

## From the President's Desk: YCSA - The Yeshiva College Student Senate

By Josh Nagel

The New York Times in May 1969 published an article about Yeshiva University. No, not about a scandal, but rather about Yeshiva President Dr. Samuel Belkin's approval to create a college senate comprised of students, faculty, and administrators at Yeshiva College. The Times called it "one of the most ambitious and far-reaching in the nation... [going] far beyond the formulas adopted at other universities." Universities across America established senates around that time as well - many in response to violent student protests against administrators' decisions - but Yeshiva's model seemed to significantly expand the powers of the student body, without the pressure from protests.

At first, the Yeshiva College Senate operated as a policy-making body, whose decisions became College policy, unless vetoed by President Belkin or the majority of the Faculty Assembly. After a few years, the Senate lost this absolute power, but remained in an influential advisory capacity. As the founding student leaders of the Senate noted, once the students, faculty, and administration representatives on the Senate approved a recommendation, the university community would have a hard time ignoring it.

The Senate acted as a forum to share the responsibilities "for the operations and improvement of the College among the groups that constitute the College" (Constitution of the Yeshiva College Senate, 1969). Six students, eight faculty members, and a small group of administrators (which usually included the Dean, the Director of Admissions, the Registrar, and at least in the early years, the Vice President for Academic Affairs) would meet regularly to discuss aca-

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SHLOMO FRIEDMAN/THE COMMENTATOR

The newly renovated Gottesman Library was recently unveiled. Read more on page 9.

## Stop Simplifying the Problem: Why is American Health Care so Expensive?

By Tzvi Levitin

As America enters the 2016 presidential primary season, we can expect heated debates amongst the candidates on issues ranging from gun control to education reform, health care to foreign policy, and immigration to Planned Parenthood. While these hot-button topics make great small talk material ("Is it just me, or does Rubio mention Jesus more than Hillary tries to use slang?" or "How did he turn a question about Kim Davis into a rant against ISIS?"), they also entice us to crown ourselves experts; we align our views with candidates we already support, echo their sentiments, and consider ourselves part of the "discourse."

However, we get an incomplete picture from watching Democrats and Republicans duke it out. In truth, politicians ignore the complexity of major economic and social issues in order to separate themselves from their opponents and connect with a large audience in a restricted amount of time. Essentially, candidates provide us with Snapchat versions of the facts and their opinions in order to suit the short attention spans of the media and the public. The ways we consume media further distill and trivialize the issues; tweets take quotes out of context, BuzzFeed summarizes entire debates in listicles, and Saturday Night Live reduces campaign endorsements to seemingly unconnected strings of words ("Right-winging, bitter-clinging proud clingers of our guns...." Bad example, it turns out that one was completely real).

Political theater notwithstanding, campaign season provides a great opportunity to familiarize ourselves with current problems facing our country. Health care, a mainstay on the political agenda, imposes a great stress upon the American economy. According to the World Bank, health care costs in the US are significantly higher than in other developed countries with safe and reliable health resources; the average American spends over \$9200 on health care each year, as compared with \$5700 in Canada, \$5000 in Germany, and \$3600 in the United Kingdom.

The most common misconception about higher costs in the United States relates to our privately funded health care system. Many people assume that health care is cheaper in Europe and Australia because citizens pay higher taxes, and the government places these taxes in a public fund spent on health care. However, according to data collected by The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an international economics forum with members from 34 market economies around the globe, the United States spends more tax dollars per capita on health

care than the UK, Canada, Australia, and many other developed countries (See graph on page 13).

This data is surprising because even though Americans devote more tax dollars to public health care than other developed countries, far fewer people actually benefit

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**"ESSENTIALLY, CANDIDATES PROVIDE US WITH SNAPCHAT VERSIONS OF THE FACTS AND THEIR OPINIONS IN ORDER TO SUIT THE SHORT ATTENTION SPANS OF THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC!"**

# The EDITORIAL

## *The Value of Expectations*

By Yechiel Schwab

Expectations often influence our lives' path and direction. Expectations from future jobs or graduate school can affect our choice of major, summer plans, and extra-curricular activities. Many students pursue fields of study or internships which conform to these job market requirements. While for some these plans coincide with their passions and interests and lead to fruitful opportunities, others pursue areas outside of their passions in order to better prepare themselves to fit into the workforce. This can lead to the dulling of interests, and the development of marketplace skills instead of personal reformation.

David Brooks, in a famous 2015 New York Times article, offers a similar distinction when comparing resume virtues and eulogy virtues. He argues that our culture places extreme value and importance on resume virtues, or skills that lead towards jobs and the achievements required for marketplace success. Contrastingly, eulogy virtues, which represent moral characteristics like kindness and caring, are undervalued by our society. Since our society doesn't expect this kind of moral reformation, we then too often ignore these moral values in pursuit of perfect resumes.

While this trend pervades throughout our culture, a recent study from the Harvard group "Making Caring Common" pointed to its troubling placement in the college admissions process and its deleterious effects on young high schoolers. The study, entitled "Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions," (<http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/collegeadmissions>) notes how the applications for many colleges place extreme value on academic success and broad extracurricular involvement, with little expectations for communal involvement or moral contributions, among other issues.

The study points to three main issues. Firstly, colleges place intense pressure on test scores and advanced courses, often encouraging students to enroll in far more courses than they can handle, and increasing the pressure and stress of their high school years. Secondly, the applications themselves often encourage students to list as many extracurricular activities as they can, and work with parents or other mentors to produce perfect looking transcripts and essays, instead of expressing their own personalities and passions. Thirdly, these applications offer no incentive for students to participate in moral work, and no opportunity for students to list contributions like family involvement, or jobs they obtain to help bring income for their families. The study argues that the college admissions process thus produces students who work slavishly to attain high academic achievements, while caring less about their passions and moral contributions.

Simply recalling my own college application experience, or perusing the Yeshiva University Honors Application requirements, confirms many of these claims. In terms of the test scores, the YU honors application sets a strict minimum score of 1400 on the SAT's or 32 on the ACT's, in addition to their recommendations for multiple advanced courses.

On the extracurricular side, the application encourages stu-

dents to participate in multiple academic or athletic teams, and "lead at least one." Further, the applications offer no direct forum for students to express their passion and commitment to these activities, but simply to list as many as they can. To Yeshiva University's credit, the essay section of the honors application has moved farther towards this personal approach, with one essay explicitly requiring personal/creative expression, and even allowing students to choose their own medium for this essay to further display their personality. However, the list of honors requirements still reminds students that honors essays are "error-proof and reflect sophisticated critical responses." Disclaimers like these often encourage parental involvement in these essays, lessening the personal expression available to the applicant.

In terms of communal or moral involvement, though these attributes can be expressed in letters of recommendation or in essays, the opportunities are far less significant and apparent to the student than academic achievement or extracurricular involvement. In those areas student see clear expectations, as well as defined areas to express their success in these areas.

This system of expectations, found in admissions processes across the country, sends the wrong message to young high schoolers. Obviously, an Honors college expects academic success from its applicants, and its application should reflect that. But higher education, and Yeshiva University specifically, should also expect passionate students. Students with unique personalities and interests. Students who are searching to contribute to the world. Students who remain committed to helping their families and communities.

At a time when colleges across the country have endorsed Making Caring Common's study, and sought to shift the expectations of their admissions process, Yeshiva University should join this movement, and seriously examine many of the recommendations offered by this study. Our application should allow students not to simply list their extracurricular involvements, but to express their passions for these activities. We should encourage students not to over-extend themselves academically, and to think deeply about not just their personal academic success, but also about helping the world around them. Students who spend significant time contributing to familial responsibilities should know that Yeshiva University values family commitment.

Expectations convey our system values, and help cultivate the minds of students. The expectations for our university should thus reflect the value of our university, which though rooted in education, also encourages the development of passions and moral involvement.

We must extend this message beyond our admissions office to our own campus community. While many elements in our culture only value personal success and marketable skills, our campus can and should develop its own culture of expectations. We should remind our friends and colleagues around us that our community values kindness, honesty, and the exploration of passions. Expectations lead to actions. The more we expect this type of behavior from ourselves and the community around us, the more we will see this behaviour in our campus community.

## *University Housing Teeming with Residence Life*

By David Rubinstein

The Office of University Housing and Residence Life has started the spring semester vibrantly, opening applications for next year's resident advisors and adding an extensive collection of Nerf blasters to the continuously expanding inventory of opportunities for residents of the Wilf Campus.

The application process, which opened early last week, includes reading a detailed position description, submitting a professional picture and letters of recommendation, interviewing at least once, and completing an online form that asks applicants for personal information and an exhibition of creativity and original thought.

Last year, over 80 candidates vied for positions on the 21-man roster of RAs. This year's application form represents a significant upgrade from last year's.

Most noticeably, the entire application process (excluding

the in-person interview) can be done online and via email. The new form also places a larger emphasis on the ability of the applicant to demonstrate creative thought.

Jonathan Schwab, Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life, explained that creative programming "is one of the distinctive aspects of Housing." According to Mr. Schwab, people have seen Housing programming as "staid" and "boring." Since Mr. Schwab's appointment to head the Wilf Campus Housing office, however, "student-driven creative programming" is a significant part of the vision he has for UHRL. "When we do creative things, we generally get a really positive response," he said. He also said that part of being creative is being open to great ideas from wherever they may come, including from residents.

About going paperless, Mr. Schwab explained that he is a "huge believer" in technology "allowing us to do our jobs

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## *The Commentator*

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*The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.*

*For 81 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

*The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.*

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## 1 Eizenshtein Bakery

When it opens, this new joint, located on Amsterdam between 186th and 187th, will hopefully bring heimish baking to a storefront that has been vacant for years. Though judging by the history of other stores on its block, it might end up only selling brownies.

## 2 Brown Snow

Consider this: when people age, their hair goes from brown to gray to white. When snow ages, it goes from white to gray to brown. In both, a yellow patch is cause for concern.

## 3 Caf Card Tracker

An online system now allows students to see the date, time, location, and amount of all caf card transactions. You can even see which register you checked out at! Now instead of suddenly realizing midway through the semester that you are out of money, you can watch your funds dwindle away in real time!

## 4 Cake Wars

Our favorite fusion of delicious pastry and violent activity. Tied for a close second place are tiramisu torture, apple strudel assault, and croissant crusades.

## 5 Builders of Death Stars

The resistance thanks you for yet another engineering fiasco. These guys are terrible at their job, always managing to sneak some fatal weakness into their otherwise-flawless designs. Maybe they're secretly working for our side...?

## 6 Shameless Resume Boosting

We kinda respect the clubs who don't hide behind a veneer of intellectualism or altruism. After all, isn't resume building the entire reason most of us are in college?

## 7 The SkyCaf

YU mythical lore speaks of a sparkling hall in the sky where heroes dine on extravagant salads and spinach burekas. Whispered of today only in secretive tones, this lavish heavenly feast is rumored to still exist, though the journey there is fraught with danger and only the most valiant and brave can partake.



# 7 UP 7 DOWN

## 1 The Nagel Lobby

The construction is over, the wall is permanent, and we now have absolutely no idea what to do in the area in front of the stairs. Can we get a couch there? Or an inflatable pool? Anything to break up the drab gray of this awkwardly empty space.

## 2 Change.org Petitions

More library hours! No finals on Sunday! Vacation on Groundhog Day! There is a fine line between presenting constructive criticism and just being whiny. And you have crossed it.

## 3 Punxsutawney Phil

In an undemocratic and, quite frankly, paternalistic ritual, Phil and his "Inner Circle" of tuxedoed white males get to decide for all of us when spring will come. Someone has got to speak truth to power and bring down this mammal-dominated men's club.

## 4 "The Sephardim are Coming!!!!"

A direct quote from a YStud sent by YU Sephardim. What is this, some kind of race war?

## 5 Noisy Radiators

Can someone show me where the volume button is on my heater? I do not appreciate being awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of a person trying to break down my wall with a sledgehammer.

## 6 People Who Send Way Too Many YStuds

You know who you are, and I have one word for you: unsubscribe.

## 7 Jeb Bush

At a campaign event in New Hampshire, the hapless Jeb! had to literally ask his audience to "please clap" after an impassioned speech fell totally flat. Given his recent lackluster performance, we suggest that the exclamation point in his campaign logo be substituted for a semicolon.



## News Briefs

By Commentator Staff

### YSU Vice President of Classes Jacob Herenstein Runs for Local Town Council

Continuing to explore opportunity in the realm of elected office, YSU Vice President Jacob Herenstein has declared a candidacy for one of 3 available slots on the 7-member Teaneck Town Council. Herenstein, a resident of Teaneck, NJ his entire life and by far the youngest candidate in the race, will be running against 6 other Teaneck residents, including two incumbent council members, Councilmen Mark Schwartz and Henry Pruitt. In order to be placed on the ballot, Herenstein must gather 261 signatures by March 7th. Despite his age and lack of experience in local politics, Herenstein is hopeful he can add a fresh voice to the council and has already begun weighing in on local issues like the development of new apartment buildings in a relatively undeveloped part of town, which he supports. Herenstein said "I decided to run for town council because I truly believe I can make a difference in Teaneck's growth." He continued, "I have been a resident of Teaneck since 1996. When I grew up, places like Cedar Lane were thriving with businesses, restaurants, and stores. Now, the same establishments struggle to remain open. I believe that with more multi-family residential units, there can be more commercial stability in town, thereby helping these establishments remain open and adding to Teaneck's culture." The election will take place on May 10th.

### Robert Kraft to Receive Honorary Title at Commencement

Robert Kraft, founder, chairman, and CEO of the Kraft Group and owner of the New England Patriots, will receive an honorary degree and deliver the commencement speech this May as hundreds of Yeshiva University undergraduates receive their diploma at Madison Square Garden. Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel said that Mr. Kraft's "success on and off the field, his profound humanity, his willingness to stand up for the Jewish people and Jewish causes make him an ideal role model for our students." Mr. Kraft, who has donated upwards of \$100 million to charitable causes, will receive the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, highlighting his staunch commitment to the betterment of humanity. Mr. Kraft joins a list of notable YU honorary degree recipients, including four United States Presidents.

### HOUSING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

more efficiently," specifically in the context that it can "allow for more human interaction." Mr. Schwab said that by moving the application online, he was able to save himself time that paperwork would imply. As a result, he was able to extend the allotted time of each in-person interview.

Yoni Shedlo, who plans on applying to be an RA next year, thought the application was "straightforward" and that its questions were indicative of what UHRL is looking for in candidates. "The applications seems to be geared towards finding motivated, diverse, and thoughtful YU students to assist in bringing a greater sense of community to dorm life," he reflected. Mr. Shedlo, a junior studying political science, said he would like to be involved in campus life as an RA because he has "discovered that one of the simplest ways to enjoy YU is to be as involved as possible."

One activity in which a growing number of students are becoming involved is Nerf Wars, sponsored and run by the Office of University Housing and Residence Life. UHRL staff sets up the Nerf Wars arena with different structures for cover, including an inflatable birthday cake over five feet tall, and provides an arsenal of over 60 Nerf blasters, including manual and electrically powered foam dart shooters.

Most recently, UHRL hosted Nerf Wars on Saturday night, January 30 as part of the Community Shabbat. Dozens of students and local residents took up Nerf blasters in the MTA gym and played elimination-style and capture-the-flag rounds. Previously, Nerf Wars debuted as part of orientation for students arriving for the spring semester.

Mr. Schwab, who conceived the idea for the activity while reading Ender's Game during downtime at jury duty, thought that together with Escape the Dorm, Nerf Wars resonates with UHRL's distinction of being an office "where creativity can be engaged and so much student programming can be effected."

What's in store for the Office of University Housing and Residence Life in the near future? "I hope the next big idea comes from a student," Mr. Schwab mused.

## Medical Ethics Society Partners with JScreen to Bring Free Genetic Testing to YU Student Body

By Josh Blicher

In partnership with and funded primarily by JScreen, a renowned genetic testing organization, the Yeshiva University Medical Ethics Society will provide all YU students with free genetic testing—which usually costs \$99—at the upcoming Seforim Sale. To help spread awareness of the importance of screening for genetic diseases, all members of the greater Jewish community are invited to take part in the screening process, which will be conveniently offered on the Wilf and Barren campuses. The test which will be administered screens for over 100 genetic diseases that are common within the Jewish community. The YU Roshei Yeshiva recently published a letter strongly encouraging students to participate in some form of genetic testing prior to commencing the dating process or beginning a serious relationship.

Unlike most forms of genetic screening, JScreen extracts and tests samples of saliva, which contains the same DNA extracted from blood, the more commonly used method to analyze DNA for genetic diseases. Students who are unable to attend the event can deposit their DNA samples in a kit that can be ordered from JScreen.org. According to Rebecca Garber, co-president of the YU Medical Ethics Society, genetic testing has been offered at the Seforim Sale in previous years, but it has neither been free nor available to those who do not attend YU. In a recent interview, Garber stated that the invitation to all Jewish students is predicated upon the belief that every Jew should be tested for these potentially harmful diseases. She posited that YU students

are “fortunate enough to go to a school that satisfies this need for us” in many ways—such as YU screening events at Einstein or other on campus initiatives.

“However, many of our peers do not have this opportunity readily available to them. We recognize this lack and hope to include as many people as possible.” Garber discussed how the Medical Ethics Society has “been working tirelessly with JScreen to ensure that not only the entire student body at YU gets screened, but also that we can extend the screening to all undergraduate and post graduate students, regardless of whether or not they are YU affiliated. Ultimately, our goal is to get as many young [Jewish] adults of marriageable age screened as possible. Our only requirement is that the participants be 18 years or older.”

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**“ULTIMATELY, OUR GOAL IS TO GET AS MANY YOUNG [JEWISH] ADULTS OF MARRIAGEABLE AGE SCREENED AS POSSIBLE.”**  
- REBECCA GARBER

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Echoing Garber’s message, fellow president of the MES Ari Garfinkel expressed that “this event is one of the most important events that the Medical Ethics Society runs. All of our other events tend to be educational or about theoretical topics, but this is a practical and

important service that the Jewish community needs and we get to provide it. This is Medical Ethics in the real world.” Garfinkel also encouraged students who are not currently dating to partake in the testing, for “having



**JScreen**  
Genetic testing just got easy

genetic testing done and dating don’t necessarily need to be connected. There are certainly obvious reasons to get tested before entering a serious relationship or when getting engaged. However, knowing what conditions you may be predisposed to can be vital in taking the necessary precautions to staying healthy.”

