Dear Colleagues -

In April of 2012, for the first time since 1997, the Gustavus bottled and fountain beverage contract will be put out for bids. This contract will cover bottled and canned beverages as well as fountain soft drinks that will be served on campus for the next several years. In January of 2012, we will invite the two companies who possess the ability to provide services and product—Coke and Pepsi—to submit their proposals. Due to limits of storage capacity and space to place vending machines, display coolers, and running fountain syrup lines, it is possible for only one company to provide service to Gustavus.

A request for proposals (RFP) is a document prepared by a customer – Gustavus in this case – that outlines service requirements and expectations along with other items of importance such as institutional values. Those responding to the RFP typically detail their service abilities and pricing structure but we will also use the RFP as a way to ask each company to **address its record** on health, environmental, human rights, and other issues. In addition, the RFP will invite the companies to tell us **how they can contribute** to the work in which Gustavus is invested; how, e.g., can they help us to advance some of the important initiatives outlined in Commission Gustavus 150?

Here is where your [organization/class/office] comes in. We are writing to invite you to be a part of the research team that helps us to craft a request for proposals (RFP) from these distributors. What we seek is information that would contribute one of these two kinds of items:

1. Questions we could ask the company about its practices or its products—labor, environmental, health, economic.
2. Requests for ideas about how the company could be involved in Gustavus initiatives—health, environmental, justice, e.g.

In order that we can coordinate the research being done—and can ensure that the full range of topics is being addressed—we ask that your group **submit to us a one-page proposal** that describes the topic area you will research (e.g. Coca Cola and water mining; soft drink portion size and health; Pepsi packaging and the environment; marketing to children; soft drink marketing in the two-thirds world; you name it), as well as an estimated date of completion of your work. Note that we especially welcome creative ideas about how our beverage provider could be creatively involved in supporting the work of the college; how can they “use their powers for good?” Please submit your proposal by **May 13**.

Once all proposals are in, we will get back to you about your proposal, confirming it and—in all likelihood—asking you to tweak it, to ensure that all relevant issues get covered. This confirmation will be a kind of “contract” between your group and the Kitchen Cabinet, and we will be **counting on you** to produce the research you’ve agreed to.

You will have the fall semester to conduct your research. [You may present your findings in whatever format is suitable to their content. Written reports should be under ten pages. Video or audio presentations should be no more than fifteen minutes.] [If the research is done within an academic class, the length of the presentation will be left to the discretion of the instructor.]

A word about the timeline: We will be sending the request for proposals at the beginning of January Term, 2012. That means that we need to receive your research findings by December 15, at the absolute latest, in order to take them into consideration.

We will share with all participants a copy of the final RFP. We will also share any parts of their responses that can be made public, so that you can see how your research has been put to use.

This is more than simply an opportunity to Retain Coke or to Replace Coke with Pepsi; it’s a very concrete opportunity for us to discuss, as a community, what we value, and how we value it. It’s an opportunity to **“make thoughtful choices”**. We look forward to thinking creatively with all of you about how to use this beverage contract as a way to operationalize our institutional commitments.