

The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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Volume LXVI Issue VI

February 2018/Adar 5778

The Newest Member of the GPATS Administration: Provost Selma Botman

Miriam Pearl Klahr
Managing Editor

In October of 2017, The Observer sat down with then-Vice President Rabbi Kenneth Brander, to discuss some of the many programs he had played an integral part in, as well as how they would function upon his departure. GPATS, Yeshiva University's Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies for Women, played an important role in the conversation. Rabbi Brander became intimately involved with the program at a point when YU was struggling financially and the future of GPATS was very uncertain. However, Rabbi Brander personally took on fundraising responsibilities for the program and brought GPATS back to life. Following his belief that a women's learning program should have a female role model at its epicenter, he also added Professor Nechama Price to GPATS's administration. When asked about who would take over fundraising for GPATS, as well as his role as the program's vision head, Rabbi Brander responded that "Rabbi Berman and I are working on that." He added that the Provost and someone else would most likely get involved and did not share any specifics regarding fundraising.

While the "someone else" that Rabbi

Brander intimated still remains unnamed, and the GPATS webpage does not yet indicate any new leadership positions

also clarified that the lack of an official update was a mere oversight and will be corrected shortly. Provost Botman was

uninterrupted way to the study of Talmud." She also explained that she will be tapping into the expertise of Yeshiva University's Vice President of Institutional Advancement Alyssa Herman to ensure continued fundraising for GPATS. When asked about her goals for the program, Provost Botman replied that she is looking forward to meeting with the "GPATS women to talk about their goals and aspirations."

This meeting took place on January 31st. Botman asked each GPATS participant to describe why they enrolled in the program and what they are currently gaining from it. The students shared their different goals ranging from formal chinuch, to Jewish leadership, and taking the time to learn Torah and gain skills before continuing on to medical or law school. Price described the conversation as "inspiring, since everyone's story was so unique."

The GPATS students that The Observer spoke with, all of whom asked to remain anonymous for this article, found the meeting to be productive. They described how they felt listened to, and were impressed with the way Provost Botman knew the Beit Midrash lingo,

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at the date of this article's publication, Provost Selma Botman confirmed with The Observer that she has officially begun her new leadership role as part of the GPATS administration. Professor Nechama Price

appointed to this position by President Berman. She describes it as "a wonderful opportunity to work with a consequential program that gives women a chance to devote themselves in an intense and

Paying the Price for the Modern Orthodox Dream

Talya Hyman
Staff Writer

The American Dream declares that if one has a good job and works hard, he or she will attain happiness and success. It seems that religious Jewish Americans have to work harder to attain their own Modern Orthodox American Dream. Chasya Klafter, SCW '19 asserts, "In many ways, Modern Orthodoxy has an unwritten checklist of standards that dictate the choices that individuals must make in order to fit into this particular lifestyle. This includes attendance at an Orthodox Jewish day school, shul membership, and often sleepaway camp. And these experiences are by no means inexpensive." Living as an observant Jew comes with financial pressures. Are Orthodox Jewish students aware of the high cost of living fully as observant Jews; and does this awareness affect their choice of major and career path?

Rachel Somorov, SCW '19, first and foremost chose to major in biology because of her genuine interest in the field of medicine. She said, "Going into biology and medicine wasn't only about the money, it's definitely also about what I'm interested in naturally, and what I want

to do with my life and helping people." She also recognizes, however, that in order to "send [her] kids to private school and give them opportunities to experience the world", she must be financially secure and comfortable. Somorov stated, "I wouldn't consider a career if I knew that I wouldn't make enough money to sustain myself." She suggests that observant Jews should ultimately think practically and sensibly about their lifestyle, and the salary they earn to support those means.

Klafter, a psychology major, said, "I've always known that I wanted to go into a field relating to psychology, but [I didn't know] the exact path that I would take. Majoring in psychology was a way for me to explore the different options I had, eventually allowing me to narrow down which direction I would take." Now in her third year at Stern College, Klafter is "planning to attend a dual degree master's program in public health and social work. I hope to work preventing sexual violence and domestic abuse." Similarly, Bella Adler, SCW '20, decided to pursue a Jewish education degree based on her pure

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Stern College Economics Major Faces Potential Shutdown; Tension with Administration

Sarah Casteel
News Editor

Several Stern College students have recently been concerned regarding reports from professors about the Beren campus Economics Major potentially shutting down soon. When asked by The Observer to respond to these claims, Professor James Kahn, chair of the Economics Department at Stern and Yeshiva College, was emphatic in his denial. "We are making a concerted effort to increase enrollments and attract students to the major (as well as the minor), particularly students who are considering related quantitative subjects such as math and computer science, as well as those at Syms," he said. "We are optimistic about the major and are already seeing increased enrollments. Economics is the largest major at many colleges and universities, and we see no reason why it cannot be here as well."

At the beginning of the Fall 2017 semester, even though, as Kahn claimed, the major is not closing as of now, The Observer investigated these student reports further and discovered deeper complications and tensions behind the potential closing of the Stern Economics Department.

According to a different professor at Stern who spoke to The Observer anonymously about the situation with the Economics department, "Some time before Summer 2017, Dean Bacon approached Prof. Kahn and let him know that she may have to shut down the Econ major at SCW because too few students were enrolled in it. In fact, it seemed [that] only one student had declared Econ as a major and no other student seemed to plan doing so."

The professor concurred with the administration's assessment of enrollment in that period of time. Last year there were only two enrolled students in the Intermediate Microeconomics class, a gateway course for the major. So it is clear that not many SCW students were thinking of the Econ major—otherwise more people would be sitting in the class.

The source went on to recall that, "in Fall 2017 Dean Bacon reached out to Prof. Kahn again, saying that she was ready to cancel the Econ major unless enrollments in Intermediate Micro were higher. She did not specify the minimum number required

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The Strategic Plan: Yeshiva University's Best and Worst in Transparency

Mindy Schwartz
Editor in Chief

If you checked YU's website on February 7th, 2018 you might get the wrong idea about some critical things going on at YU. Because our university fails to appropriately update information on its site you would not know, for example, that Provost Selma Botman has taken on a senior advisory role to the Graduate Program for Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) since the departure of Rabbi Brander from YU this past January. Rabbi Brander served as the senior administrative figure responsible for GPATS, including its funding, for a number of years and when he left the university he left a gap in senior administrative leadership for the program. Still, even though it was determined by the administration some time before Brander formally left the university over a month ago, Botman's role in GPATS is not yet recognized on the website.

Botman's omission from the GPATS page is just one example of the university's slow pace at updating its information. As The Commentator recently reported, Dr. Stu Halpern moved from his role as Chief of Staff of President Berman to Senior Advisor of the Provost on February 1st. However, it took over a full week for the university to recognize this change on its website.

To be sure, the website's need for prompt updates is not one of our university's most pressing issues. But while this is true, I think it is safe to say that this slow tendency to update the website—its foremost interface with the general public and student body—reflects a deeper issue that does need to be solved: the YU administration's lack of transparency. When a significant change takes place, people should be informed of that change. The website is the key place where that information is shared, so that informing should be done promptly when the change occurs.

YU's Strategic Plan is perhaps the best example of both the university's attempts and failures in transparency. The plan itself, spearheaded by Vice President Josh Joseph in 2016, outlines the university's goals for improvement from 2016 to 2020 with five specific strategic imperatives. The plan clearly outlines goals for achieving each strategic imperative listed and often provides dates for when each goal should be achieved. This plan was made public and can be found on the university's website—as it should be. This sort of transparent articulation of vision and purpose is exactly what our university needs. Not only does it assure that the university has a defined plan and direction, but it also makes the university accountable for the goals it sets for itself, especially when it sets clear deadlines to achieve those goals.

But while the Strategic Plan shows some of the best of what YU has to offer in terms of transparency, it has also shown the university's failures in this regard. The plan was written in September 2016, but it has yet to be updated since its original release. This is cause for concern because many of the dates set to achieve goals laid out in the plan have already passed. A full nine goals were set for 2016—none have been updated. Nine more were set to be achieved in the spring of 2017, nine in summer of 2017, and five in the fall of 2017—all of these dates have also passed without an update.

So now we have a problem: while it is all well and good that we know our university's goals and intended direction, we have no straightforward, easily accessible way of knowing what has and has not been achieved and what will be done in the future. We do not know if a goal has failed to be achieved, and if so, why it failed and what the university's strategy is going forward. Even if all the goals laid out in the plan to be achieved before Spring 2018 have been fulfilled by their deadline, there is no way for us to know this without undergoing a thorough investigation of our own. While I encourage students to feel empowered to seek out the university information they care about on their own, we are not all journalists, nor should we have to be, in order to be made aware about whether or not the university has achieved its set goals.

There is another important question the lack of updates does not account for: what happens after a goal is achieved? Are further goals for expansion created or is there a stagnation of purpose?

The faculty wage crisis is a perfect example of this issue. The Strategic Plan states under "Strategic Imperative 2: Advance Faculty Development and Excellence in Teaching and Research" a list of six actions to achieve this imperative. The first: "Develop a plan with benchmarks by summer 2017 to improve faculty



Pathways to Our Future The Strategic Plan for Yeshiva University

2016 – 2020

compensation (salary and benefits) that meets the collective goals of the University." After eight years of a continuous wage freeze as well as cuts in faculty benefits put in place during the Joel administration to deal with the massive debts accrued by mismanagement of funds and the 2008 stock market crash, this action was critical in regaining faculty trust and goodwill. As The Observer reported in October, this goal was met in August when President Berman announced to the faculty that there would be a "modest allocation of funds" for merit based raises and an increase from 2% to 3% in retirement plan matching.

While this was great news, there is clearly much more that needs to be done in way of "improv[ing] faculty compensation"; the merit based raises will not be as far-reaching or big as they once were and the retirement matching benefits are still 4% lower than they were before the university's fiscal crisis. The need for further action on this issue was acknowledged by the president himself in his announcement to the faculty, in which he said "these steps are, of course, only minor improvements, and I am deeply aware that more needs to be done in the future." And herein lies the problem: the Strategic Plan has not been updated to reflect the fact that the president has reached a "benchmark" on this issue, and thus it also does not layout any future plans for how to improve faculty compensation "in the future."

Without clear transparency on this issue, the president's office, when asked what the next benchmark will be for faculty wage improvement, as they were by The Observer multiple times, can simply revert to vague statements such as "the administration continues to work on this issue as well as the general strategic plan."

Some might fly to the defense of President Berman, claiming that he holds no responsibility to update a plan that was not made during his tenure, with many of its deadlines passing before he was even selected for the job. I would agree that from the outset the plan should have been adopted with the intention to update it as long as it was in use, and the previous administration's failure to do is not a fault of our new president. However, the president's office has confirmed with The Observer that Berman has been following the Strategic Plan, which has remained on the university's website since he has assumed office. If our president intends to use this plan, then he must be held accountable for its failings; if he intends not to use it, then he should make that intention known, remove it from the website, and, hopefully, release (and update) his own.

As it stands now, the Strategic Plan does not reflect YU's current reality, because it is not updated to account for it. Unfortunately the same document that provided so much transparency when it was first released, can often obscure the true state of our university now, making this is the administration's problems today.

I highly recommend the administration work harder to keep its website updated, at least in regard to its senior staff positions, as an easy and simple way to let us know what is happening in our university.

But I also recommend a more difficult, but also more urgent change: an updated Strategic Plan that accounts for the goals that have been achieved, those which have not, those which need adjusting, and those that need complete alterations, in order to provide us with the clear transparency of vision and direction that we deserve.

The Yeshiva University
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Founded by the women of Yeshiva University's Stern College in 1958, The Observer is the independant newspaper of Stern College for Women, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University. The Observer is an independent student publication, self-funded, and published on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. Views expressed in The Observer are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University. All Observer content is copyrighted and may not be reprinted without permission.