In contrast to other forms of screening, JScreen actually shares the test results with the patients while maintaining confidentiality. Although the screening will take place at the Seforim Sale, it will still be done in a private manner. As such, there will be two screening locations: one at Stern, for students who do not want to travel to Washington Heights, and a location at the Wilf Campus.

## Israel Club Hosts “The Truth About the UN” with Ambassadors Roet and Ayalon

By Judah Stiefel

Nearly all the seats filled up in Furst Hall on the YU Wilf Campus on Tuesday, February 2, as students piled in to hear two firsthand accounts about Israel’s treatment at the United Nations. This exciting panel discussion, created and hosted by the Israel Club, featured two prominent Israeli political figures who have each experienced the UN as ambassadors from Israel. It was a rare opportunity for students to hear detailed, insider accounts of the frustrating struggle Israeli representatives face each year fighting for Israel in the UN.

The first panelist was Israel’s current Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador David Roet. His prestigious resume includes serving as the Head of the Bureau for Personnel Training in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Director of the US Consulate Department in the North American Affairs Division, among many other government positions. The second panelist was Ambassador Danny Ayalon, YU Visiting Professor of Foreign Policy Studies, former member of the Knesset, Israel’s former Deputy Foreign Minister, and Israel’s previous Ambassador to the UN. The discussion was moderated by Senior and Co-President of the Israel Club, Yaakov Sultan.

The discussion began with an upbeat tone. Ambassador Roet spoke about the numerous victories Israel had won in the past few years on the floor of the UN. One of its most significant achievements was having the UN hold a platform about anti-Semitism, which according to Ambassador Roet took ten difficult months to arrange. Through great opposition Israel was also able to make Yom Kippur a UN holiday. “Most importantly,” stated Ambassador Roet, “Israel grinds away constantly. We say what Israel stands for without being shy.” He described how it isn’t easy to stand up and speak as a representative of your country when few people in the room want to hear you and many even despise what you stand for. Israel is mistreated in the UN but it’s clear that no Israeli Ambassador to the UN would ever go down without putting up a fight.

When asked about his experience in the UN, Ambassador Ayalon responded jokingly, “In one word it was good. In two it was not good.” He described how the UN still does not help Israel. In his words, “Nothing has changed.” He

compared the UN in 2016 to the UN in the times of Yasser Arafat, former Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization. “They don’t want peace with Israel, they want pieces of Israel,” said Ayalon. He explained how a majority of the UN is dominated by the Arab countries, creating a voting bloc that stifles Israel.

Roet called it “eerie” to see how similar the UN of then is to the UN of now, describing how one of the 20 anti-

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**“THEY DON’T WANT PEACE WITH ISRAEL, THEY WANT PIECES OF ISRAEL.”**  
- AMBASSADOR DANNY AYALON

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Israel resolutions this year was to give the Golan back to Syria. He pointed out how absurd this was by noting giving the Golan back to Syria would condemn even more people to the deadly chaos and anarchy going on there. He spoke about the significant amount of hypocrisy that went on in the UN Human Rights Council. Countries condemn Israel constantly as a ploy to shift the focus from their own countries who commit human rights violations constantly. For instance, Roet explained that countries with slave labor and terrible records when it comes to women’s rights condemn Israel, which offers equal rights to all its citizens.

The panelists also expressed disappointment in a negative New York Times article about current UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. Ambassador Roet was particularly surprised by Secretary Ki-Moon’s hurtful article and disposition towards Israel as his previous meeting with him had involved only Ban Ki-Moon’s expression of gratefulness to Israel for its incredible foreign aid and field hospitals in disaster-ridden countries. Both panelists explained that in appointing a future UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon’s successor would most likely be from Eastern Europe and could never be from the United States or Russia. This is because the UN wants someone with no significant political weight, both ambassadors agreed. To quote Ambassador Roet, “They need someone minorly known and in an X-ray you, would find no backbone in.”

In closing, both expressed their nervousness towards the future. They described how the current students and young adults are the future ambassadors and leaders of the Jewish people. Ambassador Roet feels that the current generation’s narrative is weaker. Says Roet, “[Your non-Jewish college friends] don’t want to hear from Ambassador David Roet. They want to hear from you!” Ambassador Ayalon encouraged the audience to keep working and to spread the word on social media that we have enough facts and material to show the world the truth about Israel and not the strong bias of the UN. Both Ambassadors left the attentive audience with the feeling that although times are challenging we must continue to stand up for Israel just as they do each week on the floor of the United Nations.

The students in the audience left with lots of new facts and a more informed understanding of what Israeli Ambassadors face when working in the UN. Sophomore Benji Wajsberg said of the speakers, “I found it inspirational and even a bit relieving that although the situation in the UN has been so frustrating for so long, these ambassadors know the truth and work tirelessly to fight for Israel.” That impression resonated with a lot of people. Sophomore David Aaronson, a member of the Israel Club who helped organize this event, expressed his happiness with the event’s outcome, saying, “[Arranging the event was] fun but difficult. It was a great, receptive, big crowd. The two panelists came with very passionate accounts that they shared with us in a very motivational way.”

## Another Successful Year of Cake Wars

By Elie Lipnik

The evening of February 4th, 2015 was indeed one to remember. As in year's past, students from both the Wilf and Beren campuses anxiously awaited the most anticipated event of the year— Sharsheret's Cake Wars. As one of the largest club-run events of the year, Cake Wars gives students the opportunity to donate to a great cause while having an amazing time. Students create teams of 5-8 players who work together to decorate the most creative cake, keeping in mind the theme of the year. With well over 300 spectators and participants, this year's Cake Wars appeared to be quite a success.

The event began with buses from Stern rolling up to the Wilf Campus, and students filing into Furst Hall. In an overly-packed 5th floor of Furst, students registered their teams, bought T-shirts and other Sharsheret memorabilia, and made sure to size-up their competition. Students were then ushered into a smaller room to hear from Shera Dubitsky, the Director of Navigation and Support Services at Sharsheret. She delivered a heart-warming speech about Sharsheret and its mission to assist women afflicted with breast cancer, while attempting to find the disease's cure. She explained why Sharsheret is an extremely important organization because it gives individuals strength and a sense of unity knowing that they are not alone in their battle. After a welcome speech from co-presidents Rachel Mirsky, Shlomo Frishman, and Jacob Litwin, the event officially began.

Crowded into Furst's large auditorium, 50 teams of students surrounded their sheet cakes in attempt to come up with a winning design. Each year's Cake Wars has a theme for which students design their cake around—this year's theme togetherness. The theme seemed entirely on point because Sharsheret is all about creating a united alliance of women to give love and strength to one another.

There were many creative and meaningful cakes



*Cake Wars Participants, Sharsheret Director of Navigation and Support Services Shera Dubitsky and the cake designed after Ms. Dubitsky.*

that embodied the message of togetherness, including one team that created a "PinkedIn" cake, a play on the professional network alliance LinkedIn. Another team created a three-tiered cake with little people climbing up stairs titled "climb the cure." One group even made a cake version of one of the judges, Shera Dubitsky. There were many other designs in relation to the upcoming Super Bowl football game, portraying two holding hands, and many other varying compositions.

To chose a winner of the competition, there were a few celebrity judges brought in-- Dani Beckerman, founder of JARS by Dani; Shera Dubitsky, Director of Navigation and Support Services at Sharsheret; Tina, 16 Handles Top Employee; and Dominick Costa, finalist of Seaside Sweets and Treats and manager of Gotham Burger Upper West Side. The win-

ner of this year's Cake Wars was Shake and Bake, with their cake depicting a world, with little figures holding hands all around it. On top, it had the Sharsheret insignia which read "we stand united." First-place winners received a gift-card to Gotham Burger on the Upper West Side.

Around the room, faces were lit up in joy, a fun time was truly had by all. Chantal Levy (SCW, 17') said "Cake Wars is literally the best event of the year. I look forward to it every February!" Comments like these were being thrown around the room all evening long. Moreover, Akiva Marder (YC, 17'), a member of Shield News at the event, said that "there was really great energy in the room, it seemed like everyone was having an incredible time." The president of Sharsheret Club on the Wilf Campus, Shlomo Frishman (YC, 16'), exclaimed "The event was a huge success! We raised a ton of money for a great organization and had an amazing time doing so." As we close out Cake Wars 2016, there is only immense excitement and anticipation for what Cake Wars 2017 has in store.

## Orientation Eases New Arrivals into College Life

By Aaron Szydlo

Students of all variations anticipated the new semester at Yeshiva University: final-semester seniors, returning students, and most exciting of all, first-semester students. Noam Feifel, (Sy Syms '18) said, "I can not believe how fast the first semester flew by; to imagine that I am already starting my second one is crazy. Now that I know what to expect out of school, I am excited to see how this semester will go."

After coming back from vacation, students appeared to be enthused about the spring semester. Ariel Bluman (Sy Syms '16) stated, "being that it is my last semester here, I have mixed emotions. On the one hand, I am thrilled about graduating, but on the other, it is hard to leave school considering it has been my home for the past few years. Looking back on my time here will always be nostalgic, no matter how long after I graduate." However, the most intrigued students of any at YU appear to be the incoming lower sophomores, students returning from a gap year in Israel.

Being a new student on campus is a great deal to absorb at once. While it is hard to make new friends, adjust to the living conditions of the dorms, or get accustomed to all of the classes, perhaps the hardest thing to absorb is orientation. At orientation students receive informational papers, meet faculty, listen to speeches, become familiar with the campus, and more. This is quite a load to be handed. Moreover, spring orientation was crammed into a smaller period of time due to Winter Storm Jonas, which covered campus grounds in almost 20 inches of snow.

Eli Lipner (Sy Syms '19), who recently began his first semester at YU said, "Coming from Israel I do not know what to expect. I did not have any tests or exams, and now I have to prepare to take exams in four classes. It is kind of a culture shock, but I think I will adjust soon enough." Orientation provided students with expectations for the semester, as well as introductions to faculty members who can make the transition from Israel to college more manageable. Rami Laifer (Sy Syms 19) said, "Meeting some of the deans put me at ease. Putting a name to the faces really does matter. The faculty really seems to care about the students and that is very reassuring. I can't wait to see what the semester has in store for me."

As the new semester begins, and orientation has passed, nerves are calming. Students are getting into the ebb and flow of the semester. Before they take a step to look back at the semester, summer vacation will be around the corner, and the next semester will be coming.

## The Wilf Shabbat Experience

By Darren May

Spending Shabbat on Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus is totally unique. No other college offers the amount of orthodox Shabbat programming that YU provides. Whether it is a world-renowned Torah scholar, or a great Jewish politician, YU routinely invites impressive guests to come for Shabbat. Despite this, a sizable portion of the student population doesn't seem to enjoy Shabbat on campus. In recent years, the number of students who attend Wilf Campus Shabbatot has increased, but there is still widespread sentiment among many students that Shabbat on campus is boring, or even, uninspiring. YU's proximity to large "in-town" orthodox neighborhoods, to which a large portion of the student body retreats for the weekends, furthers this sentiment. However, the SOY board, in an effort spearheaded by Vice President Yehoshua Brick, is taking serious steps to change student discontent with the Shabbat experience.

Perhaps SOY's most noticeable new initiative is renaming the larger, heavily programmed Shabbatot "Community Shabbat," instead of "In Shabbos," the past terminology. The idea is to cater to all types of YU students, which some feel was not always done in the past.

"The Wilf Shabbat experience has historically been geared towards the more right-wing segment of the student body" said Brick. "It caters to those who want a yeshiva experience. That's awesome, but it does leave out some other people in the institution who want more of a traditional Shabbat experience. That's why we created the community Shabbat. We're not trying to take away from the feel of a yeshiva Shabbat; all of the yeshiva-styled programming is fantastic. We are just adding other events that we hope will appeal to a different crowd, making Shabbat on campus more inclusive and enjoyable for all students."

There are a number of different new events that have and will be taking place during the coming Shab-



batot in order to make Shabbat on campus more appealing to the general student body. For the first time, there will be events without a specific Torah aspect, but instead geared to appeal more broadly. These are not designed to take away from Torah study, but rather to bring another type of student to the Wilf campus for Shabbat and give him something exciting to do.

Another idea that the SOY leaders are implementing is students panels. These have been popular on the Beren campus for years but have never made it to the Wilf campus Shabbat. The idea is to have different students with similar, interesting stories speak about their own experiences, followed by questions from the audience. SOY hopes that an event like this will draw a wide array of students with a range of interests.

The idea of making Shabbat more appealing to a wider YU student audience is an interesting one. Only time will tell if SOY will be successful with their new initiatives, but they are certainly innovative. At the end of the day, Shabbat is a time of religious devotion where YU students can come together for a day of rest, and SOY, the elected student government responsible for religious areas of the student experience, is trying to make that day more enjoyable for everyone.

## Yeshiva University Sends Student Solidarity Mission to Israel

By Shaina Hourizadeh

On January 16, 2016 a group of twenty motivated students of Yeshiva University set out on a weeklong Solidarity Mission to Israel. The purpose of the Mission was to show support of the State of Israel and to become educated on the salient topics and questions that members of Israeli society are dealing with today. Throughout the duration of their time in Israel, the students heard from a number of speakers, participated in chessed efforts, received training in Israel advocacy and were exposed to multiple sides of the heated conflict between Arabs and Jews, which has escalated over the past few months in the form of stabbings and other terrorist attacks.

The trip began with shiurim lead by the esteemed Rav Dovid Miller, Rosh Yeshiva of Gruss Kollel at Yeshiva University, and by the renowned Rav Shlomo Riskin, founder and Chief Rabbi of Efrat and the Israel Chancellor and Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone Institutions. The topics of discussion included the halachik (religious guideline) ramifications of various acts of war, the ancient and modern historical backgrounds of the complex relationship between Muslims and Jews and a personal view on how best to resolve the tension in that relationship today.

The students also visited the Jerusalem headquarters of OneFamily, an organization built to aid the emotional, financial and legal rehabilitation of victims of terror. After hearing from a victim of terror who was affected by a suicide bombing and who was subsequently forced to re-identify his role in Israeli society, the students worked alongside the victim to fashion Magen David necklaces, which were then donated to children orphaned by acts of terror.

On the second day of the Solidarity Mission, the YU students travelled to the Judea-West Bank territory and took part in a workshop lead by Noam Bedein, a photographer who dedicated a decade of his life to photojournalism in order to document the lives of Jews in Sderot. Through his photography, Noam Bedein aimed to capture the many conflicts and clashes faced by those living in Israel today. He taught participants of the Mission about the longstanding history of a Jewish presence in this territory, marked by the Herodion, King Herod's summer palace and final resting place. As they stood before the Herodion,



YU Solidarity Mission Students with Hatzaloh Founder Eli Beer

the students took note of the stark contrast between the monument representing Jewish life in Israel dating back thousands of years and the glaring red signs demarcating Arab land, legally prohibiting Jews from entering the very same land upon which that monument stands. Following the unique experience of Noam Bedein's personal mission to use photography as a tool for national expression, the students heard from a representative of the Friends of Roots Organization. This group promotes co-existence and works to bridge the gap between Jews and Arabs through peaceful relationships and mutual recognition of each people's connection to the Land.

Other powerful moments of the Mission include a shiva call to the Meir family in Otniel who lost a mother of six, Dafna, when terrorists attacked her in her own home; a meeting with Rabbanit Chana Henkin, who's son and daughter-in-law were killed in a terror attack this past October, leaving behind four children all under the age of ten; a tour of Yad b'Yad, a unique Arab-Israeli day school; a visit to the Ma'aleh Film School, during which the com-

plexities behind checkpoints and forced evacuation of land were brought to life via short films; and an empowering session with the Stand With Us organization. The students spent Shabbat in Yishuv Yad Binyamin, and heard from various members of the community who discussed the theme of life before, during and after the disengagement of Gush Katif.

Students of the 2016 Solidarity Mission to Israel shared a tremendous experience. They spent seven days of heightened emotion, education, exposure and activism in Israel as an expression of their dedication to its cause. These students plan to take what they have gathered collectively and personally from their experiences and to build a program of Israel awareness both on the Yeshiva University campuses as well as on campuses of schools nearby. Alumni of this trip have returned from Israel equipped with the information and knowledge necessary to help students at other universities fight BDS and other anti-Israel sentiments expressed in American campuses today, and they plan to take action in the most effective ways that they can.

## From Yeshiva University to Yeshivas Bein Ha-Semesterim

By Philip Blass

Yeshiva University's Glueck Beit Midrash was packed with over seventy five YU undergraduate students spending their winter break learning Torah in the 12th annual Yeshivas Bein Ha-Semesterim. The program, which ran from January 11th through 25th, offered three classic yeshiva-style sedarim, catered meals, daily shiurim from different YU roshei yeshiva, and various trips, shiurim, and discussion groups with prominent New York roshei yeshiva and community leaders.

Organized by Rabbi Etan Schnall and Rabbi Ely Bacon and funded by the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), Yeshivas Bein Ha-Semesterim, or simply "YBH," offered two weeks of shiurim delivered by a rotation of YU roshei yeshiva in both Talmud and machshava, small mussar (Jewish ethics) groups with semicha students, and several appearances from Tanach expert Rabbi David Fohrman. Additionally, YBH brought its participants to Brooklyn for a shiur from Rabbi Avraham Schorr of Kahal Tiferes Yaakov followed by dinner with Rabbi Eliyahu Shulman, had a sushi and dating Question and Answer session with Rabbi Zvi and Rebbetzin Efrat Sobolofsky of YUConnects, a Question and Answer session with Rabbi Mayer Twersky, dinner with Rabbi Herschel and Rebbetzin Shoshana Schachter, as well as dinners with Rabbi Meir Goldwicht and Rabbi Schnall at their respective apartments. Outside of learning, the gym and workout room remained open, as did the complimentary coffee, hot chocolate, and assorted snacks and sodas.

