

Campus Living Wage and Anti-Sweat Shop Campaigns

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Students at various universities across the country are voicing their concerns over university apparel produced in sweat shops, over living wages for university employees and contractors, and for student and worker rights.

Alta Gracia Adopted at the University of Iowa

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The University of Iowa recently adopted Alta Gracia, the clothing line that supports paying living wages to its employees. Navigate to [*The Daily Iowan*](#)'s story about the students, teachers, and activists that aided in the campus-wide adoption of the apparel company for more information.

Nationwide Student Sit-Ins, More to Come

When it comes to budget cuts and policies that hurt students and campus workers, student activists are refusing to sit down ... unless it's their President's office. In the past week students at 5 major universities have staged sit-ins for student and worker rights, and this seems to be only the beginning.

For the past few years students across the country in United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) have been running campaigns against budget cuts and salary freezes that hurt students and already underpaid workers. This spring has been blowing up with an impressive show of student labor solidarity and community activism. Students in USAS launched a national "Take Back Our Economy" project and mobilized in more than 30 cities on March 2 and April 4 to take action in support of workers' rights. A week ago today, USAS activists at two universities in the Southeast simultaneously occupied their university president's offices to demand justice for workers on their campuses. At Emory University in Atlanta, students staged a 7-hour sit-in after over 100 students rallied with MLK nephew Isaac Farris Jr. and State Senator Vincent Fort, to urge President James Wagner to

terminate the school's multi-million dollar contract with food service giant Sodexo, exposed for human rights abuses globally. Using Skype, the Emory activists teleconferenced with USASers at Virginia's College of William and Mary, live from their own sit-in in President Taylor Revelly's office, where students sought resolution to a 10-year campaign by campus workers for living wages. The William and Mary group was arrested after midnight, while Emory's sit-in escalated into a sprawling "tent city" outside the administration building until Emory arrested 7 students yesterday. The next day in New Orleans, 21 students at Tulane University took over President Scott Cowen's office, singing and chanting to demand that the school kick out Sodexo and protect campus workers' rights, leaving 3 hours later after administrators threatened disciplinary charges and brought in police.



Tuesday, the action came back to Madison, where 70 students occupied the office of University of Wisconsin Chancellor Biddy Martin to protest her promotion of a privatization scheme that would lead to skyrocket tuition and outsourcing good union jobs on campus. And right now, 20 students continue their occupation overnight of the building of New Jersey's Rutgers University President Dick McCormick to stop tuition hikes, support campus workers, and drop Rutgers' deal with the Nike-dominated "Fair Labor" Association.



Students have noticed disturbing trends nationwide since the beginning of the recent 'economic crises' where universities and local governments implement cuts and policies that hurt working people and students, while corporations continue to receive record profits and universities continue to invest in new construction projects and enormous salaries for university administrators. It's time to take a stand against the corporations that are bankrupting our states and funding right-wing politicians to attack workers and students. It's time for corporations in Virginia, who have the second lowest income tax in the U.S, to start paying their fair share in this crisis. The Living Wage Campaign is part of a broader movement towards schools, workplaces, and an economy that works for us. Although we're witnessing enormous state budget cuts to education, William and Mary's budget has increased every year for the past 10 years or more. The College currently receives less than 13% of our funding from the state, and relies heavily on private donations and other sources of funding. As we move towards a school that looks more private than public, we need to start considering finding private donors and sources of money that can go towards living wages, just as we find these donations for new buildings and projects. It's time for our government and our universities to start prioritizing real people, and for students to start challenging policies and ideologies that force our workers to live in poverty and make education increasingly unaffordable.

To find out more about Living Wages and the history of the campaign, visit our website wmlivingwagecampaign.com or email livingwages.wm@gmail.com

Past Events and News

More than 300 faculty members have agreed to join in standing with the workers who make university logo apparel. On the list are faculty from more than 125 universities and colleges and from numerous academic disciplines. If you would like to join them, send your name, university affiliation, and e-mail address to the [Faculty No-Sweat Network](#).

The Faculty No-Sweat Network will be working over the coming weeks to put in place a system to provide periodic updates and alerts to Network members, to keep you informed about key developments, including:

- New reports from the Worker Rights Consortium on labor rights violations in factories making university apparel;
- New initiatives and campaigns launched by United Students Against Sweatshops;
- The performance at campus stores of Alta Gracia apparel, the ground-breaking brand

that is making university apparel in a unionized, living wage factory in the Dominican Republic;

- The progress of other key labor rights initiatives – like the outcome of collective bargaining at Russell Athletic’s re-opened factory in Honduras and the efforts by the WRC and many other groups to challenge the Bangladesh government’s persecution of leading labor rights advocates;
- And, most importantly, ways that Network members can support these crucial efforts.

Recently, these efforts have paid off on campuses around the country:

- March 6, 2011: [Audrey Coleman, “An Apparel Worth Cheering For”](#) (University of Iowa)
- September 10, 2010: [Maggie Love, “Duke Apparel Suppliers Pay Ethical Wages”](#) (Duke University)

Know of other examples of universities using no-sweat labor vendors? Let us know at lawcha@duke.edu!

Author



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