

BRINGING THE WORLD TO UINDY THROUGH FAIR TRADE

By

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Abstract

Fair trade is a practice that encourages socially and environmentally ethical business practices, and ensures an affordable livelihood for small scale artisans. Global Gifts, a fair trade organization, is attempting to enter into a business partnership with Follett bookstores to bring fair trade products to university campuses. This project was an attempt to explore and establish this partnership through research into fair trade and the two organizations. This initiative was also tested through a sale of Global Gifts fair trade products at a representative university campus. The sale was not only useful as a gauge of interest in fair trade products as an option on campus, but also as a platform to inform the university community about fair trade and Global Gifts. This paper will explain the methods and purposes of the project, as well as examine the effectiveness of fair trade efforts.

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to find outlets that provide fair and livable wages for artisans around the world. After identifying fair trade as the means by which to support the skills of these artisans, I selected the Global Gifts fair trade organization as my local contact to assist the work of the global community. After partnering with this organization, I developed the project into an effort to help the Global Gifts fair trade organization to expand their global influence by gaining a permanent presence on college and university campuses, specifically through partnership with Follett campus bookstores. This goal included an introductory sale of fair trade products on the University of Indianapolis campus, as well as the education of students, faculty, and staff about Global Gifts and the benefits of fair trade.

Introduction

Fair trade is a movement to improve market equality and working conditions around the world, but is it always an effective means to that end? This paper will examine the stated purpose of fair trade, note its criticisms, and further defend fair trade's overall capacity to improve producers' benefits.

Poverty continues to be a very real problem in our world today, and one major factor is wage inequality. In some areas of the globe, workers are not paid a fair wage for what they produce. The profit from the business stays in the hands of the middlemen while the workers may not even get enough to sustain themselves. Fair trade is one means to fight against wage inequality and poverty, by ensuring that the workers are paid fairly for the products they create. Through fair trade, this project aimed to support the Global Gifts fair trade organization in its efforts to reduce poverty and wage inequality worldwide.

This paper will examine the process by which I conducted my case study of fair trade. After examining the topic of fair trade in more depth, the interest of the community was gauged both through education and through a sale of fair trade products. I concluded with a suggestion to pursue a partnership between the Follett corporation of campus bookstores and Global Gifts, as a means by which to bring fair trade products to college campuses.

What is fair trade?

While many people have heard the term “fair trade” before and will generally support the idea that fair trade is beneficial, many of them have either an incorrect or an undeveloped understanding of what the phrase “fair trade” actually refers to (Brown, p. 36). Fair trade is not just the sale of some sort of crafty, decorative bauble that was made in a foreign country. It is a method by which we attempt to "establish some form of global market justice" (Walton “What is Fair Trade”, p. 433). It is the process of taking locally made products out of the community they were made in, and bringing them to foreign communities like Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, where they can be sold to a wider audience.

Fair trade is not simply a matter of trading with the poor of foreign countries (Nicholls and Opal, p. 17). Fair trade is about supporting and building the sustainability of a business (Nicholls and Opal, p. 4). Many people can confuse it with "free trade," which is trade without the presence of taxes and tariffs (Nicholls and Opal, p. 17). However, free trade can lead to poverty and lower wages because of international competition, as well as abuse of environmental resources (Bhagwati, p. 50).

Fair trade, by contrast, is a system of international trade that requires businesses to provide their workers with livable wages and to protect the environment ("What is Fair Trade?"). In order to be certified as "fair trade" an organization must prove that its practices are ethical, both socially and environmentally (Reynolds, p.494). This means that it must obey child labor regulations, maintain a safe workplace, be environmentally sustainable, and provide fair wages to workers ("Global Gifts"). These regulations set

fair trade apart from free trade by setting a standard for a more ethical, sustainable business.

