

August 24, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Dr. Suzan Farhang Sardroodi's application for a J-1 visa to join my laboratory at Rutgers University for her training in conducting research in cancer genomics and precision oncology.

I am an Associate Professor of Pathology in Medical Informatics and Systems Biology at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey (New Brunswick, NJ). The research in my group is focused on exploring problems in cancer genomics and precision oncology using computational and bioinformatics approaches, which has resulted in the publication of more than 60 peer-reviewed scientific articles. We are also fortunate to be supported by major grants from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the V Foundation totaling \$4,000,000 for the next 3–4 years. Moreover, through extensive, interdisciplinary collaborations, I have built a pathway in my laboratory for quantitative researchers to become translational scientists, and have mentored undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral trainees with cross-disciplinary backgrounds who have gone to receive numerous excellence in scholarship awards and competitive pre- or post-doctoral fellowships from the National Institutes of Health, and the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research.

Dr. Farhang will join this multidisciplinary environment with an impressive background in mathematical modeling of complex data. She received her Ph.D. in physics from University of Zanjan (Zanjan, Iran) in 2018, and since has honed her skills in mathematics and statistics through postdoctoral fellowships at Ryerson University (Toronto, Canada) and York University (Toronto, Canada). Dr. Farhang's in-depth training in applied mathematics, unique skills in quantitative modeling, and extensive experience analyzing biological data, have enabled her to pursue the investigation of mechanisms that underly evolution of human diseases such as cancer or drive immune response dynamics against disease-causing organisms such as SARS-CoV-2. Her results are now published in 6 major papers which she has also presented in numerous high-profile scientific meetings.

As it has been noted in her research plan, Dr. Farhang will focus her work at Rutgers on studying the changes in tumor mutations when cancer patients are treated with chemotherapy or drugs that disrupt the processes with which tumor cells communicate with their microenvironment. Dr. Farhang's will develop novel mathematical tools to model novel DNA and RNA sequencing datasets that we have generated for this NCI-funded project. Her work is expected to provide insights for designing treatment strategies that combine cancer cells' therapeutic vulnerabilities contributing significantly to combating drug resistance and increasing positive outcomes for cancer patients.

Dr. Farhang was recruited to Rutgers in January 2020, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, due to various travel restrictions, border closures, and other limitations in the U.S. visa application process, she has not been able to join our group for over 18 months, resulting in significant postponement in her training as well as our research. Accordingly, Dr. Farhang qualifies for a National Interest Exceptions, and it is critical that she joins Rutgers as soon as possible as to avoid further delays and the possible lapse of federal and private funds.

In conclusion, Dr. Farhang will be an asset to Rutgers and Rutgers Cancer Institute, New Jersey's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center (one of only 51 centers nation-wide), for our continued research on understanding the epidemiology and pathogenesis of cancer and other human diseases.

Please contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,

Hossein Khiabani, Ph.D.



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