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Ralph Nader's Statement on Trading Truth at Harvard

Trading Truth at Harvard reveals the latest chapter in the long-running story of the hijacking of Harvard University's name and reputation by corporate interests. Companies like Enron have learned that small investments in endowing chairs, sponsoring research programs or hiring moonlighting professors can return big payoffs in generating books, reports, articles, testimony and other materials to push for and rationalize public policy positions that damage the public interest but benefit corporate bottomlines. The Harvard Center for Risk Analysis is just one such example.

This has been an increasingly significant problem at Harvard for more than two decades. It is time now for new President Lawrence Summers to go beyond modest tinkering with conflict of interest rules and undertake a top-to-bottom review of its multiple interconnections with large corporations, including through research sponsorships and consulting arrangements with professors. It is time to establish boundaries that establish precise limits on the University's corporate entanglements. There is need for a clear and comprehensive policy on the limits of commercialism on Harvard University and for pro-active efforts at the University to spur research guided by public-spirited rather than mercantile values.

It is telling that the vital questions and policy recommendations contained in Trading Truth at Harvard come from students, rather than the Administration. These students are operating in the long tradition of challenging Harvard to live up to its best values and to resist the corrosive effect of the monied interests that seek to exploit Harvard's name on the cheap. The students' call for a more democratic governing structure at Harvard, disclosure of the financial and other ties between

Enron and Harvard, and especially for a review of corporate funding at the University should be heeded, expeditiously.