Global Gifts

Global Gifts is one of these fair trade organizations. It was founded in the early 1980s to bring fair trade products to Indiana and Ohio, with the mission to support "fair wages, gender equity and safe and dignified working conditions" ("Global Gifts"). Global Gifts focuses not only on improving the lives of the artisans that make the products they sell, but also on improving the lives of the people they sell the products to, by creating informed and socially conscious consumers. Global Gifts sells fair trade items that come from over forty different countries around the world, such as Ghana, Mozambique, India, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and many more ("Global Gifts"). It provides a variety of products from these countries, from jewelry and home decor to clothing and kitchen utensils. Each of these pieces reflect the culture of the person who created them.

Why fair trade?

It is important not only to understand what fair trade is, but also who it benefits. Your mind may flash quickly to a group of poor women sitting in the hot Haitian sun as they thread handmade beads together, or of a large field of coffee trees, with dozens of workers filling wicker baskets with coffee berries. While buying fair trade products will indeed benefit the workers that are creating these products, fair trade goods are produced all over the world in many different settings. The fair trade seal is

not restricted to starving villages that have never known Western civilization. Fair trade is simply a means to ensure that workers are paid livable wages and have a safe, ethical environment in which to work (Dragusanu, Giovannucci, and Nunn, p. 221). While free trade is simply a lack of restrictions and taxes on international trade, fair trade focuses on making sure that international trade, whether free or not, does not exploit the workers nor the environment (Irwin, p. 2).

Fair trade has many beneficial effects on producers. Fair trade organizations, as previously highlighted, benefit producers by providing them with a higher than average income when contrasted with comparable non-fair trade operations (Baumann, Oschinski, and Stähler, pg. 170). This encourages poverty reduction, not just in the sense that workers are provided a livable and sustainable income, but also because it provides an outlet for consumers who may not be otherwise inclined to contribute to poverty reduction efforts (Walton “Consequentialism,” pg. 136). One study also showed a correlation between fair trade organizations and both productivity and efficiency, particularly efficiency in terms of land usage (Arnould, Plastina, and Ball, pg. 191). This could be due to the assurance of a sustainable wage, which encourages producers to make better long term use of their land.

Fair Trade has also been shown to affect education. Fair trade organizations regulate child labor, and studies have shown that this positively impacts the probability of a child studying or being enrolled in school (Arnould et al, pg. 198). Fair trade positively impacts educational achievement, which is often used as an indicator for an individual’s, family’s, or population’s quality of life.

Buying fair trade products has a positive impact on producers, but it benefits society on a much larger scale than on a worker-to-worker basis. If this were the case, the practice of fair trade would have been short-lived. Fair trade impacts the consumers, who are given the opportunity to become more globally minded. Consumers are able to buy quality products and know that they are not destroying the environment or supporting unethical work environments. They may even learn about the country the product comes from in the process, enabling consumers to become more informed and connected to the world around them.

Fair trade additionally benefits the companies that stock these products on their shelves--companies like Global Gifts. Not only do these organizations gain a profit from the sales, but they also create an image for themselves that attracts different types of consumers (Harford, p. 36; Tesler, p. 87). By providing fair trade products, a business can attract more socially conscious consumers that may not have been interested in the business before (Harford, p. 36). This increases the variety of products available for a store to offer, which can attract people because of the added diversity of merchandise.

Criticisms of Fair Trade

Fair trade is not a perfect system. Some fair trade operations have the potential to negatively affect producers, particularly in poor or developing areas. Even the regulation itself can have a negative impact. More intensive and standardized regulation means that fewer businesses can meet the criteria, and are therefore unable to become fair trade partners (MacAskill, pg. 133; Renard, pg. 424). Despite the standardization, many

certifications still differ somewhat in their principles and criteria. One example of this is stressing 'better' wages rather than 'livable' wages (Dekhili and Achabou, pg. 548).

Similarly, despite the increased price for fair trade products, many fair trade organizations involve middlemen in the sales process (MacAskill, pg. 134). This means that the consumer is paying more for a product, but that profit margin does not equate cent for cent in an increase in wages for the workers. Much of the profit stays in upper management or in the pockets of the middlemen.

