January XX, 2015

Chancellor Jimmy G. Cheek
Office of the Chancellor
University of Tennessee
527 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, TN 37996-0184

Dear Chancellor Cheek,

As the flagship university in the state of Tennessee, the University of Tennessee distinguishes itself in its commitment to higher learning, innovation, critical thinking, and global citizenry. UT, in particular, also seeks to set the highest standard for its students regarding ethics, equality, and human rights. It is within this higher learning mission and tradition, we as faculty strongly recommend that UT require all UT licensees that “sourced, produced or purchased collegiate apparel in Bangladesh as of January 1, 2013” or anytime thereafter, to sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.

Such a policy follows The Worker Rights Consortium’s recommendation for affiliated universities. Currently, twenty-four universities across the United States have adopted such a policy, including seven that rank in the top twenty-five national universities, and four from the top twenty-five public universities. Because no university in the Southeastern Conference has adopted the Accord licensee policy yet, UT would emerge as a much-needed regional leader in setting the highest standard for collegiate apparel sourcing along with joining the ranks of prestigious and distinguished universities.

On April 24, 2013 over one thousand Bangladeshi apparel workers died while working in apparel factories in Rana Plaza. As devastating as this tragedy was, the global apparel industry, and Bangladesh specifically, has a long history of workplace safety concerns. Over 500 apparel workers had lost their lives in Bangladesh in over twenty factory incidents before the Rana Plaza collapse. With the Accord on Fire and Building Safety, however, opportunity rose out of tragedy. Leading apparel industry and labor experts have called the Accord “a groundbreaking labor-management contract.” As a legally binding contract between global brands/retailers and international unions, it prioritizes worker representation and brand responsibility in its governance structure and articles. Notably, it fills common regulatory gaps found in the existing social compliance model of apparel supply chain labor monitoring.
Noteworthy items of the Accord include:

- Independent inspections for all factory suppliers, including sub-contractors;
- Signatory companies are required to provide financial assistance for factory safety renovations;
- Signatory companies must commit to long-term, stable sourcing arrangements; and
- Supplier factories must provide extensive safety training.\(^5\)

Over 150 Western brands have signed the Accord from twenty countries including over fifteen brands from the United States.

UT has already begun to show its commitment to ethical apparel sourcing with its decision to sell Alta Gracia made apparel in its VolShops in 2012. Alta Gracia is arguably the only apparel manufacturing company that pays a living wage, meets high occupational safety standards, and provides social protection guarantees to its Dominican Republic workers. However, Alta Gracia apparel is no longer being sold at VolShops.\(^6\) Adopting the policy that all licensees that source from Bangladesh sign the Accord and reinvigorating our engagement with Alta Gracia would accentuate our commitment to ethical sourcing and heighten our national reputation. It also would markedly demonstrate to our students and staff, as well as the wider community that at the University of Tennessee we take seriously our responsibility to all of our workers, whether they are directly or indirectly connected to the university, and that we hold ourselves, our students, and our partners to the highest ethical standards.

A faculty representative group would be happy to meet with you in person to discuss this in more detail.

Sincerely,

Derek Alderman  
Department Head  
Department of Geography

Kristen Block  
Associate Professor  
Department of History

Stephanie Bohon  
Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology

Toby Boulet  
Associate Professor  
Department of Mechanical, Aerospace and Biomedical Engineering

Michelle Brown  
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology

Hoan Bui
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology

Graciela Cabana
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology

Sherry Cable
Professor
Department of Sociology

Michelle Christian
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology

Stephen Collins-Elliott
Assistant Professor
Department of Classics

Ian Down
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science

Sébastien Dubreil
Associate Professor
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures

Arthur “Sandy” Echternacht
Professor
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Peter Fernandez
Associate Professor
UT Libraries

Diane Fox
Senior Lecturer
College of Architectural Design

Ernest Freeberg
Professor
Department of History
Scott Frey  
Professor  
Department of Sociology  

Stan Garner  
Department Head  
Department of English  

Paul Gellert  
Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology  

Elizabeth Gentry  
Lecturer  
Department of English  

Millie Gimmel  
Associate Professor  
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures  

Joan Grim  
Clinical Instructor  
Early Childhood Special Education  

Rosalind Hackett  
Professor  
Department of Religious Studies  

Joanne Hall  
President, Faculty Senate  
College of Nursing  

Michael Handelsman  
Distinguished Professor of Humanities  
Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures  

Ralph Harvey  
Associate Professor  
The College of Veterinary Medicine  

Jessica Hay  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Psychology
Tricia Redeker Hepner  
Associate Professor  
Department of Anthropology  

Laura L. Howes  
Professor  
Department of English  

Bob Hutton  
Lecturer  
Department of History  

Josh Inwood  
Associate Professor  
Department of Geography  

Ann Jefferson  
Lecturer  
Department of History  

Lucy Jewel  
Associate Professor  
College of Law  

Emily Johnson  
Lecturer  
Department of Religious Studies  

Nathan Kelly  
Associate Professor  
Department of Political Science  

Rebecca Klenk  
Lecturer  
Interdisciplinary Programs  

Ilona Leki  
Professor Emerita  
Department of English  

Mary McAlpin  
Professor  
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures
Jana Morgan  
Associate Professor  
Department of Political Science

Stephanie Ohnesorg  
Associate Professor  
Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures

Michael Olson  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychology

Tore Olsson  
Assistant Professor  
Department of History

De Ann Pendry  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Anthropology

Denise Phillips  
Associate Professor  
Department of History

Lois Presser  
Professor  
Department of Sociology

Brandon C. Prins  
Professor  
Department of Political Science

Rachel Radom  
UT Libraries

Dean Hill Rivkin  
Distinguished Professor of Law  
College of Law

Avigail Sachs  
Assistant Professor  
College of Architecture and Design
Jon Shefner  
Department Head  
Department of Sociology  

Chad Thomas Black  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  

Tobin Walton  
Lecturer  
Department of Sociology  

Micheline van Riemsdijk  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Geography  

Ann Viera  
UT Libraries  

Carl Wagner  
Professor  
Department of Mathematics  

Susanne E. Wright  
Associate Professor  
School of Art  

Post-doctorate and Graduate Student Support  

Adam Alsamadisi  
Department of Geography  

Janna Ruth Caspersen  
Department of Geography  

Matthew Cook  
Department of Geography  

Meagan E. Dennison  
Department of Anthropology  

Kevin Durand  
Department of Sociology
Sean Hoban
Post-doctorate
National Institute of Mathematical and Biological Synthesis

Kathryn A. Massana
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Nicholas J. Matzke
Post-doctorate
National Institute of Mathematical and Biological Synthesis

Zachary McKenney
Department of Sociology

Holly Ningard
Department of Sociology

Jeremy Smith
Department of Sociology

Jessica Welch
President, Graduate Student Senate
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Notes

1 Worker Rights Consortium, “WRC Recommendation to Affiliates on Bangladesh”
2 Specifically: Duke, Penn State, University of Washington, University of Pennsylvania, New York University, Temple, Cornell, Georgetown, Brown, Syracuse, University of Wisconsin, Columbia, Emerson, University of Michigan, Macalester College, Rutgers, American, Northwestern, University of Illinois, Washington State, George Washington, Michigan State, Grand Valley State, and Arizona State
3 Doug Miller, Last Nightshift in Savar.
4 Open letter to Professor Posner from Professor Richard Applebaum, et al.
5 Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh
6 Michelle Christian in Sociology is working with David Kent of the VolShop to bring the brand back for the re-opening of the University Center.