Stern College Economics Major Faces Potential Shutdown; Tension with Administration

	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
1101 Interm. Micro	n/a	4	n/a	2	n/a	6
1201 Interm. Macro	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	n/a
1421 Econometrics	6	n/a	2	n/a	1	n/a

The required courses in the major, beyond the introductory course, and their enrollments, as provided by the Dean's office

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not to cancel the class, leaving the faculty to deal with the uncertainty of a last-minute (i.e., Dec 19) cancellation. After much communication and effort [between] Prof. Kahn and the Dean's Office (notably Ethel Orlian), and the re-scheduling of the course at a different time to avoid overlaps with other classes, the number of enrolled students climbed to five, and the Dean's Office withdrew from the table the plan to cancel the course or the major." There are now six students in Intermediate Microeconomics. Seven years ago, there were about five.

While the situation may seem like a straightforward enrollment issue, some faculty claim that the administration's actions are indicative of a larger animosity between them and the Economics department. "The mere fact that the possibility of closing the major was raised as a solution to lackluster enrollment numbers for the major is part of a trend that sees the Econ dep[artment] under fire from the Dean's Office and more generally the administration," our source said. The source cited further evidence of this perception of animosity seen from the administration toward the department: "Since Provost Botman joined, three Econ faculty members have been fired against the faculty's opinion." He is referring to popular professors Dr. Hawkins and Dr. Richter who have taken YU to court for their unceremonious firing against university policy, as well as one other professor. Besides from firing professors, the source claims that "lack of [administration] support for Econ is [also] evident when compared to the hiring decisions for other areas, such as math and computer science," in which new professors are being hired, as The Observer reported earlier this year.

Economics professor Dr. Alex Citanna reports that the administration has deemed the department "too expensive," which frustrates him given that the department is "one of the few" that offers classes across Yeshiva College, Stern College, and the Katz School. While he does concede that the department has had decreased enrollments, he believes the numbers across campuses are "still quite high." He credits the decline in enrollment, particularly at Stern College, to the fact that Sy Syms has made it difficult for its students to take Econ courses, and the "brain drain" of STEM-minded students caused by the addition of the computer science major. He also notes the lack of basic resources afforded to other majors by the administration, such

as peer tutors on the Beren campus, as an additional reason for enrollment decline.

Still, Citanna is quick to combat the claim that declined enrollment has made the department too expensive. "The negative trend in enrollment has been more than compensated by increased enrollments in the Masters in Quantitative Economics program (now hosted at Katz), which rakes in over \$1 million in revenues and attracts about 30 students"—a program run by Citanna himself. Citanna believes that the Econ department "faculty shows an entrepreneurial and collaborative attitude when it comes to developing new programs, new online courses, new e-learning initiatives, new e-marketing material for the school, and the like."

When asked by The Observer, Professor Kahn seemed to agree with Citanna that the Econ department is being unfairly judged for low enrollments. "I would note that the YU Fact Book put out by Institutional Research lists Economics as having four majors at Stern—a low number to be sure. But it also lists three for Chemistry, five for History, three for Music, among others. Have any of these departments been told their majors might be closed if they don't boost enrollments?" While these majors face low enrollments and may provide a financial burden to the school, only Econ, to The Observer's knowledge, has faced a threat of shutdown from the administration.

While the administration has retracted the threat of closing the major for now, reports from both students and professors on the Beren Campus seem to provide strong evidence that the major may be closing fairly imminently. For students who have or will have already declared the Econ major, its potential cancellation leaves them rightly concerned for how they will be able to complete their studies if the necessary courses are no longer offered. Citanna assured that "nobody at the Dean's Office wants to leave any student who declares this year or who has already declared Econ as a major without the possibility to complete the requirements and major in Econ—even if they decided to shut down the major for future students."

Recently declared Economics major Sarah Berger, SCW '20, expressed her concern over the major's potential closure. "I understand that there's a lack of interest right now at Stern" she said, "but at the same time Stern is a liberal arts college and the lack of students registered for a very mainstream major is not a reason to close it off to the minority of students who are interested." Berger also pointed out that, perhaps with some more effort, she doesn't see why the department shouldn't be more popular. "A major or minor in Economics can complement almost any major, especially ones like math or political science," she pointed out. "Emphasizing this and advertising various courses to the student body could be a good start to building up the department."

When The Observer

inquired with Dean Bacon about the possible closing of the department, she responded, "As a liberal arts college we are committed to supporting a broad range of disciplines and majors. But even with that commitment, our support must be related to student interest and demand. In the case of the Economics Department, there have been very few majors at SCW over the last few years." She pointed out that though "the elective courses in the department usually do well, because they are taken by Sy Syms students in some cases (Money and Banking, Public Finance)

"The mere fact that the possibility of closing the major was raised as a solution to lackluster enrollment numbers for the major is part of a trend that sees the Econ dep[artment] under fire from the Dean's Office"

and by pre-health students (Health Economics)," the small number of majors means that "the required major courses have been poorly enrolled, if at all."

Bacon also pointed to numbers which make it evident that the courses in the major have indeed seen a general decline in recent years. In courses "required in the major, beyond the introductory course" there have been no more than six students in a class, but more often that number was closer to one or two for the past three semesters. This semester has seen a slight upswing in enrollments, with six students enrolled in Microeconomics, but the numbers still remain relatively low.

In response to the slight upswing in enrollment in major required courses this semester Bacon, like Professor Kahn, expressed her optimism about the major's future. "This spring semester, we are seeing a small turnaround in these numbers which is very promising. We hope this is the beginning of a trend."

Still, the decline from what was once around fourteen majors to under five raises concerns about the major's viability, while complications with the administration reveal the possibility that the solution may be to shut down the Beren Econ major altogether if the "trend" in higher enrollments does not continue. The department will certainly have to revamp and double its efforts to attract majors and minors, as Professor Kahn noted, if it is to stave off a potential shut down. Even if such changes were to be made, professors Kahn and Citanna have also raised important questions about whether the department is being treated fairly by the administration. Clearly, there is more to the story that has yet to be discovered, and many important decisions that have yet to be made. Check in with The Observer soon as the story continues to unfold.



YU Kicks Off Annual Seforim Sale

Shira Krinsky
Staff Writer

The annual Yeshiva University Seforim Sale opened its doors to the public at ten in the morning on Sunday February 4th, 2018, and will close its doors for the final time on Sunday February 25 at ten PM. Over the course of a little over three weeks, the sale will sell over 6,500 unique book titles to over 15,000 shoppers. Last year, the Seforim Sale generated \$750,000 in revenue. All of the profits go towards student life on campus. The sale takes place in Belfer Hall on the Wilf Campus, and is the largest Jewish book sale in North America.

CEO of the Seforim Sale Aaron Ishida, YC '18, told The Observer that, "The Seforim Sale first and foremost provides both the local YU community and the greater Jewish Community the ability to acquire seforim at affordable prices. Additionally the Seforim Sale provides many students with real world work and job experience."

Head floor manager Rachel Lelonek, SCW '18, explained, "A lot of hard work goes into making the Seforim Sale happen. We have been working in Wiessberg Commons since January 8th to ensure that this entire endeavor could happen. It took a lot of hard work, long nights and perseverance from all involved. And I'm pretty happy to say I think we've been doing a good job thus far."

The Seforim Sale is entirely student run, from ordering books to setting up the tables and bookshelves and designing flyers for the various events. Approximately 100 students are employed by the sale. Ishida explained, "We have almost 100 students who dedicate their time to the Seforim Sale. We send out applications, have an interview process and eventually hire the best candidates for the job."

Many of these workers will be seen walking around on the floor or behind the check-out counter in their grey "Seforim Sale" zip-up sweatshirts, while

many others are working in the back, labeling books, collecting books for online orders, updating the computer system, or ordering new books. These hard-working students are paid in Seforim Sale gift cards, as well as given an employee discount.

The students on staff work hard, and many do it because they believe it will contribute to not only their college experience but also their life in general. "Working at the Seforim Sale has given me a community on campus. Not only that, though, it has given me so many friends that will stick with me for a long time!" Sophie Ostrow, SCW '19, explained.

Ostrow works in the back end, labeling and collecting books for online orders, rather than on the floor and interacting face to face with customers. "This is my second year working in backend. I love it because we are truly the backbone of the sale. We keep the floor stocked, shipments running, and do anything else that needs to be done! I get to see the sale from so many different perspectives," she said about her experience.

The Seforim Sale also features a diverse array of programming. For example, the sale hosted a panel discussion sponsored by YUConnects featuring Rabbi Mordachai Willig and Chava Willig Levy and book launches from Rabbi Mordachai Z. Cohen and Rabbi Gil Student.

The Seforim Sale also features several discount days, such as a YU alumni discount day, a YU faculty discount day, and an NCSY advisor discount day. Ishida told YU News, "What is important at the end of the day

for both YU and the Seforim Sale, is not how much money we make, but rather how much Torah we can spread to our fellow Jews."

Every year the sale goes through changes and improvements. The Chief Operating Officer Yonaton Glicksman, YC '18, explained to The Observer one of the ways that the sale has grown this year from last year. "We've expanded our order from a number of vendors, like Peter Century, in order to offer a wider array of titles by Rav Avraham Zvi Kluger," he reported.

Many YU students enjoy that this sale takes place on their campus. One anonymous student told The Observer that she enjoys shopping there, but most of all, "I love seeing the community come together over their love of learning. As the people of the book, it is fitting that we fill our shelves with seforim from the sale every year."



Yeshiva College Economics Department Faces Significant Complications as Department Has Seen Continued Decline

Sarah Casteel
News Editor

Recent talks about the potential imminent closing of the Stern College Economics major have prompted The Observer to investigate rumors about the tensions within the Yeshiva College Economics Department. The Econ major at Yeshiva College has 26 students, which is almost seven times the number of Econ majors at Stern. On the Wilf campus, the major is not shutting down, but rather, things are more complicated. There are enough majors in the department uptown to deem it worth keeping open; however, complications within the department and in its relationship with the school administration seem to have been recently escalating. For example, three professors—two of whom were on tenure track—have been fired in the past two years, and an additional senior professor is rumored to be leaving. According to reports by several Econ majors, a once very strong department at Yeshiva College has been deteriorating in recent years.

At the beginning of the Fall 2017 semester, an alarming email was sent out by an Econ professor on the Wilf Campus after he received what he claimed to be "the lowest teaching evaluations" in his 20-year history of teaching for the previous spring semester. One student claimed that, while he did not receive the email personally, "apparently [the students] wrecked him" in course evaluations. One student cites that a possible reason for these negative reviews was that the final was "apparently ridiculously hard for no reason," and that he thinks "the average on his exams were below a 70," and that "[the professor] enjoyed putting students in situations where they couldn't really succeed." While there is no confirmation of these claims, this student and other Econ majors have reported to The Observer that these are the likely reasons for the professor's bad reviews.

On the other hand, the professor cited tension between the Econ Department and the school's



administration as the primary reason for the recent decline in the department in his message to his students. He wrote that the Econ department has "made a huge effort to improve the content and delivery of courses, modernizing the content and bringing it in line with what is done at many good places." In the process of the revamping the department the professor claimed that the department "got hit hard by the university administration and became the culprit for all that went wrong with the university financial crisis, and certainly were (and still are) the target of the new academic leadership [under Provost] Botman [and Dean] Bacon." He noted that he and his colleagues have "fought through the administration's bashing of us because of the students' support"—support which he sensed from the evaluations was no longer as prominent on the Yeshiva College campus.

The professor's message to his student reveals both the department's unfavorable relationship with many of its own students, as well as apparent complications between the Econ department and the administration of Yeshiva University. To determine how the department has ended up in this position, a timeline has been pieced together.