This year's Torah learning during YBH was officially dedicated in the memory of Rabbi Yosef Weiss zt"l, a YU rosh yeshiva who passed away on December 20th, shortly before YBH began. Rabbi Weiss began teaching Torah in YU in 1938 at the age of 18 when he delivered the post-shiur review for Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, the father of

Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik.

Yeshivas Bein Ha-Semesterim began in 2005 when Rabbi Micael Ellman (YC '05, RIETS '09) and Rabbi Dovid Preil (YC '04, RIETS '08) wanted the opportunity to stay in the YU beit midrash rather than what was the common alternative of learning in other yeshivot in the United States and Israel, Rabbi Bacon reminisced. With permission from President Richard Joel for a YU-sponsored meal program, "students stayed on campus and had a really wonderful time learning in their own yeshiva." "We decided to...make a real yeshiva experience for at least two weeks a year in YU and make it more comfortable to stay in YU," said Rabbi Ellman.

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One of the overall goals of YBH with its programming, explained Rabbi Bacon, is to continue the energy in the beit midrash without pause and form an environment of serious Torah learning for those who return from winter break travel, as well.

Rabbi Bacon admitted that the program was expensive to run. Each student costed RIETS several hundred dollars with a \$60 fee requested from students to cover some expenses, but "the yeshiva itself is committed to helping guys stay here."

YBH "fuels the excitement in the beis medrash for the

spring semester," RIETS dean Rabbi Menachem Penner explained. "Every yeshiva experiences some winter doldrums - especially in a leap year - until Purim can be seen on the radar. The energy created by the guys who experience YBH together plays a crucial role in sparking the new semester."

A graduate of Yeshiva University and former participant in YBH, Rabbi Yakov Grun (YC '09, RIETS '13) reflected on how "talmidei hayeshiva, who balance so many important responsibilities during the semester, need a chance to focus purely on the elevating study of Torah."

Students stayed for similar reasons. Yaakov Hagler (YC '18) wanted time with friends and to make new friends while using YBH as the opportunity to solidify YU as his yeshiva. "I feel that it is important to use YU as your yeshiva as much as possible," he added.

"I really wanted to be in a yeshiva environment over the break," remarked Avrumi Schonbrun (YC '19). "I really wanted to make YU have that yeshiva feel and I felt that a great way to do so would be to stay here over the break, the same way that I wouldn't leave my yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael when there was a break." "I was in YBH for three years and would definitely do it again if I had the chance," January graduate Yaakov Deutscher added (YC '16).

The long term goal of YBH is to give students "a new appreciation" of the yeshiva experience at YU. It often helps students realize how much they can actualize their religious growth here, Rabbi Schnall explained. With a break from the pressures of academia and extra-curricular activities during YBH, they can easily enrich their bonds with Yeshiva.

"Experiencing the beis medrash in a different light often enhances a student's own connections to the overall YU experience. Students enjoy and appreciate learning in YU even more during the regular semesters after participating in YBH."

## The Perks of Being a Procrastinator

By Kochava London

As college students, we have all experienced the downward spiral of procrastination. It starts out innocently enough: "I'm just going to take a short break and watch this baby panda video," you tell yourself. After the video ends, YouTube decides to do you the favor of displaying other baby animals in your related videos. Oooh, a baby hedgehog! I have to see this! Five minutes later: BABY KOALAS!! Seven minutes later: Wait, is that a baby giraffe? One hour and twenty baby animal videos later: How is it 2 AM?! I still have six pages to write about World War II! If this scenario sounds alarmingly familiar, you're not alone. It turns out that between 80 to 95% of college students procrastinate during the course of a semester.

Why do we procrastinate if we know that it will only lead to stress and anxiety? One possibility is that procrastination is a result of misdirected flow. "Flow," a term coined by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, refers to a state of intense focus in which a person loses track of time due to complete immersion in a task. Flow is usually considered a positive experience, but a group of South African researchers found that people experience an undesirable flow when they procrastinate on the internet.

Although procrastination can hinder performance, there is a significant but lesser-known benefit of letting your mind wander. Research shows that procrastination actually facilitates creativity, insight, and problem solving. Setting a task aside or even daydreaming allows the mind to incubate and turn over various solutions to a problem. For example, a study in 2012 found that engaging in a mundane task that requires little cognitive effort, like folding



laundry, leads to greater problem-solving ability compared to engaging in a demanding task or resting.

Anecdotal evidence also supports the link between procrastination and creativity. Some of the most successful startup companies originated as ideas that were simply stumbled upon. For example, Jack Dorsey came up with the idea for Twitter (worth \$19 billion as of October 2015) when he wanted to send short messages to co-workers in his office. The founder of Nike, Bill Bowerman, thought of creating a rubber-soled shoe while making waffles for breakfast. Other successful procrastinators include Steve Jobs, Bill Clinton, Aaron Sorkin, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

An interesting study in 1999 found that winners of the Intel Science Talent Search engaged in productive procrastination, meaning they employed their procrastination either as a form of anxiety to propel them to work or as an

incubation period to generate new ideas. This idea of an incubation period is why experts recommend letting your mind wander periodically throughout the day to enhance cognitive function. In a 2014 article in the New York Times, Dr. Daniel Levitin, a neuroscientist and professor at McGill University, said, "You might be going for a walk or grocery shopping or doing something that doesn't require sustained attention and suddenly – boom – the answer to a problem that has been vexing you suddenly appears. This is the mind-wandering mode, making connections among things that we previously didn't see as connected...Zoning out is not always bad...people who work overtime reach a point of diminishing returns."

Daydreaming is even more crucial today, since our brains take in an average of 174 newspapers' worth of information on a daily basis, five times more information than we consumed in 1986. Dr. Levitin says that taking breaks is "biologically restorative," because even though the brain is an incredibly advanced processing system, it is still limited and can become overloaded if not properly rested.

Given this information, what can you do to capitalize on the restorative benefits of procrastination while still getting your work done? Here are four research-backed tips: (1) Work for short blocks of time, taking frequent breaks every 15 minutes or so. (2) Remember that progress is more important than perfection. Doing some work is better than doing none at all. (3) Picture what will happen if you don't complete your work – the anxiety can serve as motivation. (4) And finally, don't feel guilty about letting your mind wander every so often during the day. Think of it as giving your brain a much-needed break from reading 174 newspapers.

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democratic issues, recommending ways to improve the quality of education and life at the College. Dr. William Lee, in a 1989 Commentator article remarks, "as a forum, it is the one location where students, faculty members, and administrators regularly air their views to each other." He notes how this contributes to the College's healthy "spirit of community" ("Anatomy and Physiology of the Yeshiva College Senate", YU Commentator, 1989).

Throughout the Senate's almost 40 years of existence, it dealt with a myriad of issues, from the mundane to the innovative. Along with its regular discussions on when to start the academic calendar, preventing rampant cheating, and creating programs to encourage more student-faculty interactions, the Senate also initiated the creation of the Writing Center and the College's first support services for students with learning disabilities, today both integral institutions at Yeshiva College.<sup>[1]</sup>

At Yeshiva College today though, no such body exists. Around 2005-2006, the Senate disbanded, but no similar forum arose in its stead. If students see an area for the College to improve or see a need for a new initiative, what can they do? Although occasionally individual initiatives succeed, students with ideas generally lack the power of an organized system that can incorporate the views and support of different parties. In the 1980s, students realized they needed to improve their compositional skills, so they approached the Senate about creating a writing center. The Senate debated the pros and cons, researched how writing centers operate on other campuses, and recommended, as a unified voice comprised of students, faculty, and administrators, to establish such a center. The Senate empowered students to mold their education.

Currently however, the University as a whole seems to place less emphasis and value on student input. The University convened a Strategic Planning Committee at the beginning of this academic year to create a "set of actionable, measurable initiatives to move [YU] forward with excellence over the next few years" (<http://www.yu.edu/strategic-plan>), yet no students sit on the actual committee. Shouldn't an initiative that explores the future of YU include students? The committee of 18 people divides its responsibilities among a number of advisory task forces, which includes the single task force with students, "Student Success and Wellbeing Task Force", which I and only one other student serve on. Dedicated and thoughtful stakeholders of the YU community work on this committee and its task forces, yet I am shocked that no one seems to want to consult with more students

on these issues. Who else would know the impediments to student success and well being than students themselves? I as one single student cannot effectively represent all students on this committee. The current search committee for the next president does not have an official space for students' input beyond the short meeting with student leaders last week. Even within the College, many departments decide on which courses to offer and change their requirements without hearing input from students, who might have a perspective that the faculty did not consider.

YCSA's experience with the Yeshiva College Office of the Dean stands out as a notable exception to this trend. Dr. Joanna Jacobson, Yeshiva College Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, diligently incorporated student ideas and concerns into the proposed changes to the YC

**"CURRENTLY HOWEVER, THE UNIVERSITY AS A WHOLE SEEMS TO PLACE LESS EMPHASIS AND VALUE ON STUDENT INPUT."**

Core Curriculum, including having an open meeting for anyone to contribute. Like Yeshiva College Deans Eichler and Koller last year, both Dean Karen Bacon and Dean Jacobson offer their time whenever YCSA requests meetings and their Office will periodically reach out to us for our input.

Nevertheless, in the long run, the College has no official policy that recognizes YCSA as the official representatives of the YC student body. Our entire existence stems from the Student Constitution, a document that governs extra curricular life via the Office of Student Life, but completely powerless over the academic departments of the University. So any academic ideas we have, usually limited to the brainpower of the three students on YCSA, lack the resources and clout that official student representatives would have. Despite being elected by the entire YC student body, administrators, faculty, and even students do not necessarily see YCSA as academic representatives.

Thus, YCSA would like to reconvene the Yeshiva College Senate to once again have a powerful voice at Yeshiva College. It would offer students an effective forum to propose new ideas for the College and create a space where their unique perspectives, as recipients of the edu-

cation, could inform better academic policies. It could foster "a spirit of community" between students, faculty, and administrators, empowering each party to garner support for their causes. With the approval of these multiple groups, its recommendations will pressure decision-makers to listen to ignored concerns; last year's changes to Yeshiva College- which upset many students and faculty- may have turned out differently if a senate existed to facilitate more dialogue between the parties and had a unified voice to publicly raise concerns.

A number of issues that YCSA has dealt with this year could also have benefited from having the Senate: (1) Although the Core Curriculum proposals contain some student perspectives, students and faculty actually never had a dialogue about it, where rejected ideas could have been explored more fully through discussion. (2) A group of students have proposed establishing a Math Center, similar to the Writing Center. A Senate, like it did in 1985, could initiate that process. (3) A few months ago, Dean Bacon asked the YC Academic Standards Committee (a faculty committee that usually selects two student members) to reassess the policy of accepting only a 5 on high school Advanced Placement Exams. Shouldn't students - who could comment firsthand on the consequences of receiving exemptions for introductory courses from AP credits - and faculty discuss this policy together on more equal ground? (4) In previous years, students would fill out two course evaluations at the end of each course: One for the faculty and deans to evaluate professors and one for students, with the end goal of compiling those evaluations into a database to help students decide which courses to take. Yet numerous complications arose, many of it due to lack of communication and motivation. Despite YCSA's efforts over the last few years, no such database exists right now. Yet a senate of faculty and students could ignite the project forward.

Students created Yeshiva College. In the early 1900s, the students of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary protested the lack of secular subjects taught at their institution. Their desire for a better education led Dr. Bernard Revel to establish Yeshiva College in the 1920s. Thus, students are at the heart of the institution. The 40 years of the Yeshiva College Senate continued that trend of empowering students to shape their education. Now in 2016, as students seem to lack a powerful voice, we need to ensure that we do not lose that defining characteristic of Yeshiva College. We need the Yeshiva College Senate.

## On Air: My Interview with the Co-Presidents of the WYUR Student-Run Radio

By Isaac Krasnopolsky

What do sports, comedy, music, and politics all have in common? Well, these are all categories of entertainment streamed to an international audience from a cramped and stuffy studio on the third floor of the Schottenstein Center. Started by a group of ambitious college students about 60 years ago, WYUR Radio has continually been a shining example of just one of the many extracurricular activities YU has to offer to its students.

Today WYUR Radio hosts 17 student-run shows covering all sorts of topics. The creative individuals who host these shows on a weekly basis have the unique opportunity to adopt new personalities while broadcasting their thoughts and ideas over the airwaves. I recently had the privilege of sitting down with the current WYUR Radio presidents, Daniel Goldsmith and Oren Herschander, to conduct a little Q and A on the current status of the station:

**Isaac:** So I guess let's start from the beginning.

**Daniel:** Well, the universe began about 13 billion years ago. Oh, not that far back?

**Isaac:** What is the YU Radio?

**Daniel:** Well, we're the flagship radio station of Yeshiva University. It's one of the oldest clubs on campus. The club started on an actual radio station, 640 AM. It used to be a really popular club back in the day, so much so that a rule was put into place that prevented a member of the YU Radio from being president of YSU or becoming an RA because of the demanding nature of WYUR.

**Isaac:** I heard Nachum Segal had his start on WYUR back in the day?

**Daniel:** Yea! His son Benjamin Segal was actually the president last year. Oren and I took over this year.

**Isaac:** So you guys are like co-presidents now?

**Oren:** Well, I wouldn't really call ourselves co-presidents per se. We're both presidents.

**Isaac:** You two run a show together, right?

**Oren:** Yep! It's called Live from 185. We're on every Tuesday night at 10 PM.

**Isaac:** I actually tuned into your show a few times. It's some funny stuff.

**Daniel:** Thanks! Honestly, we're just happy the radio is up and running.

**Oren:** Yeah, it takes a village to build a radio.

**Isaac:** What would you guys say your show is about?

**Oren:** Our show is about NOTHING!

**Isaac:** Nothing?

**Daniel:** Right. So freshman year I get a y-stud from WYUR because I'm still reading y-studs at that point. I forwarded the email to Oren and I was like "question mark"? That's basically how it started. We were already friends from yeshiva. We got together and met with the presidents at the time, Benjamin Segal and Barry Muller. We told them we had an idea to do a late night talk show type situation combined with Seinfeld and...

**Oren:** ...Comedy Bang Bang. But that was a little later. Basically what we ended up doing at first was actually plan out our shows precisely. We came up with scripts and everything.

**Daniel:** We stuck to the point and had really tight pro-

gramming.

**Oren:** Yeah, but after a short while we just stopped having time so the show kind of evolved into short term and long term improv. We developed wider themes that eventually began to overlap with our subsequent shows. Like, we made up this sketch one time where Christopher Walken, Nick Cage, and Mark Wahlberg worked in a soup kitchen in the Chrysler building.

**Daniel:** That was probably one of our most elaborate improv sketches.

**Isaac:** So you make this all up on the spot? You guys don't have any game plan going into each show?

**Oren:** Nope. It's pure improv. The trick to good improv is to keep our wits about us and to keep our minds running. We can really talk about anything. As long as we keep talking and sound confident, the ideas will just keep flowing. At that point two things can happen: either it turns out to be really funny or (and this is sometimes even funnier) we actually sound like we know what we're talking about. And then, when you're doing all of this under the guise of a comedy themed show, it just means that you're good at improv. Let me give you an example of what I mean by all this banter. Name a topic.



**Isaac:** I don't know. Quantum mechanics!

**Oren:** Well, I mean like quantum mechanics has to do with little tiny uh... quanta that are basically a mix between a mama bear and a sloth. And they're about the size of, what would you say Daniel, a pinprick? It's not what you may know as a pinprick though. The pinprick was actually named after Alfred J. Pinprick who was a researcher under Edwin Shroedinger.

**Daniel:** The trick is basically to have new ideas on deck as you talk and then let the magic happen.

**Oren:** ...and people are like... can you observe the pinprick or can you not observe it?

**Isaac:** So let's talk about your audience for a bit. Is your show popular?

**Daniel:** So the maximum amount of people we ever had listening to our show at one moment was about 5500.

**Isaac:** 5500?? Is that a realistic ballpark figure?

**Daniel:** Well, again that's the max we ever got. On a typical week we get about 20 people listening in. Not bad for a Tuesday night show on WYUR.

**Oren:** Also, our listeners come from all around the globe. We've had people call in from California, Israel, Canada, Chicago, and even Australia one time. I remember my parents even called at one point too.

**Isaac:** So I've been up to the studio a few times and I noticed there was this room with a ton of records in it?

What's that all about?

**Oren:** Right. So the lore is that like 20 years ago or so the presidents of WYUR stole random stuff from the Morg Lounge and brought it to the radio room.

**Daniel:** This is off the record by the way.

**Oren:** No, it's fine. You can write this. So essentially they stole Rav Soloveitchik's chair at one point.

**Isaac:** Rav Soloveitchik's chair?

**Daniel:** Yeah. Rav Soloveitchik supposedly had this big rocking chair in one of the apartments in Morg. So when one of the guys from WYUR came to take the chair, the janitor told him it was the Rabbi's chair. The Rabbi who he was referring to was the previous person who lived in that apartment - the Rav. So now it's just sitting in that room next to the WYUR studio with all the records in it. There's so much random stuff in that room. There are props from school plays in there. There are chumash notes from the 80's in there. You name it.

**Oren:** I like to call it the Room of Requirement from Harry Potter. If you need something, odds are it's not in there. So actually it's the exact opposite of the Room of Requirement.

**Isaac:** But who acquired all those records?

**Oren:** No one knows. I guess the radio used to play a lot of those records back in the day and the collection just grew.

**Isaac:** That's very cool. So let's discuss operations. What goes into running a student radio on campus? How does it all come together?

**Oren:** We run WYUR like a business incubator in the sense that we are the guidance and support system for all the shows. We're very much for everyone having their own show, as in they do the marketing for it and manage the content. Our hosts get to be completely independent and do their own thing. For us, as the presidents of WYUR, we have no influence over students' radio initiatives. We just help guide students if they need our input.

**Isaac:** What's the primary reason people join the YU radio? Do they join to have a good time or is it something that could potentially help them down the road?

