

IS DREW FAUST SMEARING HARVARD'S GOOD NAME THROUGH HER MEMBERSHIP ON STAPLES' BOARD OF DIRECTORS?



Harvard University President Dr. Drew Faust serves on the board of Staples, the troubled office-supply retailer. In addition to her Harvard compensation, Dr. Faust will earn over \$250,000 this year for her Staples work. Nice money if you can get it. However, serving on the Staples board sullies Dr. Faust's reputation and smears Harvard's good name.

Last year, Staples announced that it would close at least 255 stores and lay off hundreds of workers. This year, the company announced plans to merge with Office Depot, close more stores, layoff additional workers, reduce competition, and limit options for consumers. Even so, the company might not survive as a brick-and-mortar retailer; it might become an Internet-only vendor, or go out of business altogether. Staples has had 11 straight quarters of declining sales.

Out of desperation, in a deal with the U.S. Postal Service, Staples has opened postal counters in its stores to handle U.S. mail. And they're doing more than just selling stamps.

These pretend post offices accept and process mail from customers. Letters and packages handled at Staples stores are not under the protection of the U.S. Postal Service until they are handed off to a uniformed postal worker—perhaps days later.

Staples clerks do not receive the same level of training as U.S. Postal Service employees, and they are paid low wages with few benefits. In a recent interview with *Buzzfeed*, President Obama singled-out Staples for criticism, saying “shame on them,” for threatening part-time workers with termination if they worked more than 25 hours a week. Staples places limits on employees' hours, denying them healthcare benefits.

The U.S. Postal Service is using the Staples deal to reduce hours at nearby Post Offices.

The deal will reduce the Postal Service's ability to provide quality service to customers. It might even lead to the shuttering of local public Post Offices.

Dr. Faust is one of the decision-makers allowing all of this to happen. Is this the proper role for a Harvard University President? Without public debate, should Staples become a replacement for the local Post Office? Should Harvard's leader be undermining the United States Postal Service, an institution older than the nation itself? Should Harvard be attached to such a shameful company?

If Dr. Faust can't use her influence to end these dirty deals, she should resign from the Staples board.

Dr. Faust: Stop the Dirty Deals.