

Annual Meeting of the WRC University Caucus

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown

Lincoln Room; 2nd Floor

350 West Maryland Street, Indianapolis, IN, 46225

Thursday, May 9, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions*Kyle Muncy, University of Connecticut, Treasurer of the WRC Board of Directors**Scott Nova, WRC Executive Director*

9:30 a.m.

Powerful Partnerships: How Universities and the WRC Recover Millions in Wages Stolen from Workers

This session, which is open to schools not yet affiliated with the WRC as well as to WRC affiliates, will spotlight the most recent success in the WRC's efforts to secure back pay for workers producing university apparel—money that they legally earned but had never been paid. Executive Director Scott Nova, WRC staff, and Kyle Muncy will discuss how WRC staff and university licensing directors worked to ensure that the workers at Style Avenue (El Salvador) receive US\$1.8 million owed to them.

WRC staff and board members will combine a deep dive into this pivotal case with a discussion of the broader context of wage theft in the global apparel supply chain and the impact of the WRC's work. They will also answer questions about how licensees and the WRC work together to address violations of universities' codes of conduct.

Presentation by Executive Director Scott Nova, General Counsel and Deputy Director for Policy and Research Benjamin Hensler, Director for the Americas Tara Mathur, Director of International Advocacy Thulsi Narayanasamy, and WRC board member Kyle Muncy, followed by questions and discussion

11:00 a.m.

Morning Break

11:15 a.m.

The Year in Review: 2023–2024

We will review the WRC’s work over the last year across the apparel supply chain, including an in-depth look at several key investigations at collegiate factories in Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. We will also provide an update on combating forced labor in the garment industry, a look at the growing impact of climate change on worker safety, and a review of organizational developments.

*Presentations by Scott Nova, Deputy Director for Field Operations and Strategy
Jessica Champagne, Deputy Director for Investigations and Gender Equity Rola
Abimourched, and other WRC staff, followed by questions and discussion*

12:30 p.m.

Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Saving Lives in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Beyond: The Future of the International Safety Accord

Universities have brought dozens of licensees into the International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry, with most universities now requiring that all production of collegiate apparel in Pakistan and Bangladesh be done under the Accord’s umbrella of protection. We will update on the Accord’s work to eliminate lethal hazards in Pakistan’s garment sector and plans for expansion to new countries.

Presentation by Scott Nova and Thulsi Narayanasamy, followed by questions and discussion

2:15 p.m.

Open Discussion

Participants will have the opportunity to raise additional topics, projects, or cases of interest and/or to engage in further discussion of items on the agenda. Board members and staff will initiate the conversation by sharing their insights into some commonly asked questions and challenges.

Facilitated by Jessica Champagne

3:00 p.m.

Break

3:15 p.m.

When There's No One Else to Call: Addressing Rights Violations Where Worker Voices Are Silenced

In many countries where apparel is produced, workers and communities are facing increasing crackdowns on the right to speak out and even, in some cases, outright collapse in the rule of law, undermining workers' ability to protect their own rights and the ability of local civil society to support them. This simultaneously increases both the importance and the difficulty of the WRC's work, requiring us to adapt to new realities and find ways to remedy violations of university labor standards regardless of the circumstances. WRC staff will illustrate how the WRC gets this done in places like Haiti and Bangladesh.

Presentation by Thulsi Narayanasamy and Tara Mathur, followed by questions and discussion

4:15 p.m.

Concluding Remarks

4:30 p.m.

Adjourn