USAS Activist Boot Camp:
Empowering Students to Take Back their Universities

Sonia Szczesna
Faculty Advisor—Professor Francis Ryan
The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at [http://iwl.rutgers.edu](http://iwl.rutgers.edu).
USAS Background

Founded in 1997 –
Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Technical Employees

Entirely student run & funded

Basic Principles:
1. Solidarity
2. Collective Liberation
3. Grassroots Democracy
4. Diversity of Tactics
5. Pluralism

“Sweatshop” is broadly defined
Beginnings

Struggles began with simply getting corporations to make their source factories public.

Then it was the struggle to get universities to join the Worker Rights Consortium.

USAS founded the WRC in 2000.
Using student power to make an impact on the global economy.

University apparel is a huge part of the industry.

Using nationally coordinated campaigns at universities to pressure major corporations to create change.

The USAS Model
Adidas & the PT Kizone Factory

• PT Kizone Factory was shut down in April of 2011

• 2,800 workers out of work

• Adidas has refused to pay $1.8 million owed to workers in severance

• Nike & Dallas Cowboys—also used the factory, have paid

• USAS nationally has taken action!
Rutgers USAS

Has been working on the campaign since September 2012.

Have used a variety of tactics including:
Speaking to Barchi at multiple public events, letter deliveries, meetings with administrators, fun actions, etc.
Northeast Regional Boot Camp

2-day conference of organizing workshops

Brought together students from all over the east coast—approximately 60 students, 12 schools

Networking, sharing ideas, learning, teaching, & renewing excitement among all
USAS Boot Camp

Rutgers University
Dear Members of Rutgers United Students Against Sweatshops:

Thank you for sharing with me your analyses and recommendations regarding the university’s license agreement with Adidas. I applaud your commitment to workers in developing countries and your efforts to advocate on their behalf.

I agree with you that Adidas’s refusal to acknowledge its responsibilities to the PT Kizone workers and pay them Adidas’s share of their legally mandated severance payments is not consistent with the values of this university. We expect the companies with which the university has a trademark license agreement to respect and uphold the labor and legal rights of workers producing Rutgers-branded products, and Adidas’s actions are not in keeping with this expectation. Therefore, I have instructed our Trademark Licensing Office to work with the Collegiate Licensing Company to discontinue the university’s license agreement with Adidas.

Again, thank you for expressing your thoughts and concerns in this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Barchi

cc: Richard Edwards, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
    and Interim Chancellor of the New Brunswick Campus
    Kim Manning, Vice President for University Relations
    Marybeth Schmitt, Assistant Director,
    Rutgers Office of Trademark Licensing

Victory!

9 days following the boot camp, President Barchi agrees to cut contracts with Adidas.

This makes Rutgers the 4th to cut following Oberlin College, Washington State and Cornell University.
Special thanks to...
The Institute for Women’s Leadership;
    Francis Ryan;
The Rutgers Labor Education Department;
The AAUP-AFT;
United Students Against Sweatshops national organizers;
Anna Barcy, Amish Patel, Hannah Roe;
&& all the members of USAS and our coalition that made this happen!!