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WRC

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companies that can prove they can do the job and aren't doing anything illegal. All other factors that could include the condition of the company's factories can no longer be a factor for a university to choose a business partner.

The University is the only institution in the OUS that is a member of the WRC.

University General Counsel Melinda Grier said she has been reviewing the policy since the middle of last week, and while she said she will not totally understand its impact until the end of the week, she did confirm it essentially means the University can not be a member of the WRC.

"I don't see how we can join [the WRC] and comply with the board's policy," she said.

She added the University's code of conduct may also be in conflict with the new guidelines.

Despite the policy's dramatic effect on the labor issue, Grier said she has heard the decision was not prompted by the WRC dispute. She said the policy is the board's attempt to keep state schools from using their political weight as leverage in business deals, which she said is in conflict with the public nature of universities.

"As public entities, [universities] should be impartial," she said.

OUS board member and University student Tim Young said he was the lone dissenting vote on the policy,

and expressed his frustration at the way the board handled the issue.

"It was such a broad issue, the way that it was treated ... it was a little misleading," he said.

Young said the board should have offered more opportunities for students and other university members to join in on the debate over the policy, rather than simply making the decision at the meeting.

OUS Chancellor Joe Cox could not be reached for comment on the policy.

Young said the decision was in direct response to the WRC issue and is a means for the OUS to avoid having to make a decision on the labor issue.

"It's a way for the OUS to not answer the question," he said.

Young said he was also against the policy because it denies universities the chance to use their influence in political causes. He said issues will continually arise where universities can provide a strong voice, and now that voice has been muzzled.

"It's unfortunate that we can't be in that capacity," he said.

The University has been involved with the WRC since last April when student protests helped prompt the University to join the group. The University joined the FLA at the beginning of this academic year.

While the University is a member of both groups, a faculty committee has been studying the issues associated with labor monitoring, which has remained a key campus issue

even though some of the activist fervor of last year has abated.

Part of the reason why the University's involvement in the WRC has been so controversial is because one of the University's largest donors, Nike co-founder Phil Knight, severed all his ties with the University because it joined the WRC.

That action left many supporters convinced that the University would never make it through the first year of its membership in the WRC.

Associate professor and director of the Honors College David Frank has been leading the committee studying the issues surrounding labor monitoring and said he is not sure what the committee will do in light of the board's new policy.

"I am still thinking about what the committee ought to do," he said. "The next question should be, what should the University do?"

He said the response to the policy has been mixed among faculty members, some were pleased by the decision and others frustrated. Some faculty members were "quite concerned" about what the policy may mean for the University's code of conduct, he said.

Even though the decision has ended the labor debate, Frank said he was not discouraged by the policy. He said the decision changed the issue from simply involving the University and the WRC to something all the state's universities could have a voice in.

"I think it moves it to a different plane, the state board plane," he said.

Reaction

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and Vice President Holly Magner, took positions in student government after the protest, trying to fight for the WRC on a different scale.

Breslow and Magner could not be reached for comment.

But as University members and lawyers decipher whether this rule marks the true end for labor monitoring groups such as the WRC and FLA on campus, next year's ASUO Executive will have to deal with the workers' rights issues.

Executive candidates Bret Jacobson and Matt Cook, who are running on a platform of removing the

University's ties with the WRC, said the board's decision is a step in the right direction.

But, if elected, Jacobson said he will continue the work to mend relations between the University and the alumni, which were hurt when Nike CEO and alumnus Phil Knight angrily pulled his personal donations to the school. In wake of the decision to join the WRC.

"We feel completely vindicated by the decision," Jacobson said. "This is one more symbolic message."

But candidate Nilda Brooklyn disagreed and said the University must enlist the help of labor monitoring groups. As a member of

Breslow's executive staff this year, Brooklyn has worked on the issue and Breslow's adamant stance of remaining in the WRC.

She said that, if elected, her administration would examine the University's original code of conduct and see how it could be altered to include the involvement of groups like the WRC.

Sullivan added that he's not sure how the student activist community will react to the news, but he hopes it will be stronger than the mild student response after previous decisions.

"I hope it will cause some uproar," he said. "This should make people very angry."

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