Some researchers consider that one of the ideals of fair trade are unethical for low-income or developing areas. Fair trade regulates wage compensation and working conditions, and excludes sweatshops from earning fair trade certification. As such, many supporters of fair trade boycott sweatshops to improve the lives of the workers (Renard, pg. 91). The consideration that consumers should boycott sweatshops, and that this is in turn good for the workers, is not necessarily correct (MacAskill, pg. 130). Shutting down a sweatshop leaves its workers without jobs or any source of income, and they are often forced to seek more intensive manual labor to sustain themselves. While the conditions of sweatshops are not enviable and can be dangerous, some researchers believe that even this work is better than the options workers are forced into when a sweatshop is closed.

In some cases, the purpose of fair trade fails because the consumers are simply not willing to pay extra for the fair trade version of the product (De Pelsmacker, Driesen, and Rayp, pg. 364). Different populations and differences in demographics have different opinions of whether the fair trade certification is worth the extra money. They furthermore have differing views of the degree to which they are willing to pay extra for

a fair trade product. A person may be generally willing to pay extra for a fair trade product, but if the price margin reaches too high, they will no longer be willing to pay the extra money for the product.

Global Gifts, by contrast, has attempted to address several of these concerns. It focuses on providing not just 'better' but 'livable' wages to workers from a variety of geographic and demographic areas (Sam Carpenter). It also purchases products from a number of different organizations, including wholesale options that cut out the middlemen entirely ("Global Gifts"). By focusing on addressing these issues, Global Gifts is attempting to improve the "fairness" of fair trade.

As this project is focused on bringing fair trade to university campuses through entering into a partnership with Follett campus bookstores, it is also important from a business standpoint to consider the profitability of bringing in new fair trade products. Follett is the largest group of university campus bookstores in North America, with over 1,200 bookstores across the continent ("Campus Stores"). As a successful business, Follett has high standards in choosing its business partners, and so it must consider the profitability of partnering with Global Gifts, which is itself a non-profit organization. While attracting customers is all well and good, if there is not enough demand for the new products to create a profit for the business, then there is no point in the business offering those products. There is evidence to show that consumers give preference to fair trade products, and are willing to pay a small percentage more for a product if it is fair trade as opposed to the same, cheaper product that is not fair trade

(Hainmueller, Hiscox, and Sequeira, p. 243). This shows that consumers are conscious of the benefits of fair trade, and that their shopping habits are influenced accordingly.

To be considered a "fair trade" product, there are certain regulations put on the development process that in turn affect the sale of these products. For instance, products have a minimum fee charged to buyers (Dragusanu et al, p. 219). This fee ensures not only that the production cost is met, but also provides a livable wage for workers. Additionally, buyers enter into long-term contracts with the producers, which provides a dependable income and security for the workers (Dragusanu et al, p. 220). This may also include advance financing to cover the initial production costs.

Many of the products found on the shelves of a Global Gifts store were bought from secondary fair trade partners around the world ("Global Gifts"). These products would not prove economical for consumers if sold to Follett, as there would be too many "middle men" to keep the price low enough to tempt buyers. However, Global Gifts has recently entered into a wholesale agreement with Imani Workshops in Kenya ("Global Gifts"). Imani Workshops offers work and income to HIV-positive Kenyans. Due to the unique relationship that Global Gifts has with Imani, these products would be the best candidates for sale in partnership with Follett. The products could be sold by Global Gifts to Follett at a much lower rate, allowing the bookstores to stock their shelves with reasonably priced items that they can still make a decent profit from.

While fair trade is not a perfect system, it still has many benefits for both producers and consumers. Not only does it provide financial security and improved working environments for producers, but it also raises a profit for partnering

organizations and helps them attract a specific class of consumer. Additionally, it impacts the consumers themselves by educating them about global cultures and helping them become more aware of the world around them.