**Daniel:** I think most students do it for fun.

**Oren:** I think it can be potentially beneficial to those who are pursuing careers in creative content. For example, I work in creative content and my colleagues always find it intriguing when I tell them I host and manage a radio station. But I would agree with Daniel in saying that our original motivation for getting involved with WYUR was purely to have fun. The fact that it evolved into something more practical for me was a pleasant side effect. Also, Daniel and I became much closer friends through WYUR because it just gave us an opportunity to just goof around once a week and get to express our fun sides.

I would like to personally thank Oren and Daniel for taking the time to sit down with me and have this interview. WYUR is an "institution" and tradition that has been passed down through YU students for decades. It is really great to see that the radio is doing so well under the auspices of these two co-presidents. Yashar Koach!

Shows that are currently broadcasted on a weekly basis include Business Matters with Michael Altaras, Night Seder with Aryeh Rosenfield and Lev Heller, Advice in the Heights with Yisroel Schatz and Isaac Krasnopolsky, The Eclectic Best with Ariela Greengart, and many more.

To tune into WYUR visit the club's website at [www.wyur.net](http://www.wyur.net). If you are interested in starting a show or want to learn more about WYUR, email Oren or Daniel at [wyur-radio@gmail.com](mailto:wyur-radio@gmail.com).



## Aging Library Tries to Redefine Itself

By Yadin Teitz

It is a somewhat alarming experience to walk into the newly renovated Mendel Gottesman Library on Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus and discover that there are hardly any books to be found. Library-goers entering through the main entrance on the second floor will find only a number of low (and currently empty) bookshelves dotting the corridors, as if to provide a token remembrance of what used to be the sanctuary of the written form. Granted, the function of an academic library has changed radically in recent years. Today's students use libraries as places to study and interact with one another, as places to write papers and conduct research, as places to meet and socialize. They are no longer places to read books. With the advance of the Internet age, eBooks, Google Books, and the like have made it possible for today's college students to need only a laptop to connect them with millions and millions of scholarly works. The notion of cracking open a book has become arcane and outdated, and libraries scarcely have any need to house books on site. Yet to me, at least, there is something still comforting about the physical book, or at least its corporeal presence. Books are, or were, the defining features of a library, with their stately ubiquity manifested in rows and columns of multicolored facades. For a nostalgic like myself, it seems as though ROART, the architectural firm behind the renovation, has come to the conclusion that books as a whole are obsolete, and has thus favored to transform our former library into a modern, 21st-century recreation room. But in its pursuit of contemporary, the library has forgotten its purpose.

This is true of the exterior as well. The formerly Brutalist style structure, with thick, imposing masonry walls and discreetly placed light wells offered carefully filtered light into the interior without compromising the commanding and awe-inspiring nature of the exterior. Today, however, that careful haven of preserved time and culture has been breached. A three-story glass curtain wall with prominent stainless steel mullions cascades down the primary elevation, not unlike a glossy spaceship descending upon a little explored planet. As light is now allowed to enter the building uninhibited, the building's very ethos has been compromised. It can no longer be perceived as a stack of books, as urban myth has long contended. Looking in from the street, one would have difficulty understanding that this building was different than any other utilitarian office building or academic structure on our campus.

This is not to say that the current structure is without any merit. Inside, designers have worked hard to solve some of the library's major functional problems. The heavily confining brick demi walls, banisters, and balustrades of the previous library have been replaced with smooth horizontal bars, offering a sense of weightlessness and an airiness which never existed previously. Standing in the soaring entrance atrium, one can look upwards and observe activities taking place in the balconies on both sides. It feels as though sense has finally been made of the dizzying 1950s design's commitment to collective isolationism, with partial balconies and viewing platforms offering strategic vantage points of below. Parts of the library have been reconfigured, to allow

for larger and more cohesive study spaces and to relegate offices to more convenient locales. As a result, the number of study spaces has increased drastically. Furthermore, the creation of group study rooms offers a wonderful alternative for small clusters of students to work collaboratively without disturbing the rest of the students in the library, a problem which severely plagued the previous incarnation.

The architects have also resolved much of the library's dreariness, through the addition of the aforementioned curtain wall and a second wall of fenestration on the 186th Street elevation, the latter of which anchors a particularly handsome reading atri-

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um with colorful furnishings. Dusty vertical blinds, which ruthlessly covered practically every window in the library, have been removed, allowing light (and less attractive views of the surroundings) to enter the library. Throughout, new lighting, painting, carpeting, and furnishings have freshened up the library and helped enhance the feeling of spaciousness in the space.

Yet while the improvements are drastic, the library is not without faults. Especially on the main level, bright furnishings and faintly colored squares of carpet are not quite successful enough to serve as reprieves for a space that can feel sterile and harsh at times, decidedly due to the banished warmth of books. Likewise, exposed brick walls have become integral design features offering desperate relief from the blinding whiteness of the walls, but appear uncomfortable in their new roles as awkward relics of the old space. The brand new workstations on the fourth floor offer sleek hidden wells for charging

phones and laptops, but the token panes of frosted glass separating stations declare that privacy is obsolete, too, and that shared working is the way of the future. Replacing the low-ceilinged stack areas on the main floor with computer research stations and communal tables has created a cramped space for working, in which the too-bright lights glare directly down on the heads of innocent library-goers. Perhaps this area would have been better suited for a seating area with dimmer lighting, or—dare I say—as a place for books. Yad Shmuel Belkin, a little-used library corner which pays homage to our late president and sports a bizarre combination of polished granite, light wood, glass brick, and mirrored elements, has only become even more of an anomaly. Perhaps the architects were told to ignore this space, as countless amounts of students have no doubt done as well. But it is a shame that better attention could not have been paid to make this space more inviting.

The profound lack of focus on Yad Shmuel Belkin is exactly opposite to the over-attention given to the library's entrance. I have no doubt that, for the sake of the purity of architecture, it was essential to relocate the primary entry staircase into the library building. I have no doubt that the architects found it rather strange, and perhaps inconvenient, that people were forced to enter the Glueck Center in order to access the library. But I question if this was the soundest, most practical decision that could be made. Whereas the former staircase was wide and

welcoming, with a comforting continuous width and sky colored palette guiding the ascent upwards, the new staircase has an extremely narrow, winding center and haphazardly placed wide steps at the base, as if to compensate for what's ahead. At the staircase's tightest point, the primary walls are cloaked in dark black, which only exacerbate the claustrophobic nature of the space. The passageway from Glueck, frequented throughout the morning by students traveling between Nagel's Bagels and the study hall, has been reduced to a shrunken vestige of its former self. Lastly, the so-called swing wall, designed to hide Nagel's Bagels, has succeeded only in dividing the floor space horribly and rendering it virtually unusable.

Perhaps the swing wall's elaborate mural by Connie Rose, a fanciful depiction of the magic of books, was an effort to turn the space into an inviting one in which people would wish to congregate. But to me, it is as if ROART once again showed its vision of books as no longer ensconced in reality, certainly not within the walls of a library. Perhaps it is ROART apologizing for the lack of emphasis on the written word in the new design, as if by reminding bystanders of the building's purpose in the form of NASA-esque depictions of stars and planets and kindergarten-style images of mountains, villages, and birds turning into books, we will be satisfied with the failures of the new structure.

Ultimately, we will be satisfied. The library, if we can still call it that, is considerably more comfortable than its previous incarnation. It is indeed better suited for its purposes today, and it is far better equipped for the future. Might there have been a healthier way to design the library in order to effectively integrate past and present? Undoubtedly. But at the very least, the untouched Mendel Gottesman Library on the 5th floor offers relief for one anxious sentimentalist.

## Tell Me Honestly: Thoughts on R. City's "Locked Away"

By Doron Levine

People who think that our hip-hop culture lacks depth have to listen to Z100 a little more often. This station's often irritating habit of playing the same five or six songs on repeat affords its listeners the opportunity to meditate on the music, to contemplate the various pieces and their relevance to the pursuit of the Good Life.

True, some of the songs they've been airing recently admittedly lack the profundity we've grown accustomed to expect from the likes of Fetty Wap and DJ Snake. But one song that has been playing for some time now on our local hip-hop stations grabbed my attention. Released a few months ago and praised for its reggae fusion tempo overlaid with soothing vocals, "Locked Away" by R. City featuring Adam Levine is refreshing evidence of overlap between the popular and the profound.

Disguised as just another shallow love ballad, "Locked Away" zeroes in on a primary difficulty that lurks behind the institution of marriage. Without, perhaps, having consciously lingered on this particular point, we all intuitively recognize the difference between liking something and loving something. We like a thing for its positive qualities. I like salmon because it is tasty, fireplaces because they are cozy, road trips because they are adventurous, and Arnold because he is an agreeable guy.

But love transcends the appeal of the thing loved. We don't love our parents because they are agreeable – no doubt most parents can be exceedingly disagreeable at times. Conversely, parents do not stop loving their children when they suddenly mutate into cantankerous adolescents. And one doesn't quit loving one's mother country when it loses a war or its economy tanks. We love things not for their good attributes but regardless of them. When we love something, we wish it to be good and we will take pains to make it lovable.

This is irrational. The notion of a stubborn love that persists regardless of the loved thing's lovability seems arbitrary and much less justifiable than the more reasonable policy of liking things when they are likable. What is the nature of this uncritical affection? The bottom line is that nobody knows what generates this bond or why it persists, but we can observe that it resides in situations of natural or biological relations. Love for family stems from consanguinity, and national ties lie in shared ancestry and heritage developed and cultivated upon common soil.

Particularly with regards to the family, its accidental and arbitrary nature is its strength. Biology often pairs children with parents who are similar to them in personality and temperament. But the process of creating new people is complicated and, in many respects, random, and it can therefore yield great surprises, sometimes throwing together a diverse group of people who otherwise would never have associated with one another and calling them a family. And

because families are not created by choice, there is also a general recognition that they cannot be dissolved by choice. Parents don't stop loving their children when they become grouchy because the relationship never hinged on either party's congeniality. And the same goes for siblings. Your brother may be extraordinarily peevish at times, but he is still your brother.

Now contrast this with marriage. In "Locked Away," R. City astutely draws our attention to a dilemma that lies at the heart of this form of love. He points out that, when we consider marriage in

the context of other familial connections, we notice that, unlike other forms of kinship, marriage is not an accident. Wherever you stand on the contemporary debates about marriage—whether you see marriage as a sacred institution or as a mere social construct—as a matter of empirical fact marriage is a legal agreement, originating in liking and not in loving. In our society, two people decide to marry because they find each other likable. Generally arranged by consenting individuals, marriage is the result of personal initiative, not an accident of biology.

So the question becomes, what happens if one of the spouses is no longer likable? In other words, how does marriage make the leap from liking to love? In "Locked Away," R. City and Adam Levine pose this question starkly. The narrator of Locked Away asks his wife (or significant other) whether she would remain with him under the pressure of various trying circumstances, such as his being thrown in jail ("if I got locked away") or spontaneously losing all of his assets ("and lost it all today"). More incisively, he asks if she would still love him if he were to reveal his personal flaws or if he "couldn't be strong." Does she have a basic unbreakable love for him, or does she like him only for his desirable qualities?

The answer to this question would become apparent in the event that one of these possible events should be actualized, but the song's brilliance lies in its articulation of hypotheticals. The

speaker in the song is presumably a free man with comfortable finances, but he realizes that the scenarios that he has dreamt up are relevant to the current status of his relationship; the nature of his wife's love for him now is dependent on how she is disposed to act in these far-out scenarios. However unlikely it is that he will become imprisoned or impoverished, he is plagued by these visions because he wants to know if he is liked or if he is loved.

Our intuitions tell us that marriage should and often does make this transition to love. We are probably all familiar with real-life scenarios where two people get married and then find themselves in a difficult scenario which, had it occurred during the courtship period, probably would have forestalled or cancelled the marriage. But when a marriage remains strong through such adversity, we view this as heroic.

It is regarding precisely this sort of heroism that the narrator in "Locked Away" interrogates his wife. He asks, "Would you really die for me?" At what point does the answer to this question become yes? Surely people choose to marry someone because of his or her likable qualities, but when does the relationship transform into a devoted and self-sacrificing love that no longer hinges on either party's likability? We can only hope that R. City is not done composing and that their next reggae hit will provide us with an adequate answer.



**"LOVE TRANSCENDS THE APPEAL OF THE THING LOVED. WE DON'T LOVE OUR PARENTS BECAUSE THEY ARE AGREEABLE – NO DOUBT MOST PARENTS CAN BE EXCEEDINGLY DISAGREEABLE AT TIMES."**



## In Zusha's Kavana, a Meditation at a Crossroads of Jewish Music

By Netanel Paley

Music reviewers are difficult to please. The most forgiving will not hesitate to dismiss an artist's arduous, year long (or longer) efforts in scathing, career-destroying terms if he or she feels the music "doesn't coalesce around a distinct sonic identity" or the lyrics "provoke less thought than One Direction's syrupy platitudes." The least forgiving - well, you can just check out the Pitchfork or NME websites and see how many of the reviews, day in day out, are decidedly negative.

It's difficult to excuse such snobbery, but one defense I can offer is that writing music reviews is itself difficult. Regardless of their familiarity with music theory and aesthetics, music reviewers cannot use any of that in their writing because they have to write in terms comprehensible to the typical pop music consumer. So, in effect, the content of their reviews is inevitably limited to the "musical identity" of the band, the relative originality or profundity of the lyrics, and a slew of pop culture references and reminiscences of similar-sounding artists to help them express their visceral response to the music. They really have nothing else to say, which might explain why reviews are generally quite short.

That's why I can't imagine a professional music reviewer writing about Zusha's new album *Kavana*. As in their EP, a fraction of their songs actually have words, and even those words are not original lyrics but quotes from traditional Jewish sources. Their sound has been invigorated since the EP's release, but still is not comparable to anything in current or canonical pop music, and certainly not in Jewish popular music. I suppose a junior Consequence of Sound writer could showcase his ignorance of traditional Jewish music by trying to describe what a niggun is. But let's be honest: no one would read it.

No, *Kavana* needs to be reviewed by someone who has actually listened to Jewish music before. I don't claim an extensive knowledge of the past 40 years of Jewish, non-hazzanic popular music, from Miami Boys Choir to Moshav, but I have listened to enough to know that Zusha is not only breaking the mold, but breaking new ground. Today's post-Carlebach Jewish music scene appears to be more about the money than the music, what with popular performers charging several thousands for a single wedding, and similar-sounding, 20-something male soloists popping up every other week. It probably isn't so simple, but it seems like all a Jewish music producer needs to make it big these days is a young guy with a good voice, a bunch of simple melodies and dance-pop hooks, and a half-decent band. And yet people buy it. A lot of it.

So Zusha's timing couldn't be more perfect. Their nonchalant, individualistic ethos, as hipster as their unkempt beards and flannel shirts, serves as foil to the commercial climate of the mainstream. More to the point of this review, though, their organic, atmospheric sound is a refreshing contrast to the derivative, sometimes melodramatic sound of current Jewish music. Songs like "Pashut" and "Child" exude a spiritual sincerity that even the most talented Jewish music producer cannot contrive. And unlike the music of Eitan Katz and Simcha Leiner, neither Zusha's musical horizons nor the emotional response they evoke are limited by a single voice and a simple band. Their layered harmonies and unconventional use of instruments native to Jewish music--the jazz-infused saxophone solo in "East Shtetl" is one--generate the ambience of klezmer and the intense nigunei deveyikut (wordless melodies sung to increase attachment to God) of the Hasidic musical tradition. With such emotional saturation, Zusha has no use for the pulsating emptiness of electronic dance music that infiltrated Jewish music long ago, and that is probably why they avoid it entirely.

*Kavana* is also better by Zusha's own standards. A common complaint I heard about their EP, mostly from people who did not have the patience to listen to it carefully or more than once, was that all of

the songs sound the same. That's understandable, because the six songs on the EP hover around the same trance-like tempo, which recalls that of certain time-honored niggunim of Chabad and Breslov. But if you listen closely, you'll detect subtleties, like dissonant piano flourishes and lead singer Shlomo Gaisin's scat-singing, that make each song musically exquisite. Those subtleties are more pronounced in *Kavana*. Gaisin gets more creative, and more confident, in his vocal improvisation - he is not afraid to get throaty towards the end of "Shuva" and downright weird in "Ikvisa" - and the album features a number of richly nuanced instrumental interludes, of horns in "Mashiach" and of strings in "Forever." This all contributes to a bolder sound than the EP's, a boldness I think is best captured by the uptempo, bouncy rhythm of "East Shtetl." It was indeed a wise move for Zusha to give that track the first spot on the album, because it can convince the casual listener to keep listening.

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**"I HAVE LISTENED TO ENOUGH [JEWISH MUSIC] TO KNOW THAT ZUSHA IS NOT ONLY BREAKING THE MOLD, BUT BREAKING NEW GROUND!"**

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What may be less convincing to Zusha's primarily Modern Orthodox audience is the significance of their role in the modern continuum of Jewish music. Friends of mine who went to the recent concert in Manhattan spoke of a thick stench of marijuana that pervaded the Bowery Ballroom, leading some to question whether Zusha is Jewish music at all. Aside from the fact that such a sentiment betrays a

naively restricted definition of Jewish music, it also ignores the fact that Zusha is not playing solely for Jews. Touring around the world and taking up the model of Soulfarm and Matisyahu, Zusha is just trying to let the world know that Jewish music is more than just variations of "Hava Nagila." Jewish music can be hip, it can be avant-garde, it can sound beautiful. It can also take in outside musical influences while maintaining its Jewish character. Sure, a bar filled with pot-smoke is not the most comfortable environment for a religious Jew; I and many other fans would avoid those kind of venues. But that doesn't mean Zusha's music is any less Jewish than Yaakov Shwekey's or 8th Day's. It only means that Zusha has the opportunity, the first of its kind in modern Jewish musical history, to show the world how soulful and musical religious Judaism can be.



## The Force Awakens: A New Hope's Feminist Alter-Ego

By Yitzchak Fried

I haven't met anyone who's seen *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and did not enjoy it. I don't attribute this to a brilliant plot or spectacular acting (although I do think Daisy Ridley and Adam Driver were excellent). Rather, viewers seem possessed by a simple, undeniable joy: *Star Wars* is back. My theater exploded in cheers when the Millennium Falcon first appeared on-screen, when Han Solo and Chewbacca made their appearance, again when Princess Leia (now General Leia) came on...you get the picture. Plain, stupid happiness. And although I'm no *Star Wars* junkie, I felt it too: a rush of nostalgic pleasure that no amount of skepticism in Disney production could suppress.

