



The COMMENTATOR

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Renovations of Gottesman Library Around the Corner

By Andy Joshowitz

Yeshiva University has big plans in store for the Gottesman Library on Wilf Campus. Back in early 2012, the University embarked on a plan to renovate the aging library. The project is being spearheaded by Jeffrey Rosengarten, Yeshiva University's Vice President for Administrative Services, along with Dean of Libraries, Pearl Berger. Soon after the decision was made to renovate the library, Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd., a library consulting firm, was hired to study the library and evaluate the changes



that would be necessary to better serve our students and faculty. Both Rosengarten and Berger were confident in hiring the firm. According to Rosengarten, "they know what's going on in academic libraries around the world. They come with an area of expertise and ask the questions

necessary to see what will be most effective." The firm worked with the University to survey its community, through a number of "focus groups," of both students and faculty, who helped to determine what the library's users wanted. Af-

ter this process, it became glaringly clear that the library needed a true renaissance and modernization. In June of 2012, Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd. presented the university with the results of the study and planning commenced. Dean Berger stresses that, bottom line, "what-

ever we decided has been based on the response we received from members of both the faculty and student body."

For a long time, libraries were the silent homes of books. Like many of its contemporaries, the Gottesman Library, which was built in 1969, was fashioned in the same way, and now houses over 600,000 physical volumes. Today, in contrast to how they were historically constructed, libraries are not built merely to house collections. No longer do libraries consist solely of endless rows of books. "Now," says Berger, "libraries consist of both quiet as well as active and lively spaces." A library is meant to facilitate learning both independently and interactively. The entire purpose of a library has evolved

see [Library Renovation](#), p.5

Possible Changes to Morning Programs Coming

By Darren May

A RIETS Rosh Yeshiva once said, "YU is the last bastion of sanity." One can guess that this rabbi did not have the pleasure of being premed at YU. The YU dual curriculum is a challenging system to navigate. Although many students flock to YU specifically in order to experience the meshing of Torah and secular studies that YU offers, no one would claim that the experience is a relaxing one. In order to be successful in both Torah and secular studies it takes a great amount of time, effort and dedication. Therefore, some have suggested that there should be certain changes to the YU 's morning programs in order to reward students who are committed to both the Torah and secular aspects of the institution. These proposed changes, if passed, could have radical ramifications for the students who are yet to arrive at our university.

Currently, if a person is in IBC and takes the correct classes he is able to earn an AA, an associates of the arts degree. This type of degree is considered far less substantial than a BA (Bachelor of Arts) or a BS (Bachelors of Science). Therefore, the university staff has proposed giving students who take four years of IBC classes a BA in Jewish Studies. "YU students should be rewarded for the hard work that they put into their morning programs," says Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS. "Our students are learning a great deal of additional Jewish studies outside of their official major, and we feel that they should get recognized for that."

There has also been talk of giving students who are in the MYP (Mazer School of Talmudic Studies) for four years a BA. When Daniel Yahav, a MYP student, was told about the possible change to the MYP morning program he was ecstatic. "There is so much incredible learning that is happening in the mornings in MYP.

To get official recognition for the time and effort that we put in every day would be fantastic." Additionally, the idea has been proposed to give students who are in IBC a masters degree in Jewish studies, in addition to the degree that they receive in their secular studies. This degree, like the other degrees that have been proposed, would be predicated on staying in YU for a full four years.

Lastly, there has been talk of making davening part of the official IBC schedule. "The university cannot mandate prayer, since it is a secular institution," Rabbi Penner said, "but we can make it part of the schedule." The rabbis on the YU faculty have said that they hope that making davening part of the IBC schedule will encourage more of the IBC students to consistently pray in the morning. Some students have expressed that they think this is a bad idea, claiming that having davening in the IBC schedule will cause students to dislike the IBC program, and possibly cause people to enroll in other morning programs. It is worthwhile to note that there is a similar inclusion of davening as of present in the Mechinah morning program, so including davening in the IBC morning program would not be without precedent.

Rabbi Penner said, "All these ideas are not finalized, but we will know more in December when the various faculty members take a vote on the issue." Whether or not any of these changes come to fruition, it is important to note that the faculty recognizes that there is a great amount of effort and work that each students puts into their respective morning program, and recognition for such work is therefore warranted. Only time will tell what the YU morning program will look like in the coming year, but whatever happens may have a substantial effect on the student body for years to come.



NEWS BRIEFS

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

MORNING "MARRIED BUS" TRANSPORTATION ELIMINATED

The YU transportation system paired its introduction of the shuttle app with a simultaneous cutback in services. In previous years, YU has provided free downtown transportation for Stern and GPATS (Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Study) students who live in Washington Heights. Every morning, a yellow school bus would ferry students from the corner of 186th and Amsterdam to Stern College's Stanton Hall. Though the bus was funded by GPATS, the bus's ridership regularly consisted of a mix over fifty GPATS students and Stern undergraduates. Last semester, YU threatened to downsize the so-called "married bus," and

replace it with a fifteen-seat van for GPATS students only, but after receiving a flurry of complaints, YU elected to preserve the status quo. This year, though, due to budget constraints, YU has decided to eliminate the bus entirely. In a second attempt to downsize, YU again proposed a highly subsidized van restricted to GPATS students. GPATS students declined the offer, opting instead for other convenient modes of transportation like the subway. Thus far, this alteration in transportation has had no demonstrable effects on their Talmudic reasoning.

NEW PRE-LAW ADVISOR

This past week, Yeshiva College announced the hiring of Ms. Dina (Dassy) Chelst as the new pre-law

adviser on campus. Following Ariella Hellman's departure from YU after last semester, there was distinctive void in the Pre-Professional Advisement office. With degrees from Columbia University and Brooklyn Law School, Ms. Chelst brings a wealth of experience and "has a strong commitment to undergraduate education and the role of advising in a student's academic and professional success," according to a university-wide y-stud sent out by YC Dean Dr. Barry Eichler. While the first meet-and-greet with Ms. Chelst was already hosted before Rosh Hashanah, students are invited to reach out to her via email, at dchelst1@yu.edu, or by visiting her office located in Furst Hall, Room 110.

The EDITORIAL

Gender Inequality at YU: Men, It's Our Problem Too

Earlier this month, in a speech delivered at the United Nations Headquarters, actor and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson launched the HeForShe campaign, a "solidarity movement for gender equality" that serves as a "formal invitation" for men to join in the efforts to end gender-based discrimination. In her speech, Watson argued that feminism—"the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes"—is not just a movement for women, but one for men too. According to the campaign's website, HeForShe's goal is to bring "together one half of humanity in support of the other of humanity, for the entirety of humanity."

HeForShe arrives at a moment in popular culture and politics when feminism is more present than ever before. The past two years alone have seen the introduction of multiple campaigns such as "Lean In" and "Ban Bossy," which promote gender equality in the workplace and combat negative perceptions of women and girls. At this year's MTV Video Music Awards, pop singer Beyoncé stood proudly in front of a screen that read "Feminist" and received a standing ovation. At The New York Times, Roxane Gay's "Bad Feminist", an essay collection of cultural criticism that focuses on negative and damaging depictions of women in literature and entertainment, holds the thirteenth spot on the bestseller list. And this past summer in Congress, Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Claire McCaskill introduced legislation that would penalize universities that fail to adequately handle cases of sexual assault.

In the midst of all these feminist campaigns and accomplishments, what marks HeForShe as a particularly significant event is the decision to make men the target audience of the movement. By creating a feminist campaign directed specifically at men, HeForShe extends, and rightly so, the responsibility for the advancement of women beyond women alone, placing a direct obligation on men to help end gender-based discrimination and inequality. HeForShe urges all men to review their lives, relationships, and communities to identify the ways in which gender inequality is perpetuated and how effective solutions can be found. And a quick glance at our own community of Yeshiva University shows that gender divides and differing educational and religious expectations for women and men are alive and well.

At the undergraduate level, majors and courses offered on the Wilf and Beren campuses still fall along "traditional" gender divides. Stern College offers many courses in Art, English, Women's Studies, and human sexuality that simply do not exist at Yeshiva College. But when it comes to STEM education—particularly in math and computer science—Stern students are not privy to the same rigor and intensity in their education that their male counterparts enjoy. In the Jewish studies department, Stern students have limited access to the breadth of talmudic and halachic study that is so readily available to male students at Wilf. And when courses in Talmud are offered in Stern, students often have to choose between taking it or a taking a secular course—a decision that no male student in Yeshiva College would ever have to make. Additionally, in the arena of religious graduate programs, RIETS continues to gleam as the "crown jewel" of Yeshiva University, while GPATS, the Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Study, faces budget cuts and changing curricula.

Gender inequality anywhere is unacceptable, but what makes gender inequality at Yeshiva University particularly damaging is that YU also serves as the theological and religious center for a large swath of contemporary Orthodoxy in America and around the world. RIETS is the largest program in the Americas that ordains Orthodox rabbis, and graduates from both the Beren and Wilf campuses fill religious educational positions throughout the country. If gender inequality exists both in academic and religious life at Yeshiva University, and the Orthodox environment on campus, you can bet it exists in the Orthodoxy and cultural norms that are disseminated by its graduates.

Yeshiva University needs to take action to end gender inequalities because the implicit message it's sending young Jewish women is this: It's fine, get a degree, but know that intellectually and religiously, your place is different because you're a woman. Or, to quote the Nigerian novelist Chimam-

anda Ngozi Adichie, "You can have ambition—but not too much." Yeshiva University needs to create an environment where women can not only be confident that they have access to the same quality of education they would receive if they were men, but also that they have equality in the Orthodoxy that YU generates and maintains. In order to do so, action needs to be taken on behalf of the religious leadership, administrators, and students of YU. And because the gatekeepers of change at Yeshiva University—the religious leadership, administration, and Board of Trustees—are overwhelming male, the change needs to start with the men.

So, men of YU—students, faculty, and administrators alike: where do we begin?

Let's start by simply listening to women. For too long, women have voiced their experiences of discrimination while men have chosen not to listen. And for too long, Jewish women have voiced their frustration with a system that creates religious laws and rituals without their input—and men have chosen not to listen. Perhaps last year's tefillin crisis can serve a prime example: two young women received permission to lay tefillin and the Orthodox Jewish world vehemently condemned their actions. RIETS was quick to criticize the women and the Orthodox rabbi who gave them permission, but very few stopped to listen, to turn to the women and say: Let me hear your voice; it counts too. We need to listen to women's voices not out of sense of courtesy or benevolence. We need to listen to women's voices because they are equal to our own and should be treated as such.

After listening, we need to be proactive. Although we may not be women, we are profoundly affected by their presence in this world. If you don't like the word "feminist," that's okay, but you should like the vision of a world where your friend, your sister, your mother, your wife, or your daughter can live in a religious and secular environment that encourages them to reach their full potential as human beings. You should want a world where women have a say in the secular and religious legal systems that create laws for them. For too long, men have been the main deciders of social and religious standards for the Orthodox community, and the time to allow women to occupy the same roles—as students, scholars, professionals, and poskim—that men enjoy is long overdue. It's time for us to shift the way we think about women and the expectations that our society has set up for their religious and educational lives. We need to do our share by creating the space for women to thrive religiously, academically, and socially in the same way we do every day as men.

I take Yeshiva University seriously when it claims to hold the "Center for the Jewish Future." But the Jewish Future, in my opinion, will only be a good future if it's one negotiated and created equally by men and women. The future is not something that is abstract or far away, but rather something that is constantly constructed in the present. Right now is when we can make change. Right now is when we can make a better future.

To the administrators: let's create a university where a student in Stern can receive the same education as a man in Yeshiva College. No one at Yeshiva University should be denied a good education because of their gender. To our religious leaders: let's think creatively about how to fashion an Orthodoxy that moves away from a hegemony of male leadership and into an Orthodoxy where women are conversant and present in the halachic process. Let's structure a learning program that mirrors RIETS in its intensity and scope, a learning program that will enable women to enter into the halachic world as poskot halacha. And students: on behalf of the women in our lives, let's pressure our university into making the changes needed to provide an equal education to all, regardless of gender.

To all as we enter the High Holiday season: let's amend Watson's words, and gather together one half of YU in support of the other half of YU, for the entirety of YU—and by doing so profoundly change the Orthodox experience for women today. Let's create the Jewish future of tomorrow: a brighter, bolder, more vibrant reality than the one we live in today. But when we do so, let it be a future for everyone, by everyone, together.

The COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 78 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and commitment to journalistic excellence.



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1 SWEATER WEATHER

Finally, you can show off your amazing collection of sweaters. And honestly, sweaters look so good, I'm beginning to think G-d intended room temperature to be a cool 61 degrees. Also, you can't forget about the amazing Neighbourhood song to go with your classic style.



2 Holiday Break

While friends in other colleges complain about missing class on Yom Tov and attending class on Chol Hamoed, we get almost a full three weeks of vacation to relax and enjoy Succot. #NowhereButHere



3 Derek Jeter

Keith Olbermann's assertion that he is extremely overrated may be right (check out his Will McAvoy-esque rant), but the stats were never why we liked Jeter. In contrast to Ray Rice's and Adrian Peterson's disgusting off-the-field actions, Jeter represents an athlete we can believe in, who always seems to be doing the right thing. Watching his last season simply reminds us of his grace and likeability. He may not be the baseball player we need, but he's the role model we deserve.