Method/Procedure

This section will describe the procedure I followed to complete the goals of the project. Working within the field of International Relations, I followed the Action Research model, also known as the Community-Based Participatory Action Research approach (Koshy, Koshy, and Waterman, pg. 1). Action Research focuses on both increasing the researcher's understanding of the topic and on affecting some part of society through collaboration between the researcher and a community actor—in this case, the Global Gifts fair trade organization (Sagor, pg. 4; Troppe, pg. 2). The structure of this research methodology is illustrated in Figure 1 (“Action Research”).

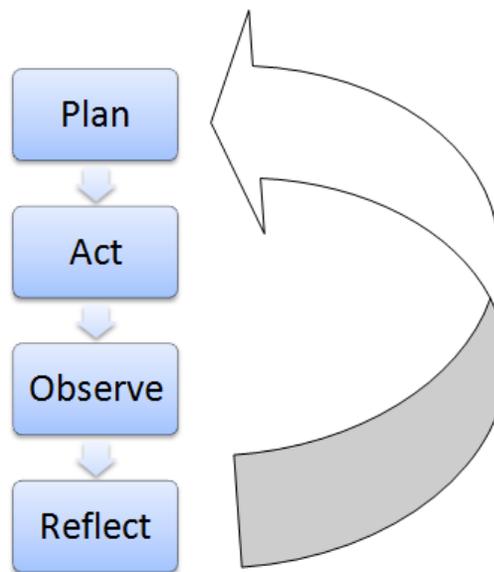


Figure 1. Depiction of the Community-Based Participatory Action Research Method

A key part of this project's development was done in collaboration with Global Gifts. The project evolved in consultation with Global Gifts as I learned more about the organization's efforts and goals. Using this methodology, the project's goal and structure remained fluid and changed as I deepened my understanding of the concept of fair trade and the challenges faced by such organizations. At each stage of my project I observed, consulted, and reflected, which allowed me to take different actions than my original plan, and in turn led me to learn different specifics that affected my final project. The initial plan focused on the sale and educating the campus community about fair trade, but as I worked with Global Gifts I learned of the desired presence in campus bookstores. After reflecting on that information, I modified my plan to include that extra facet.

My initial interest for the project was to work with a small women's group in Haiti, and as I learned more about their efforts, I understood more about fair trade and how I could affect change in society. When it became clear that I would be unable to partner with the Haitian group due to management struggles, I sought out a different fair trade organization to work with. This is when I began learning more specifically about Global Gifts. As I approached Global Gifts about a possible project to sell their products in a single, temporary sale at the University of Indianapolis, I then learned of the organization's desire to partner with Follett bookstores and to bring fair trade products to college campuses. With this I was able to develop my plan of action for a project that would positively benefit my community and communities around the globe, by not only incorporating the sale and community education, but also the goal of connecting Global Gifts and Follett in a long-term partnership.

The first part of this project involved coordinating a sale of fair trade products with Global Gifts. Global Gifts provided the merchandise for sale and set the prices. The sale was held from Monday, February 6, 2017 through Friday, February 10, 2017. The sale lasted each day from 11:00am to 1:00pm in the Atrium of the University of Indianapolis's Schwitzer Student Center.

The second part of the project focused on education. At the time of the sale, there was an informational poster and Global Gifts' promotional pamphlets available at the sale booth for students, staff, and members of the community who wanted to learn more. The information provided on the poster and pamphlets included information about where the products were coming from, fair trade, and Global Gifts. I was present at all times during the sale to explain in detail the benefits of fair trade. The information that I shared during the sale focused on the mission of Global Gifts, fair trade, and information about the communities where these products were created.

Along with this information about fair trade, I gauged the support of the campus community for the presence of a Global Gifts fair trade sales stall in the Follett campus bookstore. Along with providing information about this goal, I provided a petition for interested parties to sign to show their support for bringing Global Gifts to college campuses. The final signature list can be found in Appendix A.

The third part of this project is the development of a letter of advocacy to the administration of the Follett corporation. After the sale, I included details of my research and of the sale's success a letter to the Follett corporation that oversees many campus bookstores. This letter is an appeal to them to consider adding Global Gifts as a partner

organization, as they have done with other companies and organizations such as Vera Bradley. The cover letter can be found in Appendix B.

