



Background

Title VI of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) was established to strengthen U.S. security by training students as national security specialists and educating the public on international affairs. The goal of the program, which funds 100 National Resource Centers (NRC), including 16 Middle East Studies departments, is to equip students with a full and unbiased understanding of regions and countries vital to U.S. security. However, in the absence of federal oversight, these programs have devolved into hotbeds of anti-American and anti-Israel activity, disseminating falsehoods both in universities and, through the congressionally mandated “public outreach programs,” to K-12 teachers and to the general public.

Problem

Research has shown that recipients are using Title VI funds to promote biased, one-sided, and anti-Israel programming.

- 2014: AMCHA researchers tracked anti-Semitic discourse and anti-Israel bias in public events sponsored by UCLA’s Center for Near East Studies (CNES) over a three-year-period. They found that CNES events disproportionately focused on Israel and the Israeli-Arab conflict, with 93% of events on Israel being anti-Israel, and 75% displaying anti-Semitic discourse.
- 2016: A report examining Title VI-funded Middle East Studies departments found that 42% of NRC directors publicly endorsed the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement, and those directors were more than twice as likely to host federally-funded events with pro-BDS speakers.
- 2017: New research demonstrated the abuse is escalating. Middle East Studies departments with one or more pro-BDS faculty were five times more likely to sponsor events with BDS-supporting speakers, and the more faculty boycotters, the greater the likelihood of BDS-supporting speaker-events. In addition, academic units with BDS-supporting chairs or directors were three-and-a-half times more likely to sponsor events with BDS-supporting speakers than units headed by non-faculty boycotters.

Action

Congress sought to address this problem in 2008 by requiring that each recipient “reflect diverse perspectives and a wide range of views,” among other provisions. Nonetheless, Title VI funds continue to support many Middle East studies programs that provide only a monochromatic -- and biased, anti-American, and anti-Israel -- perspective. Greater enforcement and accountability from the Department of Education is critical in addressing this pervasive and rampant violation of the law.