4 YU in the Top 50

Amidst the constant criticisms and scandals, this list serves as an annual reminder of the greatness of our institution. It gives us a little more pride the next time someone asks us where we go to college.



5 Network TV

Cable's summer programming is like that friend who goes to college hundreds of miles away; super fun and interesting to be around, but never seeming to be around for long. Network TV is that friend who lives closer, who may not be as profound, as well acted, or as clever, but no matter what happens, this friend will be there for you when the rain starts to fall.



6 Climate March

Hundreds of thousands gathered to demand that world leaders enact legislation to help save our planet. Somebody's gotta be looking out for our future.



7 Sponsored SnapChat Stories

When you're in an elevator, avoiding human contact for fear of life, this new feature gives you an easy out. Also, they're usually pretty interesting, featuring sports events or concerts.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 No Kaballat Shabbat

Between three different three-day Yamim Tovim and Shabbat Yom Kippur, we don't say a full Kaballat Shabbat the entire month of Tishrei. Even those who don't love Carlebach will be excited for that first *Lecha Dodi* next month.



2 NFL

The sport encourages players to try their hardest to physically tackle and injure others, and shirks its responsibilities to reimburse players for the diminished mental state and life expectancies caused by concussions and heavy pain-killers. Should it really surprise us that they were so reluctant to react to the recent domestic violence scandals? This isn't a domestic violence issue; this is a collection of owners who place their wallets before everyone else's health, be it their own players, the women in their lives, or their own children.



3 K'tiva v'chatima tova/g'mar chatima tova

K'tiva v'chatima tova/g'mar chatima tova—It's like "Good Shabbos," but so much longer. And after shul you have to say it to literally everybody! Ain't nobody got time fo dat!



4 Peppers

I don't enjoy their taste.



5 Selichot

Saying sorry, an action nobody enjoys doing, at either 1 AM or 6 AM, times that no one enjoys being awake.



6 Gotham

Maybe it's the impossibly high expectations set by Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy, or the fact that the most recent cop shows I watched are "The Wire" and "The Sopranos," but I found the entire pilot to be cliched, with every character drawn to ridiculous extremes.



7 Holiday Work

We just want to enjoy our small vacation consisting mainly of Yom Tov, but luckily, every professor has other ideas, realizing that the week after vacation is the perfect time for our first test to be given or our first paper to be due.

Investing Wisely: YU CIO Ahron Herring

By Yaakov Sebrow

It was in August of 2009 that President Richard Joel announced the appointment of Sid Browne as Chief Investment Officer. Prior to Mr. Browne's appointment, there was no such a thing as an investment office in Yeshiva University. They never believed they needed one. The endowment was handled by the board and investment consultants. This wonderful board included Bernie Madoff, of ponzi-scheme fame, who besides being chair

of its business school and treasurer of the university, received an honorary degree from the university in 2001. His positions in the University allowed him to help a cohort of his, a high profile investor named J. Ezra Merkin become a member of the board. Merkin impressed the board so much that they made significant investments in his Ascot Partners fund. Mr. Merkin steered that money to Mr. Madoff which caused \$110 million dollars, ten percent of the endowment, to disappear like fairy dust.



Two infamous familiar faces of the past: Bernie Madoff (left) and Ezra Merkin

To avoid repeating those financially fatal mistakes, the Yeshiva instituted a CIO position. Dr. Sid Browne was a professional investor who has held leadership positions at Goldman Sachs and Brevan Howard. Out of nowhere, however, Sid Browne resigned as chief investment officer on December 24, 2011, a move regarding which Yeshiva University refused to comment.

In March 2012, Ahron Herring took over Browne's position. As Chief Investment Officer, his role essentially is to guide YU's investment strategies to secure the financial future of the University. Herring, whose contact information - and even his name - is not directly listed on the yu.edu website, is not an easy man to contact. After finally getting through, Herring replied quite promptly. He gave me mostly general information, explaining that until the 2014 financial reports on the university are disclosed, he is very limited as far as what he could discuss.

Herring first delineated the purpose of a college endowment, in particular YU's endowment. He explained that "the purpose of the endowment is to ensure a reliable source of funds that secure the most vital needs of the University includ-

ing scholarships, faculty salaries, and building upkeep." The investments that support students on campus in any given year must also be available to students who will be in Yeshiva in the future. The stock market is a very volatile entity. In some years it may rally while in other years it may tumble. The endowment is meant to smooth out those ups and downs so that funds are readily available to distribute every year. It is therefore foolish to simply measure the endowment for just a short period of time, such as two or three years. According to Herring, the objective of the endowment is to allow for a sufficient return to support a yearly distribution without taking on the full risk of the stock markets.

AS CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER, HERRING'S ROLE ESSENTIALLY IS TO GUIDE YU'S INVESTMENT STRATEGIES TO SECURE THE FINANCIAL FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY.

While Herring continues to work on these investment strategies, many financial decisions lie with the Board of Trustees, who met last week to discuss some of the plans YU has in store. Those and other developments will continue to be reported on.

The "Video-Conferential Equation"

By Jeff J. Ohana

The idea of videoconferencing at Yeshiva University emerged a few years ago at the highest levels of the academic administration. The purpose of the initiative was to address several problems, primarily the distance between the Wilf and Beren campuses. On paper, videoconferencing appears to be an ideal solution to the problem of similar courses, sometimes taught at the same time, on both campuses. However, video-conferenced classes require a very important investment in both equipment and technological staff.

Pros and Cons of Video-Conferenced Classes at YU

The principle benefit of videoconferencing is to offer courses that would otherwise be impossible. For instance, in Spring 2011, seventeen students were enrolled in the Mathematical Statistics class at Wilf campus, a higher-level math course geared towards those in the pre-Actuarial track. Only one student was registered for that class at Beren Campus. To address this issue, the class was videoconferenced. The professor was in regular contact with the student at Beren and, according to the Mathematics department, the student was not bothered by this type of class setting. In the fall of 2011, there was a similar situation. In both cases, the technology worked flawlessly according to Dr. Thomas Otway, Professor of Mathematics, and former chair of the department at Wilf Campus. Without videoconferencing, it would have been financially impossible to run two similar classes in both campuses.

Nevertheless, video-conferenced classes had several inconveniences. First, the instructor is not present physically. Students have said that the lack of the professor's physical presence has made the classes less serious. The original format of the class could

also bother some students that are used to learn in a typical class environment. Further, it constitutes an issue regarding the quizzes and exams: How will they receive the exams? Who will observe the students in the video-conferenced class? Finally, the success of video-conferenced classes is highly dependent on the technology working properly.

Video-Conferenced Math Classes This Semester

Several video-conferenced classes were planned for this semester for the Mathematics department: two undergraduate-level courses, Advanced Calculus and Probability Theory, as well as several graduate-level courses, including Chaotic Dynamical Systems. On the weekend before the beginning of classes, a cable was accidentally cut in the major videoconferencing classroom, Belfer Hall's Room 205. According to Dr. Otway, "this immediate problem was that, due to the accident during construction in one of the high-tech classrooms, the equipment simply didn't work."

As a result, a significant component of the technology, which permitted to the professor to write on the board at one campus and have the result appear on the board at the other campus, was not working. The courses could not be run without this machine working properly. Consequently, both undergraduate videoconferenced courses were replaced by regular courses. Chaotic Dynamical Systems remains video-conferenced, while other graduate-level math courses were cancelled for other reasons, including low enrollment numbers. This incident created minor problems on timing, specifically within the professor for the Probability Theory and Chaotic Dynamical Systems were finally accommodated by small changes in the schedule.

In addition to the construction problems, Dr. Otway said that, "the other problem was that the class sizes were on the margin of what would be appropriate for that kind of technology in any case. It's hard to argue that a class having ten students would not run unless it were video-conferenced from another campus," as opposed to the successful video-

conferenced classes in the past, which only involved one student.

The Chaotic Dynamical Systems class continues to be video-conferenced since its enrollment is small enough to use a technical backup system which was not adequate for the large undergraduate courses. On the Wilf Campus, the Probability Theory class has over thirty students.

Future of Video-Conferenced Classes at YU

Dr. Marian Gidea, who teaches Probability Theory and the Chaotic Dynamical Systems courses, is optimistic about videoconferenced classes at YU. "Videoconferencing, hybrid, and blended courses in mathematics are becoming increasingly popular. Such courses can provide a very successful educational experience," Dr. Gidea told me. However, Dr. Gidea, who must now hurry from Wilf to Beren Campus on Wednesdays to teach the Probability Theory class there after teaching the graduate course from Belfer

Hall, cautions that this method requires activities that increase the level of engagement among students with their professor. Still, "Getting students used to videoconferencing can be viewed as acquiring a job skill as well, since this is becoming a standard tool for running long-distance communication and team projects," concludes Dr. Gidea.

Dr. Otway remains distrustful of the technology. "It is unlikely that videoconferencing will be used in the future if there is any alternative mode of presentation. But that is precisely what videoconferencing is supposed to provide: a means of running a lecture course if no other mode of presentation is feasible." Dr. Otway concluded by noting that "other technological alternatives are currently being explored by the department, in particular, hybrid lecture/online courses in computer science."



Josh Rochlin's Century Ride

By Avi Strauss

Josh Rochlin, lifelong member of the Jewish community currently residing in Teaneck, NJ, went to Columbia University for his undergraduate degree ('88) and JD ('91) and never had much to do with Yeshiva University. Yet, on September 7, he rode in the New York Century, a 100-mile bike race that spans the varying neighborhoods of New York City, and raised nearly \$65,000 for Yeshiva's Scholarship Fund.

This incredible feat was achieved despite a rollercoaster of a year for Mr. Rochlin. In November, while visiting yeshivas in Israel with his 18-year-old son, Mr. Rochlin fell victim to a horrific accident. After a nice day out in Yerushalayim with his son and extended family, Josh drove back to Bet Shemesh, where he was staying. After dropping off his passengers, Josh's car collided head-on with an Egged bus. Josh was immediately rushed to Hadassah Hospital in Yerushalayim and admitted to the ICU, where he learned of his injuries: 8 broken ribs, a broken clavicle and scapula as well as a punctured lung. After 3 days in the ICU, Josh was transferred to another area in

the hospital to continue to recover, where he stayed another 3 weeks until flying home to America.

Throughout the recovery process Josh experienced an outpouring of support from his friends and family, both in Israel and in America, as he was struggling to cope with his injuries. Yet, while everyone's attention was focused on helping him, he was focused on helping someone else. "While all this was going on, I was very much involved in the conversion process and educational plans of a young man that I met while visiting Spain" said Rochlin.

A few months prior to his accident, Josh had visited Gerona, Spain, a city rich in Jewish history and was home to both the Ramban and Rabbeinu Nissim. While there, he visited an old synagogue-turned museum where the docent assured him Gerona was devoid of Jews. Yet shortly afterwards, Josh experienced a strange encounter. "As I was about to leave the museum, descending from the steps of 'unauthorized area' of the library was a young man, who appeared to have just walked off the set of Fiddler on the Roof. I asked in Hebrew "Yesh

Minyan Po? [Is there a minyan here?]" hoping that he just stumbled upon a fellow member of the Jewish faith.

The next thing he knew, Josh spent 6 hours with Shalom, a native of Gerona, touring the city. Shalom guided Josh and told him more about the city's ancient Jewish history and historical sights, even showing him old mezuzah holes. As fascinating as that all was, Josh realized something more important was happening. "Halfway through the day I concluded two things: Shalom was the brightest young man I ever met. He was only 20 but spoke 10 languages, had written many articles, and his intellect was impressive. At the same time I realized notwithstanding his knowledge and sharing of kosher food, he was not yet Jewish." Shalom was in fact not Jewish, but had been on the path to conversion after learning Hebrew. His love of language roused him to learn Hebrew at 15, which then led him to investigate Judaism. This revelation put Josh on a mission—he knew the best place to further Shalom's Jewish pursuits was Yeshiva University. Josh suggested the idea of furthering his studies at YU, to which Shalom enthusiastically agreed.

Century Ride, cont. on p.8

Library Renovation, cont. from p.1

and been revolutionized.

This is the goal for the renovations of the Gottesman Library. Yeshiva University intends to change the function and purpose of the library. What once was an institution established primarily for books and study, will be transformed into an environment meant to stimulate learning. Essentially, the plan is to modernize the outdated library by transforming both the main function and overall ambiance. The University wishes to create a more open, welcoming, and stimulating environment. Many new spaces to study independently and quietly, as well as more public areas meant for group studying and discussions will be created. Dean Berger adds that, in short, “the goal is to address a large variety of needs.”

The library currently consists of both spaces meant for independent and quiet studying, as well as larger areas meant for group sessions and interactivity. Unfortunately, the extensive number of bookcases force some of the spaces meant for quiet studying to be placed near the group areas. The noise from the more open areas carries over to some of the designated silent parts of the library, compromising the purpose of some of the quieter areas. Furthermore, the size of the impressive

book collection limits the number of study spaces. Even the fourth floor, which has been designated as the quiet floor where students can study in silence, does not have nearly enough individual study spaces. There are only forty-eight individual spaces on the silent floor for the roughly 1400 undergraduate men at Yeshiva University. Additionally, many women come uptown from the Beren Campus on most nights to use the library. Many parts of the library have little, if any, natural light because of the placement of windows. The otherwise dimly lit library creates a rather grim and foreboding environment, which is unpleasant to learn in.