Over recent years, enrollment in the Yeshiva College Econ major has decreased by about half, and the number of courses offered by the department has diminished significantly, from an average of about 10 to only four or five per semester. For example, Principles

of Econ used to be split into two classes, named Intro to Econ Macro and Intro to Econ Micro, but because of rumored budget cuts, the course has been merged into one. Most of the department's courses are repeated on a rotation basis, and there are now only one or two unique classes offered per semester. It has been reported to The Observer that the YC Econ Department has stopped offering as many courses as it used to due to budget cuts, which may, as claimed by the professor's email, have resulted from the deteriorating relationship between the department and the school's administration.

One student claimed that it appears that the professors are "locked in" to the classes they teach every semester, creating a pattern within the department. For example, Professor Hashimoto has been teaching game theory, but was only able to offer another "cool and interesting" class once. The inability to offer such courses again was supposedly due to its failure to garner sufficient student enrollment.

However, it should be noted that fortunately for Econ majors, adjunct professors are hired periodically to offer unique courses that would not otherwise be offered, and for a lower price for the university. Yeshiva College senior and Econ major Chiya Abramowitz told The Observer that "Econ Development was a great class," which he says indicates that "generally speaking, the adjunct professors are good and should

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Yeshiva College Economics Department Faces Significant Complications as Department Has Seen Continued Decline

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be kept in the rotation of offered classes, as they bring something new to the table.” Right now, the department is offering another elective called Econ of the Middle East, another example of unique courses that the adjunct professors are able to provide.

One of the primary complaints made by the various Econ majors interviewed by The Observer is that the classes lack rigor. One student claimed that “even the good classes are jokes”—from Principles of Econ which is a Wilf Syms requirement and popular elective on the Beren campus, to courses geared towards Econ majors. Students claim there is a current lack of both writing intensive economics classes as well as rigor within the courses currently offered. Additionally, last semester, the Intermediate Macroeconomics course had such low attendance that a class policy was implemented to administer pop quizzes, and it is rumored that the Deans were going to be involved in the situation. When Professor Hawkins, who was fired in 2016, taught the course, the class was said to be popular and well attended.

As of now, one student claimed that the Econ Department on the Wilf campus is “all over the place.” The department is known by many majors to be “flexible,” as Dr. James Kahn, head of the department, is reported to have told the students that things within the department can be switched around to accommodate their needs. But rather than the flexibility reflecting positively on the major, one Econ major claimed it is only works this way because “it’s a mess.” Additionally, another Econ major claimed that “you have to know how to play the game within the department”—if you ask Kahn for a class to be substituted, he is not always able to grant it. On the other hand, some students take more positive approach to the major’s flexibility. Econ major Michael Kohan said that he “really likes Kahn,” and that “he’s been super helpful and understanding though he can be difficult to get a hold of sometimes.” However, he did note that “Kahn teaches at Beren, so he’s much more accessible to them.”

Another issue with the department is that there are few advanced electives offered, even though part of

the major requirement is to take two advanced Econ electives. One of the continuously repeated options is known to be especially hard for the general Econ major students, and thus Kahn does his best to offer other advanced courses. However, he is not always able to. Several Econ majors have agreed that “there definitely aren’t electives, especially advanced electives.” However, Kohan claimed that it “is somewhat remedied by the fact that you can take accounting or finance as electives, and I think for anyone getting a basic understanding of accounting and finance is useful.”

Although Professor Kahn runs the Econ major at Stern and Yeshiva College, he only teaches on the Beren campus and is only in his office on Wilf once a week. Students on the Wilf campus have a particularly hard time meeting with Kahn, even though the Econ major at Wilf has around seven times more students than on the Beren campus. An Econ major from the Wilf campus claimed it takes him a week to get a meeting with Kahn. As many rumors have spread, one student has claimed that Kahn does other jobs outside of his position at Yeshiva University which make him more busy and difficult to reach, although this has not been confirmed.

As previously reported in The Observer article, two recently fired Econ professors, Dr. Hawkins and Dr. Richter are currently seeking legal action in their second court case against YU for being fired while on tenure track, which is against the university’s own handbook guidelines. Both of these professors were popular and well-regarded teachers within the department. Despite this, and their scholarship within the field of economics—Hawkins even studied with a world-renowned economist who is now taught about in some Econ courses—the school fired them for budgetary reasons. Since Hawkins left in 2016, there has been a hole in the area of macroeconomics, which was his specialty. The department is said to place an emphasis on microeconomics, which some majors are less interested in.

As per the timeline of the department’s decline, Economics Professor Dr. Citanna recalls that, “When I joined, we economists thought of being an inspirational

(and non-mandatory) model for other [departments] at SCW (and YC). The model, originated in Provost Lowengrub’s plan, would put research-active faculty at the center of the department, using their know-how and their excellent teaching skills to improve teaching quality. It would be financially sustainable by funding the research faculty’s higher cost with [Masters in Quantitative Economics] revenues and other initiatives, while the reduced teaching loads would be compensated with more faculty flexibility in teaching courses across YU campuses. It took three years to realize that, instead of creating inspiration, we fanned envy and resentment across other fields, especially at Stern.” For a number of reasons cited, this vision Citanna describes for the department seems not to be entirely panning out in recent years.

Overall, as less people are being hired, many of the same courses are being offered, and tensions between the department and the administration rise, some Yeshiva College students have been disillusioned with their ability to receive a proper and enjoyable education as Econ majors. In addition to this, there are various unconfirmed rumors about the tension and unprofessional practices within the department which may also have an affect on the students. As cited by the professor in the email to his former students, there is a possible correlation between the University administration’s animosity toward the YC Econ Department and its decline in quality and enrollment.

According to Kahn, “[The Econ Department is] making a concerted effort to increase enrollments and attract students to the major (as well as the minor), particularly students who are considering related quantitative subjects such as math and computer science, as well as those at Syms. We are optimistic about the major and are already seeing increased enrollments. Economics is the largest major at many colleges and universities, and we see no reason why it cannot be here as well.” It appears that changes are on the way—check in with The Observer in the upcoming months as the story continues to unfold.

Michal Alge “Owns the Boards”

Chana Weinberg

A few hours remained in the competition and Michal Alge had only 100 votes to her name, but through a university wide push Michal Alge was named the second best Division Three rebounder in the country. Michal was one of ten women nominated by Division Three Sports News for an online poll entitled “Who Owns The Boards”, a poll that asks the public decide which of these ten women is the greatest rebounder in DIII this year. In the few short hours before the poll closed Michal collected over 3,000 votes—finishing the poll in second place.

“It was a nice feeling seeing the votes go up. At first I thought it was just friends [voting for me],” said Alge in response to the outpour of support through reports in Whatsapp groups and facebook groups encouraging students to vote for the YU athlete. “It was really cool seeing the Jewish world behind me, spreading the Yeshiva name”

Michal ranks 6th in rebounds per game and 9th in total rebounds country wide. Alge is also approaching YU history with her rebounds this year—she currently sits second place all time for YU NCAA rebounds. She is about 100 rebounds away from all time YU NCAA rebounder Rebecca Yosher. As Michal plans to play next year as a super senior, she is likely to pass Yosher and become first place all time. Michal has also won countless Skyline academic awards and athletic awards.

Rebounding has been apart of Michal’s game from early on. Michal was a member of the Maimonides High School basketball team in 8th grade. “[Rebounding] was

actually what got me noticed by the varsity coaches,” she explained. “Rebounding is really about how much hustle,

matter as much as one may think. In rebounding you have to “out hustle” your opponent. Women’s Head Coach Michael Alon says that Michal has an “intensity” about her that allows her to rise above her opponents under the boards.

The outpouring of responses to this poll is also a testament to Michal’s character. Feedback from coaches, administrators, and teammates attest to Michal’s leadership on and off the court and to the great person and player she is.

“Throughout her time thus far at Yeshiva [Michal] has demonstrated the highest levels of athleticism and sportsmanship while balancing an academically challenging course load,” boasted Athletic Director Carly Moss. “The YU athletic department is proud to have an athlete such as Alge represent our university.”

“I’ve played with Michal from the start and since then she has always been leading by example, even as a freshman!” lauded fellow team member Shira Feen, SCW ‘18.

“It’s no surprise the community is recognizing Michal [with this poll], she’s really deserving,” said Michal’s teammate and underclassman Adina Rosenberg, SCW ‘20. “I’m so thankful to have Michal as someone to look to, I admire and value her personality and advice both on and off the court. She has had a great impact on both me and the team as a whole.”



how much fight you have against your opponent, how much work you put in,” she said.

Michal may not be the tallest player; at 5’6” she is six inches shorter than the average height of the top ten rebounders according to NCAA.com. But size doesn’t

**Note: All YU stats come courtesy of YUmacs.com stats guru AJ O’Hagan*

RIETS Brings Rabbi Dov Zinger To YU For A Two Week Stay

Mindy Schwartz
Editor in Chief

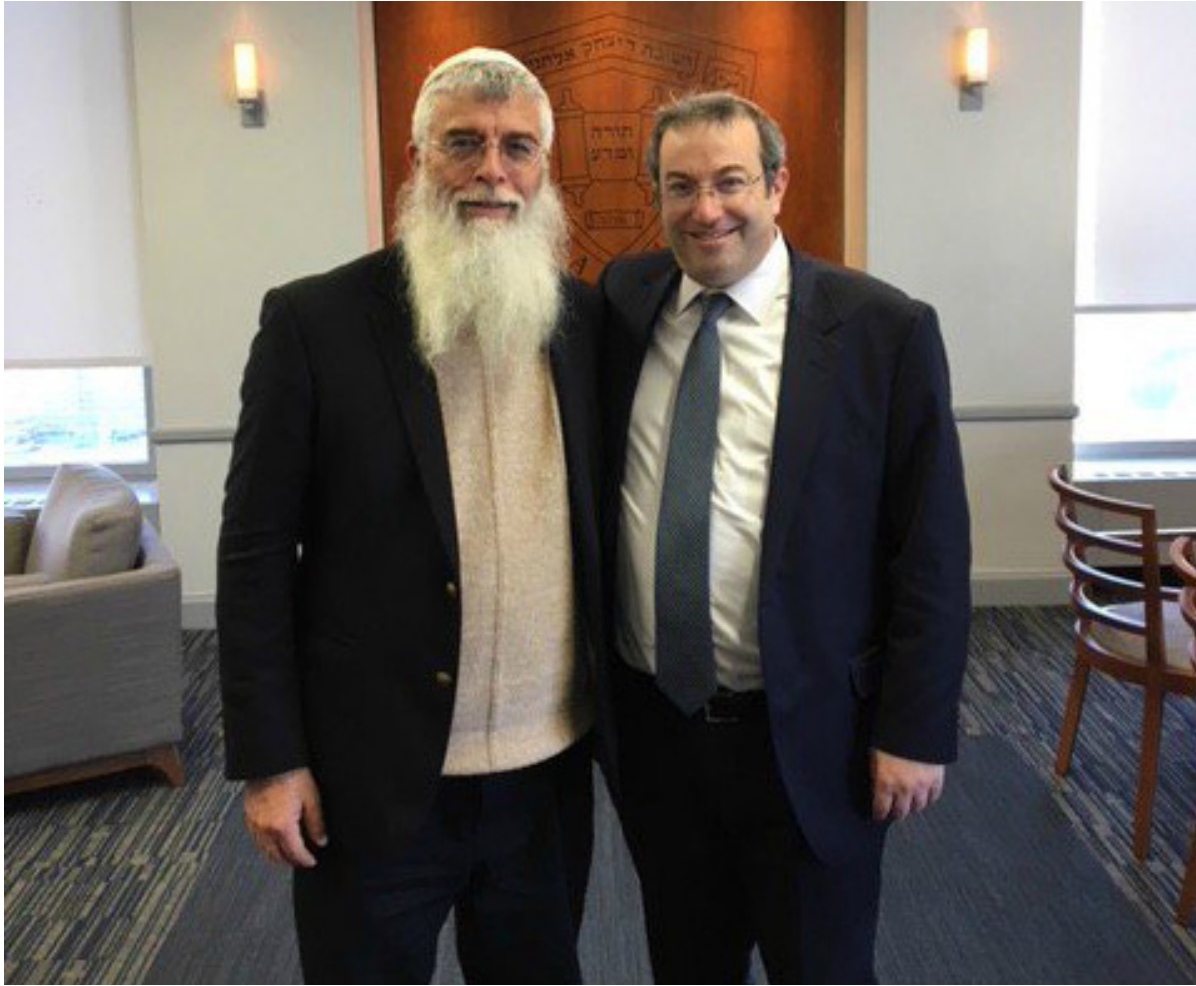
Rabbi Dov Zinger is serving as a visiting scholar at Yeshiva University for a little over two weeks, from February 6th to the 22nd. Rabbi Zinger is the Rosh Yeshiva of Makor Chiam, a boys high school located in Kibbutz Kfar Etzion in Gush Etzion known for its innovative approach to Torah education. According to YU's bio of Rabbi Zinger, his "unique educational approach involves trusting and empowering the student and developing his inner spiritual consciousness in a way that opens him to the outside world (rather than isolating himself as is often the case)." While Mekor Chiam is known for its Neo-Chassidic ideology, the school's teachers encourage students to find their own means of connecting to Hashem and Torah learning and do not attempt to impose a singular ideology on them. YU's connection to Makor Chiam goes back a number of years, as Yeshiva University High School for Boys (MTA), has an annual exchange program with the school in which they send tenth grade students to Makor Chiam and host eleventh grade students for a semester.