I will continue to work in collaboration with Global Gifts as an advocate for their presence on college and university campuses either until Follett agrees to a partnership or until Global Gifts no longer wishes to pursue the partnership.

Results

The result of the sale for Global Gifts at the University of Indianapolis during the week of February 6, 2017, was a total of \$981. This total accounts for the sale of 105 products.

This was the first Global Gifts week-long sale at a secondary location, and therefore no additional data is available to compare the results of this sale to previous similar sales.

The result of educating the campus community about Global Gifts and fair trade was a petition providing evidence of the community's support of fair trade products being sold in the campus bookstore. During the one-week period, signatures were collected from seventy-three people in support of the proposed partnership between Global Gifts and Follett (see Appendix A). The signatures are a positive representation of support because everyone who signed the petition was first educated about fair trade, Global Gifts, and the proposed partnership.

This petition also serves as a measure of how many people in the campus community this project affected in terms of education. A total of seventy-three people, including students, faculty, and staff members of the University of Indianapolis, signed the petition after discussing the details of fair trade with me. Therefore, my objective of educating the campus community and helping them deepen their understanding of fair trade was met in my discussions with these seventy-three people.

Analysis/Conclusion

During the week-long sale of fair trade products, Global Gifts generated a substantial amount of interest for fair trade within the University of Indianapolis campus community. Customers left the sale table more informed than when they arrived, not only with a deeper understanding of the mission of fair trade, but with the ability to make more informed decisions in their buying habits and an interest to see more of what fair trade has to offer. I used the sale to meet my objective of educating the campus community because my presence at the sale put me in the middle of one of the busiest areas on campus, at one of the busiest times during the day. The contents of the sale also drew attention to me and enabled me to initiate conversation. In this manner, I was able to discuss fair trade with people I would not otherwise have contact with.

I was also able to discuss with the community how this partnership would benefit them directly. Having Global Gifts products in the university bookstore would provide variety to the products already available to purchase on campus. For students, this would mean that they no longer have to leave campus to find a last-minute gift for a friend or family member. It could also give students and faculty the opportunity to dress up their dorm rooms or offices, as well as find interesting accessories that are not only unique but also come with a story and purpose. More importantly, having a fair trade option on campus will give the campus community an opportunity to make socially and environmentally conscious shopping choices without leaving the university.

The University of Indianapolis functioned as the audience for my educational efforts because of my studies at this university, as well as its proximity to the Global

Gifts administrative office. I was personally invested in the community prior to my project, and was interested in furthering the campus's discussion of fair trade. This decision met Global Gifts' business interests of reaching college campuses, as the University of Indianapolis can function as an initial test of interest before developing a business partnership on additional campuses (Julie Edwards).

However, as with any study, there were faults in the method used to gauge the campus community's support of a Global Gifts/Follett partnership. The first fault is assuming that every person who visited the sale during the period would be as likely to stop at the campus bookstore and look at merchandise in a less open setting. The one-week sale was hosted at an open table in a high-traffic area. This could skew the data by not being an appropriate representation of the business Follett would get for the same products. The sale was advertised briefly, and therefore may have attracted customers that would not have otherwise been interested in buying these goods.

Similarly, the results of this sale cannot be used as a representation of the profit Follett would make off the same products in a single week. While this sale only lasted a week, the sense of urgency to buy appealed to customers, as the products would not be available in the same area later. Follett is available continuously, and therefore would not invoke the urgency of the week-long sale. People are likely to purchase an item once during a week-long sale, while they are not as likely to purchase something from a store one week and return to the store to buy something again the next week.

The number of signatures may also have flaws in its ability to represent true support, as some people may have signed without fully supporting what they were

signing. There was also a lack of signatures of other people on campus who were unable to come to support the sale during that week but are still in favor of the partnership.

