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## WKU Named Fair Trade University at Conference

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## WKU named fair trade university at conference

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Joanna Williams | [0 comments](#)

WKU became a fair trade university this weekend at the annual United Students for Fair Trade Convergence, which brought more than 100 students from 40 colleges and high schools all over the country to campus.

The goal of the conference was to provide students with the tools to bring fair trade to schools across the nation, according to the program. Participants went to workshops, lectures and a market with fair trade products, which means workers were paid a fair price to make the items.

Natalia Choi, a high school senior from Troy, N.Y., said she enjoyed the convergence because she was able to meet other students passionate about fair trade.

"It was really inspiring to see so many other students dedicated to this and bringing fair trade to their schools," she said. "I really got the feeling that it's a movement to bring social justice to the forefront."

President Gary Ransdell signed a fair trade resolution on Saturday, which commits the university to bring fair trade food to campus events, offices and catered meetings as well as sell fair trade products in the WKU Store, according to the resolution.

There are only three other colleges designated as being fair trade: the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Siena College and the University of California-San Diego, according to [usft.org](http://usft.org)

The signing of the resolution marks the end of almost a year's worth of campaigning and organizing led by WKU's chapter of Americans for Informed Democracy and Fair Trade WKU, said Morganfield senior Charlie Harris, co-founder of WKU AID.

"Being able to host this convergence was the launch pad for what we hope to see across the country," Harris said.

Sustainability Coordinator Christian Ryan-Downing said now that WKU is a fair trade university, it opens the door for students to become aware of making conscious decisions.

"Having a fair trade option whenever possible is a way to educate," she said. "When people can see that they can choose between a regular coffee and a fair trade coffee, that is helping them be socially responsible."

Ryan-Downing said this also helps students see that WKU is committed to making an environmental impact.

"We want our students to see that their school is open in a social and environmentally responsible way," she said. "And this is a way to illustrate that."

Matt Vaughan, a senior from Mexico, Mo., and co-founder of WKU AID, said the group's next goal is to educate students.

"We have the dedication and the resolution, now we need the students to understand what fair trade is," he said.

Harris echoed those thoughts.

"Everything that we've done to raise awareness about the convergence is what we're going to try to do after it," Harris said. "Just because we signed the resolution, as meaningful as it is, it doesn't mean we are going to decrease our campaign to bring awareness to the students."

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**Josh Moore**

Herald editor-in-chief