Rabbi Zinger also helped establish two successful kiruv programs, "Beit Midrash L'Hitchadshut," a nationwide outreach program that helps individuals in their personal spiritual development, as well as "Lifnei V'Lifnim."

Rabbi Zinger is spending his time on campus meeting with students, teaching Torah in various settings, and, as President Berman tweeted on the day before Rabbi Zinger's arrival, "bringing the ruach of Eretz Yisrael to [YU]." Over the course of his stay Rabbi Zinger will be participating in a wide array of programming. He will be giving a three part lecture series, a shiur on "Rebbe Nachman's Significance Today", and a shikas mussar. He will also lead a Farbrengen with the Mashpia and spend a lunch speaking with Semicha students.

Rabbanit Iris Zinger, an elementary school teacher, will also be spending these few weeks in the

Stern Beit Midrash, connecting to students and giving small chaburot. Rabbanit Zinger told The Observer that she has so far enjoyed her time in the Stern Biet



Midrash, which she praised for its "wide-open layout and windows [that make the room] full of light. "It influences me in my learning, in my prayer, and in my writing," she said. "I wish there were more books on Chassidut here," she noted, but was quick to temper this one critique. "I bring some of my own books and I am very happy with what is here." Rabbanit Zinger said she has enjoyed meeting Stern students who have "all been very nice and pleasant—all meir panim [bright faced]—to me" and learning the Sefat Emet with a few students.

Rabbi and Rabbanit Zinger are spending a shabbat on both the Wilf and Beren campuses. Rabbi Zinger will also be giving a club hour shiur at Stern on "Recipes for Prayer: Accessing Our Inner Voice".

Rabbi Zinger's trip is funded by RIETS, which explains why the majority of his programming will take place on the Wilf campus. Dean of RIETS Rabbi Menachem Penner told The Observer that the idea to bring Rabbi Zinger to YU for an extended stay was

"a joint [effort] of World Mizrahi, Yeshivat Makor Chaim, and YU." The idea in a nutshell, according to Rabbi Penner, was to "expose students to Rav Zinger's fascinating approaches to yiddishkeit, avodat Hashem and chinuch while exposing Rav Zinger to the American Jewish community."

When asked about the unique nature of this extended scholar in residence type program, Rabbi Penner responded that although "the program is somewhat unique, it is working very well, [and so] it seems to be a model worth investigating for the future."

According to Yehuda Fogel, a Yeshiva College student who has been helping Rabbi and Rabbanit Zinger get acquainted with YU, the trip has "been great so far." "There have been shiurim, chaburot, as well as many meetings with students," Fogel reported. "We are looking forward to a strong few weeks."

When asked what Rabbi Zinger can add to the conversation at YU and how his visit can benefit students, Rabbi Penner explained that "Rav Zinger teaches a unique approach to connecting with Hashem. We hope that exposure

to Rav Zinger will inspire students and get them to think more deeply about their relationships with G-d and their fellow man."

Fogel agrees that Rabbi Zinger's visit will bring new perspectives to the conversation at YU. "At times, the religious conversation in YU is limited by the assumptions and boundaries of what religious Judaism means in America," Fogel said. "The Zingers bring a taste of the vibrant spirituality of Israel to an institution full of students thirsting for more."

What's more, Fogel believes students will benefit from "the breath of freshness" that Rabbi Zinger brings. "It can be challenging to feel the vibrancy of religious life and ideas when [a student is] in one institution for years," and this visit provides students a chance to revitalize their religious experience. For Fogel, Rabbi Zinger is the perfect person to help students on this mission as "the Torah [he] brings is intimate, powerful, and real."

The Newest Member of the GPATS Administration: Provost Selma Botman

continued from page 1:

even though she has never held a position of this nature before. Some students did raise concern about how Botman's appointment raises questions regarding the role GPATS plays in the YU community. They explained that if one primarily sees GPATS as a master's program in Bible and Talmud then someone with these academic credentials is a very logical choice. However, if GPATS is to be seen as a learning program, similar to a kollel, then appointing a leader with a stronger background in Torah may have been an appropriate fit. However, other students strongly disagreed with this sentiment. They found that "their former position as a 'child' of the Center for the Jewish Future, detracted from the program's legitimacy." They think that being under the Provost's leadership will bolster GPATS's status as an integral graduate program of Yeshiva University.

Additionally, the women of GPATS voiced their appreciation for the support that Provost Botman and the new administration have expressed towards the program. However, the students also added that these words of support are very vague, and they wonder what exactly they will entail. They expressed their hope that these promises will lead to more advertising and recruitment for GPATS, so that the program can

"Provost Selma Botman confirmed with The Observer that she has officially begun her new leadership role as part of the GPATS administration."

continue to grow to its full capacity.

Price also expressed her excitement about Botman's new leadership position. According to Price "Botman is impressive in terms of her sophistication, and her

understanding of female leadership and empowerment is very clear." She added that Provost Botman is working to "bridge the gaps in her understanding of GPATS," through continuous meetings with both Price and the students. Furthermore, Price believes that newly appointed Senior Advisor to the Provost, Dr. Stuart Halpern, who understands GPATS intimately, will serve as an important resource to Botman.

In response to a question regarding her confidence in the program during this time of transition, Price replied that "President Berman is extremely supportive of GPATS" and has told her on numerous occasions that "it will remain and stay as a vital part of university." She then added that though a "leadership change might be happening, GPATS is as strong as ever, with its same high level learning and talented students." She cited the many internship positions GPATS students hold this year, ranging from Harvard Law School, to Lincoln Square Synagogue and Congregation Keter Torah. She also confirmed that June Zman will be taking place this year as usual. Price concluded by saying that applications for next year's class are now open. She encourages anyone who is interested to contact her with questions and apply.

Paying the Price for the Modern Orthodox Dream

continued from page 1:

passion and interest in the field. She shared, “When I look back to my own education I appreciate the skill set I was given to think critically, make my own decisions, and to be a leader. I want to give students the ability to think for themselves and the skill set to make the world a better place.”

Though salary did play a role in Klafter’s career choice, it was not the determining factor. “I definitely considered salary when I was choosing my career path, but it wasn’t the most important factor for me. What is far more important to me is that I want my career to add value and meaning to my life, and I hope that the direction I’ve chosen to take will do that,” acknowledges Klafter. Though many Orthodox college students ultimately pursue careers in areas they believe will be personally fulfilling, financial needs may still weigh heavily on their minds. “Being a religious Jew is expensive. There’s all of our Yomim Tovim, buying a Sukkah, matzah, having meat at every Shabbat meal, and ritual items. Everything adds up,” stated Somorov. While these expenses contribute to the overall cost of the Modern Orthodox lifestyle, Adler attributes the biggest expense to the cost of Jewish education.

Paying for Jewish education can be burdensome. Many parents find that they need financial help from outside sources in order to provide their children with a strong Jewish day school upbringing. Klafter, who grew up in “a small, out-of-town community in the Midwest” says that while growing up, she was left

unaware of the “significant financial pressure generated by the orthodox lifestyle” because “a lot of financial support was provided, allowing everyone access to these ‘essential’ experiences.” Some communities, however, lack the resources to provide significant

price of one’s own personal happiness. Adler said that she will “remain optimistic that people choose careers that they are passionate about, and will ultimately help make the world a better place.” Somorov believes that while it is important to provide for one’s family and to be financially “self-sufficient”, a student deciding his or her career path should not feel confined or limited to a few practical majors because “there is a lot you can do within a lot of fields.” When college students decide on their majors and career goals, they should remember that there are a multitude of different directions they could follow in order to lead a fulfilling life. Somorov stated, “Within [careers that make money] there is still a lot of room to do what you love and what you’re good at, and what you feel will allow you to contribute.”

The Modern Orthodox Dream of leading a lifestyle in accordance with religious values is obtained through hard work. While this is vital in order to sustain the growth and strength of the Modern Orthodox community, the biggest dream of all should be the pursuit of personal happiness and actualization through that hard work.

Klafter shared this very dream: “I want to be able to provide for myself and help support a family, but I don’t feel the need to exceed that baseline amount. What is far more important to me is that my career [should] add value and meaning to my life. I hope that the direction I’ve chosen to take will do that.”



scholarships for a large percentage of their school’s student body. Adler stated, “If we as Jewish people believe that the continuity of our people is through Jewish education, then we must find a way to make Jewish education more affordable.”

Those interviewed agree that the attainment of the Modern Orthodox Dream should not come at the

Letter from the Desk of a Medical Ethics Society President

Yael Mayer

Five years of credit. Eight semesters on YU campus. Around fifty courses. And here it is, my takeaway and piece of advice.

Do what you love.

Really, Yael? If that’s the best you have to offer, perhaps a sixth year is in order. Comedic reality and ‘super-senior’ jabs aside, the statement encapsulates what I have learned and unlearned and relearned over the past four years.

There’s a fairly ludicrous idiom that goes something like this: “Do what you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life.” Now, any sane, sentient individual is aware that taken literally, that’s just a dash too idealistic. Because you will work. You will work hard, thoroughly, exhaustingly, at anything you do. Escaping work is not the ideal—working for what you love, however, is.

I joined the Medical Ethics Society as Vice President prior to my second year at Stern, continuing as President my third year, and currently serve as Executive Director. I must confess that my Google Drive, as a result of this experience, has become a rigorously organized labyrinth that rivals the Dewey Decimal system and Parisian catacombs all at once. (It’s not a Stern article without some solid hyperbole). I dove straight into a world of emails and spreadsheets and conference calls and spreadsheets and sleepless nights and spreadsheets...you get the drift. I worked tirelessly, much as anyone who signs up for any insane unpaid job does.

But I loved it. I loved organizing events that peeled back the layers of a controversial issue and bared the heart of the matter to debate. I loved providing input on ethical issues in medicine that banged at the door of my conscience and knocked at my intellect. I loved meeting with incredible doctors, researchers, rabbis, and ethicists from all over the world, whose passion for

their work fairly bleeds out of them. I loved hearing the kaleidoscope of opinions from the minds of students, faculty, community members, and professionals in the field.

