

The COMMENTATOR

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Hundreds of students attended the memorial for David Rottenstreich, a YU student who passed away before Pesach.

YC: From Heimish to Professional

A Retrospective of Three Years of Change at Yeshiva College

BY YITZCHAK RATNER

In an effort to be seen as comparable to other great liberal arts institutions, Yeshiva College's relatively new administration has endeavored to raise the bar. A close look at the attempts to enhance Yeshiva College reveals that improvement has mainly focused on academic rigor and increases in administrative professionalism.

In its bid to elevate Yeshiva's status among private, top-tier universities, Yeshiva University President Richard Joel hired Princeton University Professor David Srolovitz in 2006 to become Yeshiva College's 10th dean. This major appointment was made a mere three

years after Joel's own investiture in 2003, signifying his commitment to a new era of greatness for YU.

Dean Srolovitz has been around for only three years, with many of his innovations having already impacted students and faculty alike. Other developments, though, have been only implemented recently. It is important to realize that even the changes that were instituted a while ago may have effects noticeable only in the long term. As Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau wisely noted, "It's hard to evaluate policies that have effects difficult to quantify, especially over such a short period of time."

Dean Srolovitz, in an interview with *The Commentator*, stated his

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Six Years In: What Hath President Joel Wrought?

BY NOACH LERMAN, DANIEL GOLDMINTZ & MICHAEL SIEV

Six years ago, Richard M. Joel was selected as Yeshiva University's fourth President. He was the first YU president who was neither a rabbi nor an academic, both of which were previously considered a prerequisite for the post. He was, however, a noted administrator, fundraiser and visionary. He also knew YU well, having seen Yeshiva up close from the bottom, top and side – he attended MTA for high school, served as the associate dean at Cardozo, and ran Hillel, the organization for Jewish life on college campuses. And from the moment he accepted the position, he made it clear that he was determined to change the way

YU related to its students and the Modern Orthodox community.

In wide-ranging interviews with President Joel, Chancellor Norman Lamm and a number of observers inside YU gave *The Commentator* a sense of what the fourth president sought to accomplish at Yeshiva, and how he is faring so far.

REVITALIZING YU

Though in President Joel's view Yeshiva was in "stasis" before he assumed the Presidency, he was quick to offer "immense gratitude" to Chancellor Lamm. Chancellor Lamm's tenure began with the Yeshiva nearly bankrupt, and ended with the endowment at nearly one billion dollars. As both a rabbi and a doctor, Chancellor Lamm was fur-

ther praised by President Joel and others for the scholarship he produced as president, particularly towards the synthesis of Torah u-Madda.

At the same time, President Joel longed to "unleash new forces" at Yeshiva. He felt "the core vision needed revitalization; that students needed to hope, to dream, to risk." He insisted that "YU needed to become relentless in the quest to become an institution with real quality, an institution that would allow students to unleash their dreams – an incubator of lay leaders and Klei Kodesh." The key issue facing Yeshiva in his mind was the need to "break the culture that didn't encourage aspirations."

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Are Gender Relations "Shifting to the Right?"

BY SHAUL SEIDLER-FELLER

When one YU junior showed up to a first date, he was looking forward to a satisfying meal, an animating conversation and a relaxing night out. Instead, the girl came armed with a 70-question test, grilling him on his ideology and family history. Unfortunately, he failed her "test." Not surprisingly, neither was interested in a second date.

Attitudes today towards dating and coed interactions in the Modern Orthodox community have changed substantially from those of the past – from issues concerning the appropriateness of coed programming for college students to the attitudes with which they approach a date to what they talk about on a date (take the above story, for example). (See "Not Your Parents' Shidduch Scene," on the right.) A shift appears to have occurred, altering the outlooks of many young men and women in how they relate to one another – a shift that has concerned parents and community leaders alike. To what can this change be ascribed?

Much debate surrounds this topic. Many attribute these changes to the nearly-standard education of Modern Orthodox students in yeshivot in Israel after high school. Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau paints the typical portrait of a student's experience there as one where kids acclimated to coed envi-

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Not Your Parents' Shidduch Scene: Modern Orthodox Dating in Historical Perspective

BY SHAUL SEIDLER-FELLER

Students walking through the lobby of Morg in the past few months confronted a sign on the wall advertising a shidduch (dating) service for both "modern" and "yeshivish" men at YU, and a striking email: findyourbashert@gmail.com. Some had scribbled interpretations of the words "modern" and "yeshivish" by associating them with specific institutions. While this was no normal campus poster, somehow it made a lot of sense to find it at YU, since the Modern Orthodox community, like most traditional communities, is one which values family. In a shiur entitled "Hashkafic and Practical Tips for Dating," Rabbi Josh Blass, one of YU's S'ganei Mashgichim, observed that the decision of whom to marry is a crucial one: "A good marriage is often the centerpiece of a meaningful life." And so it is no wonder that at a Modern Orthodox institution like this one, tremendous focus is paid on the part of the students to the search for a spouse.

However, as many social commentators have already observed, the shidduch scene in the Orthodox community is grappling with severe challenges. Many young men and women who would like to get married are having difficulty finding a proper match, leading them to give up hope on their marriage prospects or making them simply more desper-

ate to marry. Some would argue that there is no crisis here – that everyone will end up happily married. One recent YC graduate said: "In the non-Jewish world, people get married in their late 20s and early 30s. Is that a crisis? I think the whole thing just takes time." Similarly, a recent Stern graduate noted: "For the most part, everyone will get married. It's been blown a little bit out of proportion."

Others feel, however, that a true crisis is at hand. Tamar Snyder, in a July 11, 2008 Wall Street Journal article entitled "Single Jewish Female Seeks Stress Relief," wrote: "I used to shrug off this talk. Genocide in Darfur is a crisis; being single at 23 is not. But the communal pressure is hard to ignore." Additionally, in a recent poll of the undergraduate YU student body (see the "Student Pulse" section), 54.6% of those who responded – 45.7% of the men surveyed and 68.8% of the women surveyed – felt there was a shidduch crisis. And Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean of the YU Center for the Jewish Future, said flat out: "Yes, there is a shidduch crisis, to some extent based on the additional rules and protocols that have infiltrated our modern world, causing undo barriers and anxiety in the ability for young men and women to search to find their ezer kenegdo."

And still others believe that the crisis exists but is a function of the

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Staff

Editorials

Give Students The Best Chance To Succeed

As finals time is nearly through and an exhausting three-week work marathon draws itself to a close, we look back with a sleepy eye and ask ourselves, "Is there a better way to do this?" Yes, my friends, there is.

Many teachers assign a large paper, presentation, or project to be submitted on the same date as the final, granting students the extra time necessary to wrap up large academic endeavors. Although the assignments are often handed out earlier in the semester, the daily grind of a morning-till-night Yeshiva schedule usually precludes even the most studious of students from finding time to grapple with the assignments until reading week, when a large swath of glorious unstructured time grants them a brief reprieve to finally begin attacking them with focused fervor.

Yet reading week rarely lives up the dream. Indeed, with make-up classes, lab finals, review sessions, studying for regular finals, shiur bechinot or other morning program finals, and professor-student meetings all crammed into that one seven-day period, there rarely is enough time to study and take all one's finals, attend and make-up all of one's classes, and still be able to attack one's final assignments without an unhealthy overdose of caffeine (only three cups a day is recommended, boys) and an equally unhealthy number of power-naps masquerading as a good night's sleep.

Many students have proposed – with the endorsement of a number of professors and administrators – the allowance of an additional week or two after finals to hand in final papers and assignments. If professors were granted a reprieve from their requirement to hand in their final grades but a few days after final exams, students would be able to focus on finals during reading week, and their papers the week thereafter. Seniors who need to graduate can have special rules in place, but can be the exception, not define the rule.

Moreover, the scheduling of finals into a compact one-week results in an often alarmingly crammed schedule, with students frequently being required to take three finals in two days. The clear lack of time in between tests prevents individuals from giving each subject the due time and consideration that it requires. Allowing for only one test to be scheduled per day, and encouraging a more spread out schedule would create a much more manageable schedule. Moving Hebrew earlier, and using that day for Bible, rather than shoving it into the same day as another regular class final, would be one example of opening up the schedule, but we are aware of a number of possibilities.

Additionally, scheduling finals for nine o'clock in the morning adds layers of little-needed stress to the hectic process. Pushing the clock forward an hour or two would give students the time they may need to adequately wake up, ingest their breakfast at a less-than inhalation speed, and perhaps review their notes even one more time before walking into the exam. A study noted by The Chronicle of Higher Education several months ago confirmed the intuition that students perform better in afternoon classes than morning ones. While proctors might prefer to start at nine, the finals schedule should be built around the schedules of those who must take and study for the exams, not the people giving them.

These three measures – taken as a whole or even in part -- would do an awful lot to alleviate the strain and pressure of finals time, allowing students to more carefully focus on each task in a more deliberate, studious manner. And if the goal of final exams and papers are for students to truly produce their best work, then it is time for all involved in scheduling these exams to seek out these and other ideas to furnish students the best tools and circumstances to finish their job.

Great Teachers Make Great Mentors

This year the students tapped Rabbi Shalom Carmy of Yeshiva College and Professor Henry Jorisch of the Sy Syms School of Business as their "Professors of the Year." These two choices appear to not only teach unrelated subjects (Rabbi Carmy primarily teaches Bible and Philosophy, while Prof. Jorisch teaches in MIS), but utilize different approaches to their students. Rabbi Carmy is famed for inviting students over to his home for Shabbas, holding wide-ranging bull sessions with students in the library and cafeteria, and serving as an exemplar of Torah u-Madda. Prof. Jorisch is celebrated for taking an interest in his students' personal lives, diligently ensuring that all students understand the material, and daily exhibiting an earnest commitment to his basic Jewish and human values. Both styles were clearly valued by their *talmidim* (students).

We appreciate the importance of academic research and professional development for our professors and the prestige of the University. Yet too often, the drive for academic excellence comes at the cost of attentiveness to the classroom. As stellar examples of individ-

ual care matched with first-rate pedagogical skills, these two professors have much more in common than may first meets the eye.

Particularly as the university's resources are more limited, it is important to highlight that a student is not impacted merely by the knowledge imparted or money spent in the classroom, but the relationship that develops outside of it. And when a teacher feels deeply invested in their students' own education and growth, students smell that out, and are far more prone to listen and learn.

These two professors are certainly not the only members of the faculty who demonstrate such interest in their students. We wish these two excellent teachers and mentors congratulations for their awards. We are disappointed that Prof. Jorisch is leaving, but we hope that the colleagues of both will continue to develop in their spirit, and that students will grow through their interaction with professors inside and outside the four walls of the classroom.

The COMMENTATOR

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Student Pulse - How Do You Date?

This issue's first Student Pulse (for the second, see page 4) asked students about their views on dating.

1. Do you feel comfortable attending co-ed events?

Yes – 53.8%
No – 12.3%
It depends – 32.8%
I don't know – 1.0%

2. In what contexts do you feel comfortable attending co-ed events?

Any context is fine – 46.1%
On-campus only – 7.3%
On-campus and off-campus – 20.4%
When the event supports a good cause – 34.0%
When there is little interaction with members of the opposite gender - 22.5%
When the event entails a shiur or lecture from a Rosh Yeshiva or other noted figure – 29.3%
When the event does not interfere with night seder – 19.9%
I don't attend co-ed events at all – 5.8%

3. How many co-ed events have you attended within the past three-months?

0 – 14.4%
1-5 – 60.8%
5-10 – 14.9%
10+ - 9.8%

4. Do you think it is important or appropriate for YU to sponsor co-ed events to encourage social interaction?

Yes, it is important and appropriate – 65.4%
No, it is unimportant – let people meet on their own – 5.8%
It is inappropriate for YU to do so – 3.1%
It depends: YU should only do so in certain contexts, like when there is a clear intent on helping singles meet – 18.8%
I don't know – 6.8%

5. Did your year(s) in Israel affect how you view dating and interaction with the opposite gender?

Yes – 42.6%
No – 36.9%
I don't know – 8.7%
I did not study in Israel – 11.8%

6. If it/they did affect your views, in what way(s) did it/they do so?

I began to interact more with members of the opposite gender than I previously had – 10.8%
I started being shomer negiah – 23.7%
I broke up with my girlfriend/boyfriend during my year(s) of study – 5.8%
I no longer attend co-ed events – 2.9%
I only rarely attend co-ed events, as when for a good cause – 10.8%
I no longer talk to members of the opposite gender, except when necessary – 12.9%
I now feel that I must start dating and marry young – 7.2%
I no longer date for fun; rather, I date strictly for marriage purposes – 23.7%
It/they did not affect my views – 38.1%
I did not study in Israel – 10.1%

7. How do you find/do you plan on finding a date?

Co-ed YU events – 44.6%
NCSY and other co-ed groups – 30.1%
Being set up by friends and family – 84.3%
Professional shadchanim or shadchan organizations like YUConnects – 28.9%
Having your parents review "resumes" of potential dates and creating "lists" of acceptable candidates – 9.6%

8. At what age did you start/do you plan on starting to date?

Before age 18 – 10.0%
18 – 6.8%
19 – 10.5%
20 – 25.3%
21 – 23.2%
22 – 12.6%
After age 22 – 11.6%

9. Do you/did you feel pressure from friends and family to start dating sooner than you would like to?

Yes – 28.9%
No – 66.0%
I don't know – 5.2%

10. How many dates have you been on within the past three months?

0 – 50.8%
1-4 – 32.3%
5-8 – 7.4%
9-12 – 3.7%
12+ – 5.8%

11. What are the two main characteristics you are looking for while on a date?

Intelligence – 63.1%
Religiosity/Observance – 54.5%
Jewish learning – 11.8%
Modesty – 23.5%

Wealth – 3.7%
Physical appearance – 24.1%
Sense of humor – 44.4%
Kindness/Chesed – 48.7%

12. In your opinion, is there now a "shidduch crisis" in the Orthodox community?

Yes – 54.6%
No – 15.5%
I don't know – 29.9%

What They're Saying...

"Some people feel pressured into attending co-ed events because friends are doing it, or because they feel that they will be uncomfortable on dates and ruin potential matches if they're not sufficiently comfortable interacting with the opposite sex. In truth, however, a) peer pressure is obviously not a good way to judge the worth of an activity, and b) there's nothing wrong with being uncomfortable around the opposite gender, and in fact it may help one to maintain a healthy level of Tzniut and avoid halachic problems, and a potential spouse who is off-put by someone who is not smooth and comfortable enough is probably not a good match anyway."

"The shidduch crisis results from people wanting to get married young and quickly and having an ideal standard of a match that doesn't exist."

"What I see from my friends-- there aren't enough ways to meet 'naturally' without being set up. I think people should just be able to meet and go out that way, and it should not have to be arranged through friends or a shadchan."

"People are getting married. Sure there are some outliers who aren't married or who marry older than most but isn't that normal? That's not a crisis!"

"There is no shidduch crisis - Hashem makes all shidduchim and knows who is best for us."

"I think that shidduchim - especially through shadchanim - is a completely messed up system. Unfortunately for now, it's the only one that works, even though it's ridiculously flawed. There has to be some other way. I met my chassan randomly and we didn't have a shadchan, and that's how it worked for me, but I can also see that it wouldn't work that way for everybody"

"None of my frineds can find dates. I only find [dates] because I'm on YUConnects, but it's a faulted system because most of the shadchanim don't know me (and many of my friends don't know any shadchanim on the site). I've been set up with people I know that were completely and utterly un-shayach matches. We should be meeting in natural ways! And there needs to be less stress on finding the 'perfect match' before even going on a date (or second date)."

Noteworthy Stats

31.3% of men said they started dating or planned to start dating before they turned 21, while 83.2% of women said the same thing. Only 11.7% of women started dating or planned to start dating at age 21, and 5.2% answered that they would start after age 21.

Though 56 respondents said they felt pressure from friends and family to start dating sooner than they would want to, only 10.8% of them started dating or planned to start dating before age 20.

3 women said that they were only comfortable attending co-ed events when they do not interfere with night seder.

30.9% of men became "shomer negiah" after their year in Israel, while 14.0% of women did.

45.7% of men said they thought there is a "shidduch crisis," while 68.8% of women thought so.

62.5% of those who planned to have parents review "resumes" of potential dates still thought that YU should sponsor co-ed events to encourage social interaction if there is a clear intent on helping singles meet.

44.7% of MYP students are comfortable with attending co-ed events, though 42.2% will only attend if the event does not interfere with night seder. 51.2% of MYP students think that YU should sponsor such co-ed events. 61.7% of the respondents who are in MYP have not dated in the last three months.

There were 195 respondents to the survey – 117 men and 78 women. 70 of the respondents left detailed comments – thanks!

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

You are to be commended for your eloquent endorsement of academic freedom and of tenure. The January 12 letter in the Beirut Daily Star was hopelessly one-sided and reprehensible, but people in a democracy are free to make errors of judgment--just as others are equally free to respond critically. Questions of employment and tenure are ad hominem attacks and should be off limits.

Your conclusion, however, goes off the tracks: "By attaching the name of our university to the letter, she has abused... our own reputation." Note that there was one signer from the Technion and two from Tel Aviv University. Does anyone seriously believe that these three individuals expressed the views of the institutions in question? One could indeed argue the reverse: a university whose teachers have diverse points of view is a mature institution devoted to free inquiry and to the airing of all opinions, not some fundamentalist indoctrination center with a strict party line from which no one may deviate.

Sincerely,
Manfred Weidhorn
Guterman Prof. of English

News Briefs

Cinnamon New Editor-in-Chief of Commentator

Michael Cinnamon (YC '10) will serve as Editor-in-Chief of *The Commentator* in 2009-10. He served as News Editor this past year, and worked as a staff writer the previous two years.

Cinnamon has long been active throughout Yeshiva University. He directed a Book Club the past two years, and edited *Chronos*, the History Journal.

In addition to editing *The Commentator* next year, Cinnamon additionally plans to write a Senior Honors Thesis and complete the Honors Program.

Michael expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming year. "I'm looking forward to the experience," he said. "I think we'll have a great year at *The Commentator*."

Valedictorians of 2009

The 2009 Valedictorians represent the many colors and faces of Yeshiva University. Edmond Ainehsazan, originally from Tehran, Iran, is the 2009 Mechina valedictorian and attributes his achievements to the small classes and personal attention that created a welcoming environment for him to advance his Jewish knowledge. Yaakov Ehrenkaran, the Mazer Yeshiva Program Valedictorian, originally from Memphis, Tennessee, felt that the many Torah luminaries at YU enhanced his learning, but he had special words for Rabbis Neuberger and Twersky who broadened his Torah knowledge. Roy Hilf, from Haifa, is this year's IBC Valedictorian where he especially enjoyed Rabbi Meir Fulda's classes.

Both afternoon program Valedictorians, are local boys hailing from Teaneck and Riverdale respectively. YC Valedictorian Uri Westrich, majored in Psychology, and found Dr. Norman Adler's Psychobiology class extremely stimulating. SSSB Valedictorian Moshe Aharon Fink, majored in Accounting, and expressed his gratitude to Professor Moshe Greenberg for his upstanding moral character and vast knowledge. Both Valedictorians intend to spend next year at YU, where Moshe will learn at RIETS and Uri will be a Presidential fellow.

We at the *Commentator* wish all of our Valedictorians good luck in all of their future endeavors.

YU Forms New Leadership Fellows Program

Beginning in September, Yeshiva University plans to spearhead a Jewish lay leadership training program. The program, primarily based in the Washington DC area, will train 12-15 orthodox adults between the ages of 30-45. Rabbis and Community leaders in the National Capital Area must first nominate the applicants. The applicants will then receive invitations to apply in June and send their applications to YU's CJF to await interviews during the

summer. A community leader in the Silver Springs area alongside two senior CJF staff members will run the interviews.

The program will meet eleven times over the course of the next year and run seminars on topics such as strategic and Organizational leadership Skills, Judaism and its denominations, and Serving the Jewish Community. The seminars will be a valuable opportunity for the fellows to meet and talk with Jewish leaders, including Yeshiva University President Richard Joel, Rabbi Kenneth Brander, David Butler Esq, and many others.

This pilot program intends to address the increase in demand for professionally trained Jewish lay leaders to run orthodoxies many charitable institutions ranging from: Jewish social services and advocacy to education and fund-raising umbrellas. If this pilot initiative is successful, Yeshiva University intends to run similar program models in cities across North America, in an aim to develop leaders who will be take charge in essential Jewish communal work.

Jewish Week's "36 under 36" Features YU Student

Every year, The Jewish Week features 36 rising stars in the Jewish community, 36 young men and women under the age of 36. This year, one of those chosen was Yeshiva's own Simcha Gross (YC '10). Gross was featured primarily because of his work with TEIQU (Torah Exploration of Ideas, Questions, and Understanding), a group which he and Gilah Kletenik (SCW '09) founded this year, as well as for founding the Tanach Yom Iyun along with Stu Halpern (BRGS '09) and Yehuda Bernstein (YC '10). TEIQU has held events such as a panel on the ethics of Kashrut, a lecture by James Kugel, and a new discussion group called LEQAH. "I believe in the passionate pursuit of religious truths," Gross said. "I hope that the Jewish Week's piece brings that message to people's homes and opens up more opportunities to do good."

