

## Hillel Gets \$10.7 Million For Campuses

by Carolyn Slutsky  
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### **Grant from Jim Joseph Foundation to support new breed of 'universalist' educators at universities.**

Washington, D.C. — At its second annual summit held here this week, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life announced Monday its largest grant ever of \$10.7 million from the Jim Joseph Foundation to support a new breed of educators on college campuses.

The money, payable over five years, will help create and expand Hillel's Experiential Educator Exemplar (E3) program and the Campus Entrepreneurs Initiative on several yet-to-be-named campuses across the nation.

A recent Hillel finding showed that more than hip activities, free-flowing coffee or a cool building to hang out in, Jewish students not involved in Hillel said they wanted Jewishly knowledgeable staff in order to consider being active Jews on campus. Hillel, which hopes to double the one-third of Jews already engaged on college campuses in the coming years, has responded with the creation of its E3 program, which will place on campuses knowledgeable Jewish educators who can offer answers not just to Jewish history or religious questions but to larger, more personal and global ones that are integral to today's college students.

"This generation wasn't asking Jewish questions but universal ones," Hillel President Wayne Firestone told *The Jewish Week*, adding that the "millennial generation" of youth concerned with social justice and individualism is one of the most ethnically diverse in history, yet is more comfortable than ever with being distinctively Jewish. "[We thought we] could appeal through authentic Jewish answers."

The Campus Entrepreneur Initiative, now in its second year, employs students on 12 campuses who receive money for programming and engage a further 60 people per campus, thus creating a dynamic, expansive group of engaged peers.

The announcement of the grant came at Hillel's international summit, which carried the theme "Imagining a More Civil Society" and that looked at the relationship between the Jewish community, the university community and the bonds and bridges between them.

The opening plenary session featured, among other panelists, Michael Drake, the controversial chancellor of the University of California, Irvine, who has been criticized by many in the Jewish community for not doing enough to quash anti-Israel/pro-Palestinian sentiments on his campus.

When asked about hate speech and anti-Semitism on his campus, Drake replied, "It's



deplorable, and we reject it absolutely." Hillel president Firestone later said that Hillel has been "very proud of how the Jewish community has convened and addressed the issue" at Irvine.

### **JESNA Study Of Teachers**

A new study from the Jewish Education Service of North America surveys the Jewish educational landscape across the country and finds that, despite a lack of benefits, adequate professional development and high salaries, more than 80 percent of Jewish educators are satisfied with their careers.

The JESNA survey, a portrait of teachers' satisfaction, preparation and struggles as they attempt to influence the next generation of Jewish learners, reached teachers in some 386 day schools and 1,098 part-time Hebrew school programs.

The Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS) looked at the aspects of educators' lives typically reported, such as retention rates and salary, but also focused on areas not generally central to studies of teachers' careers including benefits, professional development and mentorship. EJSS found that 79 percent of teachers in both day school and supplementary school settings are women, while 43 percent are 50 years of age or older, a finding touted as the "graying," of Jewish educators but one that mirrors a national trend for public school teachers as well. At a conference held last month to discuss the results of the study Robert Sherman, CEO of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, suggested that experienced teachers may have more to offer than younger ones, despite fears that they may age out of their careers sooner. "Gray is the new black," Sherman joked, then added more seriously, "at age 50 today you can be on the cusp of a new career, not at the end of your career."

While the largest segment of educators (22 percent) earn between \$40,000-\$49,999 annually, less than 69 percent of full-time Jewish educators in either setting receive health insurance or a retirement plan.

The EJSS study found that paid time off for professional development was one of the few benefits a majority of teachers, some 65 percent, enjoyed.

At the conference Richard Marker, a senior fellow at New York University's Center for Philanthropy and an independent adviser to philanthropists and foundations, said the question of benefits "should be a moral mandate," within the Jewish community, a sentiment echoed by others in the group of some 200 educators and Jewish professionals.

Sherman and others put much stock in "tapping talent," identifying promising potential educators when they are in school or youth groups and connecting them to mentors who will help guide them toward a career in Jewish education.

While respondents like Rabbi Joshua Elkin of the Partnership for Jewish Education and Saul Kaiserman, director of lifelong learning for Congregation Emanu-El in Manhattan, agreed that mentoring is imperative in grooming new leaders and teachers, they noted that teachers, particularly those in supplementary schools, often do not receive enough support and are often



unable to keep up financially with peers in other professions, factors which may drive younger teachers away.

Charles "Chip" Edelsberg, executive director at the Jim Joseph Foundation in San Francisco, stressed that his organization, which has granted some \$56 million over the past two years to Jewish education, is known for funding projects based on serious research and not mere anecdotal evidence, a growing trend among many philanthropists. "We just aren't smart enough to work without data," he said.

### **New Pluralistic Partnership**

The Academy of Jewish Religion, the nondenominational seminary in Riverdale, has announced a partnership to grant its rabbinical and cantorial students master's degrees through Gratz College in Philadelphia.

Gratz, another pluralistic school, has a large, elaborate online master's program in Jewish studies that AJR students will make use of, and leaders at both institutions hope the collaboration will benefit their home communities while teaching an important lesson about pluralism to the Jewish community at large.

"For awhile, when our students went out into the field, they were perceived as having had a different experience than someone who came out as a rabbi with an M.A.," said Rabbi David Greenstein, rosh yeshiva and rabbinic dean at AJR. "In today's world, anything that helps a rabbi or cantor be more effective in their job is good."

AJR's students are largely second-career rabbis and cantors, many of whom travel long distances to attend courses at the seminary two days a week. The new curriculum will fit perfectly with that spirit, say its planners, because it will be accessible online and therefore be available whenever and wherever students are.

Ora Horn Prouser, executive vice president and academic dean at AJR, said that students, faculty and alumni of the seminary are thrilled with the chance to earn a master's degree and to partner with another, kindred institution. The program will begin this fall and will be mandatory for new students and optional for current students. It will bring with it a 7 percent tuition increase, a hike the administration sees as reasonable given the enhanced value of the education and the minimal tuition increases seen in recent years.

"Gratz and AJR have a good deal in common; we're both deeply pluralistically committed to the community as a whole," said Jonathan Rosenbaum, president of Gratz College. "One of the things AJR has done over the last 50 years is emphasize a broad-based communal approach that respects and honors all people on the [Jewish] spectrum, and we honor that too."

"This will be an opportunity for Jews of all sorts of backgrounds to sit together and learn in a respected way and connect with other Jews who may not even be on the same continent," he added.