It was rewarding to help organize a massive genetic screening to limit the transmission of genetic disease to the next generation. It was fascinating and gratifying to choose a topic for our annual conference, to mold it and shape it (stirring bits of soul in as I went) and watch it come to life. It was humbling to work with a board of some of the most talented, passionate, and interesting people I know. I worked, and I loved it—and

I was happy. Exhausted and happy.

So there you have it. Like almost every other student, there’s scarcely been a day in my life where I haven’t worked (you feel me). But I do what I love—and that has made all the difference. I’ve found that working for what you love feels right. It feels valuable and exciting and purposeful. We will all—every one of us—have to work at something, be it our careers, our passion projects, our families or foundations or dreams.

Do what you love, and you will work every day of your life—and smile about it.



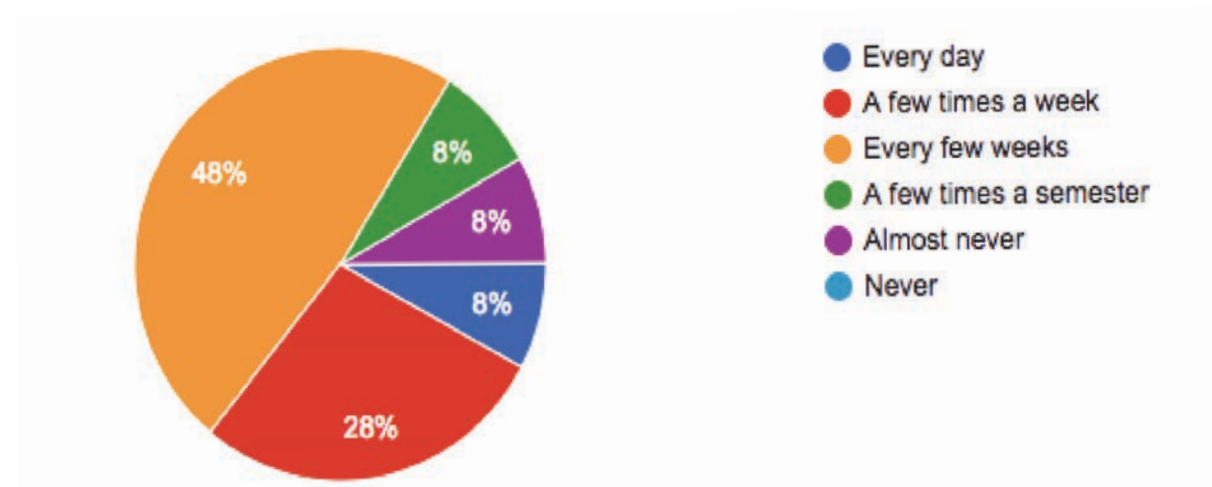
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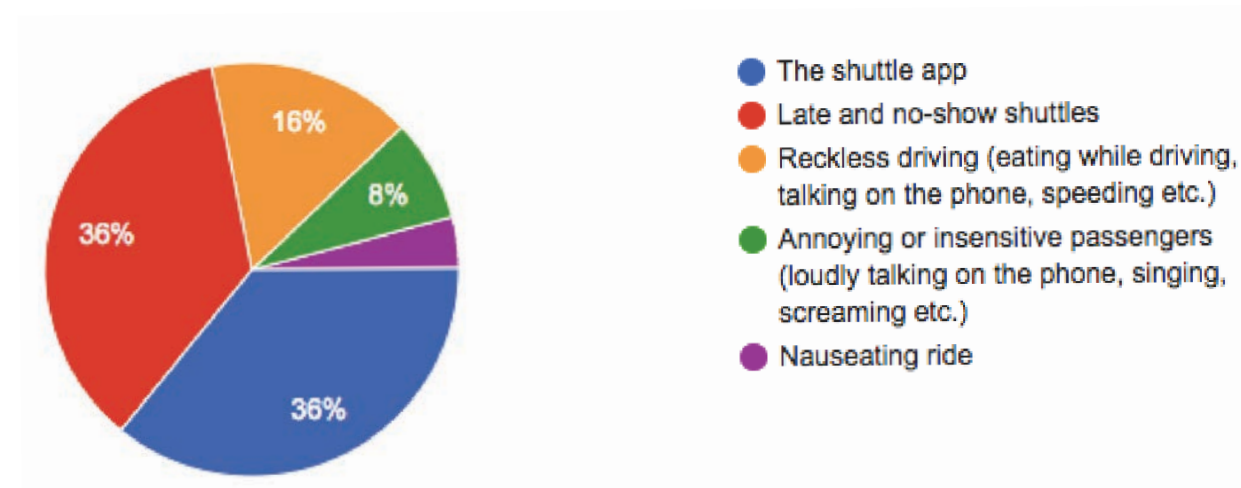
The YU Shuttles: What Students Think

The Observer will be including a poll in our paper each month so readers can see what their fellow students think about what's new at Stern.

How often do you use the shuttle?



What is your biggest frustration with the shuttles?



When asked: What do you think should not be allowed on the shuttles:

14% of respondents said radio playing

29% said passengers singing along with the radio or talking loudly to one and other

24% said passengers talking on the phone

And 57% said drunk or high passengers

What could be done to improve the shuttle experience?

“more 6/7 pm shuttles!”

“Perhaps setting common courtesy guidelines, to make sure everyone has a positive ride”

“The app actually working”

“Start them earlier and come on time”

“Drivers can drive better to make me less nauseated”

“Updated shuttle app with updates on shuttle arrivals if it's late”

“Shuttle drivers not insisting on taking the West End Highway no matter what, and always dropping off at 36th, 35th, and 29th”

“More realistically schedule rush-hour shuttles so that the time it actually comes is the time listed on the schedule- Wilf-Beren shuttles at that time are nearly always extremely late”

The Observer wants to know what you think! Look out on our facebook page to be a part of the March poll.

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A Trip to Israel: A Key Difference Between The Madrich and Madricha Programs

Miriam Pearl Klahr
Managing Editor

In many ways the Beren campus madricha program, which is currently in its fourth year of existence, is similar to its Wilf counterpart. Mrs. Rachel Ciment, Stern College Director of Spiritual Guidance, is the madricha program's coordinator and explained that its purpose is "to enhance the first year experience for all new students." The program acknowledges that starting college can be overwhelming and that having an upperclassman as a mentor with a similar pre-college experience, such as having attended the same seminary or coming straight from high school, could ease this transition. Thus the madricha program was born. According to their official job description, the madrichot fulfill this role through coordinating four activities for their students per semester, checking in with students individually, attending their seminary shabbaton on campus, helping coordinate seminary visits to the Beren campus when applicable, and meeting regularly with Mrs. Ciment to review the success of the programs they run as well as the progress of their students. The madrichot are offered a stipend of \$1,500 for their work.

According to Rabbi Elisha Bacon, Yeshiva University Mashgiach Ruchani, Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies, and coordinator of the Wilf campus Madrich Program, the madrichim program was also established to "create an additional layer of support for the new students as they adjust to the rigors of a demanding dual curriculum after a year, two, or more, in Israel." He explained that "the idea behind the program is to tap into the natural connections guys feel from having a shared experience in the same Yeshivot in Israel. This natural bond allows the madrichim to connect more easily to the new students and offer support." The official job description of the madrichim almost parallels those of the madrichot, and based off conversations with madrichim, the stipend seems to range from \$750 to \$1,500. Yet, there is one other glaring difference between the two programs. Only for the men does one of the responsibilities include "possibly traveling to Israel during Winter break to meet potential talmidim and recruit for YU."

Though the madrich program is run and funded by RIETS, the ticket to Israel offered to madrichim is paid for by the Admissions Office in return for doing recruiting while visiting their respective yeshivot. Geri

Mansdorf, Yeshiva University's Director of Admissions explained that three years ago "admissions had sent both men and women to Israel over break." She clarified that the reason only the men are sent now, is strictly because that is "what makes sense" for recruitment. Mansdorf attributes this to the difference in the structures between the men's and women's gap year programs in Israel. At the men's yeshivot, students often stay in the beit midrash for as many as three sederim a day, so there is ample opportunity for the madrichim to meet



incoming students and have chavrutot. In contrast, the seminary schedule in most schools is far more rigid. Students are in classes throughout the day, and there is not a clear time for the madrichot to engage with them. Similarly, the issue of men having an easier time staying in their yeshivot during their trip than women do in their seminaries is also of concern, since Admissions only pays for tickets and not accommodations.

Mansdorf also explained that nothing about this program "is set in stone" and Admissions "re-evaluates after each cycle." If they see that the trip to Israel isn't working for the men, then next year they will not run it for them either. They are also looking into ways to retry sending the madrichot to Israel. "We are now seeing how we can try this again—to send madrichot for the women in Israel—if we plan to do this [program] at all." Mansdorf also clarified that Admissions only sends madrichim to programs "where there is a minimal critical mass of students on YU's Israel Program." This explains why the madrichot of beit midrash style

women's programs, such as Lindenbaum, Migdal Oz, and Nishmat were not sent over break even in the year when other madrichot were sent; these schools are generally not large recruitment sites for YU.

According to the madrichim who were interviewed for this article, most of whom wish to remain anonymous, Admissions helps guide them regarding what to say and how to recruit for YU. Moreover, though the madrichim are primarily sent to Israel to recruit for YU, many find this opportunity to meet future YU students and help ease their transition, to be the more meaningful part of the trip. For example, Jeremy Teichman, the current KBY madrich, expressed that while he was sent to Israel "for the sake of recruiting" and is certain that he had "an impact in a very positive way," he personally enjoyed "going for the sake of building relationships with the incoming students to YU so that he could be more of a service when they get to YU." Others said that although they are sent to recruit "they are not puppets," and will tell the students of their Israel yeshiva about the real struggles they face at YU.

Many of YU's madrichot did not even know of the existence of the Admissions sponsored trip to Israel for the madrichim. Upon hearing the logic regarding why only the men are chosen, many women agreed with the explanation given. However, others believed that despite the rigid schedule at most seminaries, "there is still plenty of time to talk to students in between classes, at meals, or at night." Moreover, many of the madrichot expressed how much they would have benefited from meeting a Stern College student who attended their seminary before coming to YU. In fact, after learning about this Israel program, one Beren madricha said that instead of the madricha position being a job for the academic year of September through May, she believes it could be more fitting to have yearly cycles that span from January to January. Furthermore, even without being flown to Israel, she believes that starting in January, the Stern madrichot should be available to answer questions about classes and anything else over the phone, email, or video-chat, for those seminary students who are interested. She also thinks that by January of the following year, once students have acclimated to college life, the RAs are better suited to deal with student's personal issues, making the role of madricha obsolete.

Will Bitcoin Thrive or Dive in 2018

Lior Levy

Will Bitcoin thrive or dive in 2018? Bitcoin is a digital asset that aims to act as decentralized cryptocurrency. It was created in 2009 by a pseudonymous founder as the first of its type, and has increased in value by about 2500% throughout 2017. The Bitcoin's price rise expresses the increasing approval of this system. However, it might be the result of a speculative bubble. In the anticipation of the Bitcoin becoming a dominating currency, some will buy it in the hope to sell it for profit later. Bitcoin had shown to fluctuate in boom and bust cycles that ruined substantial value.

However, this encrypted tool holds some advantages which cannot be easily dismissed. While in the current banking system, you have to trust a long chain of bank clerks and payment processors to handle your money, with Bitcoin, there is no need to do so. Bitcoin transactions are fast, cheap and private, and no central authority has control over your transactions. No taxes, transaction fees or tracking apply with Bitcoin. The transactions are verified with blockchain protecting your personal information, and therefore prevent any potential identity theft.