YU Celebrates and Commemorates Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut

On April 28th, Over 1000 students gathered at Lamport Auditorium to take part in a bitter-sweet assembly that marked the transition from Yom Hazikaron (Remembrance Day), to Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day). A sea of blue and white looked on as former members of the Israeli Defense Force and Sheirut Leumi lit candles to commemorate those who perished on the Israeli battlefield and at the hands of terror. The Maccabeats, the Yeshiva University's cappella group, gave an inspired performance, singing both somber and hopeful tunes appropriate for the occasion.

After the recitation of Kel Maleh

Rachamim and Tehillim, the crowd heard from the keynote speaker, Yaakov Katz. A military correspondent and defense analyst for The Jerusalem Post, Katz eloquently discussed the strategic role of Israel in the Middle Eastern military sphere.

Following divrei Torah v'chizzuk by Rav Meir Goldwicht, the students capped off the night with a spirited chagiga at the Max Stern Athletic Center Gymnasium. Yossi Piamanta and his band excited the crowd with lively Jewish music while students enjoyed Israeli-style food.

By the next day, Yom Haatzmaut was in full swing, and a festive atmosphere spread throughout Wilf Campus. Tenzer Gardens featured a barbeque, various games and live performances by the YU bands Tzavei, TaShma and Otzar.

However, YU campus soon received a jolt of reality amidst the idealism and euphoria of the day, as Noam Shalit, father of missing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit who has been in Hamas captivity for almost three years, addressed a crowd of Yeshiva and MTA students, faculty and administration.

Shalit was in the United States lobbying the new Obama government to use its leverage and resources in the Middle East to help bring Gilad home.

"I fear daily for his life," said Shalit. "In captivity there is no tomorrow, time is of the essence. This ordeal is like a continuous nightmare, a bad dream I can't awaken from."

In response to a question about how members of the Yeshiva community could help, Shalit encouraged the audience members to keep Gilad's captivity on their minds and on their agenda and to keep their communities active and attentive to the situation.

YU Hosts Third Tanach Yom Iyun

On April 26, 2009 Yeshiva University hosted its third Yom Iyun. Occurring once a semester since the spring of 2008, this Yom Iyun focused on the topic of "Exile and Redemption," and featured a wide array of YU faculty members speaking about Bible, Jewish history, and Jewish philosophy. Whereas the first two events primarily focused on Bible study, the organizers of the Yom Iyun were interested in broadening the scope of the content, compelling them to invite scholars of history and philosophy as well. The event drew approximately 500 people, who came to listen to a variety of scholars from different YU institutions. R. Leibtag once again spoke at the event, and joined such other notable scholars as R. Ephraim Kanerfogel of Stern and Revel and Ms. Elana Stein Hain of the Lincoln Square Synagogue. The event was opened by R. Tzvi Sobolofsky, REITS Rosh Yeshiva, who delivered a speech which informed the crowd that the event would be dedicated to David Rottenstreich, a YU undergraduate who fell ill and passed away earlier this spring.

Student Pulse - Approval Ratings

This issue's second Student Pulse (for first, see page 3) asked students what they thought of overall trends and developments within YU over the past few years.

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Joel has done over the past six years?

Strongly Approve – 35.6%

Somewhat Approve – 51.9%

Somewhat Disapprove – 8.9%

Strongly Disapprove – 3.7%

2. Are you satisfied with the work done by President Joel and Dr. Hillel Davis to improve student life on campus?

Strongly Approve – 22.4%

Somewhat Approve – 53.7%

Somewhat Disapprove – 17.9%

Strongly Disapprove – 6.0%

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Joel handled the financial situation over the past year?

Strongly Approve – 30.9%

Somewhat Approve – 46.0%

Somewhat Disapprove – 16.5%

Strongly Disapprove – 6.5%

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the job Dean Srolovitz has done in YC over the past three years (YC students only)?

Strongly Approve – 34.0%

Somewhat Approve – 43.3%

Somewhat Disapprove – 16.5%

Strongly Disapprove – 6.2%

5. Are you pleased with the new professors hired under Dean Srolovitz's tenure?

Strongly Approve – 28.7%

Somewhat Approve – 48.9%

Somewhat Disapprove – 14.9%

Strongly Disapprove – 7.4%

6. Do you want to see YU take strong action against grade inflation?

Yes – 30.9%

No – 39.6%

Not sure – 29.5%

7. Have you found that Yeshiva College classes are generally more rigorous than they were when you first came?

More rigorous – 32.8%

About the same – 63.4%

Less rigorous – 3.8%

8. How would you rate your education at Yeshiva University?

Comparable to Ivy League – 5.8%

Comparable to top 50 university – 39.9%

Comparable to state school – 34.1%

9. Are you satisfied with your decision to attend YU?

Very satisfied – 41.7%

Somewhat satisfied – 41.7%

Not at all satisfied – 12.2%

Unsure – 4.3%

Noteworthy Stats:

29.0% of Yeshiva College students said that they thought their education was only comparable to that of a state school; **45.7%** of Sy Syms students agreed.

83.9% of first-year students are somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to attend YU; **90.0%** of third and fourth year students were also satisfied.

141 students responded to the poll – **101** YC students and **36** Sy Syms students.

The Case For Academic Jewish Studies

BY SHAWN ZELIG ASTER

This article solely represents the views of the writer and should not be construed to represent the views of the Division of Academic Jewish Studies or of any of its component departments.

The ongoing curriculum review raises important questions about the role of academic Jewish Studies (aka "afternoon Jewish studies") in YC. Jewish Studies requirements typically involve 20 of the 120 credits earned at YC, an appreciable portion of the curriculum. College alumni of yesteryear tend to see the need for these requirements as self-evident, part of the dual mission of a yeshiva/college. But many faculty members – as well as nearly all of the administration – are new to YU, and feel it necessary to re-think the college's mission. They justly point to the need to expand majors, to deepen the liberal arts component of the curriculum, and they question why Jewish studies requirements need eat such a large percentage of credits. The student body has also grown in number and in diversity in recent years, and now includes many who are not the children of YU alumni and whose connection to the yeshiva is less intense. Those who are not "YU insiders" tend to challenge and question the institution's traditions, including that known as "afternoon Jewish studies." Questioning traditions is part of any review process, but this particular tradition rightfully ought to form a crucial part of the Yeshiva College curriculum.

There is a fruitful tension between the Torah studies programs at YU (aka "morning Jewish studies") and the academic (or "afternoon") Jewish studies, reflecting a broader tension in traditional Jewish learning. One way of formulating the distinction between these is that the yeshiva, which is the core Torah study program, focuses on Talmud, while afternoon Jewish studies focus on subjects as diverse as Bible, Jewish history, and Hebrew language. But this formulation fails to do justice to the difference in approaches and methods, which go far beyond the distinction in subject matter.

Talmud study is sui generis as an experience and in method. Various methods of Talmud study have been developed over the generations, but they are all variations on a basic theme: deriving legal concepts and rulings through intensive study and comparison of rabbinic texts. It is a highly insular and self-contained method of learning, which does not admit influence or interference from disciplines such as history and philology in determining the meaning of particular passages. One salient example of this is the passage with which the fourth chapter of Tractate Bava Metsia begins, in which a distinction is drawn between two rulings by R. Judah ha-Nasi on the status of silver in Jewish civil law: one given in his youth and one in his old age. Historians have shown

that this distinction stems from economic history: the prices of precious metals in the Roman empire underwent a change during R. Judah's lifetime. But this historical information is not relevant to traditional Talmud study, and ought not to be used in producing legal rulings.

In contrast, there is no single method of Bible study accepted in all Jewish communities. Approaches vary and include the expansive midrash of the Talmudic era, the philosophic approaches of the Gaonim, and the rationalist pashtanim of medieval France. Because it is not primarily a legalistic discipline, Jewish study of Bible has always been part of a dialogue with other



"At least half the students in IBC, a similar or higher percentage in SBMP, and about 30% of those in MYP cannot... independently read a passage of Hebrew Bible with commentary."

areas of knowledge: the Gaonim drew on the early Arabic philosophers and the French pashtanim were in dialogue with the Christian humanist rationalists of their era. More recently, Jewish study of the Bible has been influenced by narratology, poetics, and ancient Near Eastern studies. Because Bible study has always been located at the nexus of traditional Torah learning and secular disciplines, it drew the ire of those who opposed any non-traditional study during the Maimonidean controversy. Partly because of this, the early modern period in Europe saw a tendency to exclude Bible from the place it rightly deserves in the curriculum of the traditional yeshiva. This exclusion has not been universally accepted, but the truth is that serious study of Bible does require engagement with a variety of other disciplines, primarily history and literature.

What is true of Bible is doubly true for Jewish history. It is an even less insular discipline than is Bible, engaging the broad sweep of Jewish experience throughout the ages and drawing on the approaches of general historians in formulating its narrative. Moreover, Jewish history does not deal with Jews in isolation, but with their interaction with the wider world and its social, political, and intellectual trends.

All of this illustrates clearly that serious study of Bible and Jewish history cannot be divorced from more general approaches to knowledge. Therefore, to study Bible and Jewish history is to engage in dialogue with "the academy." In a curriculum designed for students who are engaging deeply both with Torah and with general knowledge, Bible and Jewish history deserve a privileged place which allows for that dialogue. If students are to ever achieve any degree of intellectual synthesis between Torah and general knowledge, Bible and Jewish history must form part of the curriculum, and they must be taught in a manner that combines respect for tradition with the openness of the academy.

The metaphor of a "bridge between Torah and general knowledge" is often used in curricular discussions with regard to "afternoon Jewish studies." More precise metaphors might be a salient, or intersection, since these are areas within Jewish learning that require engagement with general knowledge, or perhaps a window, since they show students that within certain areas of Torah, information from "the academy" can be used to promote religious understanding and dedication (aka *yir'at shamayim*). As with all liminal spaces, battles for ownership emerge. Faculty members from other fields in the humanities, as well as Roshei Yeshiva, feel that they ought to contribute to the curriculum in these areas. The very existence of these competing claims shows the utility of these fields, and their central place within the experience of students who engage deeply with Torah and with general knowledge. I do believe, however, that a coherent curriculum in Bible and in Jewish history can best emerge from faculty whose primary expertise is in these fields, and who interact with teachers and scholars both in the yeshiva and in the college. Such a curriculum must try to guide our diverse student body towards defined educational goals.

Two challenges emerge from our diverse student body. One of these is less serious, and it relates to the professional drive of many of our students. "Why do I need four Bibles if I want to go to law school?" opined one student on my end-of-semester evaluations. The same question can be asked about any other aspect of a liberal arts education: why does a student need humanities or social sciences? Pre-professional schools exist, and serve a critical educational function, but Yeshiva College's goals do not consist solely of preparing students for the professions.

The second challenge is more serious. For a significant portion of our students, "afternoon Jewish studies" cannot yet serve as a bridge, salient, or window. But it can serve another function, perhaps a more critical one. It can serve as an "enforcer of literacy," or to use the Talmudic metaphor, "a revealer of one's inner will to read Torah in its original language."

Who are these students who need

English Department Unveils New Curriculum & Major

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

Just in time for Fall 2009 registration, Yeshiva College's English Department has rolled out a redesigned curriculum with all-new courses. A revamped and highly structured major accompanies this new syllabus, giving students a "coherent and cohesive shape for [their] studies and a chance to shape them further," according to an explanatory booklet given out at a meeting to discuss the innovations earlier this semester.

Dr. Adam Newton, the Chair of the Department since Fall 2007, made this project a priority immediately after arriving. He congratulated the department and his colleagues on the result, pointing to their "creativity, ingenuity, and vision" as well as acknowledging "a lot of goodwill" that helped the impressive expeditiousness of the redesign. The previous construction of both the major and the curriculum dated to 2004, when YC followed some points raised in an external review from 2002. That restructuring, however, according to Dr. Newton, did not address all the issues raised, specifically falling short of covering questions

of genre, ethnicity, identity, and non-religious Jewish expression.

On a broad scale, the curriculum aims to move away from a literary history and anthology-based model, completely removing any survey offerings. In the stead of surveys and electives, a new system of courses will now be offered: "Traditions" courses (labeled with a "T" in the catalog) and "Forms" courses (labeled with an "F"). The "Traditions" courses will do more than the old surveys did, prompting students to discover and question the concepts of how texts develop their own histories, rather than simply presenting them with a chronologically-ordered reading list. The "Forms" courses, which replace electives that were essentially "anything that wasn't a survey," will "emphasize genre and theoretical perspective," looking toward "interpretive frameworks" rather than context for understanding works.

The redesign also takes place on the level of individual courses, as essentially all courses offered for the fall (with the exception of "Interpreting Texts," the gateway course) are new and tailor-made for

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an "enforcer," or "a revealer of one's inner will?" They are hardly a small minority. A significant portion of our student body cannot "engage deeply with Torah" on an intellectual level, because they lack literacy skills in reading classical Jewish text. Surveys have shown that at least half the students in IBC, a similar or higher percentage in SBMP, and about 30% of those in MYP cannot meaningfully and independently read a passage of Hebrew Bible with commentary, much less study it in depth. Since ability to read Bible in Hebrew is a necessary prerequisite for serious Talmud study, it is very difficult to see how they can "engage deeply" with Torah on an intellectual level. Instead, they may study "about Torah" by reading various works in translation. More meaningfully, they may immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the *beit midrash*, the traditional house of Torah study, and have meaningful encounters with rabbis and mentors. Still more meaningfully, with diligent guidance from rabbis, they will labor intensively over a short text to grasp its meaning, and thereby build their literacy skills.

But out of necessity, those in charge of Torah studies often encourage students to focus on the type of study they will find exciting and immediately gratifying, instead of acquiring the skills needed to attain literacy. The goals of Torah studies, after all, are partly experiential, and not only intellectual. In a "world awash with secularism," involvement in a Torah atmosphere forms a bulwark against religious lapses. Thus, "Talmud Torah" (studying and knowing Torah) can be replaced with "involvement in a Torah atmosphere." This may be necessary in the short term, but these students lose

greatly by this replacement, and academic Jewish studies can help reverse it.

Because academic Jewish studies forms part of the academy, where grades and requirements are more rigid than in the yeshiva, and because the yeshiva addresses students' religious needs, academic Jewish studies can require that these students develop literacy skills in classical Hebrew, which they need in order to "engage deeply with Torah." The study of any language is not fun, and is not immediately fulfilling. Since academic Jewish studies can afford to take a more long-range view, focusing on knowledge for life, rather than on more immediate issues of religious development, it can require that students attain literacy. To do this, it will need faculty who can draw on pedagogic research in language acquisition and cooperation from the Torah studies programs, as well as from the university administration. It will need to present this program in a manner that is attractive to students. Cooperation with the Israel programs, in which too many of our students spend a year and earn a quarter of their college credit without developing sufficient Hebrew literacy, will need to be enhanced. Ultimately, the goal is to add these students to the circle of those who "engage deeply with Torah."

As a window or as an enforcer, requiring academic Jewish studies serves a critical role in promoting both the *yir'at shamayim* and the intellectual development of our students. "And all your sons will be trained of the Lord, and the wellness of your sons will increase" (Isa. 54:13).

Dr. Shawn Zelig Aster is Assistant

The New YU Insignia: One Alumnus Argues Against The Change

BY AARON I. REICHEL

I didn't need an insignia to "know," when still in the cradle, that I was destined to attend Yeshiva University. My late great-grandfather, Harry Fischel, was instrumental in the formation of Yeshiva College (as its one-time largest individual donor, its one-time Acting President, and the many-time chair of its Building Committee) and my late grandfather, Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, was instrumental in the granting of the charter of Yeshiva University by the State of New York when he was the national president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (and whose name appeared in the original insignia of the Kosher food seal now symbolized by a U inside an O).

I still cherish the many notebooks I have saved from my student days, highlighted with the insignia of Yeshiva University and Yeshiva University High School. I was thrilled, therefore, when I recently read that the flame that had been partially eclipsing the long-time insignia has been demoted to marginal use, giving way to a slightly-revised version of the original insignia.

Some people see the slight revisions as little more than adoptions of color schemes hardly worthy of note. I beg to differ.

I wish to do three things in this brief article – (1) thank the administration for restoring, substantially, the original insignia to its central place in the University's public symbolic face, (2) thank the creator of the original insignia, and give his family the recognition that I believe is his due, and (3) suggest and present rationales for the restoration of the original insignia as initially designed, and, at most, the addition of one number.

The University is to be applauded for its willingness to honor the wishes of its many alumni and supporters who have savored the original insignia highlighting the components that render Yeshiva University unique and who were uncomfortable with its partial replacement. Imagine what it would be like if the most famous YU outside of New York, the venerable Yale University, would be the only YU with an insignia that retains its original Hebrew as the central part of its shield! The replacement insignia, adorned by a flame, could mean all things to all people, and could be associated with any number of other universities beginning with a Y or with the flame that adorns the symbol of the United Jewish Appeal of New York. The idea of an "eternal flame" is worth preserving, however, so I have no problem with its

retention within the family of YU insignias.

Although Yeshiva University publicity refers to an evolution of the YU insignia, I don't believe it credits the original creator of the insignia or the similarity of the latest incarnation to the original version. I happened to have made the acquaintance of a son of the designer of the original insignia, and he introduced me to his mother, the widow of this designer. I hope the reader will be as fascinated as I was to discover that the



designer of the original insignia was a man who came to be known as Rabbi Dr. Israel Renov; he designed it when he was a newlywed and an instructor of fine arts and Israeli archeology at Yeshiva College in the 1940s! He certainly symbolized the famous YU synthesis in his own right, reportedly earning no fewer than three doctorates and ordination (although, for the record, he was not ordained at the rabbinical school affiliated with Yeshiva University and did not necessarily serve in OU pulpits).

Countless words have been written about evolution, and the forthcoming convention of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists this summer is to be devoted to discussions of Darwinism, but I have never seen as little evolution from an initial entity into an evolved entity as I saw in the Yeshiva University insignia from the time it was created until this year, when it was most recently modified. There is an expression that has never evolved from its original slang: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Although I am thrilled that the insignia of Yeshiva University is being restored to its rightful preeminent place, with all due respect, I don't see the revisions as positive, despite appreciating the good intentions of the revisers. With the exception of the new color schemes and other usage guidelines – examples of YU's professionalism at its best – I disagree with the revisions, and I hope that I can help convince those members of the Yeshiva community who have fought for the restoration of the original insignia not to give up until it is fully restored.

The revised insignia appears to

be disjointed: the Hebrew lettering on top is unanchored as if broken off from the rest of the insignia, and likely to drift away. The synthesis symbolized by Yeshiva University has the Yeshiva and the University in one big tent; not disjointed ones. For a shield to be strong, it must be united and it must be whole, not with one component floating loosely next to the others. The fact that the Yeshiva's status within the University was changed a few decades ago apparently didn't bother the government authorities all these decades, when the Hebrew name of the Yeshiva remained within the shield itself, and therefore should not bother anyone within the Yeshiva community today, tomorrow, or at any time in the future. Eliminating the Jewish year for the creation of the university is hardly what I would call an improvement. I would respectfully think we should be proud of the longevity of our university, and we will become prouder with every passing year. Part of the mystique of Harvard and Yale is their age. We will never be able to catch up to Yale as to its age (although the language on Yale's shield defers to our language of origin in terms of age, as indicated above), but we can at least highlight our history just as we highlight our values that have endured for millennia. Instead of deleting the Jewish year, the University might simply place the English year beneath it, if not simply keeping it as it was.

The only other significant change that I noticed is the darkening of the Torah within the shield. Considering the added emphasis in the world in general, and in the Jewish world in particular, on avoiding waste and preserving the environment, I see nothing to be gained by compelling the spilling of extra ink on every single use of the Yeshiva University seal, so I respectfully believe that the Torah in the shield should remain basically white, off-white (similar to the parchment of the Torah from time immemorial), or the color of the background. Finally, the simplification of the designs that surround the wording is discretionary, but seems to take away from the artistry of the original insignia.

May the Yeshiva University insignia appear in its restored format and be printed millions of times, and inspire millions of people to study the values of the Yeshiva and the University, in general, and Yeshiva University in particular, until the end of time.

Rabbi Aaron I. Reichel, Esq., '67 YUHS, '71 YC, '74 BRGS, '75 RIETS, is a grandson and biographer of Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein.

Current CEO's Response to "SOY Seforim Sale, Reconsidered"

BY OPHIR EIS

In the most recent issue of *The Commentator*, Julian Horowitz did an excellent job writing about many aspects of the Seforim Sale. Some of his points, however, need to be countered or looked at from the other side. I will go in order of his article and try to clear some things up.

The first point that Julian makes that I take issue with is "after all, isn't the Sale still masquerading as a nonprofit so it can pay sweatshop (\$3.25 an hour, less than half of minimum wage, in Seforim Sale credit) rates?" Julian, we are not masquerading as a nonprofit. The profits from the Sale do not go to any private individual or group. As much as I wish I got a share of the profit, all profits from the Sale go to student councils, and we are therefore a true nonprofit.



The SOY Seforim Sale annually draws over 15,000 visitors

I will agree that \$3.25 an hour is very low. However, this is not a regular job. You can show up and leave whenever you want, it is right next door (for Wilf Campus students), and you are hanging out with your friends and having fun. This is a far cry from a normal job.