Not to give away too many spoilers. Daisy Ridley is Rey, the new (female) Jedi initiate with a powerful intuition for using the Force. In the years following the fall of the Empire, the galaxy has divided into a Republic, born of the old Rebellion, and an evil First Order, formed from the vestiges of the Empire. In one of the many parallels between *The Force Awakens* and *A New Hope*, the story begins with a secret map, stored on a droid (BB-8) and spirited away in the nick of time from the clutches of the Order. The droid crash lands – where else? – on a desert planet, where it meets the toughened Rey, a scavenger of junk metal and old machine parts. When the First Order lands in pursuit of the droid and a runaway storm trooper, Finn, the unlikely trio escape on...but perhaps I shouldn't say.

Like I've said, the movie has striking similarities to Episode IV: *A New Hope*. Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), the new Sith apprentice, is clearly a second Vader. Ren has Vader's ideological propensity for reminding us of the unmatched power of the force. He also (quite unnecessarily as it turns out) wears a masked, voice distorting helmet. His imitation seems self-conscious; Ren idolizes Vader and, in one scene, communes with the twisted remains of Vader's helmet. Rey, our heroine of the Light, similarly brings back memories of Luke Skywalker. Rey has a Luke-like intensity and moral fiber, and the Skywalker genius for technology. Like Luke, Rey lives on a desert planet. And like Luke, she has an awesome hovercraft. Yes, Luke's ship resembled a '70s convertible while Rey's is more along the lines of a bulky hover-cycle. But both convey the same image of young-adult independence and cool.

In addition to the profiles of the main characters, the movie's narrative arc will also seem familiar. The First Order has created a second Death Star, Starkiller Base, and blowing it up is the order of the day. The movie climaxes with the destruction of Starkiller Base, carried out alongside a rescue mission to save the female protagonist, Princess Leia – I mean Rey, who is being held captive there by Kylo Ren.

But even as it parallels *A New Hope*, *The Force Awakens* gives a new twist to classic *Star Wars* tropes. Megan Garber titled her review for *The Atlantic*, "*Star Wars: The Feminism Awakens*," and I must say I

agree. The females of *Star Wars* past were all distinctively feminine: think of Natalie Portman as Padme. Rey is a sharp break from that line. It's informative to contrast her with the original series' strong, female protagonist: Princess Leia. While Leia has a rugged edge, she has a feminine core that is clearly stylized for male consumption. A gentle melody alerts the viewer to her presence throughout *A New Hope*, and Luke's first words upon seeing her are, "Who is she? She's beautiful." Leia may shout and carry a blaster, but she remains cat-callable – she's "Princess" to Han Solo, a title he uses like a diminutive. Despite her seeming independence, she ultimately falls for the jocular arrogance and hairy chest of Harrison Ford. And, of course, she can be posed in an iron bikini.

is not based on his masculine qualities (he has few), but on their shared experiences and her compassion for his troubled past. This is a far cry from the flirty quarrelling that dominates the Hans-Leia relationship throughout the early films.

*Star Wars*' new feminism extends to *The Force Awakens*' rendition of the classic Jedi initiation scene. While Luke learns of the mysteries of the Force through the hoary wisdom of a bearded Obi-Wan, Rey is charged with her mission by the gypsy-like barista, Maz Kanata. "The belonging that you seek is not behind you, it is ahead" she tells Rey, urging her to take Luke's lightsaber and join the Resistance. Their destiny-laden exchange reveals a robust female selfhood that looks to no male authority figure. It goes



Rey, however, is of a completely different mold. Starting with her unisex name and clothes, she defies traditional gender expectations. For several deliberate seconds after she comes on-screen, it's still not clear whether she's male or female; her face is hidden in a hood. This scrap-metal hunter is matter-of-factly confident in a way that Leia isn't. Rey is genuinely confused when a protective Finn tries to take her hand. When Finn asks her "Are you alright?", as if she was his responsibility, she shoots him a look of utter bafflement. Finn's chivalry looks absurd, especially given that Rey outstrips him in courage and fighting ability. As this might suggest, the unfolding relationship between Rey and Finn is very different from any previous *Star Wars* romance. In fact, it's unclear whether a proper romance will develop here at all. By the end of the movie, the two share a deep friendship that, for Rey, seems without sexual tension. Her love for Finn

without saying that *The Force Awakens* passes the Bechdel test. (According to this tool of gender criticism, one can judge a film's gender bias by whether it contains one scene in which two women talk to each other about something other than men.) Thinking back to the previous *Star Wars* movies, I'm pretty sure that they all fail.

Regardless of whether the gender politics excite or annoy you, I'll say this: If you haven't seen *The Force Awakens*, you'll want to. Wait long enough (although you might need to hold out for the very, very end), and all your favorite characters will come on screen – older, changed, yet delightfully the same. Like the beginning of all great epics, the movie is full of unresolved conflicts and mysterious pasts (who are Rey's parents?). But that will just keep you hanging on for the sequel.

## The Dangerous Side of Football

By Joey Chesir

This past Sunday, the 50th Super Bowl commenced, with the Denver Broncos facing the Carolina Panthers. The Super Bowl has long been one of America's most popular cultural events. Outside of the implications of the game itself, which determines the champion of the National Football League, the game's halftime show is widely considered to be an enormous musical spectacle, with some of the world's most popular musicians having performed. Even the commercials that air during the Super Bowl are highly lucrative, with companies shedding hundreds of millions of dollars simply for the chance to be featured in minute-long slots. Overall, the Super Bowl is one of the most financially and culturally relevant events of the year, and has contributed greatly to the popularity of the game of football. Unfortunately, one ongoing issue seems to threaten football's established reputation. This issue is the increasing evidence that playing football long-term may have lasting nega-

tive effects on players' health, often resulting from repeated concussions and other injuries sustained while playing. This problem has been linked to long-term health issues for former players, and has become a major cause for concern among the sports community.

On a technical level, football is by the far the most contact-oriented of the four major sports in America.

**"IF NFL PLAYERS ARE  
PARTAKING IN A DANGEROUS  
OCCUPATION, THEN THE LEAGUE  
HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE  
THE DRIVING FORCE IN MAKING  
FOOTBALL SAFER FOR THEM."**

Players will not only try to score touchdowns, but will unleash vicious hits on opposing players while trying to tackle their foes. Even without considering concussions, playing in the NFL carries much more of an injury risk than in the other major American sports leagues. In fact, recently, when the league considered adding an additional two games per team to NFL teams' schedules, many players opposed doing so, on the basis of the extra two games making it much more likely for players to sustain long-term injuries. Additionally, many players selected to play in the Pro Bowl, the NFL's annual all-star game, choose to skip the game, simply because they feel it is not worth risking an injury just to play in an exhibition. Even the NFL's preseason, which is essentially a brief series of exhibition games intended to help prepare teams for the upcoming season, can often result in serious injuries that cause players to miss sig-

*SEE FOOTBALL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14*

**HEALTH CARE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

from these tax dollars. Whereas taxes subsidize health care costs for all citizens in the countries on the graph excluding the US, only 28% of Americans receive publicly funded health care in the United States; we pay more taxes towards health care than we would if we were Canadian, yet we do not get free health care in return. Instead, our health care tax dollars are only enough to pay for beneficiaries of Medicaid, Medicare, and public sector employee health care. Which is not to say that these programs are bad; given the health care funds we do have available, Medicaid and Medicare are likely the best ways to allocate those funds. But why don't we have enough money to pay for everybody's health care, like in the UK and Canada?

As the graph indicates, we need to spend thousands of dollars more per capita in the private sector to pay for our health care; we spend 18% of our GDP on health care, almost twice as much as the average of all free market democracies, about 9.5%. This means that once you adjust for our country's wealth and population, we spend about \$1.5 trillion more on health care per year than you would expect.

There are several theories as to why Americans spend so much more on health care. In his blog entitled *The Incidental Economist*, Aaron Carroll notes several "red herrings" – things people often believe are to blame for our higher health care costs but which in fact have little to no impact on our spending, either because we overestimate their importance or because they are completely false. For example, some claim America's population is older than populations of similar countries, which places extra demands on the health care system. However, according to OECD statistics, the US has the lowest percentage of people over the age of 65 among the countries in the above graph, and the highest percentage of people below the age of 19.

Others suggest Americans are less healthy than our European counterparts – we are more obese, we smoke more, and we drink like sailors. Proponents of this view believe these risk factors lead to higher incidences of illness and disease, particularly cardiovascular diseases, thereby increasing our visits to the doctor's office and prescription drugs. While anecdotal evidence such as the Heart Attack Grill in Las Vegas (where diners over 350 pounds eat free and waiters encourage customers to order "Quadruple Bypass Burgers" and "Flatliner Fries") would seem to support this theory, we actually have lower smoking and drinking rates than the countries in the graph, according to data analyzed by Carroll. And while Americans are indeed more obese, Carroll claims the increased medical costs associated with our higher incidences of disease would account for only \$25 billion of the approximately \$1.5 trillion in extra health care spending per year.

Another popular gripe against US health care accuses American doctors of ordering redundant tests to protect themselves from malpractice suits. However, defensive medicine accounts for less than 2% of our total health care costs – about \$46 billion, according to the Cleveland Clinic. In fact, in recent years, many states have passed laws preventing physicians from ordering unnecessary scans, and those states have not exhibited any significant decreases in health care spending.

These statistics mean that Americans are not over-utilizing the health care system enough to account for our inflated health care spending. We don't get sick

more often (significantly, at least), we don't visit the doctor more, and we don't undergo more procedures. In order to figure out why we spend so much more, we need to figure out the areas in which we spend more than you'd expect given our population and wealth.

In 2013, John Green made a video for his YouTube channel, Vlogbrothers, attempting to explain this phenomenon. As with most problems involving \$1.5 trillion, claims Green, the truth resists simplicity; hundreds of considerations likely influence our higher health care costs, but four main factors account for a total of roughly \$750 billion in extra spending. Firstly, doctors are paid more in the US than in any other country in the world; adjusting for America's economy, Green claims we spend about \$75 billion more than we would expect in this area. Private insurance and administrative costs, such as marketing and negotiations and hospital management, make up another \$90 billion in spending above what an economy of our size would be expected to spend if we budgeted our money like the UK and Canada. This results in large part from the increased marketing and administrative costs spent by private insurance companies, expenditures largely unnecessary in countries with public health insurance.

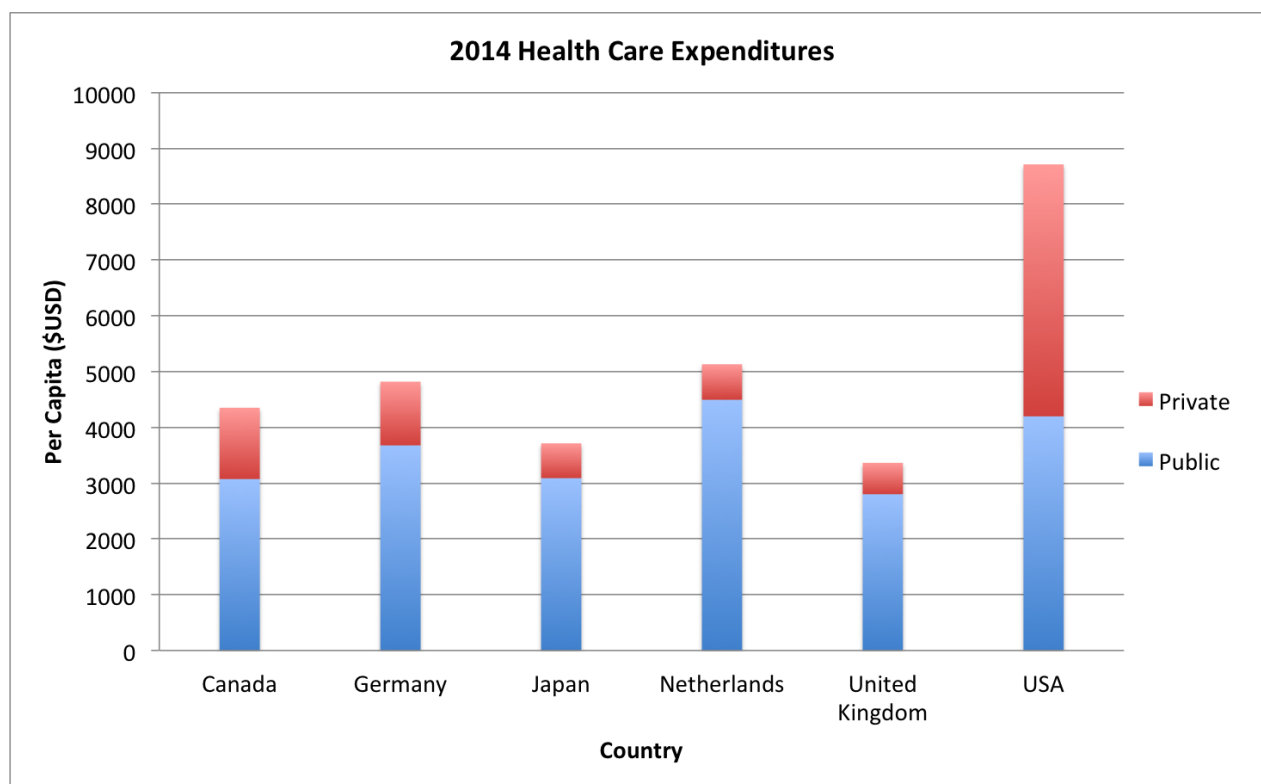
The final two factors Green discusses account for a combined \$600 billion in extra spending, and both stem from the same fundamental issue with how Americans interact with the health care system. Higher drug prices make up \$100 billion in extra spending; prescription drugs cost significantly more in the US than they do in other countries. In December, the New York Times editorial board published a piece highlighting the outlandish drug prices observed almost exclusively in the US. For example, last August, Turing Pharmaceuticals acquired the marketing rights for Daraprim, and raised the price of this life-saving anti-parasitic drug from \$13.50 per pill to \$750 per pill, a 5500% markup. While this example lies on the extreme end of the spectrum, American pharmaceutical companies often charge unjustifiable prices for their drugs.

Finally, we arrive at the largest source of excess health care spending; inpatient and outpatient care, which rack up \$500 billion more than what we would expect per year. It bears reiterating that this spending does not result from Americans receiving more inpatient and outpatient care, it results from the care we do receive being far more expensive. And this, along with the astronomical drug prices, stems from our lack of ability to negotiate with health care providers, medical device manufacturers, and pharmaceutical companies.

In the UK and other countries, where the government provides its citizens with health care, the government can negotiate aggressively with health care providers to ensure the best devices are being provided at the best price. The government chooses only the MRI machine manufacturer with the best quality at the lowest price, and signs a contract for all publically funded MRI facilities. In turn, all MRI machine manufacturers try to make cheap and high-quality MRI machines so they can nab the huge government contract, and these cheaper prices carry over into the privately funded medical facilities as well. With the exception of Medicare, which negotiates much lower prices for its beneficiaries, there exists no such centralized negotiation in the US. We can't negotiate lower prices for our own health care because we can't assign a value to our own health; as Green puts it, "We can't put a price on not dying." This is known as inelastic demand: drug companies and hospitals can charge whatever they want because we need the products and services they provide, and without somebody negotiating on our behalf, we give them whatever they ask for.

All things considered, there exists no simple solution for America's health care problem, no matter how many politicians may try to convince us they've developed one. People say it's malpractice suits, or it's physician salaries, or it's obesity, or it's hospitals, or it's drug companies. But in truth, notes Carroll, "It's all of these things, and more." To create systems in which we have more control over our own health care costs, we need to understand where our money goes, and why. When it comes to understanding, however, we hate all things nuanced and pedantic; we prefer to understand effortlessly and enjoyably. Unfortunately, until Aziz Ansari manages to create an episode of *Master of None* to explain our health care system in a hilarious and insightful way (as only Aziz can do), the burden lies on us to seek out the truth, no matter how much it resists simplicity.

Unless otherwise noted, data for this article comes from *The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*.



**“TO CREATE SYSTEMS IN WHICH WE HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER OUR OWN HEALTH CARE COSTS, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHERE OUR MONEY GOES AND WHY.”**



## Raising Awareness of Awareness

By Hillel Field

We've all heard the complaints. Whether on the internet or after watching the box office-topping movie *The Revenant* during winter break, I came back with an abundance of food for thought. Besides the fact that the movie was greatly entertaining throughout, there were a couple of lingering impressions that I came away with. Both of these reflections came from the same unique quality about this movie, which has probably contributed to its staying power at the box office. This element is the movie's strong emphasis on naturalism. This is a two-sided coin, meaning that not only is the audience exposed to gorgeous displays of pristine scenery, but also to brutally realistic human pain and suffering. An especially jarring example of the latter (spoiler alert!) is a scene where we see Leonardo DiCaprio get mauled by a bear, to the point of near-death. Unlike a typical action scene, there is eerily no music playing during the encounter, and all the audience hears are the harsh sounds of struggle and torn flesh. This goes on for an approximately painful, and might I say awkward, 10 minutes.

My immediate reaction was something along the lines of the above. But as time passed by, I realized that there is another layer to what was going on. Presumably, the director's intention was to get the audience to empathize with the poor man whose body is being thrown around like a rag doll. At the same time though, audience members were highly engaged in empathizing while leaning way back in plush chairs and munching on popcorn.

Is this really what empathy looks like? The occasional hand-to-mouth gasp? A slight jump in the big comfy chair? I think we can all agree to the negative. If a director would make a truly dedicated attempt to arouse empathetic feelings (I'm looking at you Tom Six, director of *The Human Centipede*), it would probably be too much of an emotionally draining experience to go to the movies. And while this particular bear-mauling scene is relatively extreme, it still treads the line between shocking and traumatizing very carefully.

