

Preparing for the 2025-2026 Academic Year: A Guide for College & University Administrators

Executive Summary

This document offers strategies for higher education administrators in eight key areas to promote an inclusive climate for Jewish and all students on campus. These areas are:

1. Emphasize Institutional Values and Establish Clear Behavioral Expectations
2. Communicate and Enforce Policies Prohibiting Discrimination and Rules Governing Protests and Demonstrations
3. Support Jewish Students, Faculty and Staff
4. Reaffirm Faculty Professional Responsibilities
5. Ensure Campus Safety
6. Establish a Title VI Office or Coordinator
7. Provide Antisemitism Education
8. Join CCI's Campus Cohort Program

Introduction

As colleges and universities prepare for the new academic year, they have an opportunity, and a legal obligation, to ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Hillel is grateful to the many campuses that took meaningful action to fight antisemitism and support Jewish students, faculty, and staff following the sharp rise in incidents in the wake of Hamas's October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel. These efforts include instituting mandatory training on antisemitism and how to report antisemitic incidents, clearer articulation and enforcement of time, place and manner regulations around protests and demonstrations, better attention to security concerns, and prioritizing efforts to foster an environment committed to civil dialogue. These actions have all led to a significant reduction in impermissible encampments and disruptions, fewer incidents of harassment and violence, and a safer, more inclusive campus environment for all.

But more work is needed.

[Antisemitic incidents increased](#) overall in the 2024-2025 academic year, with a particularly noticeable rise in online bullying and violent rhetoric. Students also increasingly reported being marginalized and invalidated by faculty in the classroom. On some campuses, pressure is being applied on administrators to sever ties with Hillel, which would deprive Jewish students of critical resources to live and explore Jewish life while on campus.

Sustained commitment to an inclusive campus environment, policy enforcement, and clear communication to campus communities about rights and responsibilities are critical to maintaining a climate where all students can thrive. Below are **eight pillars of action** universities should address to ensure antisemitism is not tolerated and to promote the well-being of Jewish members of their campus communities.

1. Emphasize Institutional Values and Establish Clear Behavioral Expectations

The start of a new school year is an opportune time to remind students that **engaging respectfully with people who hold different beliefs and perspectives** is essential for learning. Be clear about the institution's commitment to **free expression** as well as the **behaviors that infringe on the free expression of others**. Affirming these principles helps ensure that everyone understands the impact on the whole community when norms are not met and that everyone plays a role in sustaining an environment where learning, growth, and respectful dialogue can thrive.

2. Communicate and Enforce Policies Prohibiting Discrimination and Rules Governing Protests and Demonstrations

Campuses have a rich and proud tradition of student protest nurtured by the centrality of open inquiry, free expression and the ability to articulate and disseminate a wide range of ideas, perspectives and approaches. Those objectives cannot be achieved when certain members of the academic community are silenced, harassed, intimidated or threatened, or when the university's teaching, learning and research activities are disrupted.

University leaders must ensure that students and faculty are **aware of their campus codes of conduct**, including policies and procedures for managing protests, demonstrations, postings, and other speech activity, including time, place and manner regulations. Communicate with all campus community members about what these policies are, why they are important, how they align with core campus values and the potential consequences for violating them. These policies must then be **enforced in an even-handed, content-neutral and consistent manner** to prevent activities that impede the university's academic mission or interfere with the rights of any members of the campus community to speak, listen, teach, research and learn.

Universities must prohibit student protest activity targeting known Jewish locations, student groups, or individuals, including Hillel and Chabad centers, Jewish Greek life buildings, and other locations where Jews in particular gather. Policies that do not sufficiently balance the right to open expression with the responsibility for maintaining regular institutional functions may need to be amended.

Examples:

- [University of Chicago](#), Protests and Demonstrations Policy
- [University of Pennsylvania](#), Temporary Standards and Procedures for Campus Events and Demonstrations
- [University of Connecticut](#), Large Outdoor Gatherings: Policies and Practices
- [Brandeis University](#), A space for free speech, not hate speech

3. Support Jewish Students, Faculty and Staff

The following steps should be taken to support Jewish students, staff and faculty:

- **Promptly and Directly Respond to Antisemitic Activity and Speech.** When an antisemitic incident occurs on campus, it is important for university leaders to publish strong, timely statements that (1) **explicitly condemn the incident** and explain the steps that will be taken by the university to address the situation and prevent its recurrence; (2) **describe the support** available for Jewish students, and (3) **establish clear expectations for respectful campus discourse** tied directly to the mission of the institution. The Office for Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education (OCR) has made clear that the fact that the

incident may involve protected free speech in no way reduces the university's obligation to step up and speak out.¹

Examples:

- [San Francisco State University](#), statement after an antisemitic incident on campus
- [Drexel University](#), Ending the Encampment on Drexel's Campus
- [Washington University at St. Louis](#), Communication about Campus Demonstration
- [Northeastern University](#), Moving Forward Together

For more information see CCI's [Best Practices: Crafting Statements to Address Antisemitism](#)

- **Prevent discrimination against Jewish students in campus organizations, clubs, and activities.** In many cases over the past two school years, Jewish students have been marginalized and even expressly excluded under the guise that “Zionists” are not welcome. Colleges and universities should take proactive steps to ensure that all Jewish students, including those who identify, or are perceived to identify, as Zionists or otherwise support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, have full and equal access to all the school's student organizations, programs, and activities.
- **Unequivocally denounce the targeting of Jewish students, faculty, staff and organizations.** In addition to Jewish students, faculty and staff members being individually harassed because of their identity or support for Israel, Jewish institutions like Hillel have increasingly become targets of attacks in the form of vandalism and calls for schools to sever ties with the organization. This is antisemitism and is intended to weaken and marginalize Jewish religious and cultural institutions on campus. Colleges and universities must unequivocally reject these antisemitic actions and demands.
- **Ensure Israeli students, faculty, and staff are welcome.** Israeli students, faculty, and staff are an integral part of many university communities, yet since October 7, 2023, many have faced heightened hostility, exclusion, or discriminatory treatment based on their national origin. In some cases, Israeli speakers have been disinvited, academic collaborations have been blocked, and individuals have been singled out or harassed in classrooms and meetings. Universities must ensure that Israeli members of the campus community are treated with the same dignity, safety, and inclusion as all others. This includes enforcing non-discrimination policies, responding promptly to reported bias incidents, and affirming that Israeli voices and perspectives are a valued part of the academic community. CCI also encourages intentional integration of Israeli perspectives on campus to enable viewpoint diversity and demonstrate the diversity of Israelis themselves.
- **Show up for Jewish students.** It is vitally important for university administrators to show up for Jewish students and express support for the Jewish community by attending Jewish community events on campus. The fall season offers many opportunities for administrators to join Jewish students in welcoming environments, including welcome week and orientation activities, Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) programs and services, break fasts following Yom Kippur, Shabbat dinners and commemorations of the events of October 7, 2023.

¹ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires colleges and universities to address speech that constitutes harassment even if the speech is constitutionally protected. “The fact that harassment may involve conduct that includes speech in a public setting or speech that is also motivated by political or religious beliefs, however, does not relieve a school of its obligation to respond under Title VI if the harassment creates a hostile environment in school for a student or students.” See [Dear Colleague Letter: Title VI and Shared Ancestry or Ethnic Characteristics Discrimination](#), page 3.

4. Reaffirm Faculty Professional Responsibilities

The AAUP's guidance expressed in its [Statement on Professional Ethics and Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) is clear that while academic freedom affords faculty broad rights to articulate and disseminate academic ideas, perspectives and approaches in their professional capacity, **that freedom is accompanied by the responsibility to ensure that students can study and learn free from harassment, discrimination and marginalization.** The inherent and unequal power differential between faculty and students heightens the vulnerability of students to faculty coercion and political indoctrination. Universities must protect students from these dangers and encourage their free pursuit of learning.

Faculty have no authority to subject students to their particular views and opinions concerning matters extraneous to the course of instruction, or to significantly insert material unrelated to the course. They may not discriminate against any student on political grounds, or based on that student's legally protected status, nor should they cancel class, exams or office hours to participate in political activities such as walk-outs, demonstrations or protests. They also may not encourage or incentivize students to participate in these events by awarding extra credit or other benefits or holding class at protest sites, all of which may have a politically coercive impact on vulnerable students. These faculty professional responsibility norms, along with their obligations as employees and members of the academic community to uphold a commitment to zero tolerance for antisemitism and other forms of hate, should be made clear at the beginning of this school year.