The project, however, still had merit. While the sale was held in an open area rather than within the Follett bookstore for legal reasons, it was located just outside the store's entrance. In this way, the customers at the sale were most likely members of the campus community that have occasion to walk past the bookstore at least once a week, making it a more accurate representation of the Follett store's potential clients.

This sale shows that the campus community is in support of having visible fair trade products for sale at the University of Indianapolis. A partnership between Global Gifts and Follett would be profitable to both organizations for many reasons. Global Gifts would generate a wider market for their products, and Follett would not only share in those profits, but would also attract different customers. Having a fair trade option in campus bookstores will attract socially conscious consumers that may have otherwise ignored Follett, and would remind customers that the campus bookstores sell more products than just university apparel and textbooks. Both companies would gain not only profit, but exposure from the partnership.

A partnership between Global Gifts and Follett is the end design of this project, but the work is ongoing. Fostering this type of relationship between two businesses is a continuing project in advocacy, and takes time beyond the scope of this specific project. Work will continue in support of a partnership between these two companies until both sides come to an agreement about any collaboration.

The purpose of this ongoing project continues to be to affect global change by decreasing wage inequality and worldwide poverty. The proposed partnership is only the goal in so much as it brings more awareness to fair trade and gives more income back to the artisans creating the products on the shelves. My project is small in the grand scheme of fair trade, but it nonetheless has addressed the issues of poverty and wage inequality, and contributed support and awareness to fair trade and the workers behind the products.

Reflection

The partnership between Global Gifts and Follett is meant to make a difference for communities across the world by bringing their products to a wider population, through college and university campuses. Global Gifts is already making a difference by buying products made in other countries and bringing them to Indiana and Ohio where there is a wider market. This helps give the workers a livable wage to support themselves and their families by making the business more sustainable.

Fair trade is not just about poor versus rich, but is about ensuring that workers get a livable wage for their labor. This project has brought an opportunity to the campus community, to help make a difference on a global scale and become more socially conscious members of the global community.

This project was designed to bring information and understanding of fair trade to my campus community. In turn, it helped me realize that I held a similar stigma to the one I was trying to defeat in others. Fair trade certification does not signify that the producers are poor and in need of charity, but rather that the producers are being held to a high social and environmental standard (Dragusanu et al, p. 221). Through this project, I was able to correct my own idea of what fair trade is and develop a fuller comprehension of what my work was doing.

The project was initially centered on working with a missionary couple in Haiti, who work with the Mountain Maid organization to help Haitian women develop an income for themselves. I wanted to bring awareness to this effort, in part by bringing their products to the University of Indianapolis and sending the proceeds of the sale back

to Haiti. While management issues within the organization prevented me from continuing on that goal, it did introduce me to the concept of fair trade. Fair trade became the means by which I could encourage socially conscious trade, and led me to my partnership with the Global Gifts fair trade organization.

I was able to modify my goal and focus on educating my community about the benefits of fair trade for society as a whole. While understanding continues to develop, including my own understanding, I have taken one step towards developing a socially and environmentally conscious community.

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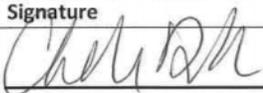
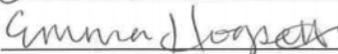
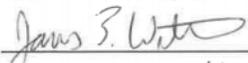
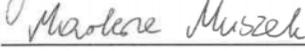
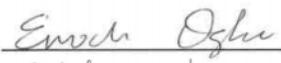
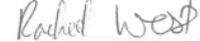
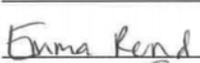
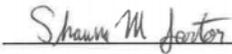
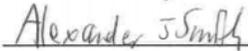
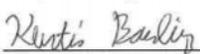
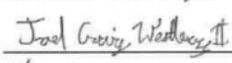
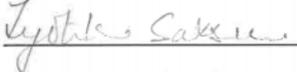
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"What Is Fair Trade?" *Fair Trade USA* (2016) <http://fairtradeusa.org/what-is-fair-trade>