Through the coming renovations, the hope is to completely change the atmosphere and environment. The library will be transformed into a more comfortable, pleasant, welcoming facility. With new windows providing natural light during the day, students will feel connected to the world outside the library, and not entrapped within a giant warehouse of books. The library will be remodeled to have a modern look and feel to it. Brighter colors on the wall will replace the antiquated brick interior of the present day library. With new, comfortable furniture, the refurbished library promises to cultivate a pleasant learning environment. Overall, these changes are meant

to foster a more welcoming and pleasant environment.

Many of the bookshelves currently housing some of the 600,000 physical volumes held in the library, will be removed in order to allocate more space for new areas to study. Individual study spaces are to be heavily increased, yet still spread out, eliminating the tight, cramped feeling of the current model of the library. These areas, which are meant to be silent spaces conducive to studying will be in a quiet setting, away from the interactive areas, allowing students to focus without feeling claustrophobic or confined. At the same time, the extra space will also host larger group areas for collaborative studying, and an overall more spacious layout. These areas will be designed to stimulate creativity and interactivity between students. New “group study rooms” with a table and chairs are being added, for students working on group projects and other endeavors. Mr. Rosengarten hopes these changes will make the library “a place that is conducive to a learning environment.” The library should be somewhere the students will not only enjoy studying alone, but also with other students and faculty as part of the overall learning experience. A place where creativity is stimulated. Renovations will incorporate several technological advances, including

much needed significant upgrades to the wireless network.

Mr. Rosengarten told *The Commentator* that the planning process is nearly complete. A competitive bid process has recently been completed and a general contractor will be selected shortly. The contractor will work with ROART, the New York based architecture firm, and university staff to schedule the renovations to be least inconvenient for the students. Mr. Rosengarten assured me that while any project of this scale will cause some occasional inconvenience, “the project will be coordinated in a way that least inconveniences the students.” Dean Berger added that this project is a renovation, meaning that the building’s footprints will not be extended, despite hints from President Richard Joel at last year’s Town Hall Meeting that there were plans to open the library’s sixth floor.

The renovations will include the Library’s ground floor/lobby, as well as levels 2, 2A, 3A, and 4. From the time they begin, the renovations are estimated to be completed in under two years. The project is being funded entirely by donor funds, without which the renovations would be impossible.

Family Discovery Club Visits Ellis Island

By Ezra Brand

In 1913, a Chassidic couple from Warsaw came with five of their children on a ship to America. At least one of their older children had already come to America. The couple had been wealthy back in Warsaw: they had employed maids there, and when they immigrated the father — who was a Levi — brought with him a small Sefer Torah, and the mother hid a large sum of money in her skirt. The mother was pregnant on the ship, and ended up giving birth to her eleventh and final child on the ship in international waters—later causing the child citizenship problems. The family ended up settling in the Bronx, and the descendants of their eleven children are now scattered throughout the New York area and beyond.

The original couple, Zanine and Esther Oppenberg, are my great-great-grandparents — my mother’s father’s father’s parents — and until last year I knew almost nothing about them or the rest of my family a few generations back. Thanks to the new Family Discovery Club of YU, founded by senior Binyamin Lewis, I was given the tools and the abilities to explore the roots and shoots of my family tree, and the stories that come along with it. Last year I was able to take full advantage of Lewis’ genealogical knowledge and his almost obsessive desire to share it, and this year I was able to benefit from a trip he organized to Ellis and Liberty Islands.

On a beautiful Sunday morning at the beginning of the semester, around thirty YU students from both undergraduate campuses went on a day trip to Ellis Island, under the auspices of the Family Discovery Club. The trip was organized in

conjunction with five other clubs, including the Historical Society and the Polish-Jewish Club. At first I didn’t want to come, as I had already gone to Ellis Island in elementary school on a school trip. Then I found out that Yitzchak Schwartz was going to be the tour guide, and it became harder not to go. Schwartz is loud, energetic, and always enter-

and-cream cheese breakfast. (Was there a deeper meaning to the bagels-and-cream cheese breakfast? Maybe because we were visiting the origin point of the great mass of immigrants who brought bagels to America?) It was unclear what the exact job description of many other people on the “board” of the Family Discovery Club was, but on the trip

be allowed into America doubtless felt. Instead, it was a kind of impatience and resignation at the kind of airport security that is unfortunately necessary at these landmarks.

Surprisingly, even some Sefardic students of YU came, despite the fact that their ancestors obviously hadn’t come through Ellis Island. Most notable were the Sasson broth-

After touring the immigration facilities on Ellis Island, we davened mincha on the expansive lawn. At this point Schwartz departed, and we boarded a second ferry to take us to Liberty Island. At the entrance to the statue, everyone from the group scrambled into pairs to share lockers and dollar bills needed to feed them. Unfortunately, we were only allowed to walk up to the top of the base of Lady Liberty — to walk up higher required a reservation months in advance — but there was an ample amount of stairs to tire out even the most athletic of the group.

The bus rides from YU to Stern to the ferry launch at South Ferry, as well as the leisurely pace of the ferries to Ellis Island and Liberty Island, allowed ample time for socializing. For me this was one of the nicest things about it. Throughout the trip, amazing views of the Manhattan skyline were available. I had the opportunity to casually meet many new people, without the feeling that an event was about to start or a shuttle had to be caught.

Just a week later, Lewis and the Family Discovery Club were at it again with another event, on how to go about researching Ellis Island manifests. The event was held this time in Stern. I missed this event, which I now regret. But the memory of this full-day trip to Ellis Island and Liberty Island, with the new knowledge gained and the new friendships made, are sure to last forever.



taining. A recent graduate of YU, and current doctoral student of Modern Jewish History at NYU, Mr. Schwartz brought his knowledge of history to bear on everything.

After the busses departed with the boys from Wilf Campus at 9:45 — only slightly later than planned — the busses proceeded to pick up the girls at Stern and then made their way to South Ferry, where we were to catch our ferry to Ellis Island. There, we enjoyed a bagel-

everyone of the board pitched in.

Schwartz was supposed to give us a tour of Castle Clinton in Battery Park, but he was running late, and we were only able to catch the noon ferry. While waiting in line for the ferry to take us to Ellis Island, it felt like we were reliving the experience of being processed as immigrants. I doubt this was intentional, but it was somewhat uncanny. Of course, we didn’t feel the same kind of fear and anxiety that those waiting on line to

ers from Panama, Marcos and Jacky, who added good Sefardi cheer to the trip. An interesting fact pointed out by our tour-guide Schwartz was that there were a number of Greek Jews (known as “Romanis”) who came through Ellis Island, who were true Sefardim. They can sometimes be seen in old pictures from the Lower East Side smoking hookahs, something that was quite foreign to the Yiddish-speaking Eastern-European Jews.

The Future of Stern Shabbatonim

By Yechiel Auman

Joint-campus shabbatonim in midtown highlight the year for many YU students. Stern shabbatonim combine the vibrant Shabbat atmosphere from both campuses, replete with inspirational davening, lively meals and tisches, dynamic speakers, and the opportunity to socialize with peers. The shabbatonim range in size and attendance, notably including large themed shabbatonim that typically draw over seventy uptown students such as the TAC/SOY, Athletics, Sephardic, and Syms shabbatonim. However, recent developments in the university's hotel arrangements have called the future of these joint shabbatonim into question.

Over the past few years uptown students slept over Shabbat at the Hotel Bedford, located on E. 40th between Lexington and Park, and enjoyed joint meals and programming on the Beren Campus. The Hotel Bedford had a great relationship with YU and was extremely helpful with the Shabbat needs of the university. However, this year the Hotel Bedford has begun a renovation project on select floors, and at this time is unsure when the project will be completed. The ongoing construction has caused a restriction in the supply of available rooms and has made it impossible to accommodate large groups like YU, forcing the university to look elsewhere for hotel accommodations.

Throughout the summer, the Office of Student Life (OSL) worked tirelessly to find a replacement hotel in time for the school year. Although there is no shortage of hotels in the midtown area, there are few that met all of YU's necessary specifications includ-

ing a tight budget, access to rooms with non-electronic keys, and late-in-the-week final reservations, among others. This past Shabbat, OSL tried out a new venue, the Park South Hotel, located on E. 28th Street between Lexington and Park. According to Hezzy Jesin, the Director of Student Life on the Wilf Campus, "the Park South Hotel was the best match



for the university's very specific needs." For instance, the hotel has agreed to work with our last-minute scheduling and to manually open doors for students during Shabbat.

There was an overwhelmingly positive reaction among students to the new hotel. One of the most noticeable improvements was the larger size and stylish decor of the rooms. In

stark contrast to the Hotel Bedford, which allowed up to six students in a room, the Park South Hotel's policy only allows two per room. Raphi Ozarowski (YC '15) "greatly appreciated the accommodations in the new hotel. With only two students per room, I no longer had to worry about fighting for one of the beds or getting stuck sleeping on the cot."

The staff of the Park South Hotel was also friendly and quick to accommodate particular Shabbat needs.

However, with the improvements come additional costs. While OSL will continue to heavily subsidize the costs of Shabbat, in order to absorb some of the increased expenses of the more upscale hotel, the price of Shab-

bat for students has been raised from \$30 to \$35. There will also be fewer available hotel spots at some of the smaller shabbatonim to further cut costs. Moreover, to ensure that students who will actually participate in the programming have access to the limited hotel spots, the OSL sent out an email on Friday to shabbaton participants warning that OSL will track participation throughout Shabbat. The email stressed that "the Office of Student Life reserves the right to restrict access to future Shabbat at Beren for students who do not participate in all aspects of the Shabbat program."

Even with the additional hotel expenses, OSL is proud that the rich shabbaton programming has not been compromised. This past Shabbat, the students were joined by a charismatic quartet of guest speakers: Aliza Abrams, the Director of Student Life on the Beren Campus; Dr. Selma Botman, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Scott Goldberg, the Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning; Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, the David Mitzner Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future. In addition, at Seudat Shlishit the students were treated to an inspirational speech by Shmuel Goldis, a new student at YU who just finished his service in the IDF and participated in the recent military campaign in Gaza over the summer. As the programming only continues to improve, and with the exciting new hotel accommodations, all students are highly encouraged to come to some of the Stern shabbatonim this year.

Unity in a Time of Distress

By Dani Weiss

With a resounding "Amen," a crowd of more than 500 people at once affirmed its faith in God and expressed a heartfelt prayer for Max Profeta, a fellow YU student, to merit a full and lasting recovery from his illness. For the first time in several minutes, many in the crowd ceased their prayerful swaying and relaxed their furrowed brows. As the crowd began to shuffle out of the beit midrash, a lone voice, pure in tone yet powerful in volume, pierced through the crowd. The singing started slowly, but in a matter of seconds the words of Acheinu, a song professing Jewish unity, engulfed the entire crowd.

Unity, the all-elusive concept that involves the subordination of small differences for a larger goal, was present in those few precious minutes in the Glueck beit midrash. At 12:45 pm on an average school day, more than 500 students, teachers, and faculty members carved a small portion of time out of their schedules to coalesce into a unified group. To characterize this unity as a spontaneous phenomenon would be a misnomer. To an extent, the unity could be attributed to the larger Jewish community, the YU administration, the hard work of the mashgichim, or the student councils. But the story of the day really belongs to the collective work of student leaders, administrators, and faculty members across multiple campuses mobilizing together to recognize the distress of a member of their community.

On Wednesday September 10, 2014, amid national preparations to commemorate the victims of a tragedy that took place 13 years prior, Max Profeta received news of personal tragedy. Several days of headaches, stomach pain, and overall physical discomfort compelled Max to visit the Mt. Sinai Hospital for testing. After a complete blood count came back with certain abnormalities, his father, a doctor in Indianapolis, suspected that he had a form of viral meningitis - a monster in its own right. But after further testing, Max and his family received the

earth-shattering news that he had been diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer of the blood. Rabbi Jonathan Shippel, director of the James Striar School (JSS) in which Max is enrolled, described that he and the rest of the JSS faculty and students were "totally shocked" to hear the news.

On Thursday morning, Rabbi Shippel addressed the members of JSS as a group, sharing the news that most had already heard about. Senior Leo Korman, president of the Sy Syms

**THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF
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SUPPORT FOR A STUDENT,
SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS PART OF
THE COMMUNITY.**

Student Council and student of JSS, reported that "everyone was a mess that morning - the faculty, the students - no one knew what to do with themselves." Yet despite the overwhelming nature of the news, the unanimous consensus among the students was that they had to do something extraordinary for Max.

Alec Feintuch, a JSS student who had his own bout with cancer four years ago, addressed the students. Because of his connections to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Feintuch suggested that the students form "Team Max" for the upcoming Light The Night Walk, a walk that helps promote aware-

ness of blood cancers as well as raise money for research and support of patients and their families. Yitz Edry, also a JSS student, spearheaded the initiative by being the team's captain. As of this writing, the page for Team Max shows that an amount upwards of \$3,000 was donated in Max's honor. In an interview a few days after the walk, Rabbi Shippel was proud of the energy with which the students worked to make t-shirts with the logo "Team Max" after shiur.