Examples:

- [University of California, Berkeley](#) policies regarding political advocacy, academic freedom, and instruction
- [University of Michigan](#) prohibiting faculty from refusing to write letters of recommendation based on personal beliefs
- [Stanford University](#) statement prohibiting identity-based targeting of students

5. Ensure Campus Safety

Colleges and universities have the obligation to create and maintain a **physically safe and secure campus** for their students, faculty, and staff. In the wake of heightened protest activity on campus since October 7 and recent violent attacks on Jews motivated by anti-Israel animus in Washington, DC, Colorado, St. Louis, New York and elsewhere, Jewish institutions in the US have increased security at their facilities, while the FBI and local law enforcement agencies are significantly stepping up their vigilance of such locations.

CCI urges colleges and universities to ensure campus law enforcement is properly trained to recognize and address antisemitic conduct that violates criminal law; that there is regular and consistent communication with Hillel and other Jewish communal institutions about security needs; and that there is regular communication with, and plans in place to, liaise with local law enforcement when necessary.

As much of campus life extends into digital spaces, campuses should also take action to **address safety online.** Jewish students, faculty and staff are increasingly subjected to online bullying, doxxing and coordinated harassment, often through anonymous platforms, group chats or social media. Digital attacks can have significant psychological, social, physical and academic consequences and may create a hostile climate that mirrors — and at times intensifies — on-campus

tensions. **Institutions must update harassment policies to explicitly cover online conduct and take swift disciplinary and remedial action when violations occur.**

6. Establish a Title VI Office or Coordinator

Colleges and universities should establish a Title VI office or designate a coordinator responsible for **preventing and addressing discrimination prohibited by Title VI** of the Civil Rights Act, including antisemitism and discrimination based on national origin. The functions of this office or individual should include:

- Offering support to students, faculty, and staff who report harassment or bias based on race, color, or national origin;
- Making sure campus community members know how to report discrimination;
- Ensuring complaints are investigated promptly, fully, and fairly, and complainants are informed of the progress and resolution of their complaints in a timely fashion consistent with FERPA;
- Leading training and education to prevent discrimination prohibited under Title VI;
- Keeping accurate records of complaints of discrimination and tracking trends;
- Reviewing the reports and complaints of discrimination to evaluate if they individually or collectively indicate a hostile environment for students, faculty, or staff so the institution can respond accordingly; and
- Sharing on the school's website aggregate data about Title VI complaints of discrimination.

Establishing clear accountability and coordination over the handling of Title VI complaints will enable colleges and universities to respond effectively and in compliance with their legal obligations. Transparency about the complaints received will help build community trust, demonstrate the school is taking the issues seriously, and give administrators the data they need to respond effectively and prevent future harm.

7. Provide Antisemitism Education

Universities should commit to **antisemitism awareness education for administrators, staff, faculty and students** on a regular and recurring basis. Many students, faculty, and staff do not fully understand what antisemitism looks like today—including when anti-Zionist rhetoric crosses the line into antisemitic harassment. Without that understanding, harmful behavior can go unchecked, and Jewish students, faculty, and staff may be left feeling isolated, unsafe, or silenced. Educating students and employees about antisemitism ensures everyone knows how to recognize antisemitism, understand its impact, and take action to prevent it.

CCI offers customized workshops for administrators and staff that address the above issues.

See: [CCI Campus-Specific Learning Opportunities](#)

8. Join CCI's Campus Cohort Program

We urge college and university administrators to commit to these critical measures designed to prevent a hostile environment that violates the civil rights of Jewish students, faculty and staff. CCI's signature **Campus Cohort Program** offers campuses a **unique opportunity to develop strategies to improve campus climate** through a 10-month program of education, data collection and assessment, and action plan development and implementation. A spring 2025 survey of more than 90 campuses

demonstrated that **CCI's education and training offerings are the most trusted by higher education leaders** seeking to address antisemitism, and a majority credit CCI for motivating them to take significant steps to improve the climate for Jewish students. [Applications for CCI's seventh cohort, beginning in February 2026, are open.](#) For more information, please contact us at cci@hillel.org.

About the Hillel Campus Climate Initiative

CCI is a collaboration between Hillel International, higher education administrators and campus-based Hillel professionals that fosters a positive, affirming campus climate where Jewish students feel comfortable expressing their identity and values, free from antisemitism, harassment, and marginalization. If you have questions or wish to consult with the CCI team, please contact us at cci@hillel.org.