Appendix A: Partnership Petition

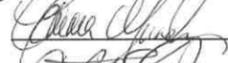
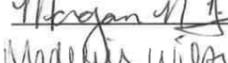
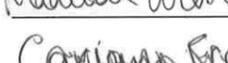
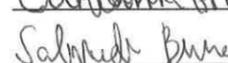
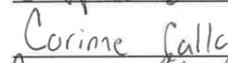
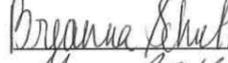
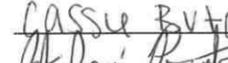
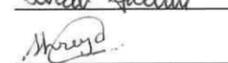
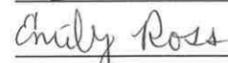
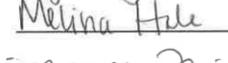
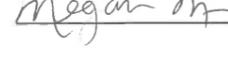
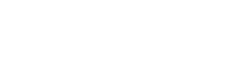
GLOBAL GIFTS IN CAMPUS BOOKSTORES

We, the undersigned, promote the aim of Global Gifts to enter into a contracted agreement with Follett campus bookstores, acknowledging Fair Trade to be an important purchasing option that we will support and consider if Global Gifts is brought into the University of Indianapolis Bookstore.

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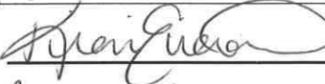
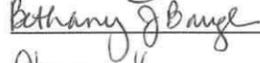
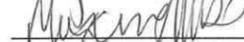
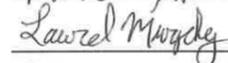
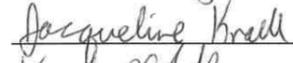
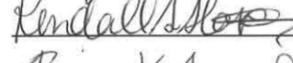
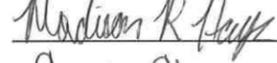
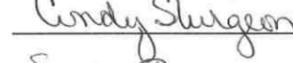
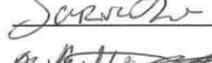
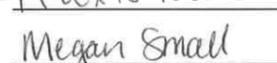
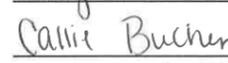
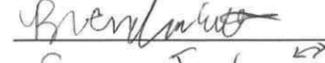
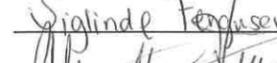
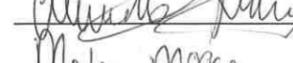
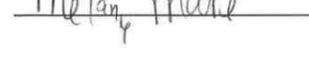
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	Melanie Moore	mamoore@windy.edu	

Appendix B: Letter of Advocacy to Follett

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Global Gifts fair trade organization. Global Gifts is interested in pursuing a partnership with Follett, to supply more fair trade options to university campuses. Global Gifts has conducted sales on university campuses in the past, which have all been highly successful and profitable. At a recent sale at the University of Indianapolis, students, faculty, and other members of the campus community were asked if they would support a fair trade option in the campus bookstore. The full results of the sale, along with a petition showing the community's support of the partnership, can be found in the accompanying report.

Fair trade is focused on encouraging socially and environmentally conscious business practices and consumer decisions. Fair trade requires fair wages for workers, safe and ethical working environments, and environmental sustainability, and studies have shown that consumers are very supportive of these ideals. These studies show that consumers, when given the choice between a more expensive fair trade product and a similar product that is slightly less expensive but not fair trade, the shopper will spend the extra money for the item that is produced in an ethical environment.

A partnership between Global Gifts and Follett would increase publicity for both organizations, and would attract more socially conscious customers to Follett. It would also increase the variety of products available in Follett bookstores, giving students and faculty more reason to visit the campus store. Students could conveniently buy last minute gifts that look personal and unique, and include an intriguing story.

The administration at Global Gifts is interested in discussing this in further detail with you at your earliest convenience. You will find contact information included at the end of this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration for Global Gifts and fair trade. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sam Carpenter
Executive Director
Global Gifts
317-917-1836 (phone & fax)
<http://www.globalgiftsFT.com>
<http://www.globalgiftsft.com/collections/the-imani-collection>