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Mihaylo Dean Rahmatian shares his journey from Iran

By Alec Cavillo

Oct 10, 2018



(Alec Cavillo / Daily Titan)

When Morteza Rahmatian finished his graduate degree in the United States, all he could think of was going back to his home country in Iran. But then a revolution happened, which caused him to prolong his hopes of going back, he said.

“For 10 years I was hoping to go back, and after that, I realized the country is done,” Rahmatian said. “That country is dead. I still love it with all my heart, but unfortunately, it’s suffering right now.”

Rahmatian is the recently appointed dean of Mihaylo College of Business and Economics at Cal State Fullerton. He has been dean since July and will serve a two-year term.

“He’s doing a very good job because he works hard. He’s very sincere. He cares about the college, students and faculty. It’s a combination of all those facts that makes him a good dean,” said Rahmatian’s predecessor Anil Puri, now provost emeritus.

His interest in environmental economics is how he ended up attending the University of Wyoming. Only a few schools had the program, and it was less than 10 years old when he became involved with it, he said.

“When you go into the Ph.D. program you have to specialize in a particular field, and I loved environmental economics. So I thought, let me specialize in that field,” Rahmatian said.

According to Rahmatian, the purpose of environmental economics is to tell establishments that cause pollution how to function in a way that ensures their cost doesn’t exceed the benefit that they provide to the community.

“Any environmental decision making that you do, it has economic consequences,” he said.

After seven to eight years of waiting for the political situation in his country to improve, Rahmatian gave up. He decided that he was going to start his life in America, because he couldn’t keep waiting.

“Life throws a lot of curveballs at you, it’s your choice what to do with it,” he said.

He contacted the CSUF economics department because they were hiring, and asked if he could join for a one year full-time lecturer position.

“I knew if I came here, just show these guys who I am, they (were) not going to let me go. Sounds a little arrogant, but that’s okay,” Rahmatian said.

A year after he came on as a professor at CSUF in 1988 he was notified that he was going to be placed on a tenure track.

“I never thought I’d be the dean to be honest with you, but I knew I (was) going to make it here,” Rahmatian said.

Eleanor Perry-Tomlin, the assistant to the dean of Mihaylo, said she enjoys working with Rahmatian.

“He’s an awesome person. He’s very energetic, and very student-focused. I’ve never enjoyed working with someone so much. It’s a true pleasure to work with him,” Perry-Tomlin said.

Rahmatian said he’s passionate about teaching and has not stopped teaching since he’s arrived on campus.

According to Rahmatian, it’s not common for deans to teach. They cannot be compensated for teaching, and they often have other work to attend to.

“I teach because I enjoy it,” Rahmatian said. “If my job is to run the college of business, how can I run this college of business and not be in the classroom? It just doesn’t make sense.”