Guest editorial

It is a great pleasure and a distinct honor to write this foreword for the special issue of Scientia Iranica dedicated to Professor Abouhassan Vafai. The special issue contains 21 outstanding papers contributed by Professor Vafai’s colleagues, friends, and former students.

Professor Vafai has truly been an exceptional scholar, educator, and academic administrator with unique talent for establishing grand-scale international academic collaborations.

Scholarly recognition

Professor Vafai has established himself as a leader in the fields of cracked shell, structural mechanics, and earthquake engineering, specifically well known and respected in the fields of structural dynamics and earthquake engineering with 12 books and over 450 publications in journals and technical conferences. He has founded the well-respected journal of Scientia Iranica, which is now recognized as an important international journal published in the Middle East, with transactions in some engineering and science disciplines. He served as Editor-in-Chief of Scientia Iranica from its inception in 1993 to 2014. Earlier, he also served as the editor of the Iranian Journal of Science and Technology during the 1980s. Both Scientia and IJST are indexed internationally in many respects thanks to Dr. Vafai’s tireless efforts. He has also been serving as a member of the editorial boards of several other journals. Dr. Vafai has been an active member of the prestigious Academy of Science of Iran and a Fellow of Iranian Society of Civil Engineers. He is also a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Society of Engineering Education, and American Society of Experimental Stress Analysis. Dr. Vafai has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the French “Palmes Academiques” (1998), “Diploma of Honor Award by Ministry of Culture for the Scientific Publication of the Year” (1997), “Distinguished Professor of the Year” by Ministry of Science (2000), and “Outstanding Researcher of the Year” Loh-e Taghdir by Sharif University of Technology (2001). In 2001, he was honored by being selected as an “Iranian Science and Culture Hall of Fame” member (Chehreye Mandegar). He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate (Doctor Honoris Causa) by Dubna International University in Moscow (2009). In addition, he was named as the “Distinguished Engineer of the Year” by the Iranian Academy of Sciences in 2015.

Dr. Vafai has organized a number of conferences on technology transfer, civil engineering, and other areas of technical and social endeavors including “Challenges of Higher Education: Historical Perspective and Future Perceptions,” Auckland University, New Zealand, and Dubna International University, Moscow, Russia; “Science in the 21st Century, Challenges and Opportunities; “The Future of Education;” “Environment and Sustainable Development;” “Appropriate Technology for Developing Countries;” “The Future of Science and Technology;” “Human Resources Development;” and “Higher Education in the 21st Century,” among many others.

Teaching abilities

Professor Vafai has taught almost the entire spectrum of undergraduate courses in civil engineering and engineering mechanics. He has also developed and taught several highly popular graduate courses in the areas of shell theory, stability of structures, and steel structures. We are aware that he has been a devoted and innovative teacher who communicates with students on a friendly accessible and helpful level. Professor Vafai’s excellence in teaching is well recognized by his students as demonstrated through the honors he has received for his teaching.

Leadership capabilities

While he has always been deeply involved in research and teaching during his career, Dr. Vafai has also proved himself to be an exceptionally able and effective
coordinator and leader. He served as the Chair of the Departmental of Civil Engineering at Shiraz University during 1980-1984 and the Head of the Office of International and Scientific Cooperation at Sharif University of Technology during 1992-2013. During his period at Shiraz University, he made numerous contributions, ranging from hiring high quality faculty to the upgrade of the departmental facilities. Under Professor Vafai’s leadership in the Office of International and Scientific Cooperation at Sharif University, the visibility of the university significantly grew in the international scientific community.

Professor Vafai’s energy and enthusiasm in performing his administrative duties has always been impressive. During his tenure in the Office of International and Scientific Cooperation at Sharif University of Technology, he established scientific and educational collaborations with numerous top universities around the globe including Monash University in Australia; Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil; McMaster University, University of Calgary, and University of Waterloo in Canada; Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in China; Helsinki University in Finland; Ecole Du Petrole Des Moteurs, Institut National Polytechnique de Grenoble (INPG) in France; Berlin University of Technology and Technical University of Darmstadt in Germany; Delft University in the Netherlands; Politecnico Di Milano, Polytecnico di Torino, Universita di Roma, and La Sapienza in Italy; Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan; Auckland University in New Zealand; Dubna International University in Russia; National University of Singapore in Singapore; Universidad Politecnica in Spain; Lulea University of Technology in Sweden; Queen Mary University, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Imperial College, and University of Nottingham in the UK; and University of California, Davis, Rice University, UCLA, and Carnegie Mellon University in the USA.

In summary, Professor Vafai has a truly impressive record of scholarship as well as extraordinary administrative performance. He is also among the very few who have the capacity to excel in all aspects of academic activities and beyond. We had the fortune of benefiting from Professor Vafai’s friendship for more than 45 years. It is certainly a pleasure and an honor to prepare this foreword for the issue of Scientia Iranica dedicated to Professor Vafai.

Ali Kaveh
Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran.

Goodarz Ahmadi
Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY, USA.