Honorary Degree

RONALD L. SARGENT…………………………………………………Doctor of Humane Letters

A man of conviction, commitment and focus, you have become the President and Chief Executive Officer of Staples, Inc., a Fortune 500 Company with $11.6 billion in annual sales, 58,000 associates and more than 1500 superstores worldwide.

The first in your family to attend college, your upbringing in the working class neighborhood of Covington, Kentucky instilled in you the values of hard work and perseverance. With a career in retail sales that started in your teens, you armed yourself early with an array of reliable skills and practices that focused on product and service quality. Whether it was stocking shelves, working the cash register, or staffing the mailroom, you distinguished yourself, no matter the role.

After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard, it was 1989 when you made the courageous decision to leave a promising career as a young executive to accept a position as a regional vice president with the upstart Staples. You obviously chose wisely as evidenced by your success in climbing the Staples corporate ladder. In 13 years with Staples you have worked as a regional vice president, led the catalog and delivery divisions, ran the North American operation, served as Chief Operating Officer, and now lead the corporation as President and Chief Executive Officer.

Knowing that financial goals alone will not differentiate Staples from its competitors, you have guided the cultural transformation of the corporation through your new TeamCARE values. Focusing on teamwork, customers, associates, and the simplification of process, you lead by example with your sense of personal accountability and focus. As a leader who “walks the talk,” you personify the Staples mission and vision by being a watchful steward of corporate assets and by undertaking meaningful change clearly connected to strategy. With compelling modesty, and ambition first and foremost for Staple's success, you have produced impressive results. Through innovation and inspiration, you guided Staples in 2002 to its most profitable year in the company’s history.

While leading a corporation to the top of its industry might be reason enough for the recognition we bestow today, it is the power of your vision for the future, your passion for excellence, your integrity, and your hard-driving style that make you a model of organizational leadership to be studied and emulated, and the reason why we truly honor you. By the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hereby confer upon you, Ronald L. Sargent, the doctorate of humane letters, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining.