

Victory for Campus Zionism at UC Irvine: Ouster of Orange County JFed President Elcott



It's official. The problematic President of the Orange County Jewish Federation & Family Services (JFFS), Shalom Elcott, has been ousted by the board – his contract was apparently not renewed. Notwithstanding he remains as a strategic consultant to the Chairman of the JFFS board. This marks an important victory for Campus Zionism on the controversial UC Irvine campus. Thus, ends a nearly decade long intrusion by Elcott working against the Zionist Anteaters for Israel (AFI) campus group. AFI's leaders like incumbent Sharon Shaoulian and alum like Reut Cohen and others have borne the brunt of assaults on their campus activities and free speech by Elcott with support from his appointed Hillel chapter campus director. Elcott's dossier was the subject of a June 2015 NER article, ["How One Southern California Jewish Federation Undermines Student Zionism at a State University."](#)

A press release from the Orange County JFFS issued on Wednesday, July 22nd [confirmed](#) Elcott's replacement:

The Board of Jewish Federation & Family Services(JFFS)announced today that it has appointed Dr. Lauren Gavshon, JFFS' current Director of Clinical Services as interim President and Chief Executive Officer, replacing Shalom Elcott as President and Chief Executive Officer

Elcott, a visionary leader who fundamentally transformed JFFS into the robust and diverse organization it is today, will continue to serve as Strategic Advisor to the Chair

of the Board

Dr. Gavshon and her family have been involved in the local Jewish community for over 20 years, and she is well positioned to take on this expanded role,” said Daniel J. Koblin, Chair of the Board.

Our colleague, UCI adjunct faculty member, Gary Fouse on his *Fousesquawks* blog [wrote](#):

I know nothing about Dr Lauren Gavshon, who is the interim CEO. The press release describes her as a bridge-builder. Heaven knows they need one over at the Federation after the Elcott reign.

Here is my question: If Elcott did such a great job, as the Federation is claiming, why the change? Why is there no reason given? Normally, something is said about a “retirement” or so-and-so wanting to spend more time with the family. One can read all kinds of things into this, but I will await further information coming out-as it surely will.

Hopefully, the new CEO will change the culture at the Federation and make it one that will truly represent all the Jewish students at UC Irvine especially the ones that choose to fight for Israel and stand up to anti-Semitism. Hopefully, the new leadership will speak out about anti-Semitism at UCI rather than try to sweep it under the rug. Hopefully, the new leadership will join the community in fighting the problem instead of trying to keep its members away from campus. Hopefully, the new leadership will support those who want to wave the Israeli and American flags in the face of pro-Palestinian demonstrators who disrupt pro-Israel events on campus. Hopefully, the new leadership will cut all ties with the insidious Olive Tree Initiative and denounce it for what it is; a thinly-veiled attempt to sway students toward the Palestinian narrative while masquerading as neutral.

Ms. Gavshon has a lot of work cut out for her as she tries to repair the mess left behind by Elcott.

We were glad to have helped in whatever way I to raise consciousness among Orange County co-coreligionists and Jews around the world about Elcott's cultivation of Israel's enemies on the dime of the Orange County JFFS at the UC Irvine campus. One of Elcott's more troubling initiatives at UC Irvine was diverting funds from a JFFS affiliate, the Rose Project, to fund student trips sponsored by the left-wing controlled [Olive Tree Initiative](#) at UC Irvine. That led to an alleged inadvertent meeting in 2009 with Hamas leader on the West Bank, Aziz Duwaik, a Palestinian Legislative Council leader. It has been almost five years since we published [an interview](#) with local Zionist activist and Ha'Emet blogger, Dee Sterling , about the plague of anti-Zionist activities on the Southern California campus.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren was scheduled to give a speech at UC Irvine on February 8, 2011, when it was disrupted by campus members of the Muslim Student Union (MSU). That was followed by the arrest, prosecution and conviction of