

SHORT BIO

Pardis Mahdavi, Ph.D., is the founder of MyUni, a the former president of the University of La Verne, and served as the provost and executive vice president at the University of Montana. She was a dean at Arizona State University and the University of Denver, and in multiple roles at Pomona College.

Mahdavi's research interests include gendered labor, human trafficking, migration, human rights, and public health in changing global and political structures. She has published seven single-authored books, two edited volumes, and numerous journal and news articles. She is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Young President's Organization and has been a fellow at the Social Sciences Research Council, the American Council on Learned Societies, Google Ideas, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She serves as a board member for the Lumina Foundation and the Human Trafficking Legal Center.

LONG BIO

Dr. Pardis Mahdavi is an Iranian-American scholar, author, and keynote speaker whose work sits at the intersection of the forces reshaping our world: global power, the future of learning and work in the AI era, and the human capacity to reinvent under pressure. For all audiences, she connects the geopolitics in the headlines to the choices individuals have in front of them.

Born in the United States to parents who fled Iran in 1978, she has built her career around a single question: how do people and cultures resist, adapt, and remake themselves when the systems around them break down? She holds a PhD and multiple master's degrees from Columbia University, and is a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a member of the Young Presidents' Organization.

She is a former university president (University of La Verne), provost (University of Montana), and dean (Arizona State University), and currently serves as Director of the Executive Leadership Academy at UC Berkeley and the Founder of MyUni Education. She is the author of eight books, including *Passionate Uprisings* (Stanford), *Hyphen* (Bloomsbury), *Book of Queens* (Hachette), and *Riding* (Duke, 2025).

Her commentary has appeared in *TIME*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Foreign Affairs*, *NPR*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Her fieldwork in Iran, which includes a documented run-in with the morality police in Tehran, has made her one of the only American scholars able to speak with both academic rigor and lived experience about life, power, and resistance under authoritarianism. On stage, she turns that rare vantage point into something an audience can use: a clear-eyed, high-energy account of how to lead, build, and find your footing when everything is in motion.