This brings to mind an analogous phenomenon that occurs when listening to music. Anthropologists and psychologists have long debated about why humans are so obsessed with music. There is a fascinating evolutionary theory that proposes that natural selection has basically conditioned us to be musically inclined. Because hearing was such an important sense in a hunter-gatherer society, determining whether you would find food or become food, those who survived and passed on

their genes were naturally the more aurally gifted. This would imply that our perception of music is based on primal instincts. Basically, when we listen to a pleasing song, the same kind of emotions are aroused as those you would feel hearing the footsteps of a predator in the Serengeti, albeit on a minimal level. Listening to music allows us to manipulate highly powerful emotions to our aesthetic benefit, in a safe environment.

Living in the iPod generation, you can't walk more than a couple feet in the city without passing by someone bouncing to the beat of their personal soundtrack.

**"THE REMEDY TO THE ISSUE OF DESENSITIZATION ISN'T A HERMETIC AND ASCETIC RETREAT, BUT TO GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS IN ITS FULLNESS, NEVER FORGETTING TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS."**



One gets the sense that not only do technological advances feed a human obsession with music, but a general need to engage in highly stimulating experiences, like this scene in *The Revenant*. But not too stimulating. As long as we know that we're safe and sound.

I think it is imperative that we keep this observation in the back of our minds, while at the same time, we should appreciate the wonders that technology has afforded us. I don't think it's such wild speculation to be worried about the possibility of a desensitization of society, caused by a constant bombardment of arousing

sights and sounds. And here is where I think *The Revenant* actually did a marvelous job by actually showing us what we might be missing out on if we become desensitized from over-stimulation. The film has numerous instances where it fixates on a particular portrait of nature, such as a melting icicle, or a glimmering lake. And I specifically am not talking about something like a heart-melting glorious sunset. The little things are those that get significant screen time in this movie, that we are sure to miss in real life. The key to catching the subtle yet beautiful is simply by practicing being aware.

The famous standup comedian Louis C.K. poignantly describes a situation which I think is a useful example for this sort of practice:

"Everything is amazing right now and nobody's happy. Like, in my lifetime the changes in the world have been incredible... Flying is the worst because people come back from flights and they tell you...a horror story...They're like: 'It was the worst day of my life. First of all, we didn't board for twenty minutes, and then we get on the plane and they made us sit there on the runway...' Oh really, what happened next? Did you fly through the air incredibly, like a bird? Did you partake in the miracle of human flight, you non-contributing zero?! You're flying! It's amazing! Everybody on every plane should just constantly be going: 'Oh my God! Wow!' You're flying! You're sitting in a chair, in the sky!"

In this hilarious, yet inspiring bit, C.K. strikes the perfect balance between engaging in modern life, and being blown away by what it has to offer at the same time. The remedy to the issue of desensitization isn't a hermetic and ascetic retreat, but to grab life by the horns in its fullness, never forgetting to pay attention to the details.

Now I'm aware that this may come off as hippie-dippie new-agey hogwash. It's also certainly legitimate to wonder what the benefit is in losing ourselves in the real world over losing ourselves in the technological. However, in my opinion, the benefits of "doing" awareness seem to be too far reaching to ignore. For example, it seems to make intuitive sense that if we make a concentrated effort to focus on the initially unremarkable, we will naturally pay closer attention to the needs of others, and the environment. On a religious level too, it isn't hard to see how adopting this mindset could be spiritually refreshing. Besides, it's that time of year right after the Jewish and secular holidays where things just seem too normal, and the grind kicks in at full gear again. It wouldn't hurt to try something new.

### FOOTBALL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

nificant portions of the regular season.

While players have long suspected that football impacted their health negatively, new research has confirmed these theories. In 2012, former linebacker Junior Seau, a legendary player for the San Diego Chargers, Miami Dolphins, and New England Patriots, committed suicide, leading many to speculate that his long career in tackle football had negatively impacted his mental health. In fact, in 2013, Seau's family members announced that Seau's brain, which had been submitted to the National Institute of Health, had indeed tested positive for CTE, a disease associated with repeated head trauma which can lead to dementia, memory loss, and depression. Another recently deceased former football player, Oakland Raiders legend Ken Stabler, was found to have symptoms of CTE in his brain as well. Stabler and Seau are two of many former NFL players to have been associated with long-term brain injuries as a result of playing in the NFL. Former Pittsburgh Steeler Antwaan Randle El stated last month that "If I could go back, I wouldn't" [play football as a career], because of the effects stemming from the injuries he sustained from his career. According to Randle El, "The kids are getting bigger and faster, so the concussions, the severe spinal cord injuries, are only going to get worse. It's a tough

pill to swallow because I love the game of football. But I tell parents, 'You can have the right helmet, the perfect pads on, and still end up with a paraplegic kid.'"

All of this evidence points to one conclusion: The NFL needs to take every possible effort to ensure that



player safety is prioritized above all else. While football is certainly a staple in American sports and culture, and changing anything about how the game is played would likely take a severe toll on revenues, the safety of the players involved is paramount. This issue needs to be dealt with by the league's leadership directly,

and internal investigations must be made. Part of the NFL's responsibility as a sports league is to protect the safety and welfare of its players, who are ultimately the ones driving football's popularity and lucrative revenue. If NFL players are partaking in a dangerous occupation, then the league has a responsibility to be the driving force in making football safer for them. And, if the NFL refuses to take this issue seriously, then it has forsaken its responsibility to keep its players healthy and safe, which is the responsibility any employer has to its personnel. The financial and cultural significance of the NFL is simply not as important as the health and safety of the people involved in its activities.

The overwhelming evidence that football is dangerous and can present long-term health risks cannot be overlooked by anyone, including the NFL. The league needs to take steps to investigate the extent to which football can negatively affect players' long-term health, so that changes can make football safer for its participants. If the current state of football is deemed too dangerous for players to participate, then major changes must be made to how football is played on a technical level, so that players will no longer be at risk. Until football becomes a safer sport, it will pose a tremendous risk to the health and safety of football players, and will cause them ill effects for years after they retire.



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## Shabbat on Campus?

By Hilla Katz-Lichtenstein

I recently spent Shabbat on the Columbia-Barnard campus. I happened to end up talking to a girl who had recently transferred from Stern. When I asked her what her reasons were, she gave several reasons, among them the fact that:

"I wasn't happy with the Jewish community there."  
 "What Jewish community?" I promptly responded.  
 "Exactly."

This is my second semester on campus. Coming in to Stern, I never thought I would face the same struggles as my friends on secular campuses, and in many ways I don't. I don't have to struggle to explain my religious observance to a non-Jewish roommate, nor do I miss classes because of chagim. I had hoped to be in an environment in which people took advantage of the incredible opportunity that they had been given by being in an entirely Jewish environment. I anticipated a vibrant Shabbat life. However, upon arriving on campus, the rhetoric surrounding Shabbat was that it was "lame" or "boring" and since I live close by I will most likely spend my weekends at home. In some ways, the entirely Jewish environment has created an atmosphere of complacency with regards to building a Jewish community. Rather than taking advantage of our enormous Jewish population, somehow YU and Stern have become notorious for their lackluster Shabbat experiences. It seems that because we do not have to put in the same amount of effort to maintain a Jewish community as our friends at secular colleges, we simply choose not to.

At any other college, we would be a few among thousands of students, and it would be our natural instinct to seek out those with whom we share a common ground (i.e. the Jewish population at the Hillel and/or Chabad). We would make the effort, as many of our friends do, to go to Shabbat meals, join weekly shiurim, get invited to meals, go to minyan, and so forth. One would think that at Stern and YU, where we have a plethora of Jews, that our Shabbatot would be that much more enriching, but they aren't. It seems that because we aren't a minority of students, we lack that natural instinct to seek out others like ourselves. This is obvious since we're all Jews here, but isn't it ironic that at one of the only Jewish universities in the world, there is such a severely lacking Jewish community?

As trivial as this may seem, I think a large source of the problem is the fact that students at YU have to pay for Shabbat meals. At other colleges Jewish students generally do not have to pay for Shabbat meals; these meals are free when provided by Chabad, and, with some exceptions, the Hillel on campus is usually also free. So to someone who either lives close by or even to an out-of-towner with access to the other college campuses in Manhattan, why use caf card money to pay for something that is free on every other college campus?

I am aware of YU's current financial straits and that perhaps providing free Shabbat meals may not currently be financially possible. However, if we are truly committed to enhancing the Shabbat life and the overall Jewish community life at YU, then I think finding a way to provide free Shabbat meals is the first step.

Of course, this is not a new issue on campus. YU has had this reputation for quite some time, hence the creation of the Shabbat Enhancement Committee on both the Beren and Wilf campus. Carmelle Danneman, the president of the SEC on the Beren campus describes some of their efforts: "Every week the SEC works with TAC, Aliza Abrams, and Tami Adelson for many, many hours trying to plan the best, and most exciting programming for Shabbat. We meet weekly on Tuesdays discussing Shabbat programming which includes: activities, shiurim, Divrei Torah, onegs, the Bronsteins, special club sponsored shabbatonim, fliers, davening, sstuds, speakers, scheduling, and most importantly... the food. Together we try to make Shabbat here on campus the best it can be."

In terms of improving Shabbat life, Danneman emphasizes that the SEC really attempts to take the

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student body's feedback into consideration. For example, "This year we have really been trying to improve the food and we have worked with Mr. Singer to ensure that the food is satisfying for everyone."

She elaborated, "Everyone has many different suggestions like having coed minyans every week or having coed Shabbatonim every week or trying to get uptown or trying to please everyone by having all the dessert options every week. I also think trying to get people to stay in for Shabbat is difficult. Many students live nearby and want to be home for Shabbat and that is something we can't always control. However, we try to have various speakers and programs each week to sway those who wish to go home not to! So I think some of the bigger factors are a bit out of control, but we do listen to feedback, work long hours, and try extremely hard to make sure everyone's experience is positive and enjoyable."

Issues with Shabbat life on the Wilf campus are a bit more complicated. According to Shua Brick, of uptown's SEC, "Shabbatot at YU are generally geared towards the more "yeshivish" community, which is often unappealing for students who simply want a "Jewish community feel" on campus. The SOY board on Wilf has been working to create programming that is geared towards both demographics at YU. For starters, shabbatot will now be called "community Shabbos" as opposed to an "in-Shabbos", which has a very yeshivish connotation. Additionally, on one Shabbos, there was a regular tisch with a rosh yeshiva happening at the same time as a taboo tournament."

Brick explained that, "There is a mentality on the Wilf campus of "hating Shabbat at YU..." but on an average Shabbat, many YU students still go to minyan on campus and simply choose to eat in their apartments in the Heights. In order to create a more unified atmosphere for Shabbatot, SOY will soon be launching anywhereintheheights.com, a website on which students can sign up to have meals in the heights through YU. That way, it will contextualize shabbat in the Heights as a YU shabbat, and subsequently change the mindset of "hating shabbat at YU."

Ultimately, however, the shift has to come from the student body. Clearly, the Shabbat Enhancement Committee on both campuses has been doing excellent work. But there also has to be a student-led initiative. As a student body, it is up to us to decide that creating a

stronger community at our university is more important than going home every weekend or visiting another campus. The Shabbat Enhancement Committee is a wonderful idea, but their efforts only work if we as a student body take advantage of their efforts.

These claims obviously do not apply to every student at Stern or YU. I am well aware that there are many students, both out-of-towners and in-towners, who choose to stay in for Shabbat on a semi-regular basis. These students are already part of the solution to our problem. I am mainly directing my claims at those who are too quick to write off Stern or YU as an option for their weekend plans.

This is obviously a complicated problem with many different factors that will take a long time to solve. But I truly believe that with the right attitude and true commitment, we as a community can truly enhance the Jewish experience at YU and Stern.

The morality of our country, and of our people, depend on our action.



## YU Security: Lights are on, but Nobody's Home

By Moshe Blockman

In Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus, there are a few things we can rely on: registration complications, elevator delays, and security personnel not checking IDs. While Jewish institutions worldwide have largely bolstered their security and taken greater precautions in this time of turmoil and unrest, here at the Wilf Campus our security remains equivalent to that of a grocery store's. In my experience, a student can go weeks without carrying an ID, with no concern of being stopped at the door.

There are only two clear instances during which YU security will check IDs: in the event of a major terrorist attack, and when the Northern Star perfectly aligns with Pluto during the Solstice apex. Perhaps security leadership believes potential terrorists will be baffled by the element of surprise strategy. As it turns out, this method not only frustrates terrorists, but students, as well.

This past fall, a day (and only one day) after the Paris attacks, security checked our IDs as though our lives depended on it. As I walked into Glueck for my 3 o'clock class, I was met by a flock of annoyed students with a line backed out the door, shuffling through their bags for their IDs. I had my ID on me, but security turned me around to the security office to update my sticker (last updated Fall 2013). I was late to class, but the bonus of having an updated sticker is that I could now check out a book from the YU library. Security hasn't checked stickers since, and I have yet to check out a book (ever).

My irritation doesn't stem from security checking IDs; rather it is the lack of consistency that I find annoying. Be-

cause of the sporadic nature of the checks, 99% of the time I simply have no reason to carry an ID on me. Here's an actual conversation I had with a security guard last year in Belfer Hall as I was going to class:

Security: Sir, may I see your ID?

Me: No, I'm sorry, sir, I don't have it on me at the time.

Security: Why not?

Me: Because I haven't used it in 3 months.

Security: \*Shrugs while nodding in agreement and waves me through.\*

Not only are students displeased by the infrequent checking, but security guards seem tired of the student response and inability to produce IDs on demand. If security began to check for IDs on a consistent basis, I guarantee students would develop muscle memory of slipping their identification out of their pockets upon entering buildings. That's how it works at every other university (and even on other campuses of Yeshiva, including at Stern).

Don't get me wrong; the security staff is filled with upstanding, moral and friendly individuals who care deeply about the students. Some of them—thankfully—do a great job. Others certainly serve their purpose of filling an empty seat by the front doors. The truth of the matter is, I feel more secure by the presence of jolly policemen drinking coffee on the corner of 185th and Amsterdam than by the institution's paid guard staring downwards blankly at his stand, with one headphone in his ear as students walk by.

I'm not implying that YU has a target on its back, nor am I trying to place security in the crosshairs. It's not, however, inconceivable to think that something bad can happen on our campus, and it would be naïve to deny that

fact. As it stands currently, any individual wearing a kippah has far easier entry into YU buildings unnoticed than an innocent Washington Heights local or a female student or professor. It shouldn't be too much to ask security to be less transparent than the library's newly-renovated glass façade.

This article isn't about anti-Semitism, racial profiling, or security overhaul—it's simply asking security to check IDs on a consistent basis. Some of you may claim this is yellow journalism, while others may cry malarkey. If students are frustrated by the implication of having their IDs ready before entering buildings, I'd recommend they transfer to a university with less safety measures. Perhaps I'll even apply for a position on the security staff; I too wouldn't mind getting paid to catch up on my Netflix.



## How To Turn a YU Education into a Professional Sports Job

By Gary Feder

Are you a huge sports fan? Do you secretly - or not so secretly - want to land a big time coaching position for a sports franchise or have some job within the sports business stratosphere? Do you at least dream about attaining one of these positions in an alternate universe, where this seemingly ludicrous idea isn't nearly as outrageous just because you are not a professional sports player? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this is the article for you.

For the longest time, the only way to attain the most coveted jobs in the sports industry, from the front office to the media to the coach's box, was to have played sports professionally. However, times are changing. The world of sports is at its very core a business, and like in any business, leadership is always looking to discover that next edge. More and more recently, that edge has been to hire people for sports jobs who have not necessarily played sports professionally. The sports world is beginning to see many high-level positions go to that guy with a background in business education.

Granted, former professional athletes do still have a stranglehold on one sports position: color commentator. Practically every single major color commentator has played in professional sports. From the NFL, with Cris Collinsworth, Troy Aikman, Phil Simms and Jon Gruden. To the NBA, where Jeff Van Gundy, Mark Jackson and Reggie Miller have owned the craft. And finally, the MLB, where guys like John Kruk, Curt Schilling, Terry Francona and Bobby Valentine have dominated the position for ESPN over the last half-decade. However, positions such as Team President, General Manager, sports writers, and even Head Coach are being opened up to those with a background in business education. After reading this piece, YU students will know what Sy Syms or even Y.C. major would prepare them best for the top sports jobs to be had.

**Position:** Head Coach:

**Ideal YU Major:** Management

**Reasoning:** Out of all of the sports jobs, this is probably the toughest one to select a major, as well as the toughest one to get and maintain a job in without a professional sports history. Just a couple weeks ago, the Cleveland Cavaliers fired their Head Coach, David Blatt, who had taken the team to the championship the previous year and had the team in first place in the current season. While there were certainly many factors behind Blatt's firing, one reason that many pundits have suggested is that star player LeBron James and some of the other Cavalier's players did

not like or respect Blatt, and preferred a Head Coach who, unlike Blatt, had played in the NBA. If someone who had been as objectively successful as Blatt could not muster respect from his team, it will certainly be hard for a current or future YU Alum to command that respect.

With that being said, Bill Belichick and Gregg Popovich, the two coaches accepted by most as the best head coaches in the NFL and NBA respectively, did not play professional sports. They were able to make up for that with exceptional leadership skills and knowledge of their respective sports. Popovich majored in history and served in the army for five years, which surely built character and leadership qualities, while Belichick was an economics major, which has undoubtedly helped him in his second role as the Patriot's General Manager (more on that to come later). If one does not go Popovich's route of attaining leadership abilities via serving in the army, a management major is a very logical route. There are many classes offered in YU's management program that relate to leadership, such as the Management & Leadership course and the distinguished Kukin Lecture Series. If a student takes advantage of courses like those, he could improve his leadership skills and be ready to coach sports professionally.



**Position:** Team President

**Ideal YU Major:** Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics (BIMA)

**Reasoning:** For those who don't know what the BIMA major is, it in a nutshell teaches the marketing aspects of refining a customer target base, providing an excellent consumer experience, and tracking market trends. These are precisely the skills which correlate to what a Team President is responsible for. A Team President is typically direct-

ly in charge of ticket prices and the fan's experience, in addition to overseeing the team's General Manager.

