

JANUARY 22, 2008 MINUTES

At a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing, held on Tuesday, January 22, 2008, in the Burden Room, 206 Low Library, the following members participated:

Geoffrey Heal, Faculty (Chair)	Shearwood McClelland, Alumnus
Mary Ellen Bianco, Alumna	Jack McGourty, Faculty
Anna Couturier, Student	Shahid Naeem, Faculty
Burton Edelstein, Faculty	Anne Sullivan, Administrator
Alex Feerst, Student	Caroline Yao, Student
Richard Levine, Alumnus	

The following members sent an explanation of their absence:

Peggy Kauh, Alumna	Sidney Small, Student
--------------------	-----------------------

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and introduced Shahid Naeem of Columbia University's Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolutionary Biology and member of the Committee.	Call to Order and Introduction of Guest Speaker
--	---

Shahid Naeem addressed the Committee on issues of genetically modified organisms as they relate to the proxy work the Committee undertakes in the Spring. As a scientist, Shahid started with the biology of GMO's. He then took the Committee through the history and the uses of GMO's, as well as the ethical and social dilemmas faced as a result of their existence.	Presentation by Guest Speaker
--	-------------------------------

The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting on December 11, 2007.	Approval of Minutes
---	---------------------

Further discussion was had regarding a conference on responsible investment. A tentative date in April was set. A list of possible attendees was discussed, as well as a proposed invitation and agenda. The proposed list of attendees will be expanded beyond the initial list of geographically-focused list of schools with committees to include more far reaching schools, as well as schools considering creating committees. Some edits to the invitation were proposed and will be made before it is sent out. The agenda remains tentative and will be discussed further. Other logistical issues were also raised and will be addressed in a follow-up meeting with student organizers from the Human	Conference
--	------------

Rights Clinic.

The Dow Chemical subgroup presented its recommendation on how to proceed with a letter to management regarding Dow's responsibility to the people of Bhopal, India in the aftermath of a 1984 gas leak from a plant owned by Union Carbide. In 2001, Dow purchased Union Carbide, making the company liable for any ongoing action taken against Union Carbide relating to this incident and responsible for any attempts at remedying the situation. In 1989, Union Carbide settled a civil case in the Indian courts, which the Indian government later upheld as just and fair. This equated to a less than \$600 payout to individuals affected by the incident. Dow claims that it has no ongoing legal responsibilities. Still, the people of Bhopal continue to suffer from the incident and the plant remains abandoned and untended to, leaking toxic chemicals into the environment. While the Indian government has been instructed to provide for the medical needs of victims and to clean up the plant, as Dow's lease on the plant was revoked by the Indian government in 1998, it is the opinion of the subgroup that Dow has an ongoing moral and humanitarian obligation to contribute to the recovery of Bhopal. It is the judgment of the Committee that while Dow has no legal responsibility to act, it does have an ethical responsibility to do so. Additionally, Dow put forth in 2006 a set of goals to be met in the environmental health and safety arena, which include local protection of human health and the environment. The Committee contends that Dow's behavior in Bhopal falls short of what it would expect in light of these goals. The Committee intends to draft a letter to management for review at a future meeting.

Dow Chemical

The Chevron subgroup presented their recommendation on how to proceed with regard to Chevron's business activities and subsequent responsibilities in Burma. The subgroup particularly raised the issue of the role of the Committee as a socially responsible investing voice. While companies in these types of situations can often hide behind a lack of legal obligation to act and, as such, do nothing, it is the role of the Committee to point out and push companies on their moral and ethical obligations to engage in sound corporate social practice for its own sake, not out of a legal obligation. Understanding this as the charge of the Committee, the subgroup believes that a letter to management regarding Chevron's responsibilities as the sole major US corporation operating in Myanmar is appropriate.

Chevron

The Committee approved the 2007-2008 Annual Agenda.

2007-2008 Annual Agenda

The next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 12, 2008. The Joint meeting with the Trustees Subcommittee will be held February 26, 2008.

Calendar

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at
7:57 p.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Sherwin
Senior Manager, SRI