today. We will ask the representative what preventative measures have been taken to prevent future issues similar to those in Columbia and India. Furthermore, we will ask for more information about their Code of Conduct and how far down the chain it applies.

Danielle Ramdath requested that we receive information in advance from the Coke representative, which Stacie will request. Another member asked what level of scrutiny Smith gives to the other companies that we contract with. Laura Smiarowski replied that all companies have to comply with Smith’s Vendor Code of Conduct. However, Smith contracts with so many different companies that it may not be feasible to scrutinize each one beyond this compliance.

1. **Next meeting: Friday, March 9, 2012, Campus Center 103/104**