



NIAC

National Iranian American Council | Community. Democracy. Universal Rights.

January 3, 2011

John L. Hennessy, President
Office of the President
Building 10, Main Quad
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Dr. Hennessy,

As a representative of the National Iranian American Council, the largest grassroots organization representing the interests of the Iranian-American community, I would like to raise an issue of considerable concern regarding a member of your faculty.

It has been brought to our attention that Dr. Jeffrey D. Ullman, Stanford W. Ascherman Emeritus Professor of Computer Science, has engaged in the racially discriminatory and inflammatory public communications regarding Iranians seen here on a university hosted website:

<http://infolab.stanford.edu/~ullman>
<http://infolab.stanford.edu/~ullman/pub/iranian.html>

Additionally, Dr. Ullman had this exchange with a student at Sharif University regarding admission:

"You need to read <http://infolab.stanford.edu/~ullman/pub/formresponse.html>

And even if I were in a position to help, I will not help Iranian students until Iran recognizes and respects Israel as the land of the Jewish people. I know that you may not hold the same insane position as the mullahs that run your country, but it is a matter of principle.

If Iranians want the benefits of Stanford and other institutions in the US, they have to respect the values we hold in the US, including freedom of religion and respect for human rights.

*regards.
--jdu"*

As you know, Stanford University is home to a large population of international students from Iran. These are students that endure numerous hurdles to attend college in the United States to pursue their dreams. It is shameful that these students may be subjected to discrimination from a member of your faculty.

Dr. Ullman has suggested that Iranians seeking to study at Stanford University should be singled out for special conditions regarding their political and social views. He has suggested that help for Iranian students seeking admission to Stanford should be contingent on the policies of the Iranian government.

No group has suffered under the policies of the Iranian government more than the Iranian people. For a Stanford professor to hold the aspirations of young Iranians hostage to the policies of their government only further perpetuates this suffering.

Increasingly, young Iranians are finding that opportunities to pursue higher education at home are closed off to them for political reasons—the Ahmadinejad government has singled out students who have expressed views counter to that of Iran’s government for banishment from Iranian universities. It is abhorrent that similar discrimination on political grounds would confront young Iranians seeking to study abroad at American universities.

I am sure you agree that Stanford University is enriched by its diverse student population and enjoys many benefits from the contributions of Iranian students. But educational exchanges also offer an opportunity for Americans and Iranians to transcend differences—whether they be geopolitical conflicts between governments, or the differences that distinguish the two cultures. Unfortunately, Dr. Ullman’s behavior is anathema to that spirit of educational exchanges.

Racial and political discrimination such as this surely cannot be compatible with Stanford University’s values. Does the university not frown on professors making and communicating arbitrary policy decisions reflecting their own politics – and using university-hosted forums to do so?

It is also troubling that Dr. Ullman chooses to say that “*if Iranians want the benefits of Stanford and other institutions in the US, they have to...etc.*” Does he presume to speak for other universities and their policies as well?

We respectfully urge that the university take immediate action to ensure that this matter is dealt with effectively by taking disciplinary action against Dr. Ullman and issuing a statement that clarifies its position relative to Dr. Ullman’s writings.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jamal Abdi, Policy Director
National Iranian American Council

Cc:

John Etchemendy, Provost

James D. Plummer, Dean, School of Engineering

Curtis Frank, Senior Associate Dean, Faculty and Academic Affairs, School of Engineering

Linda McLaughlin, Director of Faculty Affairs, School of Engineering