**Position:** General Manager

**Ideal YU Major:** Finance/Economics

**Reasoning:** Unlike with coaching, playing sports professionally is typically not considered a prerequisite to becoming a General Manager. The majority of general managers begin their career in the scouting department. According to a 2013 *Bleacher Report* study, 67% of the NFL's general managers at that time had a college background in scouting. Unfortunately for students, YU has not yet availed them of that department. However, six of the general managers in that study did have a business or law background. Thinking about it, this makes a lot of sense. A general manager's main responsibility is to be in charge of player personnel by drafting new players and signing/releasing existing ones, all while balancing the team's budget. While drafting players is largely about scouting, signing/releasing players and the all-important balancing of the budget are a mixture of knowing the game and doing a great job of money management.

One famous example of someone with an economics background making it big in the sports management world is Paul DePodesta, who is currently the Chief Strategy Officer for the Cleveland Browns. Previously, he worked at the executive level for four MLB teams, including the General Manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers. DePodesta is credited by many for starting the revolution of guys with business educations making it as sports executives. His rise to fame came after being portrayed in the book *Moneyball* as the trusted assistant to the Oakland Athletic's General Manager, Billy Beane. By relying on a combination of analytics and business savvy, DePodesta propelled the low-budget Athletics to one of the best teams in the game. DePodesta and the before mentioned Belichick show first-hand how economics backgrounds have successfully used their skills to help them achieve sports executive success.

**Position:** Play by Play Analyst/Sports Writer

**Ideal YU Major:** English

**Reasoning:** English was the pretty obvious choice for these positions, as both of them require an ability to express oneself in a way that English teaches best. Whether it be an analyst who needs to speak or a writer who needs to write, majoring in English will give a job-seeker the most opportunities to hone the necessary expression skills to become the next Al Michaels or Adam Scheffer. In larger colleges, the major to target would be broadcasting or journalism, but in YU, English is the closest option to either of those.

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## Wait! Before You Take That Adderall, Read This Article

By Benjamin Zirman

Forbes Magazine and Business Insider have both highlighted Umooove as one of the hottest Israeli startup companies to keep an eye on in the coming year. Umooove is the first ever software for face and eye tracking that works with any mobile device, without the need for extra hardware in addition to your phone. Their unique technology, for which they've already filed 20 patents, has attracted the attention of some of the biggest companies in the world, including Apple and Google. Currently, Umooove has produced gaming and focusing software but it has future aspirations to expand to many other markets including advertising, sports, and wearable virtual reality.

Its biggest impact might be in health care, as it'll allow doctors and other medical professionals to examine patients through their own eyes. This could apply to conditions such as ADHD, Parkinson's, and stroke patients, and also to people who have autism or have suffered a concussion. Any regular mobile device, with just some simple software downloads, could become an innovative medical diagnosing device that would drastically change the Healthcare market.

Umooove was founded in 2010 by Yitzi Kempinski (current CEO and CTO), Tuvia Elbaum (current CMO), Moti Krispil, and Nir Blushtein (Current COO). The idea was first envisioned as an effort to help disabled people as Kempinski was searching for an affordable solution to let paralyzed people browse the internet or read content by using only their facial muscles. But he realized the algorithms he had created could have much wider and greater applications. The original founders invested 800,000 dollars from their personal funds before raising close to 3.25 million dollars in funding. Face and eye tracking has existed for some time, but has consisted solely of expensive hardware devices and has generally been inaccessible to the general public. Umooove's first revolutionary step was that it utilizes the simple front facing camera on any mobile device and removes the expensive and inconvenient hardware. What makes Umooove's software even better is that its face and eye tracking abilities have been programmed to overcome challenges such as lighting and shakiness. It is also equipped with an active stabilization technique in order that natural body movements that lead to false-positive motion detection will be filtered out. The software runs at as low as 5% of the Central Processing Unit, which won't drain a phone's battery life, and on top of this technology, Umooove has added an interpretation layer which uses the face and eye movements and converts it into valuable data and a language of interaction.

Although the face and eye movements are very different, when tracked together they compliment one another. The face shows intuitive interactions using controlled and voluntary movements. Eyes, on the other hand, move involuntarily and aren't so relevant for regular interactions. That being said, eyes are very valuable for in depth analysis of movements and patterns as a way of diagnosing brain disorders in addition to tracing and improving brain activity. Kempinski insists using eye movements alone, such as Samsung's eye-tracking scroll tech utilizes, is extremely insufficient. He noted that people make many involuntary eye movements, which can be very confusing for this software, and additionally there is no clear way to differentiate between a controlling eye gesture and a user looking over content that they are reading or looking at. Umooove's technology is presented as two different software development kits; FaceSDK and EyeMovementSDK, which are both available on iOS and Android. This combination of tracking eye and face movements from just your mobile camera can have huge impacts in so many different current and future markets.

In January 2014, Umooove released its first game for phones and tablets. The Umooove Experience game tracks your head movements as you fly and gather purple potions to gain energy. The game also integrates touch for an all-inclusive gaming experience. Touch is used to control the user's speed of flight.

It's a very basic game with only one level, albeit one whose purpose isn't to try and rise up the App Store charts. Instead Umooove wants to show mobile app developers the possibilities of this technology, in the hope of gaining attention and demand. Its business model is looking down the line, hoping that selling this new concept of adding a new interface layer on top of the already existent touch technology to many companies and users. Kempinski said the company already has lined up seven or eight outside game developers who are interested in implementing this technology. The future gaming possibilities are quite intriguing as one can only imagine the convenience and handiness of a game that automatically pauses when you look away from the screen at someone yelling your name, and then continues when you turn face back to the screen. The gaming possibilities are fun and exciting but the application to other markets could have an even greater impact on the world.

**"THE POTENTIAL FOR UMOOOVE TO NOT ONLY SERVE AS ANOTHER COOL FEATURE ON ONE'S SMARTPHONE, BUT TO ALSO POTENTIALLY HELP PEOPLE, IS INCREDIBLE."**

One of the most difficult challenges for people nowadays is undoubtedly staying focused. Between the demands of social media and the constant advertisements that surround us, it is nearly impossible to maintain attention and focus. In January 2015, Umooove released their second app, called uHealth, to help people of all ages overcome distractions. The app is designed with two games, one to improve attention and another to improve focus. Using various eye tracking games, you gradually learn how to ignore distractions, focus, and be more attentive. As your concentration improves and you learn to ignore more distractions, you earn more points and advance to more challenging levels. This therapy, while delivered through a downloadable game, actually employs the same principles that parents used to use by holding two pencils and making their children follow the pencils with their eyes.

This could totally revolutionize the current prob-

lem of concentration and attention difficulties by removing expensive technology or therapists. "The app is meant to be used by anyone who struggles with focus and attention difficulties – about half the people in the world," said Kempinski. He continued "But using eye tracking to diagnose even serious diseases and conditions, like stroke and concussions, is nothing new. Doctors have been doing it for years – everyone, for example, has had a doctor put a pencil in front of his face and been asked to follow its movement. But this is the first interactive tool that utilizes

eye-tracking technology for therapy, and eventually it will be used for diagnosis as well." At this point, the uHealth app isn't meant for diagnosis as that would require Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval and instead is only meant as a brain exercise that is applied to supplement other forms of medical treatment. The uHealth is the first medical application of this technology, but even more applications are in store.

The biggest problem that Umooove faces is the issue of privacy. If eye and face tracking can be on every mobile device, what's to stop it from being used without a person's consent? There are three ways the company plans on addressing this concern. First, the capturing of a person's face or eye movements will not leave the phone and when the data will be sent later it will be anonymized. Second, advertisement and game participation will only have a few pre-warned users being tracked. Finally, they plan on making it possible to present a permission request to users for non-advertisement apps, making the process even more optional.

The applications for Umooove are quite exciting and possibly world changing. One amazing example is how Umooove could help diagnose autism. It has been proven that autistic children avoid looking at faces in an image or video. By playing a video on a screen, Umooove could not only sense whether the child is looking at the phone or not, but also whether they're focusing in on the face or on other parts of the screen. Also, an advertising company could utilize the Umooove software to establish how long a user's eyes lingered on a particular advertisement and see its success at appealing to the customer. "In the future, there's going to be a platform where you can upload a video and see, for every second, how engaged people are. Making any visual content effective is extremely valuable," Kempinski said. Lastly, Umooove plans to use their software for diagnosing neurological disorders but this will depend on clinical tests for accuracy and FDA approval. There is a direct relationship between eye movements and brain activity which has been backed by many scientific studies conducted over the past decades. This could apply to concussions, strokes, Parkinson's disease and many other brain diseases. Imagine a football player running over to the sideline and getting checked by a mobile phone for a concussion. Umooove is not looking to make a wholesale replacement of touch-based interfaces but instead want to their technology and



**UMOOOVE**  
powered by you

product to act as an accompanying feature. "The application possibilities are endless," says Moti Krispil. "Our strategy is driven by the vision to be the de facto standard for natural user interface on mobile devices. We're not just delivering technology, but actually suggesting a new language." Overall, the potential for Umooove to not only serve as another cool feature on one's smartphone, but to also potentially help people, is incredible.

## To Cheat or Not to Cheat

By Shlomo Frishman

We have all been there before - exam day. You need a high score on the exam or risk getting a low term grade. Looking up, you notice that the professor's back is turned slightly. What do you do? Do you lift your head, glance at your neighbor's answers, quickly fill the bubbles in and think to yourself: "Job well done!" I'll get an A in the course for sure now. Or, do you choose the route of integrity, ignore the instinct to cheat, and get the grade that reflects what you know?

If you identified with the first choice, you're far from alone. A 2009 study in *Ethics & Behavior* (Vol. 19, No. 1) found that over 80 percent of college alumni acknowledged they cheated in some form as undergraduates. Researchers and psychologists have tried to understand why this number is so high and what it is that makes cheating so common within college campuses. What makes people do it? Below are three of the common rationales to cheating which researchers and psychologists have identified.

### Why do students cheat?

**Competitive academic pressure** often pushes students to cheat. This holds true especially in small, tight-knit universities, an example being Yeshiva University. Since many of the students in small universities have mutual friends, it is safe to say that everyone basically knows everyone. As a result of this, students may feel more pressured to receive a high GPA so as to not be looked down upon by their peers.

**Student's justification** perpetuates cheating. According to Rabbi Ozer Glickman, Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS, former Senior Vice President of Strategic Risk Management at Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and current professor of Business and Jewish Law at Sy Syms, "Students feel justified in cheating when their instructors create tests that seem designed to trap them rather than demonstrate what they have learned." Basically, students rationalize that since the teacher made an unfair test, it is okay to cheat.

**Self interest** is a major driver behind cheating. Even with all the scholarships that universities distribute, attendance is still costly. Whether the students themselves are paying the tuition costs or their parents are, students want a good return on the investment. By cheating, students believe that they will be able to land a good job, thus making college a worthy venture.

### What is wrong with cheating?

**Halachic prohibitions** are certainly violated by cheating. Rabbi Glickman points out that "there is a widespread agreement among poskim (rabbinic scholars) that cheating on an exam or other assignment violates multiple prohibitions. It is, firstly, g'neivat daat (dishonest misrepresentation) since it creates a false

impression upon the students, teachers, employers etc. Secondly, as the act of cheating may affect a fellow student's prospects for employment or graduate school, it can constitute the transgression of actual g'neiva (theft). In a broad sense, it violates the Torah's admonition to 'do what is right and good.'"

**Academic dishonesty** perverts the central mission of an education: to gain relevant knowledge that will aid a student in his future endeavors. By cheating, a student is cheating himself. The goal of college is to learn and gain valuable information. When a student cheats on an exam, he is not properly learning the infor-

**"A 2009 STUDY IN ETHICS & BEHAVIOR (VOL. 19, NO. 1) FOUND THAT OVER 80 PERCENT OF COLLEGE ALUMNI ACKNOWLEDGED THEY CHEATED IN SOME FORM AS UNDERGRADUATES. "**

mation needed to succeed.

**Long-term detrimental effects** can often occur from cheating. When students graduate and apply for jobs, employers may be hesitant to accept someone due to their prior academic dishonesty. Rabbi Glickman remembers having to rescind a job offer to an executive when it was revealed on a personality check that he had been expelled from school many years before. However, it goes deeper than that. Even if a cheater is not caught, there are serious implications on his future habits. When one uses cheating as a means of getting from point A to point B and becomes dependent upon bending the rules, it can lead to cheating in work which can lead to criminal activity.

**Given that cheating seems to present some se-**

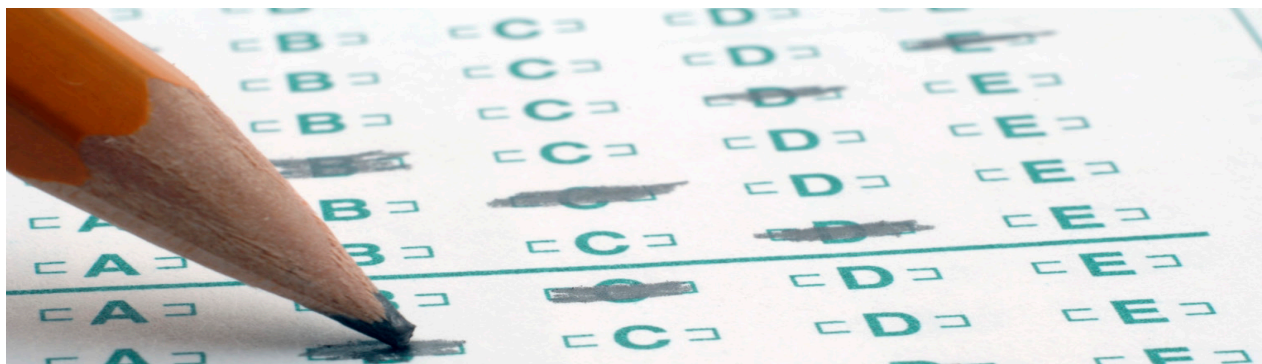
**rious issues, what can be done to curb cheating?**

**1)** Students must answer the question of why they are in college. Is the sole purpose of college to receive a piece of paper that shows they successfully attended school, (an extrinsic motivation) or is it in order to gain valuable information? If students believe that the sole purpose of college is to receive a diploma at the end of their cycle, then cheating is just an easy (albeit lazy) way to get there. However, if students believe that the reason they are in a university is to attain a greater level of knowledge, then grades are not as important as the gain of insight.

**2)** Instructors and institutions as a whole need to address the issue of cheating. Students may know that there is something morally wrong with cheating; however, they may not know the severity of their transgressions. The issues and ramifications of cheating should be addressed early on in a student's education in order to curb the inclination at the very beginning.

**3)** Academic dishonesty must be taken seriously by faculty and administration. If schools are not strict on ensuring academic integrity, or worse - disregard it, then students will have little reason to respect the rules. A college student recently confessed that the reason she often cheated in college was because "the rules were not upheld by the faculty. If they were, I would have been less inclined to cheat".

There is no question: college is hard. The stress of getting a good grade and landing a good job is immense regardless of the university. That is likely why when it comes down to acting dishonestly to score a higher mark versus listening to one's moral inclination, studies show an astounding 80 percent of students have, at least once, chosen the former. However, as Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, once famously said, "We must choose between doing what is right and what is easy." What will you choose?



## Consider Grow with Grant Thornton for Accounting Leadership

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

Syms juniors majoring in accounting are about to enter a critical moment in their professional lives. Students will, for all intents and purposes, begin interviewing for the firm that they may be a partner at fifteen to twenty years from now. This process kicks off with Friday's Leadership Fair at the Beren Campus, where students will stroll up to the Deloitte recruiter they've been dreaming of for years and talk with him or her about Deloitte. Among the firms that will be in attendance are Deloitte, EY, Grant Thornton, KPMG, and PwC. These firms will be at the fair to speak with Sy Syms accounting students about their leadership programs, which are held at their offices across the country and typically span two to three days. These leadership programs are not quite an internship, but they are what often lead to the internship, which can lead to the full-time offer, which can lead to becoming a manager, which can lead to making partner. In other words, things just got serious.

How should one approach this exciting opportunity? While one firm's leadership program may throw a scavenger hunt and another firm's program may

take students to a Yankees game, that is far from what should be prioritized in approaching the fair. Instead, what should be prioritized is identifying the firm that is the right fit for the particular student; students should ask themselves which firm they can envision being a part of in the long-term.

From the moment a student decides to start his career in an accounting firm, the only four words he is taught to think are Deloitte, EY, KPMG, and PwC, or the Big Four accounting firms. If a professor references a firm in class, it is one of those four. This is a problem, a big problem. The words a student should be thinking are "Which firm is right for me?" The Big Four represent a lot of great things which make them the appropriate fit for certain students. They provide delightful resume fillers, an opportunity for salaries typically slightly above that of other firms, and tremendous resources and networking opportunities. What they do not represent is the correct firm for everybody. Not everyone is made for the extreme hours and occasionally rough work-life balance. Some people are looking for a firm that offers a family-feel, practically identical salary to the large firms, and a culture they can grow with. The type of firm which embodies

those characteristics tends to be a dirty word around Sy Syms: midsize firms. In reality, there are several underappreciated, outstanding midsize firms which many accounting students may find more appealing than a large firm. Examples of such firms include BDO, CohnReznick, EisnerAmper, Grant Thornton, Loeb & Troper, and WeiserMazars, just to name a few.

Fortunately for Sy Syms juniors studying accounting, an outstanding midsize firm will be present at Friday's Leadership Fair. Grant Thornton will be there to recruit for their leadership program, Grow with Grant Thornton. Again, determining one's target leadership program should hardly be based on which three day summit seems like it will be the most fun. It should be based on which firm one can see himself at long-term. To help determine if Grant Thornton represents that long-term fit a student may be looking for, I recently sat down for a quick conversation with YU Alumnus and second year Grant Thornton Audit Associate Yehuda Kaminer (Class of '13).

**Neiman: What are some of the core characteristics of Grant Thornton?**

*SEE LEADERSHIP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 21*

**LEADERSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20**

**Kaminer:** Our biggest draw is our culture. Employees want to go to work. Similar to a smaller company layout, our office has low cubicles and open areas which produces a very calm atmosphere. It makes it a lot easier to remain productive and focused when it is a good feeling to be at work.