The international community has expressed mixed opinions regarding bitcoin. India's finance minister has stated that the digital currency will not be recognized as a legal tender. Turkey, some early responses claimed that "buying and selling virtual currencies is incompatible with Islam since the government can not

control it." A nationalist Dutch newspaper urged Netherlands' citizens to sell their Bitcoins as a nationalist act. The newspaper claimed that Bitcoin transactions undermine the government, and destabilize the economy by permitting money laundering and tax avoidance. The newspaper's main claim is that the Central



Bank is losing its ability to maintain a stable economy through controlled regulation by opening its doors to decentralized cryptocurrency. The citizens are exposed to the speculative nature of the Bitcoin and to the risk of converting their assets into air. In agreement with this statement, Robert Ophéle, chairman of France's

market regulator, has declared that cryptocurrency is a means for cybercrime, and represents no agreeable component of a real economy. Similar concerns were raised by the British Telegraph newspaper, which, immediately after the big drop in the value of the Bitcoin in January 15, 2018, stated that the digital currency is used for illegal purposes. Governor Haruhiko Kuroda of Japan said that Bitcoin should be regarded as a currency, but only traded for investment or for speculation.

In response to the vast approaches to the virtual currency, the BIS, the Bank for International Settlements which acts as the central bank for central banks, has acknowledged the necessity to address a virtual currency while employing a careful approach.

Facing 2018, will bitcoin, the representative of virtual currency, boom or bust? In light of its extremely volatile nature throughout 2017, some say that Bitcoin, the first blockchain-based cryptocurrency, possesses flaws that its competitors will aim to overcome. Another factor that may impact the fate of Bitcoin is the "mining" process used to create it. The mining process requires excessively high energy, raising environmental concerns. Will Bitcoin dive or thrive in the upcoming year? If it manages to overcome its current problems, adopting a virtual currency regulation system and gaining consensus in the main global banking institutes, Bitcoin could turn into the most common means of business transactions.

Building Bridges with Boards: The Gender Inequality on The YU Board of Trustees

Elka Wiesenberg
Staff Writer



The civilized world has been thrown into an uproar with all the commotion which #MeToo has caused. There are daily arguments debating the movement's merits and pitfalls. Are more people being harmed by unfair allegations than helped for actual harassment cases? Are women going too far in the pursuit of validation, or not far enough?

Disregarding anyone's support or objections, one thing is certain: Gender inequality has once again been thrust to the forefront of social justice discussions. Thanks to #MeToo, justice has been called for concerning many global issues in women's rights, as well as many smaller-scale problems.

It's time for the spotlight to be directed home—to the gender gap on Yeshiva University's Board of Trustees.

The American Council on Education (ACE) reports that the average percentage of women on governing boards of universities is at a pitiful 30%. At YU, the numbers are far more extreme, as women hold a mere three of the 27 Trustees positions on The Yeshiva University Board of Trustees. This is excluding the numbers of the Chairman, the four Vice Chairmen, and the Treasurer of The Board, all six of whom are male.

This raises one predominant question: Are women—who make up 51% of the student body—being equally represented at YU if only 11.1% of the Board of Trustees is female?

Before addressing this question, it is important to understand what the Board of Trustees does. Ms. Marjorie Blenden, Vice President of The Blenden Group, former Chair of the Stern College Board, and current member of the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees, explained that the Board is essentially liable for any actions and decisions of the institution as a whole. "The fiduciary responsibility, as I understand it, lies with the members of the Board. The Board is not only advisory, but they are responsible," she said. This means that the Board has an overarching responsibility concerning any major problems or changes that need to be resolved or made in Yeshiva University. Trustees must attend several long meetings annually, and each Board member also must head at least one or two committees at YU—of which, Ms. Blenden promises with a laugh, there are several.

Being a YU Board of Trustees member is a commitment of time and dedication. According to Blenden, "What you look for in a Board [member] is someone who will support the mission of the college or university. You look for someone who will give you that support, who is able to give you the time and the effort. And it does take time."

Yeshiva University has had female Board members since its inception. In fact, there have been times when there was a slightly higher percentage of women on the Board than there is now, in 2018. So why do we have this seemingly unforgivable shortage of women now?

At the very least, there are three women on the Board. In fact, a Korn Ferry Institute article about women on Wall Street, brought to my attention by Dean of Undergraduate Arts and Sciences Dr. Karen Bacon, says having at least three women on a Board makes a visible difference in revenue numbers. The

article quotes the stock index firm MSCI, stating that organizations with at least three women on the board had "consistently higher returns on equity" than firms without this much female board representation. While three might be the minimum women necessary on a Board for this productivity increase, it still leaves a blatantly unequal gender ratio in this case. Shouldn't gender inequality be considered during Board member selection?

"It's not about gender," Blenden insisted resolutely. "It's about who is the best fit. Male or female...To [select Board members] gender-wise doesn't make sense to me. It's about the individual. That's what counts."

I wondered about this statement. What could possibly be so important in selecting a Board member that even Ms. Blenden, who expressed a desire for more female inclusion on The Board of Trustees, could overlook the gender gap and accept that whenever the next Board member is appointed, the percentage of females might not go up? What qualities does a Board member really need, so much so that it could take precedence over ensuring equality?

Blenden expressed a powerful sentiment on this matter. She passionately declared,

"Part of [being on] the committee is a belief in the mission, an ability to support the Board and the school, and the ability to give your time—and the desire to give your time—to the school. Because it does take time. It's not just going to four or five meetings a year...you have to be willing to give that time, and... to spend [your] time pursuing the benefits of the university, doing what you can for the school. There is no one, I believe, who sits on [the Board of Trustees] who does not care. Like you care for your family, you care for the school."

The genuine belief in YU's mission of a Torah U'Mada education, so apparent in Blenden's voice, is expressed in her aims for the University: "You want to make sure that you have the right facilities, but more importantly, for me anyhow, that you have the right faculty. And that you can open your doors for the students who want to come... You want to do what's best for them."

Every Board member, according to Blenden, pours all possible resources into YU. Even though many of them are businessmen and lawyers, Blenden believes that "as much time as they give their own personal businesses or practices, that's how much time they give to the University."

However, no matter how much each Board member gives to Yeshiva University, it is hard to believe that there is a shortage of accomplished women like Ms. Blenden or her fellow Trustees, Ms. Shira Yosher and Ms. Naomi Azrieli, who believe in YU's mission and would dedicate their lives to it. It can't be "Mission: Impossible" to find them, if the effort were really put in. Perhaps a belief that finding capable women is not so difficult betrays a blind faith in the female gender. Perhaps YU really has tried to find more female Board members than it has succeeded in recruiting.

Blenden, on the other hand, seems to be of the opinion that any inequality on YU's Board is

unintentional. "It's only because no one has suggested it. I am sure that is the reason. It's not because they decided."

A possible problem that causes the gender gap, Blenden suggested, is the cycle of men recommending men for the Board of Trustees. She explained, "If you ask a man, 'Do you have anybody that you would recommend [for the Board]?' he would recommend another man. I think that's really the only [issue]—there is no rule that says it has to be 10/30, 10/50. [Men] work with men in business, they're friendly with men."

I suggested to Ms. Blenden that perhaps, with

women climbing in number in business, law, and other prestigious fields, these distinguished men will have more association with distinguished women in the workforce, and will have more female recommendations in the future. Blenden agreed—perhaps this could be the solution.

Still, this bridging of the gender gap is not happening fast enough. In the meantime, what about the interests of Yeshiva University women, particularly in the all-girls undergraduate Stern College for Women? Are the females of YU suffering budgeting and consideration consequences, due to the lack of sufficient representation from and for their gender? Ms. Blenden adamantly rejected that idea. "I think that the Board as a whole is not prejudiced or biased in favor of one school or another," she said. "There is a man who is a Chairman of The Board at Stern! I don't think that it has anything to do with gender."

It was an interesting and valid point to bring up Murray Laulicht, the male Chairman of Stern's Board of Overseers. If a man could represent women so well on that Board, why wouldn't the 24 men on the Board of Trustees be adequate to represent the female students of the University? Blenden also added, "Everyone with whom I have spoken—and I have spoken to everyone—wants the University as a whole to succeed. And [both] undergraduate schools are the bread and butter." However, even if men can represent women when there are only women to represent, like on the Stern Board, this does not guarantee fairness when looking at both male and female colleges in a university. A slight gender prejudice may subconsciously influence Board members in the men's favor, causing more Board interest in the men in Yeshiva College than the women at Stern.

Blenden did concede that being the only female in the room at Board meetings has been daunting, especially at the beginning of her association with the Board. "It would be nice to have more women, it really would," she said.

When asked for a statement regarding the gender gap in YU's governing body, Moshael J. Strauss, Chair of the Board of Trustees, claimed, "We will continue to focus on diversifying our Board, to further expand criteria such as age, gender, geographic location, professions and other factors so we can capitalize on different perspectives, different experiences, and different abilities. By doing so, we hope to cement YU's position as the standard-bearer for educating and training leaders for the Jewish community and society-at-large."

This politically correct answer was far from satisfying, but with great respect for our amazing institution and its leaders, I hope that it is true. I hope that as society advances towards gender equality, our University advances further and faster. I hope that when the time comes for a new Trustee to be selected, there are at least several women considered. I hope that one day, if we truly succeed, I can have the honor of supporting a school with a close ratio, in either direction, of male to female leaders.

Jewish Community Watch: The Fight Against Childhood Sexual Abuse in the Orthodox Jewish Community

Sarah Casteel

News Editor



In 2011, brothers Meyer and Shneur Seewald founded a small organization which would later become one of the most prominent organizations combating childhood sexual abuse (CSA) in the Orthodox Jewish community. The movement, which is considered to be controversial by some, exposes childhood sexual abusers to the public. They write articles, Facebook posts and website posts about predators from primarily America and Israel, as well as from any other countries where an abuser has been accused or convicted. The original motivation to create the movement was to target and publicly condemn sexual predators, which quickly prompted hundreds of victims of CSA to reach out to them for help.

The organization soon blew up, making moves to reduce and ultimately eliminate CSA in the worldwide Orthodox community. It was officially named Jewish Community Watch, otherwise referred to as JCW. The Seewald brothers brought in professionals and experts from areas such as law, psychology and Torah, to assist in their work. The organization's mission statement is: "Jewish Community Watch (JCW) is dedicated to protecting our children from sexual abuse by advocating, supporting and caring for victims all over the world." JCW has continued to grow, to take on more responsibilities in ending CSA and the community's refusal to properly address the issues, and to help thousands of victims.

In order to accomplish their goals of helping victims, educating the community and taking away the power of perpetrators to continue harming others, the organization has laid out their main framework: "We prevent abuse by warning parents, community members and educators about predators in their community, and work to put those predators behind bars. We educate the public by promoting child safety, increasing awareness,

and eliminating the stigma and shame of abuse. We help victims heal through our guidance and support, assisting them in their journey from victim to survivor." The multi-faceted organization has taken on the responsibility of both helping victims retroactively, proactively preventing further CSA, and taking action against those who

have perpetrated such crimes.

JCW's accomplishments are vast and impressive. To educate the community, they have produced videos to raise awareness and educate the worldwide community and hosted awareness events. They also publish articles and educational materials on their website. To help victims, they have given therapy services, launched investigations and provided a variety of resources to help with their healing and justice. Within the realm of Jewish law, JCW has influenced court rulings such as the Crown Heights rabbinical court, requiring abuse to be reported directly to the police. Finally, in terms of American law, JCW has assisted and cooperated with law enforcement, investigations and court cases, to bring justice and safety to the community.

JCW sometimes faces criticism for what they call the "wall of shame." The organization, which has almost 20,000 likes on Facebook and thousands of people visiting its website, has created a "wall of shame" to warn the community about accused predators. It features names, photos, locations and if possible, further information about each person. There are over one hundred people on the list, which can be found on the website.