You complained that Stern women put in lots of work at the Sale and do not see a fair amount of the money. In fact, from preliminary discussions with both SOY and TAC presidents, TAC will be getting a nice portion of the funds. I also do not think that the individual Stern women who choose to work at the Seforim Sale do so in order that TAC can get some of the proceeds. Additionally, according to your logic, since I am a Sy Syms student, SSSB should get some of the proceeds. Oh, I forgot to mention that I am in IBC this year, so maybe they too should get a piece of the pie?

You raise the point that the Seforim Sale presents unfair com-

petition to local stores. As I am not even close to having any significant knowledge of this topic, I cannot comment on it. All I can say is that I am sure you are not the first person to raise this question and there are plenty of rabbis in YU who would have said something if there were a problem with it.

The next point you make is that there were minimal numbers of Hebrew critical works offered at this year's Sale. You use this as a springboard to question whether we are servicing the community or running a business. I would answer you that we do both. While we try to offer the widest variety of seforim, there are many issues that must be dealt with when ordering. While the profitability of a section or single book is an issue we consider when deciding what books to offer, it is only one of many concerns. There were other issues when it came to that specific section. I apologize that we were not able to offer the widest variety this year. I hope that next year, those running the Sale will be able to.

This brings me to your next concern. You question how the students who run the Sale are chosen. Each year's CEO is appointed by the CEO from the previous year. The current CEO will give strong suggestions to the succeeding CEO concerning who should fill out the board and various other positions. This is a much better system than the elections that take place in YU; it ensures that the selection is not a popularity contest and that the best candidate is chosen. It is hard to make all the right choices, but I can tell you from my experiences this year that we certainly do try. Maybe you got your job because you knew someone, but if you were not doing your job, you would have been fired. I have, over the course of the Sale, asked people who were not doing their job to leave (nicely, of course). It works just like the real business world. Oh, and to end off my piece, since you were so critical of the Seforim Sale, YOU'RE FIRED!!! I'm obviously joking, but I would like to sincerely thank you and all the "volunteers" at the Seforim Sale for putting in so much time and effort. I really do appreciate it.

Ophir Eis (SSSB 09) served as CEO of this past winter's SOY Seforim Sale

In Memory of YU Student Dovid Chaim Rottenstreich

By JONATHAN MAEL

I can still remember getting a text message seconds before Shabbos on Friday, April 3rd asking to say *tehillim* (Psalms) for Dovid Chaim ben Sima Perel a YU student who has been rushed to the hospital a couple of hours earlier. What transpired over the next couple of days is still a blur of tehillim gatherings and special learning sederim, and unfortunately the untimely passing of our dear friend, chavrusa, and classmate David "Rotty" Rottenstreich.

David, who passed away on April 7th and was laid to rest on Erev Pesach, was diagnosed just a couple of days before with a serious type of pneumonia called staphylococcus pneumonia in his lungs. The infection caused respiratory damage that forced Rotty onto a life support machine to keep him breathing. Unfortunately, just a few days after David was seen learning in the Main Beis Medrash at Yeshiva, David

passed away.

However, during those couple of days between David's hospitalization and his passing, David was able to inspire and unite Jews from all walks of life. With the help of a blog (dovidchaim.blogspot.com) organized by Marc Zeffren (YC '11) people were able to sign up for a chapter or chapters of tehillim to say for David's refuah. Within a day over ten people had signed up per chapter of tehillim. Following the tehillim campaign there were three rounds of signing up to learn mishnayos followed by a learning Tanach, and then learning Rambam Mishnah Torah and Mishnah Berura. Tehillim gatherings were organized in Woodmere, Teaneck, Queens, and at the Kotel. A special early morning seder was held in the Main Beis Medrash that was attended by hundreds. Soon news about David was being transmitted throughout the Jewish world, including a Ramat Bet Shemesh mailing list.

While I might describe Rotty as loving, authentic, nice, or sweet, none of these words fully captures him. Although I only knew Rotty for three years, I could tell that he was the real deal. Always smiling and happy, he combined his love for Torah with his desire to lend a hand by being a regular go-to source for *divreit torah*.

Since David's petirah a Sefer Torah Fund has been started in which we at the blog are raising money to donate a Sefer Torah to the Rottenstreich family in honor of David. Additionally, with the help of the various student unions of Yeshiva a fundraising event featuring world famous mentalist Marc Salem. We managed to raise \$1600 dollars from that event. We hope to do more to honor David's memory – the memory of an individual who pursued what was right, honest and real.

English Curriculum & Major Revised

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the fresh objectives of study. The two essential words that students should expect to see in these courses are "question" (as a verb) and "discussion," as the English Department will look for students themselves to engage the texts presented, placing them in relation to each other and noticing the dialogue between them, as well as pushing back with their own ideas and interpretations. The idea of "discussion" is one that the department hopes students will recognize, adding new voices to the conversation already in place within the department regarding the major.

Dr. Newton argued that this new curriculum bolsters the English department. He felt that by reorganizing the major around important modern topics and the expertise and scholarship of its professors, YC has taken a huge step toward academic superiority. In addition, the hiring of a new Medievalist, Kirsty Campbell, from the University of Toronto, fills a hole in YC's coverage with a highly-touted and well-rounded scholar and pedagogue. Dr. Newton also made sure to provide the full English faculty.

The new major signals great change for English majors; under the previous design, students merely needed to complete a total of ten courses, one of which needed to be the gateway course (previously, "Literary Theory;" now, "Interpreting Texts") and one of which needed to be a pre-1700 British Literature course. In addition to the flexibility granted by that system, students could count up to two writing courses toward their major, meaning that no two students would emerge from Yeshiva College with the same courses under their belt, but also that there was no sense of what was necessary to know or practice in the study of English. The lack of structure was liberating to money who enjoyed the flexibility. Some,

though, felt their majors simply became whatever courses looked good at the beginning of each semester. The new major swings the pendulum in the other direction, intensively organizing the major over six areas of study that must be completed, though at the same time offering what Dr. Newton asserted was a fair balance of choices.

The first area students must complete is the newly-named gateway course which, in contrast to previous years, will be offered in many sections every semester. All students, not just majors, are encouraged to take the "Interpreting Texts" course. The course will address the first "question" of the major, the question of texts: "Why read?" and "What is reading?"

From there, students will move on to the second and third areas of the major, consisting of two Traditions and two Forms courses, respectively. In the former, the Medieval Literature requirement is sustained, as one of the two Traditions courses must be a pre-1760 literature course, though not limited merely to British literature as before. Students are encouraged to take, as they progress, "3000" level courses, which add writing intensity and additional focus on theories and methods, rather than "2000" level courses.

The Traditions and Forms parts of the major, which students are free to complete simultaneously, aim to introduce students to the variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics, which will help in deciding where to spend time in section five of the major: fifteen credits of elective courses. Constituting the "meat" of the program of study, this elective section allows students to take two of five courses outside of the department (granted specific approval of the course) in the departments of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Hebrew; Jewish Studies; any of the

Social Sciences; or Art.

To fulfill the three in-department courses of the elective section, students are free (as before) to take Writing courses, though one Writing course is also mandated as section four of the major. The writing requirement strengthens the Department's commitment to writing in addition to shaping students' own identities through the exercising of their own voice and argument.

The new major will culminate in a Capstone experience, a year-long Senior Colloquium in which all seniors will be given a reading list they will discuss with both a select group of faculty and fellow seniors. At the conclusion of the year, students will be required to undergo a qualifying oral examination with three faculty members regarding the reading, which will be graded pass/fail. The Capstone experience will help students draw their experiences together as well as encourage discussion among the seniors, but ultimately, it will serve as a way for students to practice and demonstrate the skills and theories they have learned.

According to Dr. Newton, the new curriculum hopes to address the department's most serious challenge: engaging students who, without having been exposed to English, have an aversion to it based on preconceptions. With the full weight of the department behind an exciting new syllabus, the hope is to "make a mark on every student," "especially those who don't yet know how gratifying and enriching an experience it can be." Dr. Newton also said that he hopes students will see more of the connections between morning and afternoon textual interpretations, forming a more united vision of Torah u-Madda that can lend value to both of its components.

Yeshiva College's Attempt to Deflate YC Grades Slowed By Hesitancy of Other Schools

YC Hopes To Decrease Number of A's, Rigor of Grading Standards

By STEVEN EISENBERG

Yeshiva College students are used to the idea of grade inflation hanging over their heads. Rumors fly about teachers being told to limit the number of A grades per course, or risk penalties. This student apprehension, in fact, does have some basis. Dean Srolovitz first outlined grade inflation as an issue to be addressed when he took over as Dean of Yeshiva College in 2006. He then followed up on the subject by forming a Grading Task Force in December 2007, headed by Dr. Streeter. Following Dr. Streeter's departure a year later, Dr. Paula Geyh was appointed head of the task force, and anti-grade inflation activity remains confined to the sphere of theory.

That is not to say that the committee has not made headway. In Spring 2008, the Task Force presented its findings to the YC faculty, who enthusiastically approved it with "overwhelming majorities" on most issues, according to Dean Srolovitz. The holdup came when Dean Srolovitz presented the policy at a meeting of the undergraduate Deans and University Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub in May 2008. At the meeting, Dean Srolovitz discovered that there was not enough widespread support among the undergraduate schools to pursue the subject at the time, and Dr. Lowengrub suggested that YC put its plans on hold until an undergraduate-wide policy could be developed.

While Yeshiva College has waited for its sister schools to make a decision, it has plowed ahead with planning the implementation. The Task Force, Dean Srolovitz said, began laying plans for a series of town hall meetings and a special issue of *The Commentator* meant to "deal with people's concerns with how this change would affect their future." Those plans, of course, have not been implemented.

Nevertheless, one aspect of the revised grading policy has made it into reality: the new withdrawal drop date. This change, implemented in Fall of 2008, was the Task Force's brainchild.

There is no certainty, however, as to when the new legislation

will actually be implemented, or even if it will be exactly what the Task Force formulated. Dean Srolovitz noted that the final product is dependent on what conclusion the other colleges reach, and what compromises are struck, to create a single university-wide policy.

When the other colleges will reach their decisions, however, remains unknown. According to a recent article in *The Observer*, Stern first created its own Grading Task Force in January 2009. As reported in that article, "The committee will eventually report its plans for grade deflation to the Dean's Office." Even once a decision is reached, Dean Srolovitz himself was unclear as to who exactly would have to approve it. While this could just be an issue of getting each of the undergraduate college's faculties to approve it, the guidelines could also be considered a university-level policy, in which case "I'm not exactly sure what the approval chain has to be," the Dean said. In his own personal opinion, however, he thought that Winter 2009 is the earliest it would be implemented.

Dean Srolovitz downplayed the impact Dr. Geyh's sabbatical next semester will have on the committee. He said that the committee was ad-hoc, and would find a way to adjust to working without her. Others speculated that the committee's work was largely complete, and a new committee

Despite all of the potential pitfalls, the Dean emphasized that YC has taken a careful approach to grade deflation. For instance, he noted that the "grading policy that the faculty voted on is similar to those introduced by several other institutions." Dean Srolovitz further stated that since others had undertaken a similar move, there is data on the impacts of the move and knowledge about how to mitigate them. Additionally, the Task Force will be charged with planning the switch, as well as communicating with the general public and other offices, such as the Career Development Center, to ensure that graduate schools and the like understand the new grading policies.

Looking Back And Looking Forward

By DAVID SROLOVITZ

The *Commentator* editors have asked me to write about how Yeshiva College has changed in the three years since I arrived in Washington Heights and what we can expect in the future. The perspective that I present below is my personal view of the changes, ideas that have become reality, things that did not work out as planned, my hopes for the near future, and my dreams for what the College will become.

When I arrived on campus in June 2006 as Dean of YC, I saw tremendous potential and nowhere to go but up. Those students here in Fall 2006 saw a Dean's Office on the first floor of Furst Hall that was reminiscent of a 1950's high school principal's office. The offices were furnished in what appeared to be discount store furniture. Two to four professors occupied each faculty office and the offices were furnished with what appeared to be war surplus hand-me-downs. By the middle of the Fall 2006 term, the YC Dean's Office and much of the YC faculty moved into the newly renovated fifth floor in Belfer Hall. The remaining offices in Furst Hall were refurbished for individual members of the faculty. This change signified that the University was ready to view the faculty as a group of professionals.

In turn, this professionalization signaled to the College's faculty and administration that our interactions with students must also be different. In the Dean's Office, we strive to schedule appointments for students rather than have students wait around the office to see a dean, we try to advise students of deadlines well before their arrival, and we work hard to avoid sending students from office to office to resolve issues. Your YC professors no longer recycle old exams, and if they do use questions from the past, they ensure access to the older material to all students. These are but a few examples of the changes. While we are not yet perfect, I am proud of the progress we have made.

Since the most important interactions between students and the College are through contact with faculty, we have been working hard to develop the type of faculty our students deserve: faculty who are scholars in their field, serious about teaching, and who care about their students. While the composition of the faculty changes slowly as a result of the tenure system that is traditional in the American academy, our faculty has been evolving both by growth and by careful review of its non-tenure-stream members. Over the past few years, we have witnessed significant growth in the Departments of Jewish History, Psychology, Sociology, Mathematics, Philosophy, Biology, Chemistry, Bible, English, and in the foreign languages. Our newest department, Languages, Literatures

and Cultures, emphasizes our commitment to the importance of modern and classical languages, including French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Yiddish, Arabic and other Semitic languages. These departments are now among our strongest, where just a few years ago, several of these were among the weakest. We were fortunate to do extensive faculty hiring during my first year on campus, and my hope had been that this would continue at the same pace for at least five years. Alas, we live in a world in which our financial resources have not allowed this to continue as planned and our faculty hiring decreased rapidly over the next two years. This is one of my personal disappointments. Nonetheless, YC continues to put the hiring of tenure-stream faculty as one of its major goals: even in the present challenging financial climate, we have hired two new tenure-stream professors.

I have been working with the Provost to encourage the faculty to evolve in another way: that is, to prioritize scholarship. While there were already a number of outstanding, active scholars on the faculty three years ago, all of the new tenure-stream faculty members were appointed with a mandate to be strong scholars in their respective fields. Under my administration, we redesigned the faculty award system to encourage active scholarship. Examination of the leading colleges and universities around the country shows that schools with scholar-teacher faculties are consistently ranked as the best in the country. Why is this so? To active scholars, their subject is not something they have simply studied in depth long ago, but it is a living, breathing part of their lives now. Active scholars also play an important role in bringing students into their scholarly work – both in and out of the classroom. This is another form of teaching. No member of the faculty will receive tenure without a strong scholarly portfolio and recognition within his or her field – yet at the same time, no member of the faculty will receive tenure if his or her teaching is inadequate. Strong teaching alone does not justify tenure; poor teaching will preclude it. To better measure teaching performance, we have redesigned (and automated) our teaching evaluation system. Every evaluation that you write is read by your professor, by his or her department chair, and by a dean – we are especially sensitive to comments that we hear multiple times.

During the past few years, we have been experimenting with new approaches to how we teach. A pet project of mine was the introduction of tutorials, in which a very small group of students is guided in its study of a subject rather than being taught in a classroom setting. While I still believe that this is an excellent approach, this experiment was not the unqualified success that I had

hoped it would be. The difficulty was simply that this required more faculty resources than we currently have. I am glad we did the experiment and look forward to reviving it when the faculty is able to grow again. (My philosophy is that if you never fail, you are not reaching far enough!) Other experiments have exceeded our expectations. For example, two years ago, we introduced an alternative approach to English composition, where an English composition class was combined with a topic in some other discipline. This six credit class combined composition with art, science, sociology, history, or music. These successful classes have led us to reshape the entire future of writing instruction in the new curriculum that will be unveiled next academic year. Another experiment that we began last year was to make sure that IBC classes that count towards YC requirements are at the same level as those taught in the afternoon. This was accomplished by having YC faculty teach these classes. Although it is still early, this experiment appears to be a success, as indicated by the fact that it is in its second year and is supported by IBC's new leaders. Other advances in instruction include the installation of computers and audiovisual equipment in all Furst Hall classrooms. While many faculty members immediately embraced the technology, others are slowly becoming converts. Both to make educational material more widely available, and to be greener in our instruction, we are increasingly moving toward putting all documents on Angel instead of distributing them on paper in class.

Anyone who has heard me speak or read my columns in this August periodical know that there are two themes to which I always return: four years on campus and academic integrity. More than half of our students currently spend three and a half to four years on campus. With President Joel's recent announcement that students who spend one year learning in Israel are eligible to receive a 50% discount on their fourth year tuition at Yeshiva, four years on campus is now within reach for all students. I am thrilled that a four-year undergraduate education on campus here in New York is rapidly becoming a reality.

Academic integrity is not only necessary for the success of the entire academic enterprise, but also for the future of each student and the reputation of this institution. While I am pleased that the extant data suggests we are doing better here than at other institutions, better is not enough. We must be an example for the rest of society. To this end, the College tries to operate by the principle of *lifnei iver lo sitten michshol* (not placing a stumbling block before the blind). More concretely, we make sure that what constitutes plagiarism is clearly presented to each student during his first term

and that cheating is discussed during orientation; additionally, we have dramatically increased the level of proctoring in finals. The faculty has also discussed at great length that exams should not be repeated from class-to-class or year-to-year, and if anything is repeated, the old exams should be made available to all students. In the few instances that we have failed to live up to these goals, we have taken measures necessary to level the playing field for all students. President Joel has recently announced that anyone who is caught cheating on an exam will be expelled from the University. This is a clear signal as to how serious we are about this issue.

The College has been engaged in a very serious review of the curriculum for the past two and a half years. The review began with visits by our deans to the American Association of Colleges and Universities in Washington DC. A faculty team from Yeshiva College was selected to participate in a several-day workshop on re-imagining the curriculum – joining faculty from many other universities in different stages of the type of review we are doing. The curriculum review has brought to campus curriculum experts representing different areas to talk with the faculty. While I am disappointed that we have not yet completed the new curriculum, it cannot be rushed since changes of the magnitude we are discussing involve every aspect of what we do as a faculty and as a College. The faculty has already agreed that the new curriculum will strengthen the majors (and design the majors for four years on campus), restructure the entire first-year on-campus experience, and change how the general education requirements will be satisfied. Our goal is both more flexibility for students, and majors with much more depth. Along with this process, we have done an external review of how Hebrew language is taught and are now in the process of redesigning our approach to this important topic.

Another area about which I often speak is student partnership with faculty in research and scholarship. While, for many students, participation in research is essential for going on to first-rate graduate programs, it is also important for all serious students. We have been working to provide more opportunities for students in this area. Many members of the faculty involve undergraduate students in their laboratory research during the summer as well as during the academic year. The Henry Kressel Research Scholarship Program provides competitive scholarships for students to do research under the tutelage of faculty members over at least one summer and an academic year. This program has funded students to do research in many areas, including chemistry, Jewish studies, physics, and history. In addition, faculty members involve students in research on a volunteer basis,

through externally-funded research, and through special funds provided by the Provost. While we have made real progress in this area, it is my hope that it will grow to the point where at least half of our students experience real research during some part of their undergraduate education. Book learning is important, but research exposes students to the beating heart of a discipline.

Academic advising is also being revamped for next year, in response both to some students questioning the value of advising, and our own assessment that we could make advising more meaningful – especially for upperclassmen. Starting this Fall term, academic advising for students who have declared a major will take place with professors in the home department of the major. This approach – used by schools across the country – is designed to help students get the input of professionals within their chosen field and discipline-specific advice that is relevant to their future. Advice on fulfilling requirements, getting into closed sections, etc. will remain the purview of the Academic Advisement Office. Students who have yet to declare a major will also continue to be served directly by Academic Advisement. In addition to these changes that will go into effect next term, I also want to call attention to the fact that over the last two years, the College has hired full-time, dedicated advisors for students planning to pursue careers in medicine and its allied disciplines, and law: Whitney Bennett and Rani Lustiger. Their jobs are to continue and enhance our already enviable record in getting Yeshiva College students into professional schools of their choice. Another significant change on campus since my arrival is the reinvigoration of career services in the form of the Career Development Center, under the able leadership of Marc Goldman. Don't forget that the CDC is now one of the most powerful arrows in your quiver as you think through and plan for the next stage of your life! If you have not visited them in the past year, you are doing yourself a real disservice.

The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program is one of the most important arms of the College. It brings the highest caliber students to campus. This does not simply make us more elite, but raises the level of discourse across the University. This year represented the best year ever for the Honors Program, in part because of exciting initiatives set in motion during the last two years by James Otteson, Joanne Jacobson, and Gabriel Cwilich. You have, no doubt, seen the announcement that Dr. Cwilich will take the helm of the Honors Program in the coming academic year. His appointment represents both continuity of last year's successes as well as our optimism for the future, based upon his own

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Modern Orthodox dating system itself. One junior at YC noted that "there are 10,000 points of variability in the human personality. [Shadchanim] match them up based on, what, 15?... It's, in part, a creation of the system itself." In fact, calling it a "crisis," remarked Noah Cheses, a RIETS student, may be part of the problem: "I think it's a self-created problem and we're at fault for calling it a 'crisis' and perpetuating the anxiety. If we would grab the bull by the horns without calling it things and writing books about it, we would be much better off...To use labels like 'crisis' is itself a tragedy."