**Neiman: How does Grant Thornton contrast with some of the large firms?**

**Kaminer:** Grant Thornton takes work-life balance extremely seriously. In November, we implemented something called Flexible Time Off, which is very rare in a big company. The way it works is that instead of the traditional method of having a predetermined amount of paid time off, an employee works with his manager and simply takes time off as necessary, assuming his team does not need him for a project.

**Neiman: What type of employee is Grant Thornton looking for?**

**Kaminer:** Grant Thornton focuses strongly on the type of person they are hiring. While your GPA and experience are, of course, important, our interviewers try to determine if this person would work effectively on a Grant Thornton team. Does he have the communication skills, for example, which we value in our team members?

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 In order to get the best possible idea of what attending Grow with Grant Thornton would entail, below is a sample itinerary of the program's highlights obtained from a participant of this past summer's New York office seminar:

**General:** Throughout the summit, we had the opportunity to hear numerous speeches from partners and a variety of Grant Thornton leaders. They emphasized the firm's commitment to work culture and gave us a very informative overview of the firm.

**Day 1:** Grant Thornton started by introducing the program and giving us a tour of the New York office. We

*Space Jam.*

**Day 2:** The day's major activity was a charity project in which we broke into our teams and got backpacks to fill with school supplies for children in need. Each team was given a certain amount of money and had the opportunity to earn more by completing various challenges. That night's dinner was one of the most memorable parts of the experience. Grant Thornton rented out a restaurant and treated us to a three course meal. After each course, we switched tables and ended up getting to chat with an audit, tax and advisory partner, asking them whatever we wanted.

**Day 3:** We began the day by splitting into our teams and tackling an audit, tax and advisory case study, with the teams being given full-time employees to help work out the cases. At the end, each team gave a presentation to a panel of partners. After this, the head of the New York office said a few goodbye words and the program drew to its conclusion.

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 To sum everything up, many of the students who plan to be at Friday's Leadership Fair would identify with the opportunities which a large firm offers and should, of course, pursue the appropriate leadership program or programs. However, any predetermination that top students should exclusively target the Big Four firms is a flat out disservice to Sy Syms accounting students. Every student, from a 3.00 to 4.00 GPA, should consider both large and midsize firms for both leadership and as potentially terrific career destinations. Large firms have their unique advantages; midsize firms have their unique advantages. As a first step to giving midsize firms the attention they deserve, I beg every leadership aspirant to, at the least, consider Grow with Grant Thornton.



then headed off to kind of like a team scavenger hunt in Times Square. Each team, consisting of six to seven members, received an iPhone which missions got sent to. For example, one mission was to film a recreation of a famous scene in sports history but in reverse so that it would only look correct on rewind. With Times Square as our shopping center, my team gathered our props and filmed a replica of the Michael Jordan dunk scene from

# February 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 <b>Opening Day!</b> 10 am - 4 pm	8	9 NCSY ft. Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin @7:30-9:30 PM Sky Cafe & B1214	10 YU Faculty Discount Night* YuConnects 8 PM Sky Cafe	11	12 Closed	13 OU-JLIC @9PM
14 Genetic Screening 2-6PM Sky Cafe	15 YU Faculty Discount Day* Kodesh Press ft. Dan Klein @8PM Sky Cafe 1 pm - 10:30 pm	16	17 SHEM Event @8PM Sky Cafe	18	19 Closed	20 YU Alumni Night
21 Alumni Day Rabbi Etshalom 4:30PM Sky Cafe	22 Rabbi Dovid Cohen 7 PM Sky Cafe	23 JTorah and Western Thought Straus Center 7 PM Sky Cafe	24	25	26 Closed	27
28 <b>Closing Day!</b> BOOK LAUNCH Susie Fishbein @1PM	29					

\*YU Faculty Discount applies upon showing proper YU ID to cashier. Sale is open to anyone and everyone at that time. Discount for only YU Faculty.

## Activist Investing - The Power of the Shareholder

By Michael Klein

Activist investing. Everyone's talking about it. It seems like every other Wall Street Journal article mentions it. What's the big hype? What is activist investing? And is it beneficial or detrimental to investors? To companies? To capitalism?

First, we need to understand that activist investing is when shareholders (either individuals or groups) push for change. Usually, the activist investor holds a large amount of shares in the target company he is attempting to change. Essentially, activists want to implement their strategy to increase the value of their shares. While their plans may be beneficial to investors and the company's value, it usually contradicts the plans of executives. In order to succeed, activists must gain support from shareholders to persuade the board of directors and other executives to implement their changes. When met with resistance, activist investors often threaten to begin a proxy fight, which often takes the form of replacing board members who disagree with the activists' plan (a form of hostile takeover). However, it is rare for matters to proceed that far. (For a better understanding of proxy fights and hostile takeovers, refer to my previous article.)

The concept of activist investors is not a new one, but recently, its popularity has soared, possibly due to the tremendous success of activists including Carl Icahn, Bill Ackman, Kirk Kerkorian, Eddie Lampert, and Nelson Peltz. Activism gives shareholders a voice. When activists feel the CEO or other top-level management is leading the company down the wrong path, they have the ability to intervene by rallying shareholders and using their power as the "owners" of the company.

There are many different possible reasons for shareholders to agitate the board of directors to push for change. The first reason is corporate governance, which is executed by attempting to change the company's governing documents. An example is reforming the elections for board of directors when there is a staggered board, by making elections for each and every director an annual occurrence, as opposed to directors serving three year terms. Another possibility is to fight for the right to call special meetings (to discuss pressing matters and integrate themselves into the company's decision-making process).

Capital change is the second type of activism. When shareholders feel as if they deserve more reward for their investment in the company, they often pressure the company to issue more/larger dividends, or engage in share buy-backs, thereby increasing the value of their shares since there will be less shares in existence. Such movements redistribute assets (cash) and change the amount of equity (shares). It is essentially "balance sheet activism."

The third reason for activism is executive compensation- an increasing problem in the business world is the distribution of wealth. While it makes sense that someone who performs better and provides more value to a company should make more money, it only makes sense if his compensation is proportionate to his contributed value. Many shareholders feel that CEO's and other top-level executives are receiving

more than their worth, so they lead activist movements to reduce executive compensation. In companies that perform poorly but executive pay is still extremely high, it can be very easy to rile up fellow shareholders and pressure the board to implement change.

The fourth motivator for activism is social policy reform. Corporate responsibility has become extremely important in the eyes of the public in recent years. Gone are the days where companies can get away with just making money and disregarding affected stakeholders. If shareholders feel as though the company is not fulfilling its requirements to the environment or society, activists will push for reform. They may want to increase the company's spending on environmental factors, reduce the amount of harmful toxins released, create programs for those in need, etc.

M&A activism, the fifth and final major category, is what usually makes the headlines. Activists are constantly pushing for mergers and acquisitions. If stockholders see great potential in acquiring or merging with another company, even though man-

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**"ACTIVISM GIVES POWER TO THE PEOPLE... IT EMPOWERS ANYONE WHO OWNS EVEN A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE COMPANY"**

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agement doesn't, the board can be compelled to go through with it anyway. A common source of conflict is whether to spin off part of the company. One example of a company with activist investors pushing for the company to spin off part of itself is Yahoo!

Yahoo! is perhaps best known for its internet portal, which was very popular in the late 1990's. Recently, however, the company has been less and less profitable. Shareholders have been stirring, displeased with the current state of affairs and company

However, there were complications and Yahoo! was unable to spin it off tax-efficiently. Now though, Starboard has made a complete turnaround. Now they are strongly pushing for Yahoo! to spin off its core business, as they believe it's essentially a lost cause with little potential for profitability. Instead, they should keep the few valuable things they still have and focus solely on those, including Yahoo! Finance and their stakes in Yahoo! Japan and Alibaba. The logic behind this is that Yahoo! is currently worth about \$34 billion, including the approximate \$42 billion share in Yahoo! Japan and Alibaba, so it seems that the core business is actually worth a negative value, around \$8 billion. If the core was worth something, Yahoo! would be worth more than their stakes in Alibaba and Yahoo! Japan. Therefore, spinning it off makes the most sense for shareholders, as they would also have shares in the spinoff company. The core business can also distract management from focusing on the few key components which are actually profitable. By concentrating solely on Yahoo! Finance and their shares in Alibaba and Yahoo! Japan, tremendous value can be "unlocked."

Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer opposes Starboard's plan, as she may feel the core business is a valuable asset. Since there might be tax-related issues with spinning off the core business, Mayer may not want to absorb that loss. Additionally, she might think she can turn the core business around into a profitable operation, contrary to the belief of many Yahoo! shareholders. Clandestine meetings between the board, executives, and shareholders to determine Yahoo!'s future have recently become much more frequent. Starboard recently threatened to replace board members in a potentially ugly proxy fight if Yahoo! does not comply with their wishes. Ultimately, it seems as though the shareholders will win at least partial reform. A large, united group of shareholders can be an extremely powerful, persuasive entity. In a recent Forbes article, Eleazer Klein and Marc Weingarten, co-chairs of Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP's Shareholder Activism Group, stated their opinions that activist investing is becoming mainstream throughout the entire world, not just the United States. To quote Mr. Weingarten, "When an activist calls, top executives will now pick up the phone. Companies have learned that you can't just ignore activists and hope that they go away."

Generally, activism is beneficial to stockholders but detrimental to executives and the board of directors (as they are being forced to go against their plans, which can often result in less compensation and greater scrutiny). However, it is quite clear that activism is in line with capitalism- big companies are not

just being run by a few powerful individuals, rather by all its shareholders. Activism gives power to the people--in the case of activist investing, it empowers anyone who owns even a small percentage of the company. The question is, does activism benefit companies in the long-run? Or do corporate raiders such as Carl Icahn make changes in order to increase the value of their shares, make money (usually by selling the shares at a higher price), and then move on, leaving the company to wither and die? This is a matter of hot debate and certainly varies depending on the case and the activist.



trajectory. Starboard, a well-known activist group who is also a shareholder in Yahoo! (albeit a small one- they are the 26th biggest shareholder in Yahoo! with less than 1% of shares), has been making a lot of noise since the beginning of 2015. Yahoo! is a large company, with many different subdivisions and investments. Starboard's activism falls under the fifth category described above- M&A Activism.

Originally, Starboard pressured Yahoo!'s board members and CEO to spin off their huge, 15.4% stake in Alibaba (a Chinese corporation), recently valued at about \$32 billion, and focus on their core business.

## The Executive Series

### An Interview with Mr. Jason Greenblatt

By Raymond Cohen

#### About The Executive Series:

Through 'The Executive Series', The Commentator provides its readership with access to the thoughts and experiences of highly accomplished individuals in the business world. The column has a conversational style and expresses the unique story of each business leader, including their motivations, struggles, successes and failures. 'The Executive Series' also serves as a forum for a broader conversation about leadership in business and in life.

#### About Mr. Jason Greenblatt

Jason D. Greenblatt ('85YUHS, '89YC) received his J. D. degree in 1992 from the New York University School of Law. Following graduation, Jason worked for Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson. In 1997, he joined The Trump Organization. For over 19 years, Jason has represented Donald J. Trump and his children (Donald Trump, Jr., Ivanka Trump and Eric Trump) in legal and business matters, concentrating on all aspects of domestic and worldwide real estate development, financings, acquisitions, operation and management, including luxury condominiums, office buildings, and hospitality (hotels, hotel condominiums, clubs, and golf courses).

Jason is responsible for corporate, real estate, lending, entertainment and general legal matters, as well as diverse business affairs. Jason currently serves as Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer to Donald J. Trump and The Trump Organization. Jason currently teaches a course at Yeshiva University's Sy Syms School of Business called 'Anatomy of a Real Estate Deal'. Jason is a frequent lecturer and public speaker about a variety of topics, including "Ethics in the Corporate Workplace," "The Art of Negotiation," "The Intersection of Today's Technology and Ethics," and "Keeping Shabbos in the World of Donald Trump". He also lectures to teens, college students (and their parents) about "How to Work Hard and Succeed," and on various parenting topics.

Jason lives in Teaneck, New Jersey with his wife and six children.

*This interview was conducted by Raymond Cohen.*

#### Raymond Cohen: When was the first time you considered yourself a leader?

Jason Greenblatt: I'm a big believer in teamwork, as opposed to leadership. I wouldn't say that I consider myself a leader in the classic sense; I consider myself to be a person who can identify when something needs to be accomplished and does everything he can to make sure the job is completed together with teammates, colleagues or family members. While I am the head of the legal department at Trump, I would be worthless if not for the terrific team I have behind me. I think that if you approach things solely as a leader and think that you're at the top of the hill and can push everyone around to get things done, you won't accomplish your goals.

#### RC: Tell me about a time when you failed, what did you learn from the experience?

JG: About twenty-plus years ago, I started a cappuccino company. This was right before Starbucks made its mark on America. I partnered with a company in Italy who manufactured one of the initial coffee-pod machines and I was able to get their machines into many high traffic locations in New York City, including numerous food outlets in Penn Station and several airport restaurants.

The business eventually did not succeed, though I was fortunate to be able to sell the equipment off to the users and get my investment back. But I learned two valuable lessons from the experience. Firstly, I chose the wrong company to partner with; it was an Italian company and their work ethic was completely inconsistent with the work ethic in New York. For example, if a machine broke down or if I ran out of product, I would call up the company to ship it overnight and would get responses such as 'it's the month of August and we're off, call us in September.' I learned to be careful who you partner with, and en-

sure that you're aligned in terms of your goals and expectations in relation to the business.

Secondly, I didn't do adequate market research in the sense that I didn't see Starbucks coming. Perhaps if I had looked more into it, I would've noticed companies like Starbucks starting to percolate in Seattle (no pun intended).

#### RC: Who were some of your role models throughout your career?

JG: I would say Mr. Trump and his three grown children who work with at the company (Don, Jr., Ivanka and Eric) have had a significant impact on me and have served as great role models. They each have different styles, but all of them are consistently inspiring and motivating. They are demanding in an appropriate way and they instill a desire throughout the organization, at all levels, to seek to achieve the highest standards in all that we do.

#### RC: In your experience, what intangible qualities separate the successful from the unsuccessful?

JG: Going the extra mile will really separate you



from the pack. You can do your job and be average, or you can go above and beyond in doing your job and you'll end up miles ahead. So many people are satisfied with simply doing a 'good enough' job. If you really want to impress the people around you, you have to take that job - own it, live it, breathe it - and deliver it back to whoever gave to you in as good a package as you possibly can.

#### RC: Would you recommend law school to current undergrads?

JG: If somebody has a passion for law, then I would definitely recommend it as a solid and challenging career. For those who aren't interested in becoming a lawyer, but want to use law school to get into the business world, I would say that while you will gain important skills in law school, there are others paths to get into the business world that often are more useful and practical. I would say that it is a great field if you have a passion for law, and it is possible to move from law onto the business side if you have the right training, experience and luck. But I would not view law school as necessarily the correct path to become a business person.

#### RC: How are you able to manage the elusive 'work-life balance'?

JG: The work-life balance is probably one of my most difficult challenges. I have a demanding job, and a large family that I want to enjoy and spend as much time with as I possibly can, and I have obligations to the community. Each Shabbat I ask myself three questions: 1) Did I give everything to my employer to do the job that is expected of me? 2) Was I

a good father and husband so that I gave my family everything that I'm obligated and want to give them for them to achieve, succeed and be happy? 3) Did I help my community?

As much as I love my job, I know that I'm not put on this earth just to be a lawyer for The Trump Organization; I recognize that I need give back. And so I make sure that those three legs: family, job and community are always a part of my life. Some weeks I add more attention to one and detract from another, but on a long term basis I always strive to try to have answered those questions with a confident "yes."

#### RC: What was one personal weakness that you had to overcome in order to achieve success in your career?

JG: I'm generally a shy person, and that does not help when you're trying to make an impact at the type of job that I have. I've had to work on myself to be more outgoing and, to learn how to speak publicly. For example, probably the first time I spoke about what it's like to be an Orthodox Jew in the world of Donald Trump was a pure chance opportunity when I got stuck somewhere for Shabbos, and the Chabad Rabbi at the University of Virginia that was hosting me asked me to get up and speak to that point. From that opportunity, I have now spoken at many places about keeping Shabbos in the world of Donald Trump.

#### RC: What was the toughest moment of your career?

JG: This goes back to the challenge of being Shomer Shabbos in the world of billion-dollar deals. I was the lead lawyer on a huge transaction that was supposed to be finished before the upcoming three-day Jewish holiday when I would be completely out of contact. I did everything I could to get it done, I slept in the office multiple nights and still didn't finish it for reasons beyond my control. The challenge for me wasn't trying to complete my work, because I knew I had given it my all, the challenge was mustering the strength to walk into Mr. Trump's office and tell him that I wasn't going to have it done in time and that I had to completely disappear for three days. I was fortunate that he is an amazingly respectful person when it comes to me being Shomer Shabbos; his response to me was 'Go home, go pray and be with your family - we'll pick it up after the holiday.' That response was remarkable to me - he did not have to jeopardize his deal to let me practice my religion. I left his office feeling this incredible emotional relief and great respect for him.

#### RC: What, would you say, is lacking in the business world today?

JG: I think that younger citizens today are not being taught the importance of ethics in the context of business, in particular when it comes to technology, which changes so quickly. Today's society is so focused on pushing ahead and disrupting the status quo, and the ethics that should be part of the equation either follows much later or gets totally lost. We need to do a better job of teaching ethics to the younger generation, in elementary schools, high schools and universities. We need to train the younger generation to understand that ethics of the old world can be, and must be, a part of ethics of the new world. I once read something written by John Maxwell in which he relayed a story about the time when he was asked to write a book about business ethics. His response was that he could not, because, he said, there is no such thing as business ethics, there is only ethics. Maxwell explained that people try to use one set of ethics for their professional life, another for their spiritual life, and still another at home with their family, and that gets people into trouble. He said that ethics "must be lived by one standard across the board." I think today's younger generation is being swept into life at such a fast a pace, with many new opportunities and too many distractions. Because so much time is utilized to focus on these opportunities and distractions, not enough time is spent on learning about ethics and other core values.



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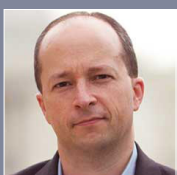
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