



University of Houston  
Division of Administration and Finance  
University Services

## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maria Honey  
Auxiliary Customer Service Coordinator  
713-743-8940  
[mhoney@central.uh.edu](mailto:mhoney@central.uh.edu)

### **SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE APPAREL UPDATE**

Houston, June 3, 2009 – This fall the UH Bookstore, the campus' exclusive textbook provider, will offer a new line of clothing that takes social responsibility to a new and inspired level. UH officials announced today that the UH Bookstore will sell Knights Apparel's *Above & Beyond* brand of clothing in the Cougar Spirit apparel department. UH is one of approximately 350 Barnes & Noble college bookstores nationwide that will carry the product.

Knights Apparel will manufacture *Above & Beyond* collegiate apparel in overseas factories committed to meeting a higher standard of employment for their workers. Every factory employee will receive benefits and a living wage sufficient to cover the monthly costs for a family of four as determined by the Fair Labor Association and the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC).

In a memo to members of the WRC, director Scott Nova wrote, "For a major retailer like Barnes & Noble to lend its enthusiastic support to this initiative is very heartening and we commend the company's leadership." The WRC is an independent labor rights monitoring organization focused on protecting the rights of workers who produce apparel and other products sold in the United States bearing college or university logos. The University of Houston is an affiliate campus of the WRC.



According to the WRC, a factory in the Dominican Republic will manufacture the garments with verification of labor rights compliance by the WRC. According to Mr. Nova, this is the first time an apparel product that is widely available in the US will be manufactured in the developing world by workers earning a living wage.

UH Bookstore manager, Felix Robinson said Barnes & Noble has been involved in building the program for some time. Later this year, when *Above & Beyond* product arrives on campus, the UH community can expect to see a major marketing initiative supporting this effort with in-store signage and website exposure.

By associating with the WRC, the UH Bookstore commits to doing business with manufacturers that prohibit forced overtime, child labor, bonded labor, and discrimination, and that support workers' rights to a living wage, safe work environment, freedom of association, and collective bargaining.

“Participating in the new and exciting initiative with the WRC goes hand in hand with the university’s mission of sustainability,” said Emily Messa, assistant vice president for university services. “This is one of the reasons we rely on great partnerships with our corporate partners, like Barnes& Noble. They help the university to continually raise the sustainability bar for our campus.”

Messa also points out that selling socially responsible merchandise on the university campus is one of the benchmarks of the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS). The STARS program is a tool created by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for colleges and universities to use in tracking their progression on sustainability initiatives using objective criteria. The University of Houston is a member of AASHE.

For more information on the university’s sustainability efforts, please visit <http://www.uh.edu/green>.

---

### About the University of Houston

The University of Houston, Texas’ premier metropolitan research and teaching institution, is home to more than 40 research centers and institutes and sponsors more than 300 partnerships with corporate, civic and governmental entities. UH, the most diverse research university in the country stands at the forefront of education, research and service with more than 35,000 students.

### About Barnes & Noble College Booksellers

Based out of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, Barnes & Noble College Booksellers is a privately held sister company to Barnes & Noble, Inc., the nation’s largest bookseller. Currently they operate almost 700 college bookstores across the United States. In 1998, Barnes & Noble adopted - and required all vendors who supply products to their stores to adopt - the Fair Labor Association’s (FLA) ([www.fairlabor.org](http://www.fairlabor.org)) Code of Conduct that requires strict adherence to workers’ rights. Barnes & Noble continues to be recognized as a leader in the effort to eliminate sweatshops used to produce collegiate apparel.