Controversy and criticism of the website stem from the wall of shame and the organization's public shaming of many people. This is particularly true because some of the publicized condemnations are against people only accused, but not confirmed or convicted of having committed sexual abuse. The power that an individual or organization has to completely destroy a person's life by sharing an allegation like this with the world is great, and some critics claim the organization is too liberal with its use of social media to shame many people.

On JCW's website, there are various resources which are easily accessible. For example, there is an option to "ask a therapist," where a person can put their contact information and a question, and a therapist will contact them directly. There is also a directory available to help people find a counseling center in their own area. One young woman who reached out to JCW to help her find a therapist said that, "the organization does incredible things for so many people, and I am so lucky I had the courage to reach out for their help." Another person asked said, "I already had a therapist and support from family and friends, but reaching out to JCW employees gave me a new support system that I never realized I needed."

In terms of education, there is an "education center" which includes information about sexual abuse and its effects, materials for parents to educate themselves, and how to empower children to be aware of and open about any situations that seem uncomfortable or unsafe.

JCW also provides legal information online, including both US law and halacha. The US law page gives information about the statutes of limitations on CSA, specific to each state. This means that a person can research how many years after a case of sexual abuse they are still able to bring legal action against a perpetrator. On the other hand, the halacha page offers articles such as "Honoring Abusive Parents," resolutions about sexual abuse by rabbis and other organizations, and various psakim from rabbanim such as Rav Elyashiv, the Jerusalem Bais Din and the Beth Joseph Beis Din.

For those who are not victims of childhood sexual abuse, or are not parents of such victims, there are also various relevant sections on the website. All members of the Jewish and Orthodox Jewish community are encouraged to educate themselves on CSA and its effects. In addition, there are opportunities to help the organization's effort through donations, volunteer opportunities and the chance to become a voice for victims by being involved with the organization's social media and event hosting.

Yeshiva University students and other readers are encouraged to learn more about the organization, to like its page on Facebook and to consider taking advantage of the various available volunteer opportunities. Victims of childhood sexual abuse, or those supporting such victims, are encouraged to reach out to JCW for support and resources. Stay tuned for an exclusive interview with JCW founder, Meyer Seewald, in the March edition of The Observer.

The Invisible Rays: What You Can't See Can Hurt You

Sophie Shulman

You are sitting in the dentist's chair with your mouth full of plastic, and suddenly all of the staff take cover and retreat to the safety of another room, leaving you there to wonder, "What about me?" X-ray radiation has high risks and to determine just how high that risk factor is, we must explore the following questions: how often one is exposed to radiation, how much radiation one is exposed to, what area of the body is exposed to the radiation, and what is the age of the person exposed to the radiation?

People who work with radiation are exposed to it on a daily basis and will wear shielding equipment, and monitor for excess radiation. Many radiation technicians monitor their exposure by wearing a film badge which turns black when it is exposed to higher levels of radiation. There has also been research showing the effects of high amounts of radiation, as seen in workers who lived through atomic blasts. Dentists, radiologists and technicians on the other hand, are working with much lower dosages on a daily basis. Researchers have discovered that medical staff dealing with radiation before the 1950s had a high risk of developing leukemia and other cancers, but more recently it has been found to have no risks, as people in the field have been taking greater precautions. However, people working with radiation should still be mindful because in new radiation practices, such as fluoroscopy, the risks are still unclear.

Most medical x-ray procedures use low doses

of radiation, which are comparable to the amount of background radiation that we are exposed to within the period of a few days. Background radiation is all around us. It is in our soil, air and buildings. It comes from cosmic radiation that penetrates our earth's atmosphere. Higher altitudes on Earth are exposed to higher amounts of background radiation. For example, Denver, which has a high elevation, has higher amounts of radiation exposure. When a person is outdoors, the wavelengths don't impact them because the wavelengths have a high energy, and will therefore go right through the person. When a person is indoors in areas of higher elevation such as Denver, they will absorb more of the x-rays, because the energy is slowed down by the walls of the building. We use this knowledge to treat cancers. When a person has a cancer that is inside their body, they are treated with x-rays that have high energies, so that they will go right into the body. If they are being treated for an external cancer such as skin cancer, they can put a shield in front of them to block the path of the x-rays, which will slow down the waves, causing them to hit the skin.

Another risk factor is the area that the x-rays are directed towards. Dental x-rays have less of an impact than chest x-rays, because the area is smaller and more localized. There are some parts of our bodies which are more sensitive to radiation than others. Whenever a person receives an x-ray, there is always a bit

of scatter that doesn't go exactly where it is directed towards. Because of the possibility of x-ray scatter, it is important to be careful when imaging sensitive locations. Of course, with today's technology and advanced machinery, the amount of scatter is very small.

Younger people are more susceptible to the risks of radiation. Fetuses in particular are at high risk. Radiation is also more likely to form cell damage in human embryo, newborn and child cells. Radiation has been found to only have an impact when it passes a certain threshold. Embryonic cells are the most sensitive, which is why extra precaution is given to pregnant women who receive x-rays. Adult cells are more specific in function, and copy themselves at a slower rate than children's cells, so we do not want to expose the children's cells to anything which might cause damage and spread rapidly.

While there are risks, it is important to put these risks into perspective. The risks come when there is a high dosage for a repeated amount of time. However, we must recognize that most people are not exposed to those levels of radiation. In addition, there are also safety measures that are taken, including the use of screens which cover the parts of the body which do not require imaging. Imaging plays a significant role in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The advances in medicine and science is incredible—and x-rays have done so much to further our knowledge and advancement.

Faculty Spotlight: An Interview with Honors Program Coordinator, Meirah Shedlo

Racheli Moskowitz

Meirah Shedlo is the Academic Coordinator in the Office of the Dean, Stern College for Women. Meirah graduated from Stern as Valedictorian in 2013 with a history major, and served as a Presidential Fellow the following year. She now coordinates academic enrichment programs through the Dean's Office, including events for the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program. This past semester, she attended her 100th honors event! Meirah is also currently completing her master's degree at NYU.

Racheli Moskowitz: Can you tell us a bit about your experience at Stern as a student, and what led you to study history?

Meirah Shedlo: I've been fascinated by history ever since I was young, and my family would take trips to local historic sites and museums. So, I wanted to pursue that interest in college.

I really enjoyed the classes that I had the opportunity to take here. My honors mentor, Dr. Douglas Burgess, teaches classes in Piracy, International Crimes, Atlantic World—a range of topics that overlap with my interest in American history, as well as legal history and human rights. I found delving into those subjects to be really exciting.

During my summers, I interned in museums - the Maryland Historical Society and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. That gave me a chance to study history beyond textbooks, to work with artifacts and do original research with primary sources like letters and diaries. I loved having the chance to personally connect with the history through these items.

I am interested in the intersection between history, policy, and public service—so at the Smithsonian, I interned specifically in the Division of Political History to learn more about the interaction of those fields. History isn't a purely academic study of past events that are over; the effects of many historical events continue into the present day. I found that fascinating and also crucial to understanding current events - why as a country we have the debates that we have, and encounter the issues that we do.

RM: How did your areas of study influence your choices when you graduated?

MS: After graduation, I started working here in the Dean's Office; I found that I really liked working in an educational atmosphere where people have intellectual conversations about all kinds of issues, and debate the intersection between academic disciplines like history and literature and how they influence our lives today.

I chose to pursue an MPA degree in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy at NYU, a degree that provides a background in management and public affairs, so I can serve the community in the best way possible - whichever sector I work in. That's something I felt combined many of my interests and skills, and nonprofit background. I'll be finishing that degree in May.

RM: What made you decide specifically to be part of the Dean's Fellowship—to continue at Stern after you graduated?

MS: I thought the fellowship sounded like a great opportunity because I was interested in experiencing nonprofit work in a higher ed setting. I specifically wanted to work in the Dean's Office, and the Honors Program played a really large role in that. I loved being an Honors student - the enrichment events, writing the senior project, and the coursework. I thought it would

be great to work on that for current students; watching the past fellows who worked with Honors, I thought it was amazing that they were able to coordinate the events and join us for them.

As part of the role, I run the Peer Tutoring Center, as well as the Frontiers programs, where students can take tailored seminar classes at Einstein, Cardozo, and Ferkauf to see what it would be like to be a graduate student in those fields. I've also been given the freedom to come up with my own workshops and panels and research fairs, and all kind of things I get to do based on student feedback. And, anything I would've enjoyed as a student - I can make that happen!

As fellows, we also had leadership seminars where we learned negotiation skills and financial literacy, among other things, and I thought it was a lot of fun to experience that with everyone as part of a cohort. We

large number—we're asking for 100 tickets at a time because we want as many students as possible to have the opportunity to go! We also have to choose dates that work around chagim, midterms, finals—finding dates that will work around as many students' schedules as possible. We think about when museum tours are available, the process for security clearance at the UN - there's a lot to consider!

RM: You recently attended your 100th Honor's event! Do you have any favorites?

MS: It's so tough to choose! The cultural events are definitely a highlight. I've gotten to see a lot of incredible performances that I wouldn't have had the chance to see otherwise. For example, when we saw *The Heiress on Broadway*, which starred Jessica Chastain and Dan Stevens, it was a huge deal. I remember my friends and I all rooting for the characters, getting really into it.

I've also loved the dance performances: we've meet ballet dancers and gone backstage to see the costumes, hear about how many shoes they go through, their commitment to what they do, and everything that goes on behind the scenes to make it happen; it makes you appreciate the performance so much more.

RM: What's it like to finally attend the event you've put so much time into making?

MS: I love it! The most exciting thing for me is once we're in the theater, we know that every student's taken care of and has their ticket, and we all get to enjoy together. And it's so special to hear everyone's feedback afterwards about the show or speaker; students will seek me out to tell me they really enjoyed it, or it was something they'd never seen or heard before and it really made them think. It makes me really happy to play a role in something I loved so much as a student, and to help current students have that experience. Since I still attend the events, we can have those conversations about what we've all just seen together.

RM: Do you have plans to continue at YU?

MS: I've had a really wonderful experience. I started in a term

position that was originally just for a year, and this is now my fifth year! Year by year, I've been able to expand my role. I'm hoping to use the skills I've gained through my graduate program and through the years of working here to have as much of an impact as I can.

RM: What does YU, as an institution mean for you?

MS: I think YU is a very special place; it's a warm and close-knit environment of students who share common values while also contributing their unique skills and viewpoints. It's a wonderful place to be a college student: to test out your abilities, to take on leadership roles, and to grow academically and personally. You can develop relationships with your professors, with the staff; Dean Bacon's door is often open, and if she's free, she'll chat with students who stop by. That's really unparalleled. As a fellow, I used to meet with the president and vice president to get their advice, something that just doesn't happen in many other colleges.

We also play a role in the broader Jewish community, as an institution balancing a strong commitment to Jewish learning and values, along with a strong general studies curriculum, learning from the best of what the world has to offer globally.

It's a great environment in which to be a student, and to start a career!



had speakers like President Richard Joel [YU president at the time], Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, high level YU administrators... It was a great experience for my first year as a college graduate, and to do it within the framework of YU, where as a student I felt empowered to take on leadership roles - it was a fantastic first job experience for me.

RM: What goes into planning an Honor's event, from the inception to actualizing it?

MS: I've definitely found, being on the other side, that it's a complex process—more than I appreciated as a student! Dr. Wachtell and I work together to brainstorm a list of events that will appeal to the range of students that we have in the Honors Program—with a variety of backgrounds, career goals and personal interests. For the cultural events, we're asking—what are the new shows on Broadway, what are the current cultural events that are being promoted in the city? We look at all the offerings and think about what people would appreciate. We try to do things that are a little different than what students would normally have a chance to do. For example, we went to a very creative show produced by the Women's Project Theater and heard from the artistic directors not only about the show, but their work supporting female playwrights.