Historical Background

How did all of this develop and why has it not been an issue until now? Dr. Jeffrey S. Gurock, the Libby M. Klaperman Professor of Jewish History at the Bernard Revel Graduate School, observed that forty years ago, when he attended YC, "it was a much gentler time. Parents went out of their way to find ways for boys and girls to meet. Saturday night was Date Night here at Yeshiva." Indeed, coed interaction took place in many unpressured, natural forums, at events include college-wide lectures, sporting meets, and Chanukah and Purim activities. Vice President for University Life Dr. Hillel Davis confirmed that "there were great places to meet women 'back in the day' – the annual Israel Day Parade, the Soviet Jewry rallies. Even 1/3 of the attendees at the Rav's [Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's] *yahrzeit* shiur were women from Stern." Also, "lots of relationships actually were created and developed in camp," he said, "as opposed to now when I have been told that if you actually meet someone you might be interested in, there is an expectation that you have to wait until after camp to go through a more formal process to develop the relationship further."

In addition to increased social interaction between men and women, dating practices in those times were different from today's practices. For instance, Dr. Davis reported, "Some of the guys kept calendars; many went out with more than one person at the same time...There were even stories of guys who went out on multiple dates in one evening. When I was a junior, I went out on a blind date party with the sophomores at Stern." In addition, dating venues were more diversified: "People went to plays and movies much more freely than they do now, since there were many fewer restaurants then," he said. And, most significantly, dating was much more of a social activity than a marriage-oriented meeting. Dr. Gurock commented: "There was less pressured dating back then because it was generally an informal interaction that could naturally develop into a more formal relationship." Indeed, dating was simply viewed as "part of a social set of activities" and was a "fun" way of building "social skills and having a good time," according to Dr. Davis.

Coed Activities at YU Today

Attitudes towards coed interaction and dating at YU have always been varied. Rabbi Blau reports that "even when the student body in Yeshiva was more homogeneous than it is today – when there weren't so many international students, when there weren't so many high schools, and before JSS [the James Striar School, now the Mechinah Program] – there were always differences amongst the more yeshivish element and the more modern element of the students: questions about what sorts of social programming, if any, was appropriate in Yeshiva – questions which were never resolved." This is reflected today in results from the undergraduate poll mentioned above. While a majority of students (53.8%) do feel comfortable attending coed events, with 46.1% of respondents comfortable in any coed context, some (12.3%) are uncomfortable attending coed events under any circumstances, and even more (32.8%) make attendance dependent on several factors, like the proviso that the event is for a good cause (34%) or more strikingly, that it involves little actual interaction with members of the opposite gender (22.5%).

Many at Yeshiva consider it healthy and proper for YU to provide coed social opportunities for its undergrads. In the poll, 65.4% of students felt that it was both appropriate and important for YU to sponsor such activities. Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky, a Rosh Yeshivah in the Mazer Yeshiva Program, explained in a September 2008 YUConnects program entitled "Dating Tips for Men" that it is important to have a variety of methods through which students can meet potential spouses: "In the spirit of the Torah, *tzenius*, and *Halachah*, there are different approaches that can be taken. Some people feel less comfortable in certain contexts, so part of the work is to make a place of *taharah* for them." Dr. Davis echoed this sentiment: "There are certain times when [coed activities] should absolutely be encouraged. Part of educating includes how to develop relationships and how to gain family values. I think that's part of our educational mission...We value the notion of people developing as full human beings and that includes relating to the opposite sex as well."

Several students also explicitly stated that they valued multiple options for meeting people. One YC junior responded that his philosophy on this question was simply: "Different strokes for different folks – let's just hope you make it to the other end of the pool." Similarly, Noah Cheses emphasized the importance of recognizing this fact on a communal level. "I think we need to recognize that there need to be different attitudes for different people to meet. Because there is a large diversity of dating strategies within the YU community, we need to develop the five best ways in which people can meet so that they can fit themselves into the category that suits them best...We should allow a certain level of diversity and tolerance on campus to make space for the other."

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It may be prudent to observe that several of these oppositional responses came from YU men. SL, a senior at Stern, commented on this phenomenon: "From what I have seen and heard, the undergraduate men at YU are far less inclined to attend co-ed events than are their counterparts at Beren." Even when men do show up to these events, it seems, they are not always those men women are interested in meeting.

The truth is, however, that it cuts both ways. In her blog, "Draydel," Stern grad Susan Jacobs writes in a post entitled "One Reason for the So-Called 'Shidduch Crisis'":

When I decided to go to Stern College for Women, I imagined that, even though I would be at an all-women's school, there would be plenty of opportunities to interact with the male students of Yeshiva College...I was sorely disappointed...[T]hroughout my college years, I had very little meaningful interaction with men my age...I listened to the admonitions of certain friends that participating in co-ed activities would not be appropriate. On my own I could have chosen to participate more in these activities. However...I felt that there was an unspoken message from my peers that I should not have friends who were male."

In other words, the attitude of staying away from members of the opposite gender and from activities with them exists on both campuses and cannot be restricted to Wilf.

Another way in which religiosity affects willingness to attend coed events is the prospect of missing night seder in order to participate in them. A full 19.9% of respondents would feel comfortable attending coed events when they do not conflict with their night seder (scheduled Torah study), implying that scheduling these programs before the late evening means that a significant portion of the YU population will not show up. And this is true for both men and women. One SCW grad wrote in: "I know many girls who will not go to events on Tuesday evenings, as that's when TAC has 'T-cubed,' where they have *chavruta* and *shiur* on a specific topic." However, this is much less the case for women, perhaps because there is no formal nightly learning program for them as there is for men (in the poll, 30.4% of men said that they would feel comfortable attending coed programs if they did not involve missing night seder, while only 3.8% of women said so).

Methods of Meeting

Despite the significant opposition to coed activities on religious grounds, a variety of social and dating practices do exist at YU. The most popular methods by which students meet include coed events, being set up by friends and young couples, going through shadchanim organizations, and having their parents search for matches for them. There are some exceptions, of course. One Sy Syms student in the Stone Beit Midrash Program, for

instance, wrote in that he finds dates by "meeting and interacting with girls at parties and bars." However, on the whole, students choose these main avenues for meeting members of the opposite gender. One YC junior, for instance, emphasized the importance of having coed events at YU from a social development perspective: "Coed programs at YU are important – you get together, talk, and have some sort of relationship without bringing it close enough that it could cause any problems. At the same time, you gain a certain amount of familiarity with the opposite sex and the ability to relate to its members as human beings." Rabbi Blau echoed these ideas: "Someone who is not familiar with people of the opposite sex – it is difficult for him or her to make intelligent judgments. And there's no decision more important than the person you marry. So there is an argument that they should be able to meet each other in natural kinds of settings."

Others dispute this claim. One YC senior, for instance, wrote in: "While there may be a purpose in talking to girls from an early age, I do not find it to be a significant one. I do not think that most people have trouble or find it awkward to talk to girls in a shidduch setting." Instead, some stress the efficacy of meeting people through friends and relatives. Rabbi Mordechai Willig, in a November 19, 2006 TorahWeb shiur entitled "Survival Guide to Dating," felt that a great place for singles to meet was at the Shabbos table. I think it's preferred that the Shabbos table be that of a married couple with singles invited...We have to do everything we can to help shidduchim...If every married couple just filled its table with some young men and women every Shabbos, that would probably do the trick." Others have related that, because married couples have connections on both sides of the gender line, they can effectively set their friends up with new people. In fact, a whopping 84.3% of student respondents, including 82.5% of men and 87.7% of women, either were set up by friends or planned on being set up in this fashion.

Another segment of the YU population reported interest in using professional shadchanim or shidduch organizations to find a match. 28.9% of those polled said they either used or planned on using this method. One recent YC grad said that the shadchanim try to get to know the students by talking to them one-on-one: "You tell them what you're looking for in terms of *hashkafah* and personality." The past decade has seen the growth of a great number of websites dedicated to helping Jewish singles find each other. Organizations like SawYouAtSinai and YUConnects are just a few of the many ways professionals set up young adults. Each has its own methods for doing so, but often strategies include organizing public lectures or shiurim, singles mixers, shabbatonim, and one-on-one counseling. All are aimed at

providing healthy, safe environments for men and women to meet and develop relationships with each other.

Perhaps the least popular way YU students meet each other is by having their parents set them up and compare so-called "shidduch resumes." Only 9.6% of respondents reported having their parents compile lists of prospective dates for them.

One YC senior described his own experiences with parental involvement, explaining his parents are "really old-fashioned," which entails "people calling them up with lists of girls and my parents doing the research for me on the family's place in the community, divorces in the family, problems with kids, troubled siblings, etc."

He feels that there are some downsides to this method: "It's definitely frustrating in terms of how slow the process is...Also, what I care for isn't exactly the same as what my parents are looking for...I have to admit that there's a little bit of tension because I interrogate them about why they suggest a particular girl." Nevertheless, he reports, most of the women he is set up with have been good matches: "After all the filtering, they're mostly on target."

Some have criticized this approach because it does not allow for the young men and women to make their own decisions about with whom they go out. Rabbi Blau explained that "the notion that someone should decide for them, which may work in other communities, is not 100 percent consistent with the whole mentality we have at Yeshiva where we very much encourage people to make their own decisions – with guidance and support." Others feel that the process can become very objectifying when men put women on their "lists" and determine compatibility based on superficial criteria. But some have argued for the success of this method. "I do not feel that this system leads to unhealthy marriages," said one YC senior. "Although I cannot know for sure, it seems to me that many of my married friends who have gone through this system are happily married."

What Students are Looking for on a Date

Another key element in analyzing the dating scene at YU is the attitudes with which students approach a date. Rabbi Brander, in a Kol Hamevaser interview earlier this year, described what he felt to be the most important attitude with which to approach a date: "People need to know what their goals are and what they want out of life...If there are potential suitors who share life visions and goals, the details of how those goals will be achieved do not need to be fully developed." Rabbi Blass confirmed this, saying, "In the key areas, you should share a vision; but in the other areas, you can have complementary attitudes."

The undergraduate poll sought to ascertain what values and qualities men and women at YU were looking

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for in dates. Asked to list the two most important character traits in a person one was dating, 63.1% of the population listed intelligence as one of those qualities, 54.5% listed religiosity/observance, and 48.7% listed kindness/chesed. It is interesting to note, however, that while 62.3% of women felt religiosity/observance was one of those two most important qualities, ahead of the 61% who felt intelligence was, men placed intelligence ahead of religiosity, with 63.4% of men choosing intelligence and only 50.9% choosing religiosity/observance. Also, somewhat surprisingly, Jewish learning and modesty were only voted on in 11.8% and 23.5% of the cases, respectively, with women choosing Jewish learning 16.7% of the time and modesty 12.8% of the time and men choosing Jewish learning 9.1% of the time and modesty 28.9% of the time.

It is of further interest, in this context, to note the stark difference between men's and women's attitudes towards physical appearance. Some were surprised to discover the extent to which men at YU focus on physical appearance in their choice of a spouse. Noah Cheses commented:

"I always stress to my friends that there needs to be a big distinction between what we want and what we need...we can delude ourselves into wants and desires, but when it comes down to it, you need to figure out what personality type you need to function and to thrive."

This attitude was confirmed by an SCW senior, who reported that "many of them [YU men] think that they are looking for a cookie-cutter, skinny, drop-dead gorgeous, smart, and outgoing young woman. Those are just some basic requirements." Indeed, while only 9.1% of women surveyed in the above poll chose "physical appearance" as one of the two main qualities of a prospective date, a full 33.9% of men did so.

Another complaint levied often against men is their supposed rigidity in terms of what they are looking for in a potential date. One Stern grad discussed this rigidity in relation to how some men perceive gender roles:

In general, guys have a certain arrogance about them. They're just looking for a certain image... Some friends of mine had to consider whether or not to go on to grad school, thinking, "How will boys perceive me?"

Both men and women, however, have been implicated in an overzealous search for a hashkafically compatible spouse. One SCW senior remarked that "both many YU men and women make are looking for such specific paper details that they are so quick to say 'no' to those who could be their basherts without giving them a chance...I think that many YU students are confused as to what they are looking for." David Bardo felt that this reality has contributed significantly to the issue: "One of the driving factors of the shidduch crisis is that people have these firm expectations of what they

want and then they drop people over silly things...I have to imagine that part of it is unreal and unfair expectations."

The Consequences of Dating for Marriage

To a certain extent, the emphasis placed on making sure that each side is on the same page religiously is responsible for what some have called the "job interview" atmosphere on many dates. Each party, eager to find out about the other side's religious standards and opinions, conducts a quasi-interrogation to probe these issues, making the experience of a date sometimes nerve-racking (on top of any other nerves one might have from socializing with a member of the opposite gender one-on-one). Tamar Snyder wrote about this as well: "People often compare dating to interviewing for a job. In the Orthodox Jewish world, this notion is taken almost literally." Dr. Davis confirmed this observation: "It appears to me that dating is a very serious activity now and I think in my day it was actually fun. Now, it's a challenge and a task to be accomplished...In my day, it was simply part of a social set of activities...I'm still under the impression that dating today sounds more like a job interview than anything else."

This may be viewed as an outgrowth of the goal-oriented nature of Modern Orthodox dating today, which demands that young people date in order to find a spouse, not to simply have a good time. Rabbi Willig, in the shiur mentioned above, felt that "dating for taclis" in this way was the correct attitude with which to approach a date. He thus denounced the practice of "two-timing" – dating two different people at once – since dating, in his view, is an attempt "to establish a relationship with a particular individual."

One of the negative consequences of this attitude, some would argue, has been an increased awkwardness between the genders, since they often only have personal interactions with one another on a date. Susan Jacobs, in her Draydel blog, stated that "many of the men I have dated – some of whom are in their thirties – have never learned how to communicate with women because they have never been encouraged to attend social events where they can learn those skills...Unfortunately, throughout much of Orthodox life, men and women are only encouraged to socialize with the express purpose of getting married." It may also be the case that the expectation of dating and socializing in general with an eye towards marriage has led many students to date often and to start doing so at a young age. It is interesting, in this context, to note that the most popular (25.3%, according to the poll) age at which students start or plan to start dating is 20 (a year or less after most students return from Israel), while only 11.6% start or plan to start dating after 22 (when many students graduate college).

Even more interesting, while 31.3% of men said that they started

dating or planned to start dating before they turned 21, a full 83.2% of women said they planned to date by that age. It seems as though women are in much more of a rush to begin their search for a spouse than men their age are. One SCW senior noted this phenomenon in her remarks, saying, "Most girls in my class started the moment they got home from seminary, if not the Pesach before."

Where does this rush to get married come from? If both many men and women do not socialize except when dating, as noted, why is it that so many more women are looking to get married so soon after starting college? Adina Schwartz, in a January 1, 2008 Observer article entitled "Shidduch Angst: Are we Selling our Sanity for a Wedding Band?," found four reasons for the extra pressure on women to date:

Many attribute this desire to external pressure that surrounds them on a constant basis. These women date not because they feel ready to marry or because they simply want to, but to relieve themselves of the anxiety levied upon them by their peers...Some feel that getting married and having children is a woman's ultimate way of serving God...Other women at Stern College would admit that their draw to the chupah comes from a secret hope, stemming from a Cinderella Complex, that a handsome prince will come and take them away from their lives of drudgery...The intellectually honest might acknowledge another reason for the pressure to marry. These women would acknowledge that they are healthy individuals with normal libidos. As halakhically observant Jews, they wish to marry so that they can have physical intimacy as sanctioned by the Torah.

Perhaps the most pervasive source of pressure, the marriage-charged environment of Stern has taken its toll on some students. One SCW student responded to the poll as follows: "[I] definitely felt this pressure from many of my friends who started dating earlier than I was ready to. They would frequently ask me why I wasn't dating yet and how I planned on getting married if I wasn't dating...I know of many people who feel pressured to rush into a

relationship because they feel like they have to date and get married within a matter of months." In fact, 35% of women polled reported feeling pressured to start dating sooner than they would have liked to, as compared with 23% of men.

This disparity between the pressures felt by men and those felt by women ties into another facet of the difficult shidduch scene students find themselves in – a difference in the age groups Modern Orthodox men and women are willing to date. Tamar Snyder felt that the blame is to be laid, to some extent, at the feet of young men:

It's not that there are more Orthodox women than men out there; experts instead attribute the shortage to the broader sociological trend of postponing marriage, which works to the disadvantage of women looking for spouses their own age or just a few years older. Men who are 30 will date women as young as 18 and may turn their noses up at dating any woman past the age of 25. The 20% or 30% of women who don't get hitched right away begin to worry they'll be left out in the cold for good.

Others, however, would reverse the claim, pointing to young women's insistence on marrying young. One YC junior, for instance, said, "It's not that there are too many girls, just that there are too many girls wanting to get married before they should be getting married. Guys want to get married a little bit later. There are just fewer people who want to get married at the same time."

To a certain extent, then, it becomes a question of what came first – men's desires to postpone marriage and date women younger than themselves or women's desires to marry at a younger age? In other words, do women desire to marry young only because men want to marry younger women or do young men postpone marriage only because they can always marry available, younger women?

While one can argue either case well, the consequences of all this shidduch angst definitely seem more pronounced with women than with men. Rabbi Brander, in the Kol Hamevaser interview, noted the effect the pressure has had on some

young women's health: "We are a very small percentage of the American population, but we take up around thirty to forty percent of the beds in clinics treating eating disorders. There are women in their forties who are becoming anorexic because not only does the girl have to be a size 2, but so does the mother." Similarly, one Stern grad said that "there's an enormous amount of pressure [to date]. Anorexia rates have gone up – seminaries in Israel have started asking faculty members to make sure their students are eating." [See the November 24, 2008 edition of The Observer for more on this topic.] Clearly, then, the pressure surrounding finding a match – and finding one early on – is a serious problem not to be ignored.

Conclusion

While there is certainly a variety of dating practices and methods for meeting members of the opposite gender at YU, there seems to have been a shift somewhat to the religious right, wherein men and women often feel uncomfortable attending coed events to meet, instead relying on friends or shadchanim to set them up. This has produced a more delicate dating situation. People of the opposite gender mostly interact with each other only when dating for marriage and may treat dates like formal business interviews. Yet since men and women are often ready to marry at different stages in their lives, and men are much more willing to stay unmarried for longer than women are, they sometimes miss the boat and enter a cycle of continual dating. Indeed, the growth of large singles communities, in Washington Heights and the Upper West Side, for instance, is due in no small part to this long, stressful process of trying to find the right match, which proves to be so difficult for so many people. Whether we can expect shifts in the general causes of trends in the near future depends on all actors involved – women, men, teachers, family members, and the helpful friend.

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Sy Syms Retrospective

By BEN RECCA

The Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) is venturing far beyond business as usual. Now in his second year as dean, Michael Ginzberg discussed the school's strategic goals, towards which he said SSSB is progressing nicely. Though slightly hampered by the University-wide budget cuts, the school still plans to continue its bid for accreditation.

This strategic plan covers five broad areas: upgrading the undergraduate school, creating a graduate school, ensuring selected themes run throughout the schools, enhancing relations with Israel and other international schools, and improving communication with various constituents and alumni.

Dean Ginzberg said that he hoped to hire a number of faculty to improve the undergraduate program. Although the university's financial situation had limited some of their ability to do so, Ginzberg was pleased that he was able to hire new faculty including Dr. Joseph Kerstein, who will direct SSSB's Masters in Accounting program.

Still moving forward on target is the SSSB curriculum review committee, who plans to present their evaluation by Fall 2010. The faculty will vote on the committee's proposal at the first faculty meeting. If it passes, current plans call for the new curriculum to be instituted by the following year.

The task force charged with reviewing the current undergraduate majors has already released a reevaluation of the information systems, management, and marketing majors. Likely on the horizon are

additional math requirements, a new capstone program, and a curriculum injected with greater flexibility.

Ginzberg also dispelled any rumors that courses would be discontinued due to the University's current budget issues. While some sections may be merged, undoubtedly increasing class sizes, courses will not be dropped for purely fiscal considerations.

Currently, SSSB is building an entrepreneurship curriculum to give students an understanding of real-world business management. To encourage these skills, SSSB conducted its first business-plan competition, where students submitted their original business ideas to be judged by an outside party for cash prizes.

Michael Strauss, an entrepreneur who heads his own start-up business, lead the efforts in this competition. He spent a considerable amount of time working with students on developing ideas by offering his real-world expertise. Reflecting on the competition, SSSB Junior Aryeh Amsel commented what he values about Sy Syms is its "focus on our future professions, educating us beyond the subjects themselves."

Dean Ginzberg expressed enthusiasm about the new Master of Science and Accounting program, which begins this fall. This program will allow undergraduates to meet the new New York State accounting requirements, and will incorporate an ethical component.

He predicted that the addition of graduate programs to SSSB will greatly benefit the undergraduate student body, as the additional fac-

ulty and resources of the graduate school will be utilized by undergraduates as well. Further, he felt that the greater demands of graduate students should lead a higher-quality faculty overall. Ginzberg also hopes that undergraduates benefit by directly interacting with the more experienced, and often more focused, graduate students.

Ginzberg plans for all graduate programs to support themselves over the long term, and expects an eventual increase in tuition revenue due to an increase in enrollment and size.

SSSB will also begin offering not-for-credit executive education programs. These will be available to the general public, who can attend programs for one or two days and hear graduate-level instruction about various topics. This will start this fall, with courses concerning the topic of family businesses. This, Dean Ginzberg believes, is a step toward the future goal of SSSB offering an executive MBA program.

