On the Ahmadinejad Visit to Columbia University

September 21, 2007

Dear Students:

Last night the Student Senate held an emergency meeting to discuss upcoming World Leaders Forum speaker Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran. After the announcement of his impending visit to Columbia, members of the student body expressed their concern and urged the Senate to take action. During the meeting, it became clear that the Senate perceives a lack of consensus within the law school student body and thus concluded that it would be inappropriate for us to issue a positional statement on behalf of the student body.

At the same time, we do believe it is important that we are all aware of details regarding the event. The event is taking place in Roone Arledge Auditorium, the largest space available on campus. It holds 800 people and 600 of those seats will be filled by students. Many students expressed concern regarding the small number of tickets offered. The Office of the President stated that the event will be simulcast. The format of the event is 50% speech by President Ahmadinejad and 50% questions from the audience, read by the Interim Dean of SIPA. The senate is currently trying to arrange a broadcast in the law school and will keep you posted with details.

In the last couple of years, there have been controversial speakers on campus and discussions regarding freedom of speech and where to draw the line have taken place. We encourage those discussions and are currently planning an event that will allow students to express their views while hearing from some first amendment scholars.

We are sending this e-mail and taking these actions because we felt it necessary to respond to the requests and concerns of the student body and continue to welcome comments and suggestions from the student body.

Thank you,
Student Senate