



מדינת ישראל

STATE OF ISRAEL

Minister of Education Culture and Sports

Jerusalem, June 27, 2005

Professor Ali Banuazizi
President
Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.
1219 N. Santa Rita Avenue
The University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721
U.S.A.

Dear Professor Banuazizi,

Thank you for your letter of June 14, 2005, concerning the proposed upgrading of the College of Judea and Samaria from a college to a university.

We greatly respect your association's commitment to "the principles of academic freedom and the free exchange of information and ideas", as expressed in your letter to the AUT's President, stating your "determined opposition" to its proposed boycott of Israel's universities and blacklisting of their faculties.

In that letter you also assert: "We especially oppose penalizing entire segments of an academic community for any reason whatsoever." The faculties and student bodies of all Israel's higher education institutions are made up of people whose opinions and beliefs embrace the entire political spectrum.

This is true at the College of Judea and Samaria as well. Seventy percent of its students come from Tel Aviv and central Israel. Approximately 300 of its students are Arabs.

The reasons given by Arab students for studying at the College are manifold. The courses offered by the College are not taught at every university. Some of the College's departments have a national reputation for excellence.

Acceptance to the College is easier than to the universities, although its courses are difficult. To ensure that students succeed, tutoring and English and Hebrew language instruction are available, which also eases their integration into college life.



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Hebrew is not studied in Palestinian universities. Arab students have found that studying in Hebrew and learning about Israeli culture opens more doors to them in the job market after graduation.

The College is convenient for students who commute, and for those who must work and study at the same time. Tuition fees at the College are half those of private colleges.

Research to be published shortly concludes that the College's Arab students have a positive sense of belonging. Relations between Arab and Jewish students are good; the former are active in campus politics and members of the student union. In an interview, an Arab student said, "If we stay home and don't go to university, will that help us or our society more?"

The College sponsors an outreach program to find more potential Arab students. Under its auspices, preparatory courses for matriculation examinations are given in Arab cities and villages throughout the country.

Last month, the names of three prominent Arab local council heads appeared in an ad on the front page of one of Israel's major newspapers, *Ha'aretz*. The ad congratulated the College on opening registration for the 2006 school year, and commended it for encouraging coexistence between the various sectors of Israeli society.

The administration and faculty of the College of Judea and Samaria is committed to providing its students – Jewish and Arab – with the finest higher education and training. We believe that, elevated to university status in accordance with the rigorous requirements of the Council for Higher Education in Israel, the College can deepen its commitment to the future of our youth and society.

When asked what attracted him to teaching at the College, an engineering faculty member stated that it was "the thought of teaching at a college in which there is an encounter between Jews and Arabs, between Israelis and Palestinians. It was very appropriate for me to bring people closer together in teaching and in research."

Surely, these lessons in peace and understanding that the College's students learn in and out of the classroom encourage the "spirit of freedom of inquiry and exchange [that] is the essence of what higher education should embody".

Sincerely yours,


Limor Livnat