Once we've identified options for events, I'll look into the logistics, find out if they can accommodate our

Ed Sheeran, Millennials, and a Broken System

Ailin Elyasi
Staff Writer

Nothing sums up my generation more than an album so relatable that girls hum it throughout the dorms and play it on repeat during long car rides. It is no coincidence that after a good date my friend whistles “Perfect,” or that she sings the lyrics of “Castle on a Hill” when feeling homesick. While Ed Sheeran may be called a musician, a businessman, or a crooner, the sheer number of people who connect to his words also makes him a genius. While the song “What Do I Know?” might be overlooked on his album “Divide,” its lyrics are extremely relatable and describe the reality of the overwhelming confusion plaguing the millennial generation.

Striving to attain that overly-structured life, millennials took endless AP classes in high school, followed by soccer, mock trial, peer tutoring, and newspaper involvement. College follows the same tune except with lyrics such as “future,” “money,” “career,” and “scores” woven into the melody. All the while, we

see people ten years out of college unsatisfied with the choices they made back in university. Those choices scare me, since they sound too similar to my own.

To what end? All the hard work results in replica jobs that the generation before this one filled, and eventually retired from, after exhausting and unfulfilling careers. We all know the depressed dentist, who was once his mother’s favorite bragging point but can now barely get out of bed. Or take the financially fulfilled lawyer, who has waved goodbye to any form of social life in order to advance her career.

Why is it that every other ad I see is about “quitting your job”? Why are we working so hard for something that ultimately makes so many people unhappy and so inclined to quit? I believe that my generation is too accomplishment-focused, ready to get that advanced degree for the sake of that advanced degree. Ed Sheeran sums this up best in “What Do I Know?” when he sings

“but Lord knows, Everybody’s talking ‘bout exponential growth And the stock market crashing and their portfolios”

As in, there is a hyper focus on future—on progress. While Ed Sheeran is living his dream as a “boy with a one man show, no university, no degree,” us suckers sit in class and hope that the system will provide us with the future we desire. Perhaps the equation all of us are trying to solve is the wrong one; even when we get the right answer, are accepted into our dream school or attain our dream job, something still seems off-balance.

Maybe we are expecting a flawed system to give us a flawless life. It keeps me up at night to know that I can work so hard and do everything so right, yet still end up wrong. And maybe Mr. No University, No Degree got it right when he sang it’s “Just love, and understanding positivity.”

CHIP and the End of Empathy

Sara Marcus

This past month, the most recent government shutdown ended not with a bang, but with a whimper. Both parties agreed to stay open to talking about immigration at some later point, and passed a short term spending budget. Amidst all the wound-licking, name-calling, and vicious debate over immigration, nestled in the spending bill, was a bipartisan victory. It was only four months past the deadline.

If you are mildly interested in politics, or just have a Facebook feed, odds are you might have spent a good chunk of time scrolling either past or through articles about the American healthcare system. But while dramatic hyper-partisan battles about Obamacare take over the news, another health insurance program had been wheezing for support.

CHIP, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, provides health coverage to families that earn too much for Medicaid, but not enough to afford more expensive coverage. More than nine million low-income families rely on CHIP to ease the cost of healthcare for their

children. Co-created by Republican Senator Orrin Hatch and Democrat Senator Ted Kennedy in 1997, it had been reauthorized over the years overwhelmingly by both parties, and still has wide bipartisan support. Polling by the Kaiser Family Foundation, a healthcare policy nonprofit, found “three fourths of the public saying it is important for Congress to work on reauthorizing funding for [CHIP].” When asked in September, as the deadline for renewing CHIP was approaching, 89% of Democrats, 72% of Independents, and 62% of Republicans said it was “extremely” important for Congress to restore funding.

But for nearly five months, CHIP was in budgetary limbo and there was nothing out of Congress. The program had become another victim of the dysfunction our aggressively partisan politics has wrecked on our legislature. When Republicans put a refunding bill up for vote Democrats refused to pass it because it would require relenting on Obamacare coverage. When the situation became more urgent towards the end of the year, Republicans refused to bring a CHIP refund bill up

on its own because they were focusing on passing a more flashy tax bill. And when the government shuddered into a shutdown rather than agree on immigration, low-income parents found that the healthcare of their children was being held hostage as a way for parties to draw their lines in the sand about entirely different political issues.

The delays in extending CHIP were because the debate wasn’t about CHIP. It had become a another partisan prize in a political game playing for the cameras in Washington. But that meant outside of D.C., nearly thirty blue and red states were in danger of running out of funds within the first three months of 2018.

There were nine million children whose parents might have had to choose between emergency surgery or the electrical bill if Congress would not have had not passed the refund bill, which they finally did 114 days late. It’s a disgrace that our political parties can agree only in principle that parents should be able to afford to take their children to the doctor.



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Why Stern Students Shouldn't Have Access to the Uptown Pool

Kira Paley

Opinions Editor

The Commentator recently released an article announcing the tentative reopening of the hot tub in the pool area on the Wilf campus. As the creation of women's hours at the pool is a matter of ongoing campus debate, several female YU students expressed frustration that the issue of the hot tub was resolved before the issue of non-existent women's hours was dealt with. Women using the YU pool, though, is not only a lost cause, but also antithetical to the philosophy of Yeshiva University.

I fully consider myself a feminist and believe that male and female students should have equal access to university resources and facilities; in the case of the pool though, halacha supersedes this belief as YU prides itself on being a bastion of Torah U'Mada. I remember the first time I sat in the uptown Furman cafeteria, shocked at a fellow Stern student wearing a tank top and leggings. YU, especially the uptown campus, is a Yeshiva, and students should dress accordingly. Inevitably, no matter how many rules would be created regarding how women would need to dress upon entering and exiting the pool area were they granted pool hours, students would break these rules and walk through the Rubin lobby dressed in clothing not following the dress code.

The pool is located inside Rubin Hall, which houses a large number of male students and contains the Furman Dining Hall, which is the Wilf campus's primary cafeteria. As a result, there is heavy foot traffic

through the doors and lobby of Rubin. It would be extremely unfortunate if a RIETS student ran into a Stern student wearing a towel as a skirt on his way to the cafeteria. Halacha aside, as students of a Yeshiva we



are responsible for preserving a Yeshiva atmosphere, and we cannot allow this Yeshiva membrane to be permeated by setting up inappropriate situations that could otherwise be avoided.

Furthermore, it is not only dressing appropriately that contributes to the Yeshiva environment of the Wilf and Beren campuses; there are various other ways in which students perpetuate and damage it. For example,

I believe it is important that campus publications refrain from publishing sexually explicit content (unless in the case of sexual assault narratives or in the context of health), which unfortunately has not always been the case. Though free speech is of course crucial, so is the Jewish value of modesty, and therefore not everything is appropriate to be published in a medium that is representative of YU.

As a feminist, and simply as someone who believes in fairness, it is unfortunate that male and female YU students do not have access to the same campus facilities. It is also unfortunate that there is not a pool downtown and that our campuses are not as large as say, a state school's; if that were the case, a recreational facility separate from the main cafeteria and men's dorms would prevent this issue. Instead, a solution could be somehow granting women access to another pool, possibly near the Beren campus, so that all students with the desire to swim could do so.

Until then, it is safe to say that it is possible to live campus life to the fullest without having access to a pool. I am grateful that I am able to attend a university that shares my Modern Orthodox values, and if that means sacrificing some of my rights, so be it.

Habitat For Humanity: A Diary

Chaviva Freedman

Sunday

It's about 7:00 AM as I start writing this. I'm sitting in a van with people I barely know; the two people that I do know currently sit in the other van. I am about to embark on a journey that is known as Habitat for Humanity (which includes a twelve hour drive to South Carolina) with Bnei Akiva and I've been nervous in the days leading up to the trip. What are we going to do once we get there? Am I going to like the people that I am expected to work with for the next week? There are a million questions running through my mind, but I choose to keep my mouth shut, sit back and enjoy the ride.

It's now about 4PM and we've been on the road for the majority of the day. I've learned the names of everyone in my van and we're playing road trip games to pass the time. I've learned what everyone's favorite sound is. I've discovered that the pillow that is between me and the guy I'm sharing the row with is not his, but actually someone else's from the other van (#pillowthepillow). I'm starting to think that this trip is not going to be as nerve-wracking as I originally made it out to be in my mind.

Tuesday

The pool is located inside Rubin Hall, which houses a It's been two days since we got to South Carolina. I've been sleeping on a couch that is smaller than my 5'1" frame and I injured my knee somewhere between travelling and getting to the worksite yesterday morning. We've had to shower at a local YMCA due to the lack of showers in the Reform temple we are staying at for the week. We've had to wake up at the ungodly hour of 6:15 AM each morning in order to leave the temple by 7:45 AM. I've dug a foundation for the beginnings of what will be a brand new house. I've gone bowling where I made a new friend while laughing from dancing badly to Harry Styles, Luke Bryan and Cardi B. I've gone to Walmart, where I wanted to buy out the entire store because the prices here are incredibly cheap compared to the New York prices I grew up with.

The craziest part of the last two days is the fact that I climbed onto a roof. I was beyond terrified, but I (somewhat) conquered my fear of heights and helped put shingles on a roof that was falling apart. That doesn't mean that the rest of my group wasn't laughing at me in the process, nor does it mean that I wasn't afraid of falling or rolling off the roof the entire time. But I did the one thing that I told myself I wasn't going to do on

this trip, and I am doing a happy dance to celebrate my accomplishment.

Thursday

I'm sitting in the van again, across the street from where we are supposed to be building a porch. This time, I'm with a few friends enjoying a game of Never Have I Ever, where I'm learning way too much information about certain people. I'm not feeling as alone as I did in the beginning. I'm slowly making friendships that I feel might have the potential to continue even after the trip ends. I've played more games of Heads Up and Psych! on this trip than I can probably count, but I laugh more and more as the games go on.

With each day that passes, I'm discovering just how much the community appreciates our presence. Everywhere I go, I hear from various people that we are doing a great thing for the community of Darlington, SC. As I throw bags of clothing into a truck, I learn that these bags could bring in up to \$2500 per truck. We are becoming immersed within the community and I'm starting to not want to leave at the end of the week.

Friday Night

I'm sitting at a Shabbat community meal in the Chabad of Columbia, SC. It's a small Orthodox community, but each person I've met is genuinely nice. I listen to life stories and see how this slowly thriving Jewish community appreciates us sitting with them at their meal. They applaud us for taking time from our winter breaks to drive to another state and build houses for people in need, without even a second thought.

It amazes me that I didn't even think about what our presence would mean for the communities we have stayed in this week. I only thought I was going to be building houses. I didn't realize that I was changing lives too. By being here, we are showing the locals that young Orthodox Jewish adults really do have the power to make all the difference in the world, if we put our minds to it.

Saturday Night

It's about 11:30 PM. I'm back in the van, this time starting our journey home. I'm sitting next to a now close

friend of mine, discussing life stories and having deep meaningful conversations. I've let him stalk my high school crush on Facebook. He's told me in detail about why he transferred colleges. He knows about my dad having cancer when I was nineteen. I know about his family dynamics. I'm learning more and more about the people I've been with for the week and I am slowly realizing that although our ages may be different, we're more similar than we thought.

I've learned a lot about myself in the past week too. I've stopped being so reserved in my thoughts. I can now laugh at myself for saying things that sound completely ridiculous. I can conquer my fears if I put my mind to it. It's amazing to see this transformation when I see myself in the eyes of the people around me. They accept my quirks, and I love them for it.

It will be weird to wake up at a reasonable hour in my dorm room bed. It will be weird to not be sitting in a van for long stretches of time. It will be weird to shower in the privacy of my own bathroom. Despite that, I wouldn't change a thing. Habitat for Humanity was one of the most humbling experiences I ever had, and I have a good feeling that this trip (and the friends I made) will stick with me for a long time.



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