Ginzberg hopes that these changes can vault Sy Syms towards the ranks of superior business schools. At the same time, he also hopes to preserve what he called "the uniqueness of Yeshiva University," by weaving together the morning and afternoon programs "by integrating ethics and business values in the curriculum" he said.

This program will further increase the schools' focus on Israel, which also fits into Ginzberg's larger strategic design. He plans to emphasize a strong relationship with Israel, partly by finding role models for students

who wish to eventually move to Israel. For example, Professor David Brock, visiting professor of management from Ben Gurion University, taught this year at SSSB. Long-term, Ginzberg hopes to have one Israeli professor teaching every semester.

With an improved relationship with alumni, students will have opportunities to use to utilize their class-based knowledge and gain experience in the real world. Ginzberg is trying to persuade alumni in Israel to accept interns, though such efforts have so far been unsuccessful due to what he termed the "Israeli sense of time." When students contact the Israeli alumni for internships, Ginzberg explained, the new Israelis often tell them that they don't begin to consider internships until the May before the summer, well after most Americans have confirmed their positions.

SSSB is also being reviewed with an eye on joining the 500 or so business schools in America with accreditation. Currently involved in the ongoing several-year process of accreditation, SSSB is on track to be added to the international list of business-accredited schools, ensuring it will be evaluated and associated with the best business schools worldwide. AACSB International, is the premier accrediting organization and so it comes with no surprise that it has some twenty-one rigorous qualifications.

These standards, can be categorized into three areas: strategy and planning, quality of participants, which include faculty, and students and staff, and assurance of learning, which certifies that students are learning what they are being taught.

Dean Ginzberg submitted the plan to meet the accreditation standards in November, and it was accepted in February. Next, a plan of action was submitted to the initial accreditation committee, who in April accepted it. Ginzberg took some pride in the fact that at the AACSB's annual meeting, the SSSB's plan was acclaimed by the committee as "what a plan should look like."

SSSB now has three years to implement its accreditation plan, and must report annually to the committee on its progression. At some point, Ginzberg plans to invite an outside perspective and enlist a peer review team to assess the school's progress. Following this, SSSB will go into a year of self-study, which will result in the production of another document detailing how they are meeting the standards. Ginzberg hopes that by Spring 2012, this process will be complete.

He believes the school is currently in good shape, though he noted that more full-time faculty must be hired, and fewer courses taught by adjuncts. This of course does not go unaffected by the current budget issues; however, Ginzberg reassures, "we are moving".

One issue that still requires attention is the "assurance of learning" category. This coming year, a full-time position will be created in order to manage this area by determining the gaps and weaknesses in the curriculum, which Dean Ginzberg believes will lead to a SSSB where "we are offering the best program possible with the best faculty possible."

Visions & Visionaries: Can We Talk?

By RABBI DAVID WOLPE

What can we do about non-literalist Jews? Non-literalists are the vast majority of Jews, those who do not believe that the tradition is dictated from Sinai, and that God's will is not the unarguable imperative of observance. The disaffection of such Jews is by far the greatest internal dilemma we face.

If we continue to lose the non-literalist Jews, not only do we forfeit the majority in terms of numbers, but also in terms of activism, political influence, cultural contribution and even Zionist support. What is our future if we cannot convince the majority of Jews to care for their own tradition?

Of course the presumptive fortune tellers of Jewry should remember that what happens to Jews is part of a larger picture: the fate of America, the West, and indeed the world will determine the fate of the Jews more than any internal debate. Again and again in history the

Jewish future has been borne on a larger tide than our own resolutions. The machinations of Iran's government or the convulsions of the environment may have more to do with the future of Jewry than any program of cultural or spiritual enrichment.

Restricting ourselves to what we can influence, my own belief and approach is that Judaism has to be sustained on the ground not of command, but of relationship. The model of covenant reminds us that Judaism is treasured because we take care of one another, watch out for one another, learn how to relate to each other and to the world. Covenant recalls to us the central truth of Judaism – that it is born in a relationship to God.

The massive, often simplistic, literature pouring forth from magazines and television reminds us daily that human beings are not only enmeshed in relationships, but constantly seeking wisdom on how to conduct and advance them.

God's role in the bible, as theologians from Soloveitchik to Heschel and Buber remind us, is one of relationship: to assuage loneliness, to seek human fidelity, to enter into a dialogue based ultimately not on need, but on the sublimity of presence. The open-souled approach to one another and to God is at the heart of Judaism; it is the aim of much of halacha, and is, I believe, the only model that can serve to consistently interest non-literalist Jews in the tradition many so cavalierly dismiss.

We have exercised the language of command for millennia. For many Jews 'thou shalt' is still alive. The tradition speaks in a voice that must be heeded. For such Jews, the model of relationship may seem mushy or even feckless.

Still, when Moses is praised at the end of the Torah we are not told that he was the greatest shomer mitzvah, or the most learned, or even the ethically purest. The Rabbis may extrapolate such attrib-

utes, but the Torah does not recount them. Rather, Moses experienced God 'panim el panim' – he had the most comprehensive relationship with the Almighty.

In a time of rapidly advancing human learning, we dare not shut the door on knowledge, whether from the natural or social sciences. We do not possess accurate factual knowledge that is denied to other traditions or methodologies; what we have is a unique language. The language of mitzvah, the means of speaking to the past, and to the future, as well as to God and others around us, is the quintessential Jewish treasure.

Given an imaginary plenipotentiary power over the Jewish world, I would begin language classes. Not in the literal sense, although we certainly could work on our Hebrew, but in the sense of teaching us to speak Jewish to one another. There is a great deal of work to be done to teach Jews how to parent Jewishly, to relate Jewishly

to spouses and parents and others in the workplace. Such a language would include how we relate to Jews who are different from ourselves and, crucially, to the non-Jewish world.

In other words, we urgently need to propagandize a Jewish language that will not be seen as arbitrarily ritualistic, but part of a covenantal frame. Within that frame human beings will choose to live not only for enrichment, but to preserve the essential communities and connections that enable us to live.

What will the Jewish world look like in thirty years? If we are granted a certain global stability, then it will depend upon whether we can create a more varied, ramified, ritually charged, nuanced and sacred conversation. Can we talk?

Rabbi Wolpe is the head rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, California. He contributed the introductory article to The Commentator's Visions & Visionaries series.

Retrospective on Three Years of Yeshiva College

continued from front page

vision for Yeshiva College students: "Students at Yeshiva should gain an intellectual way of life, along with a strong sense of how to balance their lives. These are things not seen on curriculum that students should gain, in addition to proficiency in their chosen course of study."

Other goals of the dean have been on the administrative aspect of the college. "We're looking for a shift away from the old system of protekzia," said Srolovitz. "Yeshiva College shouldn't be a place in which a student who needs something walks into the Dean's Office and asks for a signature allowing it. With a more formal structure in place, students spend less time playing the system and more time learning." One example of this new policy has been the stricter guidelines regarding overtalking into a class. Previously, students who wanted to enter locked-out classes merely needed the signature of the professor teaching the course, with some professors gaining notoriety as permissive and uncaring of class size. Now students seeking to register for a closed course must file an official petition with Academic Advising, starting a sequence of evaluations based on student need.

But the lion's share of the Srolovitz revolution has focused on improving the level of academics, with hefty investments in better academic resources. Although this year's budget crisis has effected a hiring freeze, Dean Srolovitz has hired a slew of 24 new professors since he arrived. Of those, 10 are full-time, non-tenure-track hires, 12 are tenure-track hires and 2 are tenured hires.

New, nicer faculty offices were supplied to the faculty, and the Office of the Dean has moved to the fifth floor of Belfer Hall with the express intent of being closer to them. Professor William Lee recalled the small office he received when he arrived at Yeshiva 20 years ago. "I had a nine by nine office which I shared with five other professors," he said. "That made it hard

to have a private conversation with a student. I now have closer relationships with students, due in part to my new private office."

As the Office of the Dean was formerly located on the first floor of Fuerst Hall, one student opined that it made the deans less accessible to the students. "It became a schlep to go to the Dean's Office every time I needed something," exclaimed former student Zev Lerner (YC '08). "They didn't seem to take students into consideration when they made the move to Belfer."

Additionally, research facilities have been updated and expanded, with new psychology labs added to the concourse level in Belfer. This trend of hiring professors and improving faculty accommodations shows an increased willingness on the behalf of Yeshiva's administration to spend. Such generous policies are a must when it comes to attracting nationally renowned professors like English Professor Adam Newton and Philosophy Professor James Otteson, both of whom recently joined Yeshiva College's faculty.

President Richard Joel exclaimed, "The faculty believes in possibilities, because we're giving them better compensation." He added that spending more was necessary for happy and productive professors. "They feel a sense of equity now."

Music Professor Noyes Bartholomew said that previous Yeshiva College deans were more restricted financially than Dean Srolovitz is. "All three Deans with whom I've worked have steadfastly, relentlessly and thanklessly argued for the need for increased funding for their programs." He added, "Sometimes, though, there's nothing to give." Professor Bartholomew expressed hope in the current administration, saying, "My judgment is that Dean Srolovitz is on the right track for YC."

Yeshiva administration has made an effort to provide more opportunities for students to be involved in faculty research. With this increase in professors involved in research as

well as more students interested in doing it with them, Yeshiva's reputation has started to swing towards that of a research-oriented university. According to the Office of the Dean, at least 17 students are currently doing research with professors.

"The emphasis on research may be the only short-term action that can raise YU's standing among other universities now," explained Professor Lee. "But good teaching is just as important as good research." Dean Srolovitz concurred, saying, "Bad teaching will prevent a professor from receiving tenure, but only good teaching won't get it." Srolovitz admitted, however, that "a professor's research is an important part of his or her receiving tenure, and it's definitely scrutinized when tenure decisions are made."

Dean Srolovitz has long been pushing an initiative to reduce grade inflation – or as he puts it, grade compression – which he argues will help professors and graduate schools differentiate among the students' performances. "Yeshiva College must have a system that distinguishes between adequate and excellent performance," the dean stated. "We must recognize the students who go the extra mile." Srolovitz added, "To be taken more seriously by graduate schools and employers is beneficial for all students in the long run."

Towards this end, the dean has handed out grading rubrics to faculty, with clear guidelines standardizing marks for papers and assignments. Additionally, professors have been instructed to limit the amount of A's they hand out. These policies create a larger grading distribution, with a larger variety of marks based on fairer standards.

In the past, students could push off assignments and term papers for a few semesters, receiving an I (standing for "incomplete") on their transcripts. No more, said the dean. Students not completing all coursework will by the end of the semester will fail the course, with I's being distributed by the deans rarely and only due to extenuating circumstances.

Dean Srolovitz also expressed an interest in "tracking" students in different classes within one subject. "It's ridiculous to assume that all students are on the same level," he said.

The ramifications of the dean's work at Yeshiva have sometimes been hard to detect. "I don't know how the dean's policies have affected me so much," said Ben Kandel (YC '10). "I'm a physics major, though, and Dean Srolovitz's connections with professors at other universities have been invaluable for summer research and graduate school opportunities."

For the most part, though, the dean's efforts to raise the level of rigor in college classes have borne fruit. Tuvia, a junior in YC who preferred his last name withheld, said that "I'm Pre-Med, and was in early admissions two years ago. I came back after learning in Yeshiva in Israel and was surprised to find that my classes are overall much harder now."

Shaul Seidler-Feller (YC '11) offered a more nuanced approach to the dean's achievements at Yeshiva College to date. "The classes have not gotten harder since I got here two years ago, but from what I understand, I believe the additions in staff are significant and have raised the quality of the Jewish Studies department tremendously within the past 5 years."

Increasing academic rigor means more time spent on work for classes, which in turn translates into less time for extracurricular activities, be it Torah learning, sports, or social events. Dean Srolovitz, along with President Joel, is well known as a proponent of staying four years on campus in order to finish an undergraduate degree. "If you just take one more year, you can spread the work around, and have more time for everything else you want to do."

The dean remonstrated on this issue, saying, "We are willing to provide strategies that can make four years on campus a reality. Parents and students should be on same page when it comes to getting the most out of a college education."

Between the years 2003 – 2005, the percentage of graduating students spending four years on campus declined slightly, from 30% to 22%. Since Dean Srolovitz's arrival in 2006, however, the percentage has increased, from 25% to 29% in 2007, finally reaching an all-time high with 39% of this year's graduating class remaining on campus for at least four years.

Dean Srolovitz noted the current trend, explaining, "The current financial situation makes people rethink their situation and future plans. Students aren't in such a hurry to get a job in this economy, and take the offer of staying in college for an extra year seriously."

Since most students, though, do not remain in YU for four years, one wonders what these students are giving up. Rabbi Blau, who as Mashgiach Ruchani has his finger on the pulse of the Torah learning at Yeshiva, claimed that not much has changed in the Beit Medrash. "I haven't seen any changes in Beit Medrash activity as a result of the dean's policies," he said. Rabbi Blau attributed the apparent contradiction between more rigorous classes and constant levels of Beit Medrash attendance to the nature of Yeshiva University students. "Yeshiva College has always been a place where guys can choose between taking hard and easy classes. Guys have always found a balance that works for them, and if they want to learn Torah they will find a way of doing that while going to college."

At the end of his meeting with *The Commentator*, Dean Srolovitz mentioned that he was pleased with what he accomplished so far. "There is a changing attitude of students and faculty concerning what the administration is doing in the university," he said. The dean also pointed out the recent curriculum review showing continuing improvement with regards to the intellectual aspects of the college. "I'm just glad to be a part of this," he concluded.

Career Corner: Having trouble finding a summer internship? Time for Plan B

By: LAURIE DAVIS

Even though there are still many internship opportunities available on YU CareerLink (www.yu.edu/cdc), it's true that many employers seem to be recruiting interns early in the semester these days. Given the tough economy, some internship programs have been reduced or eliminated altogether as well. So if you haven't figured out your plans yet, it may be time to consider Plan B. What should your Plan B look like? The Career Development Center is here to give you some ideas. Gaining some experience in a professional setting is extremely important, both for building your resume and for finding out what you like or dislike in a job. Here are some options to consider:

1) Create your own internship. Believe it or not, many students are quite successful in developing their own internships. Target a few companies where you'd really like to work, but which don't have any internships posted. Try contacting them and offering to intern without pay (sorry, but it's an easier sell if you're not asking for compensation). Make sure you have a clear idea of how you can help the firm and what projects you'd like to work on, so you can pitch the internship effectively.

2) Volunteer. Look for volunteer opportunities throughout the summer that relate to your industry of choice. Pre-med? Try a local hospital or nursing home. Interested in non-profit management? Help organize a walkathon for a cause you believe in. It's pretty hard for an

organization to turn away free help!

3) Shadow. Perhaps you've applied to a number of organizations, and they just can't bring you on board. Maybe that contact you had said he really enjoyed chatting with you, but his firm just isn't hiring interns this summer. Well, ask if you can shadow for a few days. That way you at least get a sense of what the company is about and what a typical day would be like in that position.

4) Visit a Temp Agency. Many students find summer opportunities through temp agencies, also called staffing firms. There are several in midtown Manhattan that are easily accessible from YU. Often, you'll need to brush up your computer skills, but that's great practice anyway. Sometimes, they have fun assignments for college students,

like working the U.S. Open or being a personal assistant to a B-list celeb. The more professional the environment, though, the better. Request that type of work when possible. Also, take the interview seriously – the recruiters definitely want to be impressed!

5) Summer Educational Youth Programs. No, we're not talking about camp, though for those considering working with children full time after graduation, that is certainly an option (for those who want to enter the business world, employers strongly prefer to see office-based experience). Many public and private schools, Ys, JCCs, and other organizations have education programs that hire college students to teach select subjects. While it may not look as impressive as that competitive corporate gig, at least you'll

gain some expertise in an area and do some good for the community.

Stop by the CDC to strategize about these ideas and others. It's NOT too late to find meaningful summer work, but it does take time and effort. With a little patience and a solid game plan, you can avoid spending your summer Twittering about your sunburn.

A Shidduch Saga: David vs. Galit

By JESSE LEMPEL

And if you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire her and wish to take her as a wife, then you shall bring her into your house and she shall shave her head and grow her nails. And she shall remove the garment of captivity from upon her, remain in your house, and cry for her father and mother a full month. After that you may go in unto her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. (Deuteronomy 21:11-13)

And the Philistine looked about and saw David, and scoffed at him; for he was but a boy, ruddy and handsome. (I Samuel 17:42)

Round 1

They sent me here, so
I came.
I know tomorrow
I will regret this.
In too soon you're excused
To the bathroom
(You desperate actress).
My eyes follow
With some hate and some fondness
And some shame.

Round 2

Just what, specifically,
Do you mean by that smile?
Is it, incredibly, a treat
Loosely guarded, battle hardened,
Profusely displayed to your army of
beasts?
(They must have sat in just this
seat.)
Or is it, just maybe, a timely crea-
tion,
A beam that's especially mine?

Round 3

Your attitude is accelerating
My possibilities. You fascist
Disaster across from me,
Acting pretty.
No exaggerating: Your shiny
Lip gloss is bitterly attractive.
Eat your dinner please.

Round 4

Now listen
You Philistine witch.
If you should die by
My sling-shot tonight
An instant embarrassing death,
Would I be at fault?
Or is it an accident,
A dissonant song,
A consequence
Of everything I was taught
And led to believe
About companionship
Being feverish and giving
Impossibly while receiving
existence, that was wrong or
At least misleading? Much what
I said before: Your
Lip gloss is bitterly attractive.
You untouchable pristine machine.

*Jesse Lempel is a sophomore in YC
majoring in English*

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Looking Back and Forward: Dean's Evaluation Of His Time At Yeshiva College

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special brand of energy and creativity. The Honors Program is both a laboratory for new curriculum ideas, and provides Honors students with the extra challenge that matches their strengths. My hope is that this program continues to flourish and that all Honors students complete Honors theses – the capstone to a unique education.

I end with a list of unfinished business. First, and most important, the future of this institution depends on the integration of the undergraduate experience and the myriad programs of this University.

Our institution cannot thrive without the integration of the faculty – we simply cannot afford to have two Chemistry departments, two English departments, two Art departments, etc.. Discrepancies between policies make it difficult for the University to present a unified image to our constituency – we have now delayed the implementation of the College's grade inflation plan pending approval by our partner schools within the University. If we are to achieve our goal of growth in scholarship, in the quality of the education we provide, and in the number

of students we serve, there is no choice but to integrate. Second, we still have important curricular issues to be settled. While the faculty is rounding the bend on the major pieces of the curriculum, we still have not adequately dealt with the College's relationship with the Israel program, with the proper balance between required academic Jewish studies and the rest of the curriculum, with devising new approaches to increase student flexibility, and with relieving some of the pressure that our students who are serious about Jewish and secular learning

often feel. These were challenges that I foresaw before I joined Yeshiva University and are challenges that remain today. I have high hopes that we will be able to meet these challenges, based upon discussions that are going on right now on campus. I am optimistic about our future, yet we have work to do.

*Dr. David Srolovitz is Dean of
Yeshiva College*

Fewer Classes Offered Next Semester

BY RAFI BLUMENTHAL

Registration for a new semester is always an anxious and exciting time for students here at Yeshiva, but this year, after all the dust had settled, several students were left disappointed with the number of courses offered by several departments. In fact, almost every department in Yeshiva College is featuring fewer classes than it did one year ago. In part, the limited class schedule stems from the fact that a significant number of adjuncts are leaving at the end of this semester.

Yeshiva College Dean David Srolovitz stressed the university's efforts, in the midst of addressing the decreasing budget, to focus on "maintaining the university's academic integrity" as well as "continuing to grow." Dean Srolovitz ensured that the budget cuts that have been made are predominantly in areas that do not affect class offerings.

He did admit, however, that certain classes that used to be offered every semester will now only be given once a year and that others will be offered in fewer sections than in past semesters. This process lowers the overall number of course offerings and allows full-time professors to teach the classes that adjuncts were once covering. "This is in an attempt to consolidate, but not compromise, academic offerings," Dean Srolovitz explained.

In a similar vein, Sy Syms School of Business Dean Michael Ginzberg stressed that SSSB will have to engage in "smarter scheduling" in order to maintain the quality of education that the business school strives for. He admitted that "there's no way we can be as entirely accommodating as we have been in the past," but guaranteed that "it won't affect the quality." Like Dean Srolovitz, Dean Ginzberg admitted that they are consolidating classes into fewer sections and will be offering certain classes on a yearly, basis rather than every semester.

Some non-tenure stream professors are leaving as a result of YU's policy in which full-time professors come under review when their one to three year teaching contract in the university expires. Tenure-stream assistant professors are also reviewed at the end of their initial three year

contract. At that point, if the administration wishes to sign another three-year contract, he/she is granted a semester's leave and offered a second three year contract. If, however, the professor does not pass the review, then the administration chooses not to renew the professor's contract. Three years later, the professor is carefully reviewed for tenure – a year long process.

Three years ago, YU hired numerous tenure-stream and non-tenure-stream professors, and those professors are now either going on their semester's leave, or are not returning at all next year. Professors who will not be here next semester, either due to this third-year policy, the course consolidations, or because they found permanent employment elsewhere, include Professor Lenny Tevlin in the physics department, Professor Michael Kaplan in the history department, and Professor David Friedman in the economics department.

SSSB, meanwhile, is slated to lose three professors at the end of this semester. Two of them, Professors Leon Schwartz and David Brock, were visiting professors who will be returning to their original universities for the beginning of the Fall '09 semester. Henry Jorisch also will not return (see insert "Jorisch" for discussion).

One way that the faculty may address the decrease in class offerings is by making certain courses into larger lecture-hall courses. In fact, Dean Srolovitz noted that Psychology, which is rapidly becoming the most popular major in YU, may soon boast several formal lecture-style class offerings – a system already in use for certain science classes. He added that the Glueck Center will contain several of the larger-style classrooms that are needed for such a format, which will further enable such configurations.

Professor Ruth Bevan, the Senior Member of the Political Science department, supported such a plan, explaining that "introductory courses profit from large enrollments and should have no specific prerequisites to hamper such registration."

Jacob Goldberg (SSSB '10), on the other hand, was apprehensive about such an arrangement: "I think that part of the reason why YU can justify charging such high tuition is

because of the small class sizes that they feature – a luxury that one can't find in larger universities. If they forfeit this, then they will be compromising their students' education." Dean Srolovitz agreed, saying "that overall we are committed to small classes for our students; however, it simply makes sense to offer two large lecture classes in place of eight small classes when possible." He further added that "very few courses in Yeshiva College fall within that category."

There are certain departments that remain opposed to larger class sizes. Dean Srolovitz acknowledged that the Bible faculty feel that since Bible classes address important and sensitive hashkafic (ideological) issues, it is important to keep classes at a smaller, intimate number. Rabbi Carmy, Chair of the Bible Department, commented that for Bible he is "against a huge impersonal lecture hall. Class should be small enough to allow for real interaction." He did add, however, that "it need not become so small that it's a schmooping (chatting) group."

Rabbi Carmy explained that he has capped Intro to Bible classes at a lower number than past years, but has increased the number of sections being offered in order to compensate.

He explained that "over the past several years many students have put off taking Introduction to Bible, even though educationally it should be taken early," and that, by offering extra sections, he hopes that many of the upper classmen who have yet to take the course will enroll for the following semester.

Because of the extra sections of Introduction to Bible and the fact that Drs. Shalom Holtz and Yaakov Elman are on leave next semester, only three higher-level Bible classes are available for students in the traditional "bible slots." Several students were disappointed by such scanty offerings, including AJ Berkovitz (YC '12), a Jewish Studies major concentrating in Bible, who called next semester's offerings "quite dissatisfying."

In response to such concerns, Rabbi Carmy has recently created a new section in a relatively uncommon timeslot for a Bible course – Mondays and Wednesdays at five PM. The course, on Five Megillot, will be taught by Dr. Joseph Angel and can be counted as a "text-Bible" which is worth two credits.

Another department that students have been particularly upset about is Political Science. The department, which last fall offered nine classes, is

now only offering five. Dr. Bevan explained that the fewer classes are mostly the result of one professor, Dr. Evan Resnick, being on leave for the fall, and guaranteed that offerings would be back to normal in the spring. She did stress, however, that in the interim many students are supplementing the number of offerings by engaging in independent and directed studies with individual professors.

This answer did not, however, satisfy all Political Science majors. One student explained that "when a professor goes on leave is exactly when the school should hire an adjunct to fill that slot. Even this past year there was a paltry amount of class offerings, and next semester it's even worse."

On the other hand, Phillip Reich (YC '11), another Political Science major, while admitting that he was disappointed by the offerings, said that he "understands the situation that the university is in. They have, thankfully, placed a freeze on tuition increases for the forthcoming year, and if the consequences of such a move means slightly fewer classes, well, that's a sacrifice I'm willing to make."

Students Say Goodbye to SSSB Professor of the Year At Cruise & Surprise Party

BY: SCOTT SHULMAN & NOACH LERMAN

Students gave a warm send-off to Prof. Henry Jorisch, instructor of management and information systems, voting him as the Sy Syms School of Business Professor of the year upon completing his tenth year of teaching as an adjunct at YU. He was a favorite among students, popular for his clear explanations and personal touch (see Editorials, page 2).

Prof. Jorisch was informed this past summer this would be his final year. Though students expressed disappointment over Jorisch's dismissal, Dean Ginzberg explained that, in order to receive accreditation, SSSB needed to "make changes in the composition of the faculty," which includes having more "academically qualified" professors, as opposed to "professionally qualified" professors in each department.

Jorisch, three-time winner of SSSB Professor of the year, had only positive things to say about his teaching experiences at YU at the SSSB awards ceremony, expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to teach over 2,500 Yeshiva students.

Students further surprised Prof. Jorisch with a cake, snacks and a personal signing board for the last day of

classes. At the student farewell, Eli Friedman (YC '09) praised Prof. Jorisch for making him "completely confident" with what he felt was "the hardest computer application there is."

Etan Slomovic (YC '11), currently in Professor Jorisch's class, praised Jorisch for "understanding the amount of work students have, yet constantly encouraging them to strive to do the best work they can." Friedman praised Jorisch for having the "care of a father and the friendship of a close peer." Jason Jacobs, gushed that Prof. Jorisch was much more than just an excellent teacher, being "our friend and mentor as well." Jacobs further stated that "In a university that seems to only care about academic standards and financial stability, there seem to be few individuals who remember to care about their students." Yet, Jacobs confirmed that "Professor Jorisch is on the top of the list of those who actually do care, and he will always be remembered for this."

continued from front page
ronments "go off to Israel, enter a world where interaction with the opposite sex is discouraged and they come out with the notion that they should only go out for shidduch purposes." Rabbi Blau identified this as "the move to the right."

This is what they call the "move to the right." One aspect of the supposed "move to the right" is the greater concern for the details of Halachah. That is an inevitable result of people having a much more serious yeshivah education.

In other words, because students have had broader exposure to the nuances of Halachah while in Israel, they return home with changed perceptions of their relationship with the

opposite gender, based on perceived halachic guidelines. This idea is echoed by Vice President Dr. Hillel Davis: "I think, in general, young people are much more serious than they were about virtually everything. In particular, I think they are much more intellectually and rigorously committed to Halachah and their interpretation of Halachah and so that demands certain behaviors."

Indeed, there seems to be significant data to support this hypothesis. In a recent poll of the undergraduate student body (see "Student Pulse" on dating), 42.6% of respondents felt that his or her year(s) in Israel affected how he or she views dating and interaction with the opposite gender.

23.7% of respondents – including 14% of female respondents and 30.9% of male respondents – started being "shomer negiah" after their Israel experience. (The current online Observer poll, which is open to all voters on the site, reports that only about 4% of respondents became "shomer" after Israel.) Another 23.7% no longer date recreationally after Israel but rather date strictly for marriage purposes. 12.9% of respondents no longer talk to members of the opposite gender, except when necessary. And, perhaps most surprisingly, 5.8% of all students broke up with their girlfriends/boyfriends during their year(s) in Israel. Some of the com-

ments that students left were quite revealing as well. One SCW student wrote that the Israel experience "made me more aware of the spirit of modesty [and] emphasized the importance of starting a family." One YC student in MYP said, "It deepened my understanding of the dynamics between men and women." And a different SCW student explained that "it helped me realize that there is a significant difference between frivolous co-ed interaction and healthy, normal, purposeful interaction with the opposite gender." All of this points to the significance of the year(s) in Israel in the development of young students' attitudes towards coed interaction and

dating.
Still, Dr. Samuel Heilman, a Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Queens College and the author of *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy*, feels that the renewed emphasis on Halachah as a result of the year(s) in Israel has not fundamentally changed the way Modern Orthodox students date:

Yes, I'm sure the time they spend in Israel has an impact. [However,] the Modern Orthodox world is still pretty far away from the style that you find in the Charedi community. Shidduchim do occur, but not in the

continues on page 17

Shift in Relations

Top 10 Reasons Why Stern Girls Won't Date Me

BY YONI SHENKMAN

(adapted from

ConfessionsOfAShidduchDater.blogspot.com)

As any honest single Jew can tell you, the shidduch scene today is nothing less than absurd, whether it's the silly questions during the initial screening process, the abnormal interaction between guys and girls, or the analysis of every single detail of a date. All of these areas can be discussed and critiqued at great length; however, the area I'd like to focus on is the excuses I've been given as to why various Stern girls won't go out with me. Keep in mind that I've been rejected by quite a few Sternies, so I'd just like to pick my ten favorite/most frequently heard rejections:

1) "She hasn't started dating yet" - What the heck does this even mean? When girls come back from seminary do they have a letter from their rabbi with an exact date they can declare themselves eligible? And since when did a single date become such a big deal? We aren't chasidish! I have no intention of proposing after the second date. In fact, there is a good chance that the only thing that the meidel will talk about is the summers she spent working at HASC, which will put me to sleep and there won't even be a second date. Give it a go! Declare yourself eligible...it's only a date!

2) "She wants to make Aliyah" - That's cool. Maybe I do too. Maybe I want to move to LA. Maybe I want to move to Brunei or perhaps move to Africa and join the Dinka tribe. But that is something that can be discussed over a first date. One should look to marry a person, not a piece of land. Granted, Israel is an important piece of land, but believe it or not the Torah is portable and one can build a home with Torah values anywhere in the world, just like Jews have been doing for centuries. The most important thing is who you build your life with, not where.

3) "You wear jeans" - Yes I do. Some Sundays if I have nothing too important planned, I get a little rebellious and break out my jeans! Ohhhhhhh God! Not jeans! NOT JEANS! HE'S A SHAYGITZ! C'mon. Jeans are tznius and no less stylish than a nice pair of khakis.

4) An irrelevant third party just "doesn't see it" - This excuse is the #1 cause of the shidduch crisis. You want to be set up with a certain individual and you ask someone you thought was your friend to mention it

to the person and they reply "Yeah...I don't see it." Of course you don't see it! I know you're not a prophet. That's why I asked you to mention it to the person that I want to take out, not to make a prediction if we will be married. If someone asks you to set them up with someone, mention it to the person and let them make the decision.

5) "I'm in the middle of something" (i.e. went on one date with someone else) - Let's clarify something: going on one date with someone isn't being in the middle of something. Going out for a couple months is "in the middle." Going on one date barely qualifies as "the beginning" because nothing of substance has even started yet. And, for the record, it is completely muttar to go on a first date with multiple people at the same time...just ask your parents or anyone from the previous generation.

6) "She's actually applying to medical school now" - So? That's like me saying "Yeah, I'd love to go out today, but I'm actually planning on filling up on gas...kinda takes a lot out of me." Obviously, I am not equating the difficulty of applying to medical school to filling up on gas (unless, like myself, you are from NJ and don't know how to pump your own gas), but come on! If you were taking the MCATs in a week than that's a different ball game. Applying to medical school shouldn't consume your whole life. If it does consume your entire existence, than I feel bad for you, your family, your future husband, and may God have mercy on your soul...

7) "I want someone who learns X-teen hours a day" - No you don't. Who do you think you're fooling? Let me tell you what you, and all Stern girls, want: You want to live in a suburb of NYC (i.e. Teaneck), you want to go to Israel for Succos and Arizona for Pesach, you want to send your kids to a modern Orthodox yeshiva and modern Orthodox summer camps, and you want to have tons of shiny jewelry. Unless you have someone sponsoring your marriage (i.e. your parents or in-laws) and your husband is a kollelnic with zero responsibilities, try to be more realistic. If you find a buchor who makes a legitimate effort to go to minyan three times a day and schedules in time to learn daily, in addition to having a steady income, than you have found yourself a quality buchor and you should be quite satisfied! [For the meidels who have just returned from Israel: Save this and read it again in a year when you get

more in tune with reality. Right now you're probably just assuming that I'm off the derech and practice avoda zarah.]

8) "I don't date guys who go to the movies" - I rarely watch TV, and only go to movies on occasion. But if you're judgmental enough to not go on a date with someone because you found out that they have attended or plan on attending the occasional film, without looking at a single other aspect of their personality, then you aren't mature enough to be dating and I'm sorry that I spent more than five seconds looking into you.

9) "Does he want to take off time to learn in Israel?" - Actually I did that already...it was called shana aleph and it took place after high school. As beautiful as it sounds to move to Israel for a year after marriage to "learn and grow together," some people need to get a job and don't have the luxury of parents or in-laws who want to sponsor their marriage until the newlyweds decide to get their act together.

10) "He has too many friends" - I kid you not! Someone said they weren't interested in dating me because I have too many friends! I never realized that having friends would hurt me. Social awkwardness and being boring seem to be the two most appealing things on Sternies' shidduch wish list.

To conclude: I feel the overall themes of these rejections were the lack of honesty and the inability to be in tune with reality. If you aren't into my look because I wear jeans or work out, just say so. If you don't like the fact that I'm driven enough to get a job and make a parnasa, I'm cool with that. If thrice-daily minyan and an evening chevrusa just don't cut it then please just be honest - you are looking to marry a Bnai Brak kollelnic, not a YU graduate! If the fact that I am in tune with reality bothers you, then maybe you need to be honest with yourself and hold off on dating until you come back to the real world. In the meantime, the only valid excuse that I have ever heard consists of two words: "I'm married!"

Yoni Shenkman is a proud alumnus of Yeshiva University (SSSB '07) working as a Wealth Manager in Manhattan. He spends his time learning Torah, doing chesed work, making a parnasa, dabbling in extreme sports, traveling the globe, and searching for his bashert.

The CDC at Our University

BY JOSEPH OFFENBACHER

What do students want to down here they grow up? When they were younger, before ever stepping into a classroom, the options may have seemed infinite. Being a doctor or a lawyer made a lot of sense. Then there were those who, out of sheer innocence, decided that being an astronaut or a fireman would lead to a life of fulfillment. Ironically, however, somewhere between the moon and the courtroom there is an entire spectrum of possible pursuits that often go overlooked. The discovery of such callings is, in many ways, what the college experience is supposed to be about.

For years, Yeshiva University has struggled to define the role of its secular studies program, particularly when it comes to how its faculties would come to influence the students' futures. Torah U'Parnasa is more than just a joke in the Purim edition of The Commentator, but a true cultural identity crisis within the very fabric of the University. For years, Yeshiva has been perceived as little more than a trade-school, preparing its students for the logical, moneymaking career options in medicine, law and accounting.

However, over the past several years, this well-established trend has begun to waver, as the ever-growing Career Development Center (CDC) begins to expand its reach throughout the Wilf and Beren campuses. Maybe you saw them distributing popcorn during orientation? While the CDC continues to provide assistance to students looking for internships and connections to the typical job markets, it has also used profiling techniques to help students discover their many talents and the trades to which those talents can be applied.

The CDC's current executive director, Marc Goldman, was hired by Provost Morton Lowengrub in the fall of 2007 to revamp what was then known as the Office of Career Services. Prior to Goldman's arrival, the CDC had been under the auspices of Academic Affairs and the Sy Syms School of Business. It was relatively unknown and was perceived by many in a negative and narrow-minded light. Goldman has worked hard to improve the CDC's image and to make it a place where all students could discover and explore available career options. Since moving to a new office on Laurel Hill Terrace this past year, the CDC has intensified its efforts to help students develop an understanding of how their education at Yeshiva can open the doors to future careers that many may never have been aware of.

The CDC attributes much of its

success to its new philosophical foundations, in particular, showing students that career development is an evolutionary process rather than a set-in-stone plan for a student's entire professional life. By being particularly attentive to the needs of students, ranging from financial to interest-based considerations, the CDC has been able to match students' skills and interests with possible, previously obscure, career paths. By improving its technology, including its website and advanced profiling tests, the CDC has become a place where students have the most up-to-date techniques and resources to help them plan their futures. Weekly emails, sent out by the center, include an obscure profession of the week. Do you know what an epidemiologist is? Or maybe you've heard of a sustainability consultant? But every week, the CDC's email features one of these professions that may be the perfect fit for you.

The CDC also boasts new "interview streamer," which allows students to record practiced interviews from the comfort of their personal computers at any time, day or night. The mock interview can then be sent to the center for critiques and comments. This tool has benefited the students by helping them prepare for critical components of any application process, while taking into account the time constraints unique to YU's dual curriculum.

Taking a counseling approach to the students' futures has made the CDC a warm environment where students can critically assess their futures. Goldman adamantly views the CDC's role as a partnership with the student body. They will never tell students what path to take, but they will give students the support they need and help them gain the skills and make the connections necessary for every student's individual career aspiration. Goldman explains that getting started early is the key to success. Students should frequent the CDC from their earliest days on campus in order to properly develop their lives after Yeshiva. The center deals with an extremely broad range of students, including those who are adamant about a career path, those who have never even considered life after graduation, and everything in between.

So what do you want to be when you grow up? Maybe you want to be a doctor, or maybe you don't have a clue. But that does not matter. Here at Yeshiva we have a tremendous resource in the newly-conceived Career Development Center. They will work with you to assess your goals, skills, and interests to help you find a rewarding and productive career.

First Floor Area to Become Student Lounge, Study Area

BY ISAAC SILVERSTEIN

Students flocking to the upper floors of the library may have been too harried to notice the ongoing renovations of the first floor's north wing, future home to a multi-level student study area and lounge scheduled to open for the start of the Fall 2009 semester. The majority of this open space has remained vacant since the Yeshiva University Museum's departure for Midtown,

with only a small fraction used for student study and the occasional mincha. The new lounge, however, will utilize the entire wing, a two-story area larger than Belfer Hall's Weissberg Commons.

Plans call for the wing to serve as a place geared towards group study, as well as lounge space with couches and chairs where students can relax. Acknowledging the lack of ample study space during examina-

tion periods, Yeshiva officials predict that this facility will provide undergraduates with much-needed extra space in the library where they can study.

Development of this area is also geared towards combating the constant noise that pervades five out of the library's six floors. Following the lounge's completion, groups engaged in loud conversation could utilize the ground level study area,

where they will be free to talk. This will in turn create a true library atmosphere in the Gottesman Library. Dean of Libraries Pearl Berger agreed, noting that that the new first floor development should help the library's noise issues, benefiting those who prefer to study in silence. "This will help us create a quiet study atmosphere on all floors of the Library proper, where students will be able to focus and con-

centrate."

Though the original plans for the space called for what Dean Berger described as a more "ambitious" design, the University-wide budget cuts have forced the plans to be trimmed down a bit. Nevertheless, the new lounge will still be aimed towards filling students' needs, with current plans calling for tables and couches, as well as wireless Internet and a print release station.

There Is More To YU Culture Than Meets The Beis

BY MARLON DANILEWITZ

As a proud MYP student, I find value in the traditional Beit Medrash culture. During my two-year tenure at YU, I have spent one year each learning in both the main beis medrash and the annex. The experience of learning for shiur is always accompanied by stimulating beis conversation, typically concerning a controversial article in either the Commentator or Kol Hamevaser or headline news from the outside world. The Chanukha, Purim and Yom Ha'atzmaut chagigot were also prominent traditional cultural events within the context of the YU calendar. During the spring and fall, the benches along Amsterdam Avenue become another popular YU haunt, as well as some of our fine local kosher establishments. For the more adventurous, the Stern shuttle and Beren campus can also be identified as quintessential YU cultural landmarks.

The traditional beis culture notwithstanding, another type of culture has begun to emerge within the student apartments. I have recently been lucky enough to become involved in an underworld society, consisting of YU and Stern students as well as representatives from some of the other local universities. The nature of this "counter-culture" society is not altogether unholy, illegal or immoral. Some, in fact, might even regard this way of life as enriching and enlightening. One of the first interesting soirees that I attended was an effervescent wine and cheese evening. Although parties of this sort have the reputation for being pretentious and elitist, in reality it was anything but. There has been a shift within contemporary general American society to reclaim wine from the grasps of the hoity toity. A greater percentage of the population than ever before has begun to enjoy and develop an appreciation for the beauty of wines.

The focus of our evening centered on learning and developing an appreciation for this most classic of drinks. It was our privilege that evening to be graced by the presence of a local YU wine aficionado who was able to guide us on our adventure. We traveled vicariously through the wines, beginning our journey around the globe in Napa Valley, California and concluding Down Under, in the vineyards of Australia. Along the way, we stopped to enjoy the sights of the Golan Heights, South Africa, Chile, France and Italy.

Historically, wine has played a pivotal role in human civilizations. The difficulties of finding potable drinks led wine, in light of its bac-

terial-killing alcoholic content, to become the beverage of choice in the Middle Ages. This historical reality is present within the historical context of the Talmud. Similarly, the use of wine for religious purposes, libation offerings in particular, is both a Jewish tradition and a source of much consternation in Jewish relations with non-Jews. The knowledge of this historical and religious reality heightened the experience of enjoying both mevushal and non-mevushal wines. It was particularly interesting to note how improvements in the wine-making process have allowed for the development of a robust line of mevushal wines which, despite being boiled, are internationally acclaimed even within the non-Jewish world.

The second event that I recently attended was an electrifying murder mystery night. Participants received character biographies and costume advice in advance from dedicated websites. Upon arriving at 183rd Street and Audubon Avenue I traveled back to the 1920's, where jazz music filled the air, men were capped in hats and robed in jackets, and women cloaked in long dresses. The suspense grew as we were invited into the kitchen and the mystery of Mr. Railburn's murder unfolded. Over the course of a succulent meal the plot thickened as each character in the course of the evening's conversations revealed their involvement in the affair. As an individual majoring in science who spends his hours buried under textbooks or dressed in goggles and lab coat, I can say that the experience of acting and uncovering the mystery was exhilarating and inspiring.

As someone who attempts to walk the tightrope between the Yeshiva and the University I laud the efforts of intimate events like these, in addition to the public music, art and theater productions, which flavor my experience at YU. Despite being an MYP double major and Honors student, I choose not to overlook my own cultural life at YU. In years hence, I will be able to remember more than just library, classroom and beit midrash. When I reminisce in years to come, I will be able to relive these aforementioned moments, TEIQU events, yoga sessions, book club meetings, lectures and other activities. There is a certain vibrancy that comes with living a life that is not altogether one dimensional; the dialectic of being at both a Yeshiva and a University, when both are seriously pursued, has the potential to create an exciting fusion of culture.

An Empathetic Indictment

BY MATTHEW C. WILLIAMS

Just about every summer of my childhood my parents, my three brothers and I would pack food and clothing, pile into our Volvo station wagon, and drive the thirteen hours from Atlanta, Georgia to my dad's hometown of Broken Bow, Oklahoma, heart of the Choctaw Nation. The uninitiated might imagine Broken Bow as a brownish yellow dust bowl, complete with tumbleweeds and dust tornadoes, fitting it neatly into every picture that one would have seen of Oklahoma. Such an image, though, would do one no good. While acres are still the preferred measuring unit and it's often miles until the next property, Broken Bow is located on the edges of a majestic man-made lake and at the foot of the Ozark mountain chain. It is green and lush in timber. Its white rivers, bedded with quartz, tumble down the hills and irrigate the soybean fields.

We would pull up to my dad's little sister's house near the tracks that run through the small town. My grandfather had moved his family back to Broken Bow, his birthplace, after his wife had passed away unexpectedly, leaving seven children with him, an American Indian living in Morocco. Most of my family would be there and I always looked forward to seeing them, after all Owa Chitah, the seasonal festival of the forest, was a time for family first and foremost.

Family, now that is an interesting concept. For many it connotes a certain degree of homogeneity. Sure, there might be some crazy uncle who is an Obama supporter and that cousin who married a girl, but more or less everyone shares similar values. That has never been the case for me. Occupying a space that straddles numerous worlds, be it the Choctaw Nation, the Yeshiva University community, or my mother's parents' hard line haskalah, my idea of family is one that transcends borders, languages, and blood.

In a sense, it reminds me of the Mishkan. The Torah states that Moshe wrapped the Mishkan in the skin of an animal known as the tachash. Many speculate that the

tachash is a dugong, some sort of sea cow, or perhaps even a giraffe. The one thing we know for certain is that the tachash's skin had a singularly important quality: it was multicolored. The Malbim runs with this fact, explaining that when G-d looks at the Jewish people He wants, He commands that they be multicolored, open to difference - open, as Emmanuel Levinas put it, to the Other. Judaism is not inherently an inclusive, ethnocentric religion.

Interestingly, if you look at one of the reasons supposedly behind the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, as well as, perhaps, the reason for our continuing Diaspora, is this same refusal to incorporate the Other into the unified service of G-d, or sinat chinam, baseless hatred. Unfortunately, though, its contemporary American incarnation, born in the urban and suburban ghettos of the tri-state area and incubated by long school days and cloistered curriculums, is a central ethnic identity, complete with the particular accoutrements of summer camps in the Catskills and Pesach trips to Florida. Within any walled community such as this, a fear of and insecurity with the Other is often a paramount feature.

I was attracted to YU for its unique solution to this issue: Torah u'Madda, the dialectic entanglement of two worlds in a binary paradigm that begs for its own deconstruction. As one of the very few Moroccan, Native American Jews in this world, I wanted a place of dialogue, of fluid borders, and above all, engagement, respect for, and tolerance of the Other. I came here only to find that the dialogue with the Other, the interaction between the Yeshiva and the University, is buried beneath stilled waters. Yeshiva College's curriculum maintains the fiction of these two discrete categories to assuage the timeless fear of confronting the Other. Unsurprisingly, it reflects the ethno-centricity of the community itself.

And this cloistered atmosphere is counter-productive in so many ways. For example, a number of semesters ago I was on a campaign to start an Honors Code at Yeshiva College to control the outright theft of others'

work more commonly known by the more innocuous academic moniker - plagiarism. The administration would have none of it, though. They believed that such a program would never work in a cloistered community. If only Bernie Madoff had made my point then.

The Tolerance Club itself was founded in part because of a student's careless disregard for the larger Washington Heights community. At a town hall meeting a student, without thinking, blamed our "neighbors" for breaking into his car. President Joel astutely pointed out that it could have been one of us too.

Finally, the most common reaction I get when someone finds out I am "Indian" is the Family Guy-esque ritual of pointing to the head with a single finger, connoting the dot some of those from the Sub-continent wear, and then popping the open hand against the mouth, asking which "Indian" I mean. Taken separately, each of these are fairly harmless. Yet, together they unfortunately represent a larger trend, fostered by both the cloistered lifestyle as well as the static curriculum.

As I prepare to spend my last year here I can't help but reflect on the missed opportunity that this school seems to have become. Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel originally founded the school with two key words in mind: harmony and blend. These words present an oxymoron of sorts; how can something being blended, a tumultuous and violent action, be harmonious?

The answer, I believe, perhaps might lie in the greatest interaction that the Yeshiva contains, the chavrusah. In the air between two people stir dynamic ideas, fraught with significant complications. These two argue, heated words boiling in the space between. Yet, in that tension is a harmony, you might even say a love; a love that you might even identify as familial in a strange new, yet wholly beautiful understanding of the word. Family not defined by borders, language, or blood, but by a unified respect for the tension inherent in that singular relationship, a relationship built on the tolerance of the Other.

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Volleyball Team Serves Up a Great One

A Successful Volleyball Season Reaches Its End

By PHIL BAUSK

This past season for the Yeshiva Macabees volleyball team has been one to remember. The Macs made their first ever playoff appearance, finishing with an 11-14 record, while going 2-6 in the Skyline Conference. In winning eleven games this year, the Macs won nearly three times as many games this year as it has since its inception.

The Macs played their playoff match down the road in Riverdale against conference powerhouse Mount Saint Vincent, losing 3-0 (30-16, 30-16, 30-19). Even without starting middle blocker Rafi Herskovitz (Hamilton, Ontario/Or Chaim) the Macs played extremely hard and were able to make the game a competitive one. David Kahana (Silver Spring, MD/MJHBA) led the Macs with seven kills and six digs, while Dovid Katz (Suffer, NY/MTA) helped out with four kills.

Even though they were knocked out in the first round, the Macs' season was a resounding success. By winning four of their last six games, they were able to eclipse the ten-win mark and make this season even more remarkable. However, it was in a losing effort

that the Macabees truly showed how much they improved over the course of the year, and how hard they tried to change the image of their squad.

"Last year it was mostly just guys joking around and having fun," said Libero Nachum Huscalovici (Montreal, Canada/Hebrew Academy). "This year there is a certain focus and determination that I hadn't seen at any point last year. I am really impressed with what we accomplished by the end of the season."

Vassar College, which was ranked number one in the NECVA conference at the start of the season, came to the Max Stern Athletic center to play the Yeshiva Macs. In the first game Vassar displayed its superiority by winning 30-14. The next two games are what epitomized the Macabees' season. They held the lead for most of the second game, ultimately falling 30-26. In the third game, however, the Macs fought back and forth with Vassar and won by a score of 30-28. This was an extremely impressive feat for the Macs and was a perfect exclamation point on a historic season. Senior setter Joseph Bajtner (Skokie, IL/Ida Crown Jewish Academy) described their efforts,

"Guys were diving for balls left and right and making a play on balls I didn't think they could normally get to."

One of the Macabees was even recognized for his season-long outstanding efforts. Junior David Kahana was voted second-team All-Conference as an outside hitter. Kahana, who won Player of the Week honors twice this season, finished the year with Macs records in numerous categories. With 281 kills, a .220 hitting percentage, 39 serving aces, and 197 digs, Kahana left his mark on his team's impressive season. Kahana looks forward to his senior season as a Macabee: "As well as we played this year, with the guys I know coming back, we can be even better next year and perhaps get out of the first round of the playoffs."

Next year's team returns players such as Kahana, Bajtner, Herskovits, and junior Zanvy Grauman (Silver Spring, MD/Berman Hebrew), who also had a phenomenal first season. As they move forward, the Macs will put in countless hours of practice in the offseason, hoping to reproduce what they accomplished this year and breaking even more records next season.

Shift in Relations

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same kind of formalized way. The hallmark of modern dating is that the male and female choose to do it by themselves. They choose their partners themselves and evaluate them and don't have their parents do it for them. I don't think that that has changed. The subjects they talk about might be different and the idea that they might be meeting for the purposes of matrimony might indicate a slide to the right. But the fact that they still run the show for themselves is a big distinction.

Thus, even as the Modern Orthodox community has changed parts of the details of its dating experience as a result of greater exposure to or focus on halachic requirements, its basic characteristics remain the same.

Others, however, argue that it is not greater emphasis on Halachah that has caused the shift; it is rather the concerted effort on the part of instructors in Israel to distance the genders that is to blame. Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, a Rosh Yeshiva in the Mazer Yeshiva Program, explained in a Kol Hamevaser interview as follows:

I do not know what implicit messages are being sent, but in some cases I know that negative attitudes are explicitly encouraged. Some young women are taught that young men see them only as sexual objects, and the very same messages are being sent to young men – that young women are dangerous sexual objects who are there to tempt them. I think that this has had detrimental

consequences and contributes significantly to the current shiddukh/dating crisis.

Sarah Weinerman, a recently married Stern grad, agrees: "I think that a major contributor to the shift is the year spent in Israel, when people who may have gone to coed schools and spent much time with people of the opposite gender spend all of their time with their own gender and hear from their teachers how that's the way things should be."

Rabbi Wieder, in that same Kol Hamevaser interview, explained that another factor in the changing attitudes of Modern Orthodox youth towards the idea of relating to the opposite gender may be the community's growing emphasis on separate education without corresponding emphasis on extra-curricular interaction:

We should consider the possibility that the rigid separation that is enforced during the prior educational stages does not allow young men and women to relate to each other as human beings when they are actively searching for a spouse. They will not know how to relate to each other or interact properly. Coeducation is not necessarily the answer to this problem – maybe part of the answer is to promote mixed activities within the context of communities committed to single-sex education.

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean of the YU Center for the Jewish Future (CJF), observed, similarly, that encouraging these interactions outside of school will help to alleviate the tensions between the genders

later on: "While there are studies that show that there are often educational benefits for students who attend single-sex schools, nevertheless they should have the opportunities...to interact with the opposite sex in a healthy environment. I think that bodes well for their future ability to date properly without being socially inept." In fact, he mentioned, a major part of the future goals of the CJF's new YUConnects dating service program is to create more venues for students to interact and confront issues of social awkwardness: "The whole idea behind YUConnects is not just to create more opportunities for people to meet; it is to begin to create means through which our students can start reflecting on these issues." In the meantime, however, until such changes are made and take root in the community, students are liable to feel uncomfortable around each other and avoid interaction.

Another approach maintains that the Orthodox community as a whole has become much more ideologically divided than it used to be, creating problems for youth looking for spouses. "Small differences have become major," said Rabbi Blau. "There's a much greater stress on ideological positions. People at a very relatively young age are somehow asked to define themselves: 'Am I 'yeshivish,' 'modern,' 'modern tending right,' 'charedi lite,' etc?' – as if everyone has to belong to a camp." And, once they have defined themselves hashkafically, they are unwilling to compromise on their principles. "How can a couple

Baseball Team Season Recap

Strong Finish Gives Hope For Next Year

By JOSHUA PRANSKY

decisively.

Our Yeshiva Macabees baseball team has just finished the best season of its short four-year existence. With a 4-19 record, the Macs surpassed the school's all-time win total on the diamond. Due to their schedule, it's tough to follow the Macs in-season; now that it's over, though, it's time to catch you up on all of the action.

The first half of the season featured a top-heavy schedule. The Macabees faced the top three teams in the conference, and did not defeat any of them. However games against powerhouses like Farmingdale State, with small margin for error, turned out to help the team put their best foot forward later in the season.

The season's most exciting day was Yeshiva's 3-2 win over CCNY. Benjamin Susswein set a Yeshiva record with eleven strikeouts in eight innings. With the Macs clinging to a one-run lead, Zachary Wiener took the mound in the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded. After working the batter into a full count, he caught a low line drive, turned and threw to first for a double play and Yeshiva's first win of the season. Max Gornish, Yeshiva's starting shortstop, who has been on the field for all of Yeshiva's wins in the past three years, confirmed that this was the most thrilling of Yeshiva's wins.

Following the CCNY game Yeshiva went through a patch of strong games but tough losses. A rough 7-4 loss to Mount Saint Mary's was followed by a pair of thrilling defeats to Mount Saint Vincent, last season's championship challengers. Other hard losses included an 8-6 loss to Purchase College and a 12-9 defeat to Polytechnic. Despite the final results, the consistent strong play displayed by the team would eventually come through.

After a two week hiatus, the Macs returned to play a double-header. In the first game the rust from the lay-off was evident, but the nightcap saw the Macs flaunt their true colors. Coupled with some great pitching from Benjamin Susswein, the Macs bats came alive and pounded the Saint Joseph's (Brooklyn) pitching staff to the tune of twelve runs. With good defense and solid relief pitching, the Macs never let go of the lead and won

back on the field at Keyspan Park, the Mets' Single-A stadium, for a game versus Brooklyn Polytechnic. The bats were spraying balls all over the large, professionally styled outfield and the Macs were putting runs on the board, but Poly didn't roll over and take it, scoring a bunch of runs of their own. It took a tremendous offensive effort to put the Macs ahead for the win by a score of 19 – 15.

The next week saw the Macs matched up against a former rival, CUNY powerhouse John Jay College. The teams came out for a double-header and game one did not look good, with John Jay blowing Yeshiva out of the water. Despite putting out the same team for the second game, however, John Jay could not pull off a second win and the Macs won their second late-inning thriller. Down by two runs with three outs to play, the Macs used every way possible to get on base and put up three runs to win the game. In addition to the clutch hitters, the game's star was Howie Avner, who held John Jay to four runs in his second complete game of the season.

Yeshiva's improving form this season was a due to the melding together of veteran and rookie players. Some individual highlights include: Zach Wiener, David Kesselman, and Howard Avner pitched two complete games each; Amitai Schwartz tied for the conference lead in thrown-out base runners; Max Gornish hit .341 over 23 games with nine doubles, two triples, one home run and 23 runs batted in; Ben Susswein and Ben Cooper each got weekly honors by the Skyline Conference; and Susswein and Seth Fein set the school record for wins (two) and stolen bases (17) respectively.

While this year's team set the school record for wins in a season, the team has long believed that more is possible. The new coaching staff (Coach Kahn and Coach Mauzy) has brought a winning mentality to the program, and the team will not be satisfied until achieving a serious run into the playoffs. This year's team is arguably the most talented and skilled group that the school has ever seen and almost every player will return for next season, making play-off contention a serious possibility.

get married [or even start dating] if they can't agree where they're going to send their children to yeshivah when they have them?" Rabbi Blau asked rhetorically.

Still a different approach points to broader society and its perceived moral degeneration as explanation for the changes in attitudes among Modern Orthodox youth. Rabbi Blau elaborated:

The fact that American society is much more open to sexual, physical contact and sexual expression has made it more difficult for someone who is Orthodox to simultaneously

identify with that society. There were people opposed to going to movies when I was a teenager, but it's difficult to say that that was based on the fact there was so much nudity and sexual promiscuity in the movies, because there wasn't.

As a result, Rabbi Blau observed, it is not surprising that the perceived acceptability of socializing with members of the opposite gender among today's students has changed significantly. (Indeed, one might hypothesize that the reason educators

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Dust Mites: Revisiting 1969

By TZVI TWERSKY

As a history major, it is understandable that I am enamored with the past. The way I have been conditioned to see life, anything and everything can be taken from you at a moment's notice – but not your memories. Certainly old age and disease can dull or damage your recall ability, but they're still there—etched into your grey matter and Father Time's eternal quilt. As time passes, though, new memories become old, and old memories vanish into forgotten wisps of time.

I like to think that I understand the frailty of time and memory. It was with that in mind that I undertook this exhausting yet necessary dip into the pool of Yeshiva University's archives, in the hope of retrieving memories long forgotten. With that cliché yet heartfelt introduction out of the way, I introduce to you some of the key athletes who made up the 1969 Y.U. athletic teams. Let's blow some of the dust off these nostalgic memories in honor of their fortieth anniversary. As always, we move forward, while looking back.

My father is very fond of saying: "There is nothing new under the sun." When it comes to Yeshiva University, I won't argue with the Old Testament's wisdom. In 1969, parallel to the present, students complained about the course offerings, the danger of living in Washington Heights and the non-existent athletic facilities. Many of the 1968-69 Commentator articles are dedicated to these very issues. It's funny, looking back now, seeing how time—and complaints—have not affected this grand institution.

The more I look at the history, the more similarities I see between 1969 and 2009. They had Vietnam; we have Iraq. They had Richard Nixon; we have Barack Obama. They had the Summer of Love; we have, well, we'll see about this one. My point being, our experiences don't diverge that much from their experiences.

What I really want to focus on though is Yeshiva University athletics. Nineteen sixty-nine was among the best year for the varsity teams in Yeshiva's history. They had a solid hoops team (Ray Aboff and Dave Hershkovits captained); the first grappling team to finish with a winning record (Arnie Weiss and Marty

Twersky, my father, captained); a successful fencing team (Norm Seidenfeld and Lazar Fruchter, my cousin, captained); and a competitive tennis team (Joseph Eichenbaum captained, my cousin Neil Twersky played). I couldn't find room or time to cover all of the '69 teams—I can barely do that for our current teams—but I was able to reach out to a few basketball players. The rest of this story is history. Enjoy.

For many of us, college is all about books and broadband internet. For some, it's the other things that make college memorable. Stuart Poloner, a 1971 graduate, the leading scorer on the '69 team and a man who turned down training camp invites from multiple NBA teams, says that playing on the team "significantly affected his college experience." He continued: "Playing basketball and participating in sports was extremely satisfying. I enjoyed the competition and the camaraderie. Playing for Y.U., though at times challenging, gave me great satisfaction. Yes, playing basketball significantly enhanced my college experience."

Dave Hershkovits, the then-captain and starting point guard on the '69 Mites and now editor and publisher of Paper Magazine, echoed similar sentiments. "Some of our better players found it hard to play ball, with studying taking up so much time. Anyway, playing under [Red] Sarachek, as great as he was, he was not one of those feel-good type of guys. He was always calling you names and trying to get the most out of you in that way, but at the same time he was very hemische. Playing basketball for him was a huge part of my college experience. It created a whole different camaraderie for me and my teammates, and you just get tight with another group of friends. You have like a whole separate life. And in that way it was like it would be at any other college."

Even for those who didn't play on a varsity team, the Mites served a key role on campus. As a caption in the 1969 yearbook reads: "You walk into the gym and you're in a whole different world. The lights reflect on the polished hardwood floor. The mood is tense; the game is about to begin. The noisy camaraderie in the stands turns into electric silence...The opening tap...Let's go

Yeshiva...Let's go Yeshiva...These are our friends out there; they sat next to us in Art 1...They're not the jocks you find on other campuses. They are an extension of ourselves. They play for us and we cheer for them and we are all one—Yeshiva."

Most other colleges would have athletic venues and facilities on campus to support their athletes, but that was not the case at Y.U. in 1969. Hershkovits, a man who grew up playing ball on the streets of Brighton Beach and more recently ran for Mayor of New York City, started off our conversation by reminiscing about the Mites' old playing facilities. "Power Memorial Gym, which was Lew Alcindor's court, was our home court. In my mind that was a big thing, especially because they had a big crucifix hanging in there."

"Our problem was that we did not have a home court. We traveled all over the city...for home games," an animated Poloner agreed. The yearbook complements both Hershkovits's and Poloner's recollections. "This morning they were in class; last night they traveled forty-five minutes to practice. Now they're out there, sweating and bleeding and fighting and cursing." The forty-year-old text continues: "[The Team has] no training, no practice, no facilities...but, most important, no lack of guts."

It takes an abundance of "guts"—and great coaching—to negate a lack of training, and the Mites, led by Ray Aboff, Harold Perl, Richard Salit, Michael Koenig, Poloner and Hershkovits, must have had bushels full, finishing the 1969 season with a 9 and 12 record—including 5 and 2 in the Knickerbocker Conference. As the yearbook puts it: "[The phrase] 'Wait till next year!'...conjoined with 'If only,' effectively sums up the past athletic year."

Forty years later and it's like no time has passed at all. The same words, "If only," ring almost too true to Yeshiva University's fans' ears. If nothing else, the class of 2009 shall all meet again in forty years and see if this faithful adage still bears a kernel of truth. If it does, I will take great comfort in knowing that our and our predecessors' impact has withstood the test of time—even if it means that our beloved Macs are still underachieving.

Shift in Relations

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in Israel have begun emphasizing the importance of gender separation in their perception of the deleterious effects secular society's sexual openness has had on Modern Orthodox youth.)

Finally, Rabbi Blau points to the changing role of women in society as an explanation for the shift in gender relations over time. "Women are playing a much more active professional role in society, which introduces complication in terms of Jewish life in general, but has particular implications in terms of the expected roles of husband and wife in marriage." Without a model with which to work, young men are left

confused about how to relate to their female peers whose professional goals may complicate their choices of when and whom to marry.

All of these factors appear to combine in the minds of young men and women into one big mess. Students have little direction or experience in how to navigate all of the new societal constructs they encounter. The influence of their time in Israel only serves to further confuse their conceptions of themselves and of the opposite gender. Feeling pressure from every direction, these students have to figure out for themselves how to relate to one another, resulting in a shift in gender relations on both a communal and

personal level, often to the right. Perhaps with time and experience, and as the number of parents who are graduates of Israeli yeshivot increases, the community will be able to begin to formulate proper responses to the seeming imbalances that exist today. Until that time, however, much of the confusing realms of shidduchim and gender relations will be left in the hands of the younger generation, for better or for worse, to independently determine their own attitudes to these critical areas of social interaction.

6 Years In: Thoughts On Joel

continued from front page

An early change that President Joel made, though minor, reflects the new culture he aimed to bring to Yeshiva. Struck that the doors to buildings said either "Enter Only" or "Exit Only," he ordered that all read "Welcome To Yeshiva University," signifying a friendlier attitude.

Yet while his other "first moves" were also laden with symbolism, intended to shake up a more business-oriented Yeshiva culture, they were far more rooted in what he viewed as the major problems afflicting Yeshiva at the time.

Two of the most significant changes President Joel made were in personnel: adding Dr. Hillel Davis as Vice President of University Life, and restructuring the role of Dr. Sheldon Socol, then-Vice President for Business Affairs, Chief Financial Officer and head of various departments. In practice, Socol was demoted, stripped of his position as chief financial officer as well as several other departments.

While YU announced Dr. Davis' hire a few weeks before Dr. Socol's demotion, the restructuring of Socol's position jolted Yeshiva's institutional environment far more sharply.

Before President Joel restructured his role, Dr. Socol ran virtually every aspect of the Yeshiva's day-to-day administration, and notoriously kept a tight fist clenched over Yeshiva's purse strings. Faculty and students chafed at what they viewed as decisions made for business rather than educational considerations. Jewish community leaders expressed concern over his lack of sensitivity for the role Yeshiva played in the broader Jewish community, fingering him as one of the figures who pushed to shutter both the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA).

But despite the criticism, his fierce sense of financial responsibility led several observers to praise Dr. Socol for his business acumen, and one unnamed board member at the time even called him a "financial genius" for artfully guiding Yeshiva's finances through the financial crises in the 1970's. Financial wizardry notwithstanding, his removal by President Joel in September 2003 was hailed by most students and officials as an opportunity for further investment Yeshiva, and a chance to change the overall culture.

The move dispersed much of Dr. Socol's responsibilities among several different administrators, most prominently Dr. Davis. By adding Dr. Davis and demoting Dr. Socol—thereby investing additional authority with a broader range of officials—Joel reorganized not only the administration, but reordered the educational perspective and fiscal approach of the university as well.

Dr. Davis, a Yeshiva alumnus and close friend of Joel's, had long worked as an organizational psychologist. Without commenting on any individuals, Dr. Davis pointed to a structural problem that had existed at Yeshiva: "literally everything ran

through Dr. Socol's office," he explained. Moreover, as the Vice President for Business Affairs Socol was inclined towards the business perspective, often viewing decisions solely through a financial prism.

Dr. Davis' appointment also marked the first time a vice president was specifically tasked with overseeing the student experience. "Who at the table was looking out for student life?" said Dr. Davis.

Indeed, Dr. Davis' first months at YU were spent sorting out the day-to-day experience of Yeshiva students and faculty, identifying trouble spots and attempting to bring about cohesion and common sense to an often frustrating system. For example, one of Dr. Davis' first initiatives was granting students a reprieve from the red-flags of the Finance Office, allowing them a week-long grace period to deal with any administrative snafus once the semester began. Previously, students were prevented from settling in their dorm rooms or entering classes until their finance holds were released. "I have tried to create bridges across the chasms that have grown up in this place," said Dr. Davis. "They tend to confuse students trying to navigate the system."

THE SPIGOTS OPEN

Of the most immediately noticeable changes at Yeshiva was the very visible expenditures of money that the new President began spending during his first year in office. In quick succession, the Center for the Jewish Future was opened and funded, the empty fifth floor of Belfer Hall was renovated and divided up into new faculty offices, and over 70 new faculty members were hired, including a new Dean of Yeshiva College and Dr. Hillel Davis. As President Joel once quipped to Roshei Yeshiva, "Dr. Lamm raised the endowment and I plan on spending it."

Yet President Joel is quick to mention that he did not "spend for spending's sake" and that the expenditures were carefully targeted to "bring the YU product up to its full potential." Indeed, administrative officials note that the spending was part of a larger effort to overhaul the culture and attitude of the entire university. With a new focus on the services provided to students, Yeshiva increased staff and faculty as well as working towards creating a flexible and responsible bureaucracy. According to the American Association of University Professors, Yeshiva's faculty today boast the tenth-highest average salary for full professors among all undergraduate universities.

The newfound spending and the availability of funds for students and faculty alike represented a noted departure from the previous administration. Student groups and faculty could and did find financial support for a wide range of new activities. Visible signs of President Joel's initiatives began to crop up on campus: huge upgrades in the classroom technology were made throughout YU, a new building was planned and shep-

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Joel In Six Years

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herded through the bureaucratic maze with relative speed, and even the planning of a student lounge in the Gottesman Library was discussed.

The new levels of spending had other benefits as well, solving what may have otherwise become political problems for the new President. Updating facilities and raising salaries was a good way to mollify a suspicious faculty. Rabbi Blau, Mashgiach Ruchani of RIETS, noted that President Joel created a "sense of equity" in the pay scale. Inheriting a byzantine system of compensation rewarding some Roshei Yeshiva based on several endowments established for various kollelim and chairs, President Joel sought to equalize the system and reward the religious faculty for their length of tenure and degree of responsibility.

Yet the influx of funds also worked to create a free-wheeling atmosphere on campus. An off-heard refrain on campus was that the only department to suffer under President Joel's tenure was food services, since so many students were getting so many of their meals from the free food doled out by the pie-full at department meetings, student activity meetings, and CJF events.

A number of current and past students felt that the frills of easy money led to a sense of entitlement on campus – and that this attitude was hit hard by the latest economic hardships and budget cutbacks. Amongst the earliest things to go was YUNite, a yearly event where roshei yeshiva, administration officials, and students joined for a weekend retreat fraught with free giveaways, lavish food, and high-profile events. Smaller fringe benefits soon disappeared as well, examples including meal food at student events and even printer paper at the Writing Center.

Yet despite recent cutbacks, many of the core improvements made to Yeshiva over the past six years have remained intact. All additional tenure or tenure-track faculty remain, the Career Development Center and Office of Student Affairs still retain full and active staff, and new services – like mental health counseling, academic advisement, sganai mashgichim, and the writing center – have remained fully functional.

REACHING OUT

One of President Joel's earliest stated goals was to turn both the institution and its students into tools to reach out to the larger North American Jewish community and influence it on a broader plane. In both action and rhetoric, the new President relentlessly sought out these goals. Phrases like "lay and klei kodesh" and "enable and ennoble" peppered President Joel's speeches from the start.

Seeking to inspire Yeshiva's students to do more than just attain a degree, President Joel dared them to be "bold enough to risk taking some responsibility for Knesset yisrael." The role of Yeshiva, as the President envisioned it, was to influence the "fabric of Modern Orthodoxy by acting as a leadership incubator of lay leaders and klei kodesh."

Practically, President Joel galvanized the newly formed Center for Jewish Future to mobilize Yeshiva's institutional resources in order to pull communities closer into Yeshiva's orbit. This included sending Roshei Yeshiva and top-flight professors to far-flung communities for weekends as scholars-in-residence as well as visiting Modern Orthodox communities personally to speak on behalf of YU.

To spur the new activism forwards, President Joel made the CJF one of his highest priorities, fueling it with a large injection of funds and staffing it with new additions to Yeshiva, including Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter and Rabbi Kenneth Brander.

Part of the new communal outreach was

designed to act as a boost to recruiting. "We have worked to build bridges with the NCSY and JSU communities as well as other organizations that could look to us as the natural next steps for students that they nurture and provide for," said President Joel. Towards this end, the new President, together with Dr. Davis, reached out to Israel programs, Yeshiva day schools, and high school programs to seek out new recruits for incoming classes.

Yet, in a larger sense, the outreach was a manifestation of President Joel's vision for the role of Yeshiva University. Believing Torah u-Madda to include both a local and national communal responsibility, Joel supported efforts to enhance the Shabbat experience at Yeshiva. The new Shenk Shabbat minyan, ciruv on the Beren campus and enhanced programming on Shabbat at the Wilf campus were all student initiatives, but were ideas that found traction due to the change in cultural attitude under Joel's tenure. Thinking more broadly, President Joel also supported humanity mission to Central America, the founding of a Medical Ethics Society, and Tanach Yomei Iyuv, positioning Yeshiva as a center for both intellectual and activist energies.

JOEL: THE MAN

In some ways, President Joel maintained that he has been training for the job his entire life. As a young college student he was heavily involved Torah Leadership Seminars, a program that took young students abroad to work in Jewish communities. As a student at MTA and later as the Associate Dean of Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School, as well as a parent of YU students, President Joel explained that he saw the inner workings of Yeshiva from different perspectives, gaining exposure to its structure and personalities. Such experiences allowed the President to say that, coming into the job, "I knew YU better than any of my predecessors."

Later, as the head of Hillel for many years, he developed the speaking abilities and fundraising skills essential to the role of the Presidency. With dozens of campuses and thousands of students, Joel needed to crisscross the country and raise an unending flow of funds for his institution. At the time, President Joel remained focus on his job, saying "I did not aspire to be the President of YU," though he quickly added that he "always thought the job was prestigious."

Once he came to Yeshiva, he brought those skills and talents with him. Chancellor Norman Lamm remarked to The Commentator that he was amazed at President Joel's dynamic energy and praised his speaking abilities. Joel's universally acknowledged personal charisma helped energize the culture and his aspirational vision of Modern Orthodoxy – long having been nurtured during his nearly lifelong work for the Jewish community – found a large outlet at YU.

Indeed, the President expressed fondness for Don Quixote's quote that "Madness is seeing the world as it is instead of how it should be." While importing his personal vision to Yeshiva, President Joel sought to implement it on a broader stage.

The literary source is an apt analogy for the President's tenure, for the sweeping romantic visionary in him is often easy to see. In any of the many speeches and talks President Joel gives with dizzying frequency, the formula is often similar: a few, self-deprecating jokes, followed by a short talk about the subject at hand, pivoting from there into grandiloquence about the mission of Yeshiva and the capacity of student potential, before ending with an apocryphal anecdote. Towards the end of speeches, as he speaks about his vision for the university and its students, President Joel's voice often drops to a lower level and transitions into a fervently earnest tone. Though the words and phrases are

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Listening to and Learning from Students

BY JULIAN HOROWITZ

Looking back at final Commentator issues of years past, one comes across sentimental but highly critical opinion pieces, authored by those whose imminent exit from undergraduate life gives them the cover to say what they really feel without fear of undesirable retribution or uncomfortable relationships. My remaining years at YU don't give me the benefit of this "cover," but I'll try to speak with the same level of candor.

In a sense, working at the Commy was tantamount to taking an extra class: I had to meet deadlines (which, as with any good YC course, could be bent and stretched to extremes), do assignments (including the unique perk of being able to turn the tables and "grade" pieces submitted by professors), and consistently BS a couple of sentences worth of ideas into papers of passable length. My regular readers (if I flatter myself into believing that I have regular readers) will also have noticed that, much like my college papers, my articles are written around cynical jokes (or what George Bernard Shaw would have called "accurate observations"). Most importantly, I try to have fun.

My only regrets are the articles I didn't have a chance to write: the irrelevance of science labs (e.g. biology lab, where we spend upwards of three and a half hours proving that microscopes allows us to see small things bigger, or physics lab, where we repeatedly drop balls into buckets, thus painstakingly proving, with the assistance of advanced computing, that the law of gravity continues to operate); the ridiculousness of Mathematics recitations (do any other departments have mandatory "homework periods" which eat away at students' time and credit limits?); the unspoken rule seemingly adhered to by many professors and administrators that no fewer than three emails must be sent before a student is to expect a response; my contin-

ued amazement as to how so many men in the Joel administration continue to defy Jewish male-pattern baldness; my disappointment with student leadership; and my even greater disappointment with the selection process for said leadership.

What I'd like to write about here, however, is something much more fundamental than a few small quibbles and complaints; in fact, it is the sum total of all quibbles and complaints that YU students have ever had. During my first semester at YU, when I was running off my laundry list of complaints about YU to a friend, he pointed out that the issues I was bringing up were all minor ones, not worthy of causing such a fuss about. It then dawned upon me that this was exactly the problem: YU doesn't have any huge ideological issues which make it totally incompatible with my life or hashkafa (philosophy). Except for one: An ideology of letting the little problems go unfixed. When all these little problems add up they can sometimes make life here, well, unpleasant. The Devil's in the details.

I'll give one example of this which I think gets to the root of the problem. At last semester's town hall meeting, I nervously requested that the university disclose some of the information gathered from the thousands of course evaluations filled out by students each year. Aren't we entitled to know which professors are liked and disliked, without having to rely on semi-reliable lunchroom banter (where conventional wisdom is dictated by those who possess the loudest voices) and RateMyProfessor.com (which usually serves as nothing more than a venting-ground for students who received bad grades)? The President, caught up in the spirit of transparency, immediately endorsed my idea, directing the Provost to follow up on this seemingly helpful initiative. That was the last I heard of it. I've since sent an email reminder to the Provost's office (cc'ed to the chair-

person of the Student Life Committee and to the Office of University Life for good measure) and personally left a message with the Provost's secretary, but it's been six months and I have yet to receive a response.

All this is not to say that the fault lies with any of the above administrators: the President's office is certainly not supposed to deal with smaller-scale requests such as mine, the Provost (whom, if I recall correctly, was absent from that particular town-hall meeting) probably doesn't have time to read emails from every Joe Undergrad who thinks he can armchair administrate a full-size university, and University Life doesn't really have anything to do with this at all. No brick walls were placed in front of me, but I hit one nonetheless. Town hall meetings, cute and inspiring as they are, are simply not the way to get things done. What we need is serious student representation on serious administrative levels.

One group that has learned this lesson is the Honors Program. After last summer's series of unfortunate events, student trust in the program and the college ebbed to an all-time low. In forming a student-elected Honors Student Board (some of whom would serve as representatives on the faculty honors and director search committees), the college ensured that students would at least be present while decisions were made, if not participating in the decisions themselves. This past year, I had the honor of serving as one of these Honors student representatives, and even if my ideas – usually gathered by surveying my "constituents" – weren't always adopted, simply having the student point-of-view represented, as well as giving students a direct outlet to higher-level administration, was highly effective. In a recent email to the honors program, Dean David Srolowitz described this past year as the Honors Program's "most successful year to-date."

There have been other efforts to foster student participation in the decision-making process. The champions of student interest at Yeshiva are the members of the Student Life Committee, which has grown nicely during my tenure here. Unfortunately, they tend to serve in advisory (read: complaining) roles rather than in actively participatory ones. I also seem to remember the Provost convening some sort of student academic advisory committee, but the selection process was a bit opaque – standards for acceptance were never specified, and this author never even received a proper letter of rejection (this being the second time in one semester that the Provost's office failed to acknowledge my existence) – and I'm not really sure what they've done. Finally, my first semester on campus saw some activity from the Student Senate, which in its heyday dealt with issues of academic integrity and even oversaw the creation of the YC Writing Center. Alas, it has since gone defunct.

What I have learned most from my experiences is that joint student-faculty participation in the governance of day-to-day university affairs is the only way to make sure that any little things that come up get dealt with in a timely fashion; a committee that doesn't include those directly affected by any issues or inconveniences simply won't be as alacritous. And if I can engage in a bit of oversimplified social commentary, I think I can explain why we need this now more than ever: in the era of Web 2.0 and Wikipedia, user-generated and open-source content are rapidly becoming the norm. This means that whenever we see something wrong, we can instantaneously fix it. Google has made a business out of doing exactly what people want as much as possible, and they solicit feedback for every new feature they produce. The nature of the bureaucratic beast at YU precludes this type of accelerated evolution – the curriculum review has been

going strong for three years – but letting students in will make us feel that our needs are being taken care of and that, more importantly, that our needs get taken care of.

Some students like to compare their status at Yeshiva to those of customers, stockholders, or taxpayers. Thinking in these terms can be destructive at worst and unhealthy at best; I prefer to think of myself in a partnership with the university, working together towards a set of common goals. But at the same time, I think the university would do best not to forget that students' parents pay in tuition just under what the average American earns in a year, and that the students of today are the donors of tomorrow. Quality of life and student satisfaction must be the sine qua non of our college experience; student participation is the best way to ensure this.

Much of what I have written here rings of a term I have heard repeatedly applied to the Jewish community in general and to the YU student body in particular: entitlement. Since I find this assessment to be mostly correct, it is not the use of this term that bothers me, but its misuse. The students that YU attracts – and will continue to attract, like it or not – come with a sense of entitlement, but this can no longer serve as an excuse for not listening to them. In fact, students may be able bring information and viewpoints to the table which simply aren't accessible to professors, whose many years inside the walls of the library can leave them temporarily blind.

If our university ever hopes to reap the benefits of "umitalmidai yoter mikulam" (from my students, I have learned the most), it must first respect them enough to listen.

Julian Horowitz served as Opinions Editor for the 2008-2009 Commentator

Joel: Six Years Of Change

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often familiar, the authenticity accompanying each flight of rhetoric rarely fails to move many in every crowd. And his

Yet, unlike all the presidents that preceded him, President Joel is not a rabbi, and it is readily apparent that he is pointedly cognizant of the fact. When answering questions regarding religious questions he regularly precedes his answers with the disclaimer that he's answering "as a layman, not a rabbi."

In other venues, President Joel has stressed that he does not make halachic decisions, and turns to Rabbi Lamm as the posek (decisor) for the institution. At the same time, he doesn't think that every decision is a halachic one. For example, during the beginning of his tenure, the issue of teaching the New Testament and other Christian texts in the classroom came to the fore. While some Roshei Yeshiva and students felt it was inappropriate for Yeshiva's cur-

riculum, President Joel felt the issue was not a halachik one. "We cannot be afraid of ideas, even the ones we disagree with," he said at the time, and, with that, ended public speculation.

Though during the search for a President, some felt that his lack of rabbinic training disqualified him from being a viable candidate as President, most generally agree that it has not impeded his Presidency.

Rabbi Blau noted that in some ways it has helped his administration. Unlike previous presidents, President Joel can avoid philosophic and halachik debates that often bogged down his predecessors. Indeed, it is notable that his tenure has been marked by a lack of major fights or scuffles with Roshei Yeshiva.

Overall, President Joel has an high approval rating amongst students, with approximately 35% of over 140 respondents strongly approving his tenure and 87% either strongly or somewhat approving of

his six year tenure (see "Student Pulse," page 4). When asked about his handling of the current financial crisis and his work – together with Dr. Davis – in improving life on campus, the approval rating hovers above 75%.

FINANCIAL CRISIS

Once the financial crisis hit in 2008, a shift in culture was readily apparent. Funding dried up for imminent projects, student activity funding was slashed, and budgets were cut in virtually all departments. YUNite was canceled, many adjunct professors were not rehired for next year, and nearly 100 staff members were let go or bought out in February.

To be sure, the President recognizes that YU faces tougher times. In the wake of the Madoff scandal and other endowment losses, Joel has been speaking frequently about the need to assess priorities and cut back on frills. "We've developed strategic plans as guides for the

schools," he said. "Now we'll have to look more closely at fiscal priorities." The President said he understands that the slog will now be tougher. "The plan was to spend the first five to six years building the product," Joel said, while the next five years would focus on improving Yeshiva's reputation. President Joel expressed disappointment that he didn't have an extra year or two to heavily invest in improving the quality, but sounded more concerned that the financial crisis would damage the YU brand and clientele. While he felt Yeshiva's academic caliber could compete with Ivy League schools, he was less convinced people would pay high tuition costs in difficult financial times.

What is clear to many observers is that Yeshiva's problems will no longer be solved by throwing money at them. Issues of building space, faculty shortfalls, or an unhappy faculty will require more diplomatic and creative mediation than ever before.

The tighter budget is certainly being felt across academic and extracurricular life. The proposed new student lounge was scrapped, printing is no longer a free option in the Writing Center, and slimmer course offerings for the fall semester are all evidence of an institution in retraction, at least in some spheres.

Such cutbacks may hurt future enrollment as Modern Orthodox families across the United States feel the crimp in their own family budgets. Though a tuition freeze will prevent anxieties from rising higher, the difficult burden of tuition will undoubtedly become more difficult in the coming years. President Joel is relying on the community relationships he has fostered in the last six years to help keep enrollment from sliding and YU from struggling. "The financial meltdown makes everyone doubt, [but] we can show how responsible we are by going forward in a business-like manner while still advancing our mission," he hoped.