

February 18, 2015

Dean John J. McCarthy  
Graduate School  
University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA 01003

Dear Dean McCarthy,

We write this letter to register our protest at the Graduate School's recent change in admission policy with respect to Iranian students. We find this policy not just contrary to the University's policy on non-discrimination, but also counter to the University's mission to foster a free exchange of ideas.

Since the text of HR 1905 is short, we cite it in its entirety here:

SEC. 501. EXCLUSION OF CITIZENS OF IRAN SEEKING EDUCATION RELATING TO  
THE NUCLEAR AND ENERGY SECTORS OF IRAN. (a) In General.--The Secretary of  
State shall deny a visa to, and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall  
exclude from the United States, any alien who is a citizen of Iran that the  
Secretary of State determines seeks to enter the United States to  
participate in coursework at an institution of higher education (as defined  
in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)))  
to prepare the alien for a career in the energy sector of Iran or in  
nuclear science or nuclear engineering or a related field in Iran. (b)  
Applicability.--Subsection (a) applies with respect to visa applications  
filed on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Put simply, the Graduate School's interpretation that the resolution subjects faculty, staff, and students to "significant penalties" is flawed. This bill is limited to the granting of visas to Iranians seeking entry to the United States. The School's decision to deny admission to Iranian students for a broad swath of University programs is in no way articulated in the passage above and is clearly overbroad. Moreover, the additional restriction imposed by the Graduate School that "all enrolled Iranian national students will be required to acknowledge the restrictions imposed ... and certify their compliance in writing" goes so far beyond the requirements of the law that we find this additional restriction to be deeply disturbing.

It is the University's *stated policy* to prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin (see "Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Policy Statement", last revised March 24, 2014). The actions of the Graduate School on this matter are in direct violation of that policy. While we fully endorse the efforts of our government's leaders to bring about peaceful diplomatic relationship with Iran, we fail to see how the Graduate School's actions assist in this cause. In fact, we most emphatically believe that these actions tarnish the reputation of the University of Massachusetts Amherst as an open and welcoming institution for all scholars.

We call on the Graduate School to reverse its counterproductive and, frankly, embarrassing position on this matter.

Sincerely,

The undersigned graduate students of the School of Computer Science