Leo Korman also addressed the students that morning. He spoke about his own encounter with cancer, his father having battled the disease several years ago. He stressed the importance of embracing Max as part of the community, visiting him in the hospital, and praying on his behalf. Indeed, the students heeded Korman's words. According to Rabbi Shippel, the students made sure that from the moment Max was transferred to the Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, he didn't spend a moment alone.

Korman's first thought was to run a campaign for "Swab a Cheek, Save a Life." Although Korman didn't know if Max would need a marrow donation, he thought the situation presented a great opportunity to raise awareness for the campaign and get people registered as potential bone marrow donors. Students can expect to see "Swab a Cheek" stations throughout campus after returning from the Rosh HaShana break.

But Korman wasn't satisfied with that campaign. He "wanted to make sure we did something for Max before Rosh HaShana - something big." After some brainstorming and an email sent to the student council presidents by a student who chose to remain anonymous, the presidents decided that a Tehillim Rally would be the perfect initiative to show support for the Profeta family. In Korman's words, "One of the most important things to stress... is that [they're] not alone throughout all of this."

Finding a time to hold this event proved challenging. The presidents

Unity, cont. on p.7

Unity, cont. from p.6 understood the need to find a time that suited the maximum number of students. They came up with a time that would suit the different schedules of all four Jewish studies programs. After making a few phone calls, Rabbi Penner, Dean of RIETS, agreed to contact the necessary parties to end the Wednesday classes of JSS, IBC, and SBMP 15 minutes early so as to allow students to attend, while MYP shiurim would begin just a few minutes late to accommodate. In this way, the entire undergraduate body on the men's campus would be able to attend without scheduling conflicts.

On Tuesday afternoon, the family offered their consent for the event to take place. Immediately, the student councils sprang into action. Jacob Bernstein, president of Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) explained "all offices worked with unprecedented speed to make sure that the event could take place on such short notice." While Events and the Office of Student Life (OSL) worked to approve the location of the event, an email and signs advertising the event were prepared. Although the OSL usually closes at 5 pm, they agreed to stay open late to print out signs to advertise for the event. Bernstein also noted that the mashgichim were particularly helpful in making announcements in the batei midrash to encourage students to attend.

Despite an important meeting taking place later that night, the student councils found time to work out a format for the event. All in attendance would spend the first ten minutes reciting selected passages from Psalms so that collectively, the crowd would finish all of Psalms several times. In preparation for that first segment, four hundred copies of individual Psalms were printed out for the attendees. Ariel Adler, a junior in Yeshiva College, arrived at the rally five minutes late and "couldn't find a paper in sight."

Ten minutes into the rally, after students had a chance to recite their designated Psalm several times, Rabbi Shippel addressed the crowd. In a subsequent interview, Rabbi Shippel noted that "the rally was not a time to give a long drasha (sermon). I just had one thing to say. I wanted to thank everyone for coming. I spoke to Max earlier that morning and asked him what I should speak about. He said to say one thing: 'Thank you.'" In reality, Rabbi Shippel did more than just thank everyone for coming. Recognizing that the majority of the crowd didn't know Max personally, he painted a stunning image of Max's character and personality. He spoke of his background as a non-observant Jew and his decision to come to Yeshiva University to learn more about Judaism.

Indeed, many people felt inspired by the turnout of students who largely didn't know Max. Menachem Polack, a first year student in Syms School of Business, expressed his incredulity at the gathering for a largely unknown member of the YU community. "Seeing hundreds of students ranging from all four morning programs along with rabbeim, faculty, and administration praying fervently for a boy who most of them had never met before was truly an amazing experience." Commenting on the fact that most students didn't know Max, Bernstein noted, "All that mattered was that he's an integral part of our community."

If the gathering for an anonymous student on the Wilf Campus was impressive, then the gathering on the women's campus in midtown was all the more so. Amanda Esraeilian, president

of Torah Activities Council (TAC), described that the women had a parallel event in the 7th floor beit midrash. "We decided to have the event at 12:45 in conjunction with the men." Despite the fact that many students were sitting in class at the time, Amanda estimated that around 100 women showed up to pray for Max's well-being.

In addition to those who showed up in the beit midrash, Amanda noted that students had received an email from the Beren Campus Student Councils encouraging them to recite a short prayer for Max while they were in class. "A few girls actually sent me pictures of themselves reciting tehillim from various parts of the Beren Campus." Similar to the men's gathering, those present heard two of Max's friends speak of his loving personality and character.

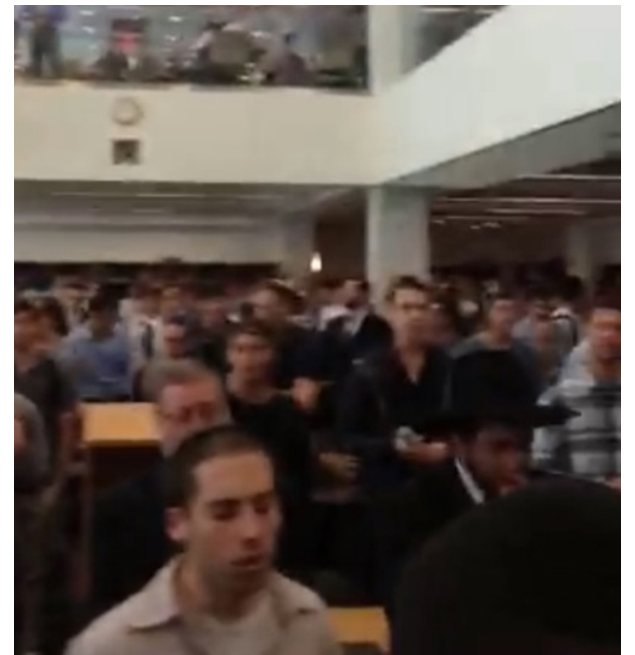
Unlike the women's gathering, the men boasted one particular guest: Dr. Profeta, Max's father. Although Dr. Profeta wasn't originally included in the program, he agreed to speak at Rabbi Shippel's request. After taking the podium, Dr. Profeta cleared his throat and began speaking in a deep voice that sounded hesitant, perhaps even a bit nervous. "I thought

"SEEING HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS RANGING FROM ALL FOUR MORNING PROGRAMS, ALONG WITH RABBEIM, FACULTY, AND ADMINISTRATION, PRAYING FERVENTLY FOR A BOY WHOM MOST OF THEM HAD NEVER MET BEFORE, WAS TRULY AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE."

I knew God - but I didn't know God. I thought I knew Judaism - but I didn't know Judaism. Seeing all of you here and the overwhelming support that we've felt..." Pausing just long enough to take a deep, shuddering breath, Dr. Profeta continued: "until today I didn't know what it means to be a Jew." In the prolonged silence that ensued, a quick scan of the room would reveal a variety of emotional reactions: some were sobbing, some holding back tears, yet others simply stunned to by the weight of his words.

Subsequent to the rally, Dr. Profeta met with President Richard Joel to offer his profuse thanks for building an institution that could foster such a strong sense of community. Although President Joel deflected the praise at the time, he admitted in an interview several days later that he felt a tremendous sense of pride from the outpouring of love. He referenced his inaugural speech where he posited the need to create a strong sense of community both within and beyond the walls of YU. In his words, "A culture of caring must be the hallmark of Yeshiva."

A culture of caring was what motivated student leaders spanning two campuses to work tirelessly to see an event come



to fruition in just 24 hours. A culture of caring accounted for interdepartmental bureaucracy melting away in the face of a student who needed the support of the YU community. And a culture of caring compelled more than 600 people across Manhattan to gather for a prayer powerful enough to reach Heaven's gates.

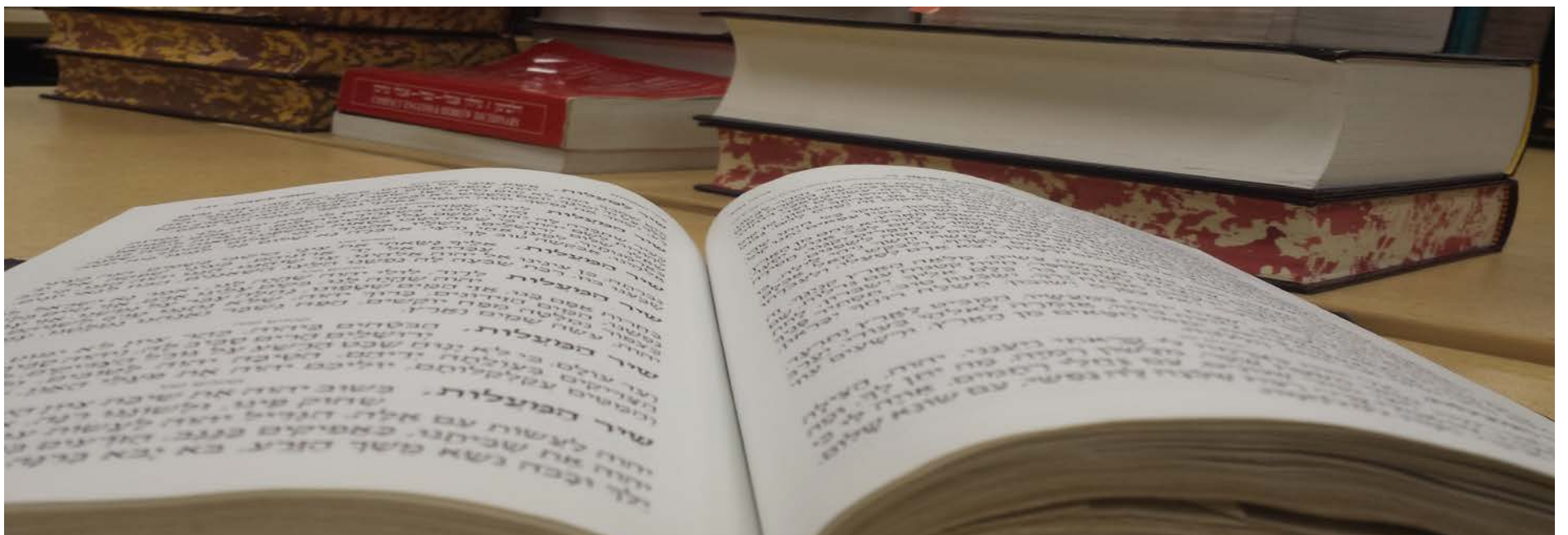
So, when those who had gathered responded with an impassioned "Amen" to the mishebeirach, a prayer for Max's good health, Rabbi Shippel started to sing. As he later described, he "felt an energy in the room. It just seemed the appropriate thing to do." Seconds later, the singing spread virally through both floors of the Glueck beit midrash. Brows once again furrowed, the prayers once again ensued: "The people of Israel are brothers- whether mired in pain or bondage... May God have mercy on them and remove them from pain to abundance, from darkness to light, and from oppression to redemption."

YC senior Adir Feifel, head Resident Advisor in Rubin Hall, was particularly moved by the rally. Adir felt that this was "probably the most powerful experience [he's] had since arriving at YU more than two years ago." Feifel mentioned that he was quite happy to have contributed in a small way in planning the event.

Dr. Profeta was moved beyond words. Referring to Max's father, Korman remarked, "You could see in his eyes that he took away hope and strength."

Through the efforts of student leaders, administrators, and a visionary president, a group of Jews from all walks of life gathered together to show support for a student, simply because he was part of the community.

As a collective YU community, we wish Max, Moshe Avraham ben Mina Masha Chaya, a full and lasting recovery from his illness. In the midst of his own personal medical struggles, Max continues to remain an important part of our community, and he remains ever in our daily thoughts and prayers.



Faculty Council Meeting Announces Beginning of Academic Refinancing/Restructuring

By Avi Mendelson

A Faculty Council meeting was held last Friday to discuss issues pertaining to tenure and academic changes that will take place as a result of the University's difficult financial situation. The topic of tenure was discussed in a meeting exclusively for the undergraduate units of the university. A document outlining the procedure for faculty to receive tenure or promotions had been developed over a period of two years by the Faculty Council and was approved by a vote of the faculty of Yeshiva College, Stern and Syms. Over the summer, the Provosts and Deans had revised those documents. Dean Karen Bacon and new Provost Selma Botman were present to answer questions and concerns regarding these changes which the faculty of the undergraduate units will need to ratify once more.

One main concern voiced was the need for greater flexibility within the document that acknowledges disparities in resources and teaching loads between the sciences and the humanities and between certain majors in Yeshiva College and Stern. It was suggested by Dr. Botman that the faculty present a document with all their questions and concerns which could be reviewed by herself and Dean Bacon as well as Deans Pava and Eichler who were not present at the meeting.

Questions relating specifically to requirements for receiving tenure within the sciences raised an essential question for the colleges in general: What vision for the undergraduate institutions are informing these standards for promotions? To this, Provost Botman expressed her interest in hearing what the council and faculty envisioned for the direction of the University in general and its designation as a Research I institution and deferred this discussion to another meeting.

The next part of the meeting was open to the graduate schools as well and was designated to discuss the university's financial situation. Dr. Botman first gave a rundown of the university's financial situation. She expressed approval of Alvarez and Marsal (A&M), the global professional services firm that has been working with YU for the past eight months to refinance. With their help and that of the Office of Finances, the University significantly reduced debt by increasing efficiency and cutting costs from the non-academic side of the University.

The University Board of Trustees has directed the University to look at the academic side of the institution to help balance the budget. This step is part of the board's Roadmap for Sustainable Excellence described by President Joel in an email sent out to the Yeshiva University community on Tuesday. "It is our mandate," explained President Joel, "to ensure that Yeshiva Uni-

versity continues to thrive for generations to come." While no guidelines or details have been given by the board outlining how to cut costs, the options inevitably will involve reducing the number of classes offered and increasing class size. Another option that will be implemented is increasing blended classes, a substitute for coeducation in which a professor splits his or her time between two campuses while the other campus either learns online or livestreams the class.

Provost Botman further emphasized the need to reflect on the envisioned future of the University in order to make financial decisions regarding educational curriculum. "What should the mission of Yeshiva University be? Are we a Research I university? Are we a university that is focused on liberal arts and science and Jewish education from an undergraduate point of view? How do we support the graduate schools that exist and how do they combine with the undergraduate schools?"

IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT ACADEMIC CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE TO ALLEVIATE THE FINANCIAL STRAIN ON THE UNIVERSITY. AT THE VERY LEAST, A BASIC OUTLINE OF ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING SHOULD BE EXPECTED BY DECEMBER, WHEN THE DEANS WILL REPORT BACK TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

One professor was bothered that the discussion of financial restructuring did not seem to include the "12th and 13th floor," namely, the administrative level of the University. Dr. Botman responded by pointing out that administrative organization is not under her control and affirming that cost cutting applies to everyone. She also mentioned that there are certain common assumptions about salary for high level administrative jobs and highlighted the fact that her colleagues are working with hardly - if any - staff.

Another professor raised a point that downsizing academics would degrade the quality of education and create more debt in the long run. While acknowledging that cuts would need to be made intelligently and with the quality of education in mind, Dr. Botman stressed the fact that there is no way around these cutbacks, and that the faculty needs to start thinking of ideas to reduce

expenses. Some decisions will be made by the administration and some faculty but "none of this works if we're on different sides of the planet. I just want to stress that this isn't desirable work, it's fundamentally necessary. We don't have a choice. So the best thinking is to everyone's advantage."

It remains to be seen what academic changes will take place to alleviate the financial strain on the University. President Joel's email outlined only that the "implementation of the Roadmap will take place with all deliberate speed, and will result in both constancy and change, as we advance toward long-term sustainable excellence." At the very least, a basic outline of academic restructuring should be expected by December, when the Deans will report back to the Board of Trustees. By then we should have a better sense of how these hard times will affect our educational experience, and quite possibly our University as we know it.

WHILE EVERYONE'S ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON HELPING JOSH, JOSH WAS FOCUSED ON HELPING SOMEONE ELSE.

Century Ride, cont. from p.4

Immediately afterwards, Josh contacted Chaim Weitschner, a member of the RIETS board to find out what could be done to get the ball rolling. Soon after that, as if by fate, Josh ran into Rav JJ Shachter, who was headed out to Gerona. Josh explained the whole story to Rav Shachter and put him in contact with Shalom. With the help of Rav Shachter and Mr. Weitschner, as well as assistance from Rabbi Brander, Shalom received admission to Yeshiva and was scheduled to begin his studies in the 2014 fall semester. During this process, Shalom completed his conversion, and Mr. Rochlin suffered his debilitating accident.

While recovering, one of Mr. Rochlin's friends suggested he set a goal, something to strive for, to aid in his recuperation. Josh settled on the New York City Century. "When the opportunity to race in the NYC Century came up, and I was thinking about how to properly acknowledge the tova that Yeshiva was doing for someone like Shalom and looking for a cause to dedicate my efforts too" remarked Josh. This led Josh to set a goal, a Century for a Century, to raise \$100,000 dollars for Yeshiva's Scholarship Fund, a fund which often offers money to people in Shalom's situation, to match his 100-mile bike ride.



Photo by Alan Wechsler | Courtesy of <http://dailyconcepts.com/ride-of-passage/>

In his effort to raise the money, Josh made his appeal by e-mail. Josh explained that although no one in his family attended YU (although his son will be attending after his time in Israel), he and the Jewish community "have been direct beneficiaries of the important work of YU and its alumni."

When asked if he felt uncomfortable raising such a large sum from his friends, family and community, Josh remarked, "I felt very comfortable asking friends and business associates to support me in this endeavor. I think a lot of people took it to heart even though they themselves aren't affiliated understand the central role YU plays in our community." Josh noted that many of our shuls, schools and Jewish organizations are headed and staffed by YU alumni and semicha graduates.

Immediately after the race, Josh appreciated all that YU has done for the greater Jewish community when he visited Frankfurt, Germany. Although home to an orthodox community, Josh noticed a stark contrast between the lack of orthodox institutions there compared to the vibrancy offered to American Jewry by YU.

Although Josh was unable to raise his stated \$100,000 dollar goal with his bike ride, he still intends to continue raising money for the Scholarship Fund. When asked how he felt about his efforts, Josh enthusiastically replied: "I hope that my ride might spur other people to create their own challenges to raise money for Yeshiva to facilitate its contributions to the Jewish community and so it can continue to help people like Shalom."

Our Lost Generation

By Daniel Atwood

A long time digital subscriber to the *New York Times*, I recently received a coupon for a discounted price on home delivery. Now receiving the hard-copy of the paper, I am able to read significantly more than I was able to online (I do not like reading online), which also means that I am spending a large chunk of my personal reading time dedicated to catching up on the paper, whereas previously most of my personal reading time was allotted to books. While I am learning a lot about various topics, including politics, international affairs, art, culture, science, and more, I feel that reading scattered articles, either online or in print, is a fundamentally deficient reading experience than reading book-length works. The depth and sophistication of a book, in my opinion, does not compare to a 1500 word article.

The truth is that my book time started to erode a couple of years ago with the proliferation of Facebook, the blogosphere, and, most crucially, the smartphone. Whereas a good part of my Facebook feed used to be personal status updates ("I'm at the beach!"), my feed is now dominated by links to news, articles, and blog posts. Interestingly, Facebook is probably the place that many Americans get their news from today. Facebook picked up on this trend when they added the "trending" section and hashtags, changes that help people find more news, faster. Facebook is no longer for posting what I am eating for breakfast, it is for sharing and discussing all types of news. I am now a member of seemingly countless Facebook groups dedicated to reading and discussing various articles about the Jewish community, interfaith relations, American political issues, and more. Keeping up with all of these "must-read" articles takes up a substantial amount of time.

Many of these articles and the ensuing discussions are interesting and important. Facebook is probably the greatest triumph of free-speech in human history. A few years back, if somebody wrote a really thought provoking piece in the *LA Times* I would never be able to read it, simply because I do not follow that paper. Now I can count on my friend from LA sharing this article, and I am exposed to diverse opinions from all over the world. I am learning about more topics than ever, from more people than ever.

And then there is my iPhone. Like a good millennial, it is always next to me. It is the last thing I glance at before going to sleep and the first thing I reach for when I wake. It is scary how much my smartphone use seems ripped out of the pages of a dystopian novel. As soon as one of my friends posts a must-read article from The Jewish Week about whatever topic (for example), I am able to read it. If I wait even two hours, the conversation might be long over, and I will be 200 comments too late. If I want to be caught-up on community happenings, there is pressure to read these articles immediately.

Being a student with a part-time job and other responsibilities, I have little personal reading time. That means that a large portion of my personal reading time is spent on these articles, either online or in my physical paper, at the expense of books. The problem with books is that they just take too long to read. In the time I can read one 300 page book I could have read 100 three page articles. And no one is discussing the book that I happen to be reading now; it is not "trending." I have come to realize this unfortunate reality, the death of the book for the millennial generation, and I try and make a conscious effort to make time to sit and read books, filtering out the constant fluttering of my smartphone, laptop, and the beckoning headlines of the *New York Times*.

Reading articles is simply not the same as reading a book. We read an article in one sitting; a book we read over a number of days, weeks, or even months. There is something to be said for going to sleep with only half of the story in your mind. You have something to think about, to imagine, to dream about. How will my book end? I love coming back to a familiar character (whether the book is fiction or non-fiction). It is like seeing an old friend again; I have to become reacquainted every time I return to the book. My varying day-to-day moods and experiences

effect how I view these characters. I read my book on a happy Sunday and when tired on the subway, returning from a long day out. It is for this reason that I also do not binge read. Books entail a more sophisticated reading experience and expand my mind and imagination in a way that no blog post can. It is no coincidence that when I am in the middle of a book I can tell people "I am reading book x." The process of reading (as opposed to "I read") is irreplaceable.

Books are also necessarily more in depth. An article, even a long one, can only hope to do so much. This harkens back to the age-old question of when it comes to learning which is more important, quality or quantity. Obviously both are important, but there is simply no comparison from an intellectual point of view to taking the time to really examine a topic or story, with all of its entailments. The book, theoretically, shows you the whole picture; the article is an intellectual equivalent to a hookup.

It is not easy to escape the cycle of articles. They simply never end; there will always be

one more must-read article, one more blog post, one more piece of news that if I do not see right now I will be forever rendered as irrelevant. And then there is the library; I can see it from my apartment's living room. When I walk through the shelves I am humbled by how much I have yet to learn. Sometimes I am reading a classic novel, and my checking out this book simply adds another wrinkle to the already worn cover. And sometimes I am giving life to a book by being the first one in the library to read it. When the librarian stamps the book with the due-date for the first time, I feel like I can sense the book's heart begin to beat. Can this profound sensory experience really be compared to being the 962nd person to share this on Twitter?

If I wanted to study the intellectual trends of 1914, 100 years ago, I know where to turn. I will go to the library and look up the writers of the "Lost Generation," as the post-WWI generation of writers is referred to as, and read about Hemingway's simple yet never simplistic characters. In 2114, when they want to learn about 2014, what will they read? Where will they turn to? To our millions upon millions of Facebook posts? To another blog post in the *Huffington Post*? To our endless comments, however interesting, on *NYtimes.com*?

We too are becoming a lost generation. We are lost from our past, no longer connecting with the great works of the human mind and spirit, losing our collective consciousness.

We are lost from our present, as our imaginations and thinking abilities become less complex, inundated with facts but bereft of critical thinking. And most scarily, perhaps, we are lost from our future. There will be no records of our existence. We will never be able to share our struggles, our hopes, our fears, our laughter, and our sadness with our great-great-grandchildren. If they want to research important pieces of writing from our generation, where would they even start? Either that or they will be too busy writing their own blog posts to bother and learn about our experience.

Book burning used to be the biggest threat to human intellectualism. We thought advances in technology would solve that problem—there are enough copies of any given book to go around. But technology brought with it a much more insidious threat, the threat of oversaturation. I know that by writing this article I am, supposedly, setting back my own cause. Hopefully it is not too late. This trend can be reversed, we can take the time to read physical books again, but we need to put in a conscious effort in order to successfully navigate the post-information age.

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The Blessing of First Year Writing

By Dani Weiss

I remember sitting in Weissberg Commons during the First Year Writing (FYW) orientation event, straining to hear my professor speaking over the hubbub of introductions between students and professors in different classes. After the obligatory introductions and awkward icebreakers, we received our first assignment as a class, to write a letter to our graduating selves. I vividly recall struggling to formulate and organize my thoughts and translate them into written words. Though I knew that this assignment would not be graded, I seemed incapable of articulating the simplest of thoughts on a piece of paper. After spending several hours I was only able to write down a few sentences. Though this experience represents the struggles involved in my FYW course, I gained a tremendous amount from FYW, and I strongly encourage all students to take this class with the utmost gravity.

My professor started the first class in a typical fashion, reading through the syllabus and setting the course goals. He then went around the class asking us individually if we consider ourselves writers. While some students responded in a noncommittal affirmative, most students, including myself, responded with a resounding: "No." To quell our fears, my professor proceeded to describe experiences with other students who expressed similar sentiments and subsequently improved their writing to a point where they had published papers and articles in public forums. I listened to his presentation skeptically, knowing that I would not become one of those people. As the professor described our next assignment, I realized that my nerves were not unfounded. We would have to choose one issue on which we were yet undecided, investigate the issue, reach to a conclusion, and describe our thought process in a minimum of two pages. The paper would be due at the start of the next class, just two days later. Upon hearing this, I felt my stomach plummet. After struggling to write a few measly sentences at the orientation event, I could not imagine writing such a lengthy paper in the allotted time.

Needless to say, I spent the better part of the next two days scouring the internet for different hot-button topics to discuss, while frantically calling friends and relatives for assistance in researching, writing, and editing my paper. Through the help of certain key players who provided both technical and morale-lifting assistance, I scrambled to produce a somewhat presentable essay. Though relieved that I completed this assignment, I now felt that completing the class would prove impossible.

But alas, through many workshops on sentence structures,

smooth transitions, and the process of rigorous analysis of arguments, I began to understand the dynamics of writing. Each assignment increased in length, and my stress levels continued to hover just under intolerable. Yet as I managed to rise to the challenge of each new assignment, I noticed my confidence rising.

The final hurdle of the semester arrived in the form of a feature length article on a topic of my choosing. Whereas writing a 12-page paper seemed an impossible feat at the start of the semester, it now came across as distantly attainable. I

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threw myself into the assignment, relentlessly researching my topic, writing into the wee hours of the night, and scouring each sentence in order to eliminate grammatical errors and refine my style. Watching my finished product roll off of the printer and caressing the crisp warm stack of papers in my hand felt nothing short of euphoric.

In hindsight, that paper was not so amazing. The writing style was a little bit choppy, the arguments somewhat contrived, and the solutions I presented were a bit naive. Rather than engaging in dialogue with my sources, I simply quoted them. Despite my best efforts at the time, I committed a

few grammatical errors. But none of the essay's shortcomings detracts from the momentous significance that this assignment played in my life. It marked my ability as a writer. Did I still need improvement? Of course. But I was now progressing steadily along a trajectory of improving my self-confidence and polishing my aptitude as a writer.

Only after taking several other writing-intensive courses can I truly appreciate what I gained from a semester of hard work in FYW. Besides for the noticeable improvement of my grade in writing courses, I can attest to improved grades in many other courses. I can produce cogent arguments and salient theses with less stress and effort than many of my peers. Not surprisingly, my oral presentations improved as well; eloquence in writing contributes to a commanding presence in speech.

Without downplaying the significance of the aforementioned items, possibly the largest benefit of the course came in the form of personal growth. It is my experience that writing forces me to clarify, condense, and elucidate my arguments so that in the process I gain a deeper understanding of my own thoughts. In this way writing has empowered me as a critical thinker across several disciplines including, but not limited to: Politics, history, philosophy, psychology, and literature.

Since completing the course, I have spoken with a variety of different people about their experiences with FYW. Some had similar experiences to mine, involving hard work and a rewarding result. However, most of the people I have spoken with simply did not put forth the necessary effort to garner any tangible improvements from the class. Whether they started out as bad writers or somewhat better writers, these people never invested the time or effort necessary to improve their writing and will not likely improve their writing skills.

To close, I would like to offer a word of encouragement to the students who are currently enrolled in a FYW section. Take advantage of this opportunity. I cannot guarantee that you will become a world-renowned writer, but with hard work you certainly will improve. At worst, you will enhance your writing; at best, you will set yourself along a life changing trajectory of growth in writing, critical thinking, and self-confidence.

I would like to thank Dr. William Lee for his hard work and dedication as my FYW teacher. Writing this article would not have been possible without his efforts both inside and beyond the classroom.

Of Privacy and Pop

By Doron Levine

The data attest to America's rapacious appetite for sugary drinks. According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately one-half of the American population consumes at least one soft drink every day. Determined to outslug its foreign competitors, America dominates the international drinking game. The average American guzzles one hundred seventy li-



ters of soda annually. The closest competing market, Mexico, consumes a comparatively small 146 liters per year per person.

And the calories contained in sugary drinks go straight to the hips. Numerous studies demonstrate that soft drink consumption produces plumpness in adults and children. Acutely aware of these facts, Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) figured that if Americans lacked their capability to control his liquid intake, then the government must lend them a hand. This past summer, Ms. DeLauro introduced the Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Tax (SWEET) Act, which imposes an excise tax on the sale of sugary drinks.

The content of the bill may be relatively innocuous, but the logic behind it is alarming. Author G.K. Chesterton once said, "Democracy is not founded on pity for the common man; democracy is founded on reverence for the common man." The SWEET Act inverts this traditional conception of democracy by distrusting the common person's capacity to make personal health decisions. In a statement about the bill, Ms. DeLauro explained, "People want to be healthy...but we are in the midst of dual epidemics with obesity and diabetes afflicting our nation... the SWEET Act will help correct the path we are currently on." That is to say, surely you citizens want to be healthy, but you simply lack the restraint to discipline your bellies. You need the government to step in and save you.

But this reasoning is dangerous. If government determines

that individuals cannot control themselves, then it could reasonably decide to impose further economic or statutory restrictions. The SWEET Act could eventually morph into legislated alcohol prohibition. And why stop at drink? Maybe foods will also be banned. From hot dog tariffs to a lollipop tax, we could soon see the American government levying all sorts of healthy-eating incentives. The food pyramid would cast its triangular shadow over the land in a terrifying display of dietary despotism. Once government no longer trusts the individual to determine what to drink, little prevents it from further tightening its grip on the citizen's gullet. Ms. DeLauro should maintain a healthy distance from this slippery slope.

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill contemplates "how to make the fitting adjustment between individual independence and social control." Government must somehow maintain control of its dominion while still granting people space for creative autonomy. Mill concludes that government should give the individual free reign unless his or her activities impinge on the freedoms of others. Such a system of government enables people to develop virtue from within, rather than having seemingly correct decisions forced upon them.

Ms. DeLauro herself seems to accept some form of Mill's argument. In a memo to house Republicans, DeLauro affirms "women's constitutionally protected right to make informed

SWEET Tax, cont. on p.11

SWEET Tax, cont. from p.10 health care decisions about their own bodies.” At least half of American citizens, DeLauro believes, can be trusted to monitor their own health.

Given her position on the privacy of personal health decisions, Ms. DeLauro’s distrust of the common soda drinker is surprising. The sugary drink tax, if implemented, would subtly subvert Mill’s delicate balance between law and liberty. Ms. DeLauro would like to surreptitiously influence our dietary decisions, gently nudging us to swap Dr. Pepper and Snapple for tomato juice and celery smoothies. In so wishing, Ms. DeLauro grossly oversteps the appropriate boundaries of democratic government. It is hard to imagine a more personal, more primal realm of human activity than eating food. Even without Mill’s extreme formulation, basic nutritional choices should remain the domain of the ordinary person; such highly personal decisions defy the broad strokes of government regulation. If a person wishes to indulge in a large fountain soda, trading a brief climb in blood pressure for a moment of refreshing bliss, this

person wagers only their own health; this person alone should decide whether to drink or not to drink. Only three people have the right to tell a person what to eat: Their partner, mother, and God. The Big-Brother government has no place in the kitchen.

The case for autonomy in drink selection strengthens considerably due to the issue’s inherent ambiguity. Even if heaviness hampers long-term health, a person may still legitimately decide to eat fattening foods. He or she may reasonably prefer shorter years filled with satisfaction to a long life of laborious dieting. Similarly, when we scuba dive, bike, drive automobiles, or venture outdoors without a helmet, we increase our chances of early death in the interest of filling our lives with pleasure and meaning. This calculation yields no simple formula, and government efforts to distort the results erode basic human freedom. Officials audaciously overstep their bounds when they think themselves more qualified in basic human matters than humans.

Aside from intruding on people’s private routines, weight-loss incentives can actually harm the people they aim to ben-

efit. Paul Campos, author of *The Obesity Myth*, argues that the socially constructed categories of weight unfairly vilify the plump. People who innocently put on paddings of salubrious pudge attract heaps of silent obloquy from friends, family, and passersby. They stoop under a heavy social pressure to slim down, subtly bullied into conformity by cultural insinuations such as “The Biggest Loser,” impossibly thin billboard models, and skinny jeans. They often succumb to various degrees of stress and body image anxiety. Government attempts to legislate based on weight stereotypes will further anchor them into the bedrock of America’s collective consciousness, and intensify the emotional damage to the overweight. Pernicious obesity prejudices will gain further legitimacy when proclaimed by the government.

Therefore, Ms. DeLauro, kindly turn your attention to other responsibilities of Congress. Pour your energies into your other enumerated powers, such as the economy, creating infrastructure, and reducing crime. But please remove your hands from my cup. Let me sip in peace.

The Future of Music at YU

By Shuey Mirkin

“Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent.” Victor Hugo, author of *Lés Miserables*, beautifully expressed what so many of us instinctively feel. Music, in whatever form we prefer, carries so much meaning. Whether our thing is jazz, rock, indie, alternative, or kumzits, we’ve all been hit before by the power of a song, a lyric, a tune, or a melody. Our music speaks to us. And that power is made possible by people who dedicate their time to the intense study and practice of music. Those who choose to study music in college—major or minor—do so because they have a passion and a gift for that thing which we all connect to.

The other week, I was speaking to a friend who’s majoring in sociology, with plans to go into chinuch. We were talking about the classes he needs to take, and what’s it like to be in one of YU’s smallest majors. He remarked, only half-jokingly, that he hopes he will be able to finish his degree before the sociology department closes down. At a relatively small university such as ours, this is an unfortunate, but necessary, reality. With limited budgets already, the university just doesn’t have the money for smaller departments and majors. When crunch time comes, the “extras” are the first things to go. With beloved head of the music department, Professor Noyes Bartholomew, retiring after this year, the question has to be asked—what will happen with the music department? To go straight to the source, I asked the good professor himself.

In articulating Yeshiva’s vision of the liberal arts, Professor Bartholomew wrote that: “I do believe that the College fully understands that the presence of the arts in a curriculum is a significant part in the forming of cultured students. The non-verbal arts, after all, comprise expressions, or projections, of human knowledge and emotion for which, frequently, no words suffice. In this sense, artists express themselves in the non-verbal arts through languages, each with its own syntax but without the precision of the

texts of poetry and other verbal literature, but languages which, once encountered and experienced deeply, enrich a person’s life.” This ideal echoes the vision and direction of any quality liberal arts college.

Oftentimes, we study art not for what we can do with it, but for what it can do for and to us. With that in mind, he continued, Yeshiva



Professor Noyes Bartholomew

faces very real, very significant monetary concerns. Professor Bartholomew told me that “the budgetary reality that Dean Eichler must deal with is almost overwhelming. The higher administration keeps calling for cuts.” The idea of hiring a full-time professor for the art department has been something which has been on the “back burner” for many years now, but has always been passed up for more hiring needs in larger departments such as psychology and the natural sciences. “Until

the university’s financial difficulty eases”, says Bartholomew, “arguments for new hires are difficult to support.”

Practically, this means that the current adjunct professors and other part time faculty in the music department will have to fill the gap, and continue to provide all necessary courses. This semester, the music department

to keep budgetary concerns at the forefront, the university must also maintain vibrant, relevant programs in its smaller departments if we are to be a liberal arts club.

Aryeh Tiefenbrunn, music major and founder of the YU Music Club, remarked to me that the music department at YU is not intended to make the university a competitive music program. At the end of the day, YU doesn’t have the resources or numbers to be Berkeley, or even Columbia or a similar program. But that’s also not what we’re trying to be. The music department here, more than anything, gives a place to students with “a serious interest in music, who have just never been exposed to much music education in their lives.” Being a music major or minor at YU is a fantastic way to take a casual passion and talent for music to the next level. If a student takes his music studies here seriously, they will prepare him for graduate level music programs.

But although the university perhaps can’t be expected to be concerned with expanding the department, it definitely should be concerned with making the music department the best it can possibly be. To encourage growth and development within the music program, students need to see that the university has their interests in mind. This comes out, very often, in the small details. Aryeh told me that the classrooms for music classes still do not have whiteboards outfitted with staff lines (for music notation), which should be standard issue. It’s the little things like this where the university has a chance to strengthen the department and show that they care, and these opportunities should not be passed up. Again though, many of the issue come down to the constant tension YU faces between maintaining healthy, vibrant departments on the one hand, and healthy, vibrant finances on the other. With all this in mind, we’re left with a bit of a question mark as to the future of music here at YU. After corresponding with Professor Bartholomew, however, I felt reassured by his closing words: “Trust that well-intentioned people will do everything possible to keep music healthy at the College.”

WITH ITS BELOVED DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR NOYES BARTHOLOMEW, RETIRING AFTER THIS YEAR, THE QUESTION HAS TO BE ASKED—WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE YESHIVA COLLEGE MUSIC DEPARTMENT?



The YU Jazz Ensemble, Spring 2014

Restructured Student Government Poised for Success

By Adam Kramer

Here at YU, we are blessed with many student government groups. As Twain famously remarked, “too much of anything is bad,” and in past years the YU student government has been large regarding members but small regarding overall efficacy. This is part of the reason why amendments were passed to reform the student government this past May.

The student government includes many different governing bodies. The Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) represents all students at YU, both those in Yeshiva College and those in Syms. YSU is in charge of non-academic clubs, and organizes major events on campus. Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA) is strictly for Yeshiva College. It is in charge of student clubs and provides a voice for students vis-à-vis the administration. The Sy Syms Student Council (SYMSSC) serves the same function for students in the Sy Syms School of Business. Finally, SOY, the Student Organization of Yeshiva, is the undergraduate body responsible for Torah learning and religious life and activities on campus.

The first problem with the way student government was structured last year and in years prior was that there was no organization to coordinate between students and the administration when it came to academic issues. According to Adam Zimilover, the former President of YCSA who was instrumental in writing and passing the recent amendments, the official organization appointed by the provost to deal with academic issues, called the Student Academic Affairs Committee (SAAC), hasn't functioned for a minimum of four years. Even when it did function, SAAC didn't work with the Office of Student Life or the Dean's Office, so its effectiveness was in question.

Prior to the elections last spring for this fall's student government, Zimilover tried to refocus YCSA to add an academic component, enabling students to come to YCSA with classroom or curriculum issues, since, given SAAC's defunctness, there was no practical way for them to deal with these kinds of issues.

A second major issue was that the student government of YU contained too many positions. This had two practical implications. Firstly, since there were so many seats, many students in student government didn't actually do anything to help the government run or to address students' needs. As YSU Vice President of Clubs Aitan Magence explained, having so many people on the government made event planning and approving more complicated.

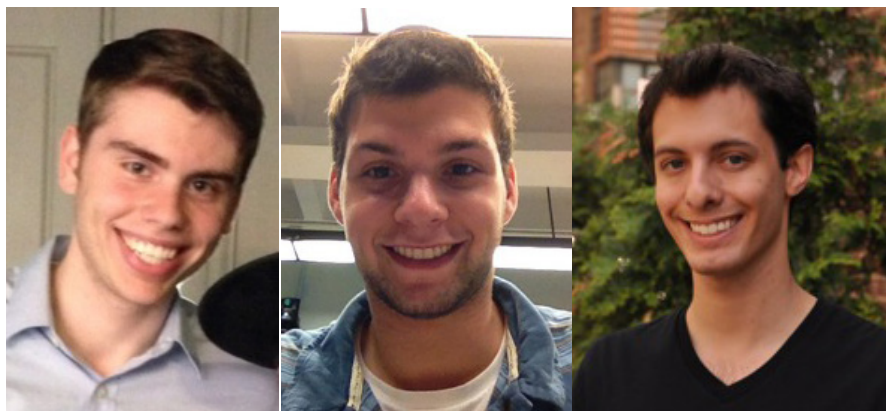
Secondly, many of the student government positions were held by students who were elected through uncontested elections. This meant that there were student leaders in important positions who were using student activities fees—tens of thousands of dollars per year when student organization budgets are combined—when they were merely appointed to the student government by default, without having a real election or opposition.

The May amendment cut out positions that were redundant, such as the YSU Vice President, and vice presidents and treasurers for individual classes. Hezzy Jesin, the Wilf Campus Director of the Office of Student Life, commented on the reorganization of the specific class councils: “folding the class councils into YSU provided a stronger, age-balanced voice on student council as well as direct access to financial resources needed for successful class-based programming.”

SOY was not without its changes as well. According to Jesin,

the SOY representatives for each morning program were formerly known as presidents and are now known as vice presidents, creating a more equal representation on the SOY council. Jesin provided similar reasoning for the SOY President now potentially coming from whichever morning program has the largest number of students enrolled, as opposed to being automatically from MYP.

One of the biggest issues with the student government last year was the participation of RIETS students in SOY. According to



YC Student Government Leaders (from left): President Shai Berman, Vice President Ben Kohane, and Secretary/Treasurer Josh Nagel

FOLDING THE CLASS COUNCILS INTO YSU PROVIDED A STRONGER, AGE-BALANCED VOICE ON STUDENT COUNCIL, AS WELL AS DIRECT ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL CLASS-BASED PROGRAMMING.

Zimilover, RIETS students could vote in SOY and YSU until this year. Furthermore, RIETS students would attend SOY and other undergraduate religious events that were paid for with undergraduate student activity fee money, but the RIETS administration wouldn't contribute money from the RIETS student activity fee to help pay for these events. Due in part to these issues, added Jesin, SOY clarified in the recent amendments that it is an undergraduate council made up of undergraduate students, with the explicit purpose of serving undergraduate students. The amendments to the student government that pertain to RIETS were worked on in conjunction with the RIETS administration, although, according to Zimilover, some RIETS students are unhappy about it.

As for how the amendment was passed, the old version of the YU Student Government Constitution included a clause stating that amendments could be considered only during a general election (held each May for the following fall). So, though Zimilover and his fellow student government members wanted to enact these amendments earlier in their tenure, they had to wait until the May general election to push their amendments forward.

This is partly why Zimilover, when asked about any regrets he has from his tenure, stated that because these changes had to be introduced in May at election time, which, he pointed out, is really a constraint of the old constitution, the amendment and restructuring process was done in a way that was very confusing for the student body. The hope is that, in the future, with the

updated constitution, things will be clearer.

This brings us to this year's restructured student government, led by YSU President Natan Szegedi, YCSA President Shai Berman, SYMSSC President Leo Korman, and SOY President Jacob Bernstein. In the past, different members of the student government communicated with different classes or clubs. This year, YSU is debuting a streamlined process for communicating with student clubs and classes. Ben Kohane, the Vice President of YCSA, commented on this change in how class representatives interact with the YSU: “In previous years, class councils really had no input into student government here on campus, and were treated strictly like YSU clubs. Now, class representatives have a greater say and are led by a seasoned veteran of student government, YSU VP of Classes Nathaniel Ribner.”

This year, Aitan Magence is assuming the role of Vice President of Clubs for YSU. As a leader of YU Club Canada for a few years now, Magence learned firsthand the difficulties of dealing with a student council that didn't communicate efficiently and wasn't receptive to a club's needs. Magence told me via email that on one occasion he “submitted an event request that got rejected, but no one from the student government contacted us to let us know... the moral of the story is that this should not have happened.” He added that his goal as the Vice President of Clubs is to ensure that all clubs and events run as smoothly as possible, and that he hopes to meet with club leaders after the *chagim* to coordinate with them.

Led by President Shai Berman, this year's YCSA is “looking to expand [its] programming and run a couple of larger academic events over the course of the year. Moreover, YCSA has begun an effort to establish itself as the voice of Yeshiva College students and, as part of that effort, we have started to create a mechanism through which Yeshiva College students will be able to effectively communicate their suggestions and input to the Dean's Office,” detailed Berman. Berman would also like to inform students that the YCSA will be releasing a Google form in the near future allowing students to communicate to YCSA any academic needs, concerns, or suggestions.

“All of these amendments speak to the student leaders' ongoing commitment to best represent the student body when creating programming, when addressing academic concerns, or when discussing new ideas with university administrators,” concluded Jesin. The restructuring and improved efficacy of the various branches of the student government will allow them to serve the student body more efficiently, ensuring an enhanced college experience for all.

They Want My Soul: The Musical Wizardry of Spoon

By Raphael Ozarowski

We are all familiar with the stereotype: the music fan who constantly bemoans the non-existence of good, guitar-based rock music in the 2000's. “Rock is dead,” s/he laments. “Nothing good has been released since the golden age of The Doors, The Rolling Stones, or The Beatles.” For various reasons, large swaths of rock fans are under the impression that rock has been “dead” since the 1970's or so.

As somewhat of an amateur music enthusiast myself, I could attempt to refute this claim by citing all sorts of modern musical move-

ments. I could easily point to the so-called “garage rock revival” of the early 2000's, including bands such as The White Stripes, The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The Black Keys, and Arctic Monkeys. I could suggest the shadowy guitar heroics of pioneering “stoner-rockers” Queens of the Stone Age, the heavy Zeppelin-worship of Wolfmother, or the swirling neo-psychedelia of Tame Impala. A cursory listen to any of these groups will show that rock is very much alive and flourishing.

But in truth, none of these encyclopedic acrobatics are necessary. Rather, a mere one word will suffice: Spoon.

Spoon is one of those delightful bands whose music can always be counted upon. For over ten years' and seven albums' worth of material, they have delivered consistently enjoyable guitar rock. Hailed as “minimalists,” (though they often shun the label), Spoon excels at concocting just the right mix of guitar, drums, piano, reverb, and feedback. A recent profile of the band in The New York Times labeled its members the “molecular gastronomists of rock.”

They always know the perfect moment to throw in a catchy tambourine, the exact second when the bass drum should kick in for maximum adrenaline. Their studio technique is rig-

orous, focused, and methodical. On the other hand, some of the band's best work seems to emerge more nonchalantly, as if some mystical force is guiding their perfect collages of sound out of the studio. Singer Britt Daniel muses that some of their best work was produced almost by accident from one afternoon in the studio.

What it is that makes Spoon's music so instantly appealing? Spoon sounds like a pretty straightforward rock outfit on first listen: a nice heap of The Kinks mixed with a bit of The Rolling Stones and a pinch of The Pixies. But there is grime and dirt beneath **Spoon, cont. on p.14**



MOVIES & TV

By Ari Schwartz

So much is happening in the Fall. School is starting; leaves are changing; winter is coming. Yet among all of this seasonal upheaval, there is one sacred constant. No, I am not referring to the High Holy Days. And I am not even referencing the return of the NFL. I am talking, of course, about the Fall TV season, a time when networks unleash their shiny new toys, and try to justify the millions of dollars they put into developing countless pilots over the spring and summer in the hope of hitting the jackpot with this year's critically acclaimed drama about a psychologically troubled male lead character. And while most of our favorite shows won't hit the small screen until springtime (Louie/Game of Thrones anybody?!), some of our returning favorites are still littered among the barrage of new content. So, without any further to-do, here is one man's completely subjective and biased list of which new shows to be excited for, which old ones we should welcome back, and perhaps a show or two that we would do well to stay away from. This is your *Fall 2014 TV Guide*.

New Shows

Mulaney (Fox)—For those of you who watch stand-up comedy (yes, I'm speaking to you five), you may know John Mulaney from his ridiculously funny stand-up special *New In Town*. If you watch SNL, you can thank him for our beloved creepy party-promoter, Stefon. So, if you fall into one of those two categories, you'll understand why I'm so psyched for this show. For the other 90% of you, you'll just have to trust me on this one. Mulaney plays the semi-autobiographical eponymous lead, an aspiring comedian who shares an apartment with two friends and performs stand-up comedy at various points throughout the show. Yes, I know. It sounds like an updated version of *Seinfeld*. However, being one of the funniest people around right now yields certain advantages, such as the benefit of the doubt. I know I'll be tuning in.

Gotham (Fox)—RYAN FROM THE O.C. IS PLAYING JIM GORDON. Sorry, I just had to get that out of the way. *Gotham* will join new series such as *Flash*, and slightly less-new series such as *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, as a part of DC's and Marvel's insatiable hunger for world domination. *Gotham* is an origin story; not necessarily of Batman, but of his city. Instead of focusing on the Dark Knight, the show centers around Detective Jim Gordon (whom, as I calmly intimated above, is being played by Benjamin McKenzie of *The O.C.*) as he navigates the crime-filled city of Gotham in order to find the murderer of Bruce Wayne's parents, encountering corruption and deception along the way. This piece of dialogue should be enough to convince you to watch:

Young Bruce: "I'm learning to conquer my fear."

Gordon: "Fear doesn't need conquering. Fear tells you where the edge is."

How To Get Away With Murder (ABC)—Finally! A chance for guys to take part in the awesomeness that is Shonda Rhimes (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*) without having to watch a show whose demographic is women in their 30's and 40's. Murder is essentially *House for law*, and it centers around Annalise Keating (Viola Davis, *The Help*), a law professor, as she manipulates and enlightens her students in an attempt to teach them, well, *How To Get Away With Murder*.

Red Band Society (Fox)—Remember that kid Astro from *X-Factor* who told Simon to stop looking at his mom? Yeah, so he has a show now. He stars alongside Octavia Spencer (*The Help*) in this Steven Spielberg-produced (like every movie ever) dramedy that focuses on a group of teens with cancer and other serious diseases living in a children's hospital. If you saw/read John Green's *The Fault In Our Stars*, and loved it because of its portrayal of teens with cancer as, you know, normal, and not just people created to teach us "normal" people an Important Lesson, then this show is a must-watch.

Do Not Watch (New Shows)

Selfie (ABC)—This show looks terrible. Reasons to avoid: 1) It's called *Selfie*. 2) No, wait, it's actually called *Selfie*. 3) The main character sounds like the woman from the "#SELFIE" song that came out this year...but she's not being ironic. 4) Actual hashtags pop up throughout the show. 5) Reasons 1 and 2. I cannot emphasize this enough. Would you watch a show called YOLO?

Returning Shows

Brooklyn Nine-Nine (Fox)—*Brooklyn* was created by Dan Goor and Michael Schur (*Parks and Recreation*), and follows Detective Jake Peralta as he and his fellow hilarious detectives solve crimes in New York's fictional ninety-ninth precinct. Just in case you missed that, that's Andy Samberg literally playing a professional cop, the people that brought you *Parks and Rec*, and just as a little something extra, the are-you-kidding-me-how-could-someone-possibly-be-this-strong-that's-just-ridiculous guy from the Old Spice commercials, who makes all men secretly question their masculinity! And did I mention it won the Golden Globe last year? Watch this.

The Newsroom (HBO)—This will be *The Newsroom*'s third and final season, and I expect it to be its best yet. *The Newsroom* follows the optimistic (if you're a cynic, read: naive) members of a fictional news program in their pursuit of giving America the "real news," free from the constraints of media politicization, ratings-mongering, and corporate self-interest. It really came into its own last season after ditching its "this is how this news

story should have been covered" framework that it boxed itself into, and instead started developing actual story lines. This is a controversial choice, but it really comes down to one thing: do you love Aaron Sorkin (*West Wing*, *Social Network*)? If you do, watch. If you don't, what is wrong with you?

Community (Yahoo)—No one knows when *Community* will return to us for its sixth and final season (well, then again, it wasn't even supposed to have a season four, so who knows?). Some say this Fall, some say they won't even start writing it this Fall, and some say Yahoo didn't actually bring the show back to life and this is all one cruel trick they're playing on us Greendale students. Ok, that last one is actually just my own irrational fear. But there's tons of stuff that has to be answered this season: Will Donald Glover (*Troy*) come back, or is he too busy being super depressing as *Childish Gambino*? Will it be revealed that the whole show is actually a movie being directed by Abed? These are the hard-hitting questions, the answers to which lay just around the corner. So watch it. Or don't. As they say in their trailer, in a homage to *Back To The Future*, "Ratings? Where we're going, we don't need ratings."

Do Not Watch (Returning Shows)

Modern Family (ABC)—This one is more of a protest than anything. Look, I loved the first two seasons of *Modern Family* just as much as the next guy. I even think that last season was moderately funny as well. But there is no excuse for *Modern Family* beating out *Veep* for this year's Best Comedy at the Emmy's. And while I know that is not *Modern Family*'s fault, I have to punish somebody.

Movies

TV isn't the only thing to be excited for this Fall. Here is a smorgasbord of six movies you should be excited for, based on previews and Hollywood Buzz, coming soon to a theater near you:

This Is Where I Leave You (September 19)—Jason Bateman (*Arrested Development*), Adam Driver (*Girls*), and Tina Fey star in this movie that was probably a response to some Hollywood exec saying "We need more movies about sitting shiva." The Altman siblings don't like each other very much. Their lives are all in varying degrees of disrepair. And, to make matters worse, their father just died, with one final request: for his children to return home and sit shiva for him under one roof. Hilarity (along with "them feels") ensues. Based on the book *This is Where I Leave You* by Jonathan Tropper. Important sidenote: Ben Schwartz (*CollegeHumor*, *Parks and Rec*) appears as a Reform Rabbi; the movie is literally worth seeing just to watch his sermons.

Gone Girl (October 3)—Yes, you've passed it every time you've walked into a Barnes & Noble the last six months. Well, your determination to not read this critically-acclaimed crime thriller has paid off, because it's hitting the big screen this Fall. *Gone Girl* is directed by David Fincher, and follows Adam Dunne (Ben Affleck) as he tries to clear his name from his wife's suspected murder after she goes missing on their fifth anniversary.

Birdman (October 17)—What happens when someone who had all of the world's love and attention suddenly doesn't matter anymore? That is the fundamental premise behind *Birdman*, a movie following a retired actor, once famous for his portrayal of a super-hero, as he copes with his new reality of living on the periphery. He struggles with issues of family, ego, and identity in the weeks leading up to his planned return to relevancy, in the form of a new Broadway play. Michael Keaton, Zach Galifianakis, and Emma Stone star.

Interstellar (November 7)—Christopher Nolan (*Inception*, *Dark Knight Trilogy*), Matthew McConaughey (alright, alright, alright), Anne Hathaway (first person ever to win an Oscar for a movie trailer), world starvation, and space exploration. Oh, and just as a proverbial cherry on this diabetes-inducing sundae, the beautiful and magical Michael Caine reading glorious poetry in the trailer. I'm not sure why I'm even writing words still. You should be seeing this movie.

Mockingjay: Part 1 (November 21)—The final chapter in the epic dystopian series about children killing each other, and related political shenanigans. Oh, wait. They're doing that annoying move where they split the last book into two movies? Whatever. Katniss is back and more suicidal than ever, as she leads begins to lead the revolution of the Districts against the Capitol. But really, the only thing that's relevant here is that this movie has Jennifer Lawrence. J-LAW. End of discussion.

The Imitation Game (November 21)—Alan Turing (Benedict Cumberbatch!!!) is a British mathematician hired by his government to break Nazi Germany's Enigma Code, thereby potentially single-handedly destroying the Nazis and ending the war. This film follows his whole life, from unhappy teenager to the fast-paced days when he and his team try to break the German code. Keira Knightley also stars.

header image graphic courtesy of: http://o.aolcdn.com/os/movie/one/img/fall-movies/mf_fall_movies_and_tv_th_v2.jpg

Where is the Magic? A Review of "Magic in the Moonlight"

By Daniel Trager

He's made forty-three films over the course of his career and we still can't help but feel that warm feeling of anticipation co-mingled with nostalgia, as the dark screen fills with white lettering and the music begins to play. The film's title, spelled in a familiar non-italicized Windsor typeface, prepares us for an expected hour and a half of amusement, followed by "Written and Directed by Woody Allen."

Joining Allen's oeuvre among comedic masterpieces like Annie Hall and Zelig, *Magic in the Moonlight* is a comedy set in Southern France in the late 1920's. It stars Collin Firth as Stanley Crawford, a world-class master of illusion dedicated to debunking claims and reports of real magic, alongside Emma Stone as Sophie, a young American clairvoyant who has managed to convince a family of obscenely wealthy Americans living large in the Cote d'Azur, the Catledges, that she possesses psychic abilities. At the behest of his childhood friend and fellow magician Howard Burkan (Simon McBurney), the exceedingly cynical and conceited Stanley—who manages to quote Hobbes, Freud and Nietzsche in the first five minutes of the film—relishes at the chance to unmask Sophie for the charlatan that she must certainly be.

Predictably, to the point of cliché, Stanley falls for Sophie's magical abilities, and for the young woman herself, within a day of arriving, as Allen presumes any older gentleman engaged to be married must after spending a weekend with an eccentric, free-spirited woman twenty years his junior. Cue Disneyesque heartwarming happy ending. Allen's obsession with May-October relationships, apparent in a lot of his work in Manhattan in 1979—in which he co-stars as a twice-divorced 42-year-old comedy writer dating a 17-year-old girl—and spanning his whole career, is, frankly, a bit weird. The age gap between the leads probably contributed to the actors' lack of chemistry on screen. Magic

in the *Moonlight* attempts to be both a comedy and an existential lecture on reason and man's search for wonder. It fails horribly at both.

The film opens with promise: on the scene, an elaborately "oriental-themed" stage, Stanley, dressed as his alternate persona Wei Ling-Soo, delivers his famous disappearing elephant trick with appropriate mystical flair. The colors are dazzling, setting the scene for a magical performance, but the rest of the movie is all colors and window dressing, with a paper-thin plot. As far as production design and cinematography go, the movie offers an alluring picture of roaring twenties indulgence and a heavy dose of nostalgia. Southern France is exquisite in summer and I was entertained throughout by the lavish

put on a white evening jacket and fly to Monaco, they do not hide the fact that the film is not funny. The film is not bad—it is cute and visually pleasing—but the audience is left disappointed because it could have been so much better. It seems that Woody is no longer trying; one wonders if the recent media attention that his personal life has garnered, allegations of his abusing his stepdaughter, distracted him from delivering another success.

The chemistry between the two leads is warm at best and the romance seems underdeveloped; Stanley seemingly falls in love with Sophie simply because she is young and vivacious. As with almost every element of the film aside from the aesthetics, the romance is

his rapid about-face is far-fetched. His egomaniacal and pompous character is irritating and elicits little sympathy.

Stone delivers her psychic reading by entering a wide-eyed fugue state and wildly flailing her arms, catatonically delivering facts about Stanley she couldn't possibly know, overplaying the character's vulnerability and naiveté. If the attempt was to show the audience how even self-proclaimed militantly scientific men will believe what they want to hear, that effect was lost on me. Sophie's psychic readings are so banal, and Stanley so ready to believe her, that the predictability left me waiting for a surprise twist that never materialized. The supporting actors gave much better performances, Eileen Atkins playing Stanley's eccentric Aunt Vanessa and Simon McBurney delivering in a great role as Stanley's friend Howard Burkin, who supplies the "magic" that winds up being more than initially meets the eye. All in all, though, the effect is not one of poor acting, but poor plot progression and character development.

The film is a visually pleasing period film, and for someone who wants to watch a movie for beautiful historical sets and costumes, it is worth a watch. But the comedy was almost non-existent, and the audience within my view

laughed a total of two times. Devout fans of Woody Allen's work will not leave angry, but likely disappointed. There are familiar elements that scream classic Woody Allen, but *Magic in the Moonlight* can't compare to some of his better work. In his effort to release a film every year, it seems Mr. Allen has sacrificed quality for quantity. For a student on a budget in New York City, I would not suggest paying the exorbitant theater ticket price to go out and see it, but perhaps wait until the film's home-release, buy some snacks and watch it with a friend. Just keep your expectations low.

MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT ATTEMPTS TO BE BOTH A COMEDY AND AN EXISTENTIAL LECTURE ON REASON AND MAN'S SEARCH FOR WONDER. IT FAILS HORRIBLY AT BOTH.



photo courtesy of: <http://athenacinema.com/magic-in-the-moonlight-coming-soon/>

sets and finely tailored costumes. The director pays close attention to detail, from the beautiful automobiles you wish you could drive, to the historically accurate outfits.

Granted, Allen adorns every scene with gorgeous landscapes and exquisite costumes, but the movie plays out like a bad episode of *Mad Men*. Instead of building toward a satisfying climax and denouement, Allen expects us to be dazzled with the magic of the scenery and the wardrobe, forgetting he never satisfyingly developed the rather bland and predictable story. While the scenery and the homes in which the Catledges reside might make you want to

not completely implausible, but could have benefited from greater depth. It seems entirely unlikely that an engaged man in his fifties would fall in love with an odd, much younger woman whom he clearly considers his intellectual inferior. The relationship doesn't develop over the course of the film; rather, Stanley has a moment of epiphany while speaking with his elderly Aunt Vanessa, when it suddenly dawns on him that he has feelings for Sophie. Because the audience doesn't see the romance develop, we find it implausible. The dialogue too is underdeveloped—it is not dry or awkward, but the audience gets sick of Firth's dry cynical quips, and when his character discovers the "magic,"

Spoon, cont. from p.12 the pristine surface of Spoon; a hint of experimentalism lurks in the background of their music, waiting to pounce. At any moment, the band could burst into an abrasive explosion of squealing guitar feedback, the calm chords dissipating into a distorted torrent of tension. Britt Daniel's voice leaps instantly from a hushed whisper to a snarling howl. This flirting between the traditional and the avant-garde is what propels the excitement in each song. The listener is again and again caught by surprise.

I recently saw Spoon perform at Rumsey Playfield in Central Park. The first opening act, Operators, was somewhat forgettable, but the second openers, dance-punk group !!! (yes, that is their name, which is pronounced 'chk-chk-chk,' but can be pronounced by repeating thrice any monosyllabic sound according to the band's website), set the stage with a throttling set of party vibes. Lead-singer Nic Offer flung his jheri-curl hairdo furiously as he flailed around the stage and unleashed quite the impressive ar-

ray of goofy dance moves. Clad in short-sleeve button-down and staggeringly short shorts, Offer whipped attendees into a frenzy with his crazed antics; at three different points during the show he descended into the crowd and wound his way through, pausing to dance vigorously with random attendees. His energy was, quite literally, palpable to the audience.

After !!!'s frantic onslaught of a performance, even Spoon felt almost a bit tame in comparison. Opening primarily with newer songs from the excellent *They Want My Soul*, the band was slightly hampered with volume issues. Throughout the show, I found myself wishing singer Britt Daniel's snarly vocals were a bit more audible, that the band's characteristically messy guitar solos would tackle me in the gut harder than they did. Though guitarist Alex Fischel was visibly writhing and throwing himself erratically around the stage as he delivered dirty solo after dirty distorted solo, the sound mix simply did not always translate the urgency of the material. Outdoor venues are notoriously prone to difficult audio setups.

Sound issues aside, this may also partly be a consequence of how unbelievably crisp and slick the band sounds on record; the taut production on their albums is some of the best I have ever heard from a rock band. In any case, Spoon eventually got into a groove, unleashing hits spanning each of their last six (!) albums. In fact, each of their full-length releases has been so solid—simultaneously polished yet rip-roaring—that your average Spoon fan is often at a loss for words when

asked which Spoon album is his or her favorite.

On the whole, tracks from their newest album *They Want My Soul* were rousing and energetic. The album is significantly fierier than the band's last release, *Transference*, which—with more meditative beats, muffled vocals, and turned-up bass—was more universally classified as a "headphones album" of sorts. The new tracks kicked about animatedly in a live setting.

The single "Rent I Pay" had the crowd singing along to its memorable chorus as sputtering distorted guitars laid a jagged base for Britt Daniel's charismatic vocal work. White lights pulsed brightly, accenting the 'hey's and 'na na's of the music as the band deftly pounded out song after breakneck song.

Aside from the new album, Spoon's older material was equally captivating in concert. Every song off of the band's 2005 release *Gimme Fiction* was a highlight: the bouncy disco-like beat of "I Turn My Camera On," which the band augmented live with jackhammering electric guitars; the rollicking, rolling pianos that weave their way into your skull in "My Mathematical Mind;" the sensitive acoustic balladry of "I Summon You." It is remarkable just how well the band's work has aged, feeling hip and slaying in concert almost a decade after its release.

The band also snuck in "Anything You Want," a nostalgic throwback to the 2001 album *Girls Can Tell* that was described by Daniel as the band's "first super-personal song," by



photo courtesy of: <http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pictures/2014/7/30/1406740610731/Spoon-band-photo-011.jpg>

request.

When the band closed after two hours of performance, I found myself hungry for more. Spoon's back-catalog is so filled with great tunes that even after a 21-song setlist, it felt like they had barely even played half of their hits—a testament to the band's lasting impact.

Though almost every one of their albums has ranked in various best-of lists, Spoon remains criminally unknown outