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Dear selection committee:

I am extremely happy to be able to recommend Koorosh Ariyaee for the EOMI Dissertation Completion Fellowship. I am a co-supervisor of Koorosh's PhD thesis (along with Philip Monahan). Koorosh is a bright and industrious PhD student with a passion for furthering the study of Iranian languages. His strong academic record, ambitious yet feasible plan of study, and his commitment to timely and high-quality work make him a great candidate for this award.

Along with being his PhD supervisor, I have also served as a committee member for both of Koorosh's qualifying papers, so I have had the pleasure to witness substantial intellectual development throughout the program. I believe that he came in without a lot of background in the types of linguistics he ended up doing, and relied fairly heavily on the expertise of his supervisors. However, as he has developed his ideas for his PhD thesis, I have been consistently impressed with his intellectual curiosity, as well as growing independence in formulating theoretical questions and jumping into methodologies he did not have a lot of experience with: specifically, behavioural research on speech perception. Furthermore, despite the many setbacks of the pandemic for his research project, he has maintained an impressive rate of progress.

While Koorosh has many research interests, much of his work is linked by an emphasis on furthering our knowledge of the diverse range of Iranian languages, having completed two Generals Papers on Persian and continuing acoustic work exploring typologically rare guttural sounds in Kurdish. Koorosh's proposed PhD project, in which he is examining the mental representation of different variants of speech sounds, is theoretically important, in that it will address a not yet well understood topic about how listeners perceive speech in the context of massive variability, and it also presents an empirical contribution in that it will provide new data about the perception and production of typologically unusual sound (uvulars) in a relatively understudied language (Persian).

Koorosh is a very active member of the department; he served for two years as the leader of the department's Phonology research group, and can always be counted on to contribute both his own work and his feedback in workshops, conferences, and research groups. As can be seen from his CV, he has a strong presentation record, as well as an impressive number of proceedings papers. He is taking the lead on an ambitious collaborative project currently being prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Given his ambition and work ethic, as well as the relevance of the thesis to multiple subfields, I expect multiple peer-reviewed publications to result from his thesis.

The University of Toronto is an ideal location for carrying out this research, both in terms of the research expertise of his supervisor, and in terms of the vibrant, interdisciplinary speech research community which provides a stimulating environment for developing his research proposal and disseminating the results.

Koorosh's intellectual ability, industriousness, and strong research proposal make him unquestioningly deserving of this award. If there is any further information I can provide, please feel free to contact me at jessamyn.schertz@utoronto.ca.

Best wishes,

Jessamyn Schertz
Associate Professor
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