

# UW's Ward agrees to quit sweatshop group

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By Aaron Nathans

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UW-Madison Chancellor David Ward told protesters he will pull the university out of a controversial organization that monitors clothing makers for poor working conditions.

But he wants to talk to other Big Ten administrators about whether to join a new watchdog group that has the support of student activists.

Ward agreed to meet with the students on Monday after a brief encounter Wednesday night at Bascom Hall, five hours after students took over the lobby of his office and the hallway outside. Students outside the office pounded on the locked door, demanding to come in and talk to Ward.

## But he holds off on picking new monitor

The protesters want to end the use of sweatshop labor in the manufacturing of merchandise bearing the University of Wisconsin logo. The protest included members of the Alliance for Democracy and the Madison Anti-Sweatshop Coalition.

As part of an agreement with students made last year after a prolonged sit-in, the university agreed to a provisional affiliation with the Fair Labor Association, which promotes dialogue with universities and other institutions concerned about factory conditions and worker treatment in Third World countries.

But student activists now favor the

newly formed Workers' Rights Consortium, which will hold a founding conference in April. Although both organizations are supposed to locate and monitor sweatshops, the consortium is being billed as more community-based and labor-oriented. The activists said the association is too influenced by corporations.

"We all feel there is some merit with the WRC," Ward said of the new organization. "This process will take some time. I'm not in a position to instantly or unilaterally join the WRC."

Ward said he wants to learn more about the group and determine what other Big 10 campuses will do.

Anti-sweatshop demonstrations also occurred Wednesday at the University of Michigan, where 20 students occupied a dean's office; and at the University of

Pennsylvania, where students ended an eight-day sit-in after officials at that school pulled out of the Fair Labor Association. Pennsylvania officials have not agreed to join the new group.

Local activists were skeptical that UW would join the new organization, and pressed for faster discussions. But Ward said his schedule would not permit a meeting until Monday.

David Ernesto Alvarado of the Alliance for Democracy told Ward he was unhappy that the process of ridding the university of ties with sweatshop labor has been tainted by mistrust.

"I'm very sad this has happened," Alvarado said.

As a concession to the students, Ward unlocked the door to his outer office and let students come and go as they wished.

As of about 9 p.m. Wednesday night, protesters remained in the lobby of Ward's office, mulling over what to do next, as plain-clothes University Police officers looked on.

Kim Brunner, a communications officer for the campus police, said some demonstrators remained at the office this morning after a peaceful night.

The university confirmed this morning that the repellent used on several students who tried to push their way into the chancellor's office was pepper spray.

"Based on reports that I have received, our police response was appropriate," Ward said in a statement.

No arrests were made as a result of the protest but police may still be reviewing the matter, according to UW spokesman Amy Toburen.