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Stanford faculty members, from left, Pamela M. Lee, who wrote a petition opposing the appointment of Donald H. Rumsfeld as a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; Tom Wasow; Eric Roberts; Charles Stein; Charlotte Fonrobert; and Philip Zimbardo.

PALO ALTO, Calif., Sept. 19 — The appointment of [Donald H. Rumsfeld](#), the former defense secretary, as a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution is drawing fierce protests from faculty members and students at [Stanford University](#) and is threatening to rekindle tensions between the institution, a conservative research body, and the more liberal campus.

Some 2,100 professors, staff members, students and alumni have signed an online petition protesting Mr. Rumsfeld's appointment, which will involve advising a task force on ideology and terrorism. Faculty members say he should not have been offered the post because of his role in

the Bush administration's prosecution of the Iraq war.

"We view the appointment as fundamentally incompatible with the ethical values of truthfulness, tolerance, disinterested enquiry, respect for national and international laws and care for the opinions, property and lives of others to which Stanford is inalienably committed," the petition reads.

Philip G. Zimbardo, emeritus professor of psychology, explained his objection to Mr. Rumsfeld's appointment as he rushed across campus to teach a class. "It is unacceptable to have someone who represents the values that Rumsfeld has portrayed, in an academic setting," Dr. Zimbardo said.

Dr. Zimbardo conducted the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971 that found that students playing the role of prison guards readily adopted sadistic behavior toward students in the role of prisoners. In a new book, he criticizes Mr. Rumsfeld, President Bush and Vice President [Dick Cheney](#) for policies that he said contributed to the mistreatment and torture of detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

John Raisian, director of the Hoover Institution since 1989, defended the appointment, which was announced on Sept. 7, saying Mr. Rumsfeld is an expert on the subjects that the panel will study.

"I appointed him because he has three decades of experience, of incredible public service, especially in recent years as it relates to this question of ideology and terror," Mr. Raisian said. Mr. Raisian said Mr. Rumsfeld had accepted the appointment, which would last one year.

Such short-term appointments, whether by the institution or by an academic department, do not require the extensive review that a tenure decision might.

Jeffrey H. Wachtel, a senior assistant to Stanford's president, said the university did not "sit in judgment of departments" inviting people to the campus. He added that out of concern for

freedom of speech, the university was extremely reluctant to bar potentially objectionable visitors. “We’re going to go as far as we can to support free speech.”

The institution, which is housed in a tower close to the heart of the campus, has had close ties to Republican administrations, including Mr. Bush’s. Like graduate schools on campus, it operates largely independently from the university — with its own endowment and doing its own fund-raising — but still is part of the university.

At times, though, there have been tensions. In the late 1980s, some students and faculty members successfully fought a proposal championed by the director of the Hoover Institution to place [Ronald Reagan](#)’s presidential library on the campus. Last year, Mr. Bush planned to visit fellows at the Hoover Institution before having dinner with George P. Shultz, a former secretary of state who is also a fellow. But after protests, the meeting was moved to Mr. Shultz’s home.

Another potential conflict could involve Secretary of State [Condoleeza Rice](#) , a former Stanford provost and Hoover fellow. Ms. Rice, who is on leave from a tenured faculty position, has said she would be interested in returning to Stanford after leaving the Bush administration. In a letter to Stanford’s undergraduate newspaper in May, a professor wrote that she should not be welcomed back.

Pamela M. Lee, a professor of art history who helped write the petition against Mr. Rumsfeld, said she hoped her protest would send a message and prompt the university to review its relationship with the Hoover Institution.

“It’s extremely important for the Hoover to know that their appointments are not in the mainstream of the Stanford community,” Professor Lee said, “as well as to send a very clear signal to the country that this is not what Stanford is about.”

Mr. Rumsfeld will not teach and would most likely visit the campus three to five times to advise the panel, whose members so far include Mr. Shultz and Fouad Ajami, a scholar of Middle Eastern studies at the [Johns Hopkins University](#) , Mr. Raisian said.

Some students said although they disagreed with policies adopted by Mr. Rumsfeld, they were curious to hear what he had to say.

“I’m not a particularly big fan of his, but I think I would go listen,” said Daniel Gratch, 17, a freshman from New York.

Students opposed to Mr. Rumsfeld’s appointment said they were planning how robustly to protest after classes begin next week.

“Public activism is only to start happening next week, when there is an audience,” said Jesse T. Wallin, 21, a senior who is active in the university’s chapter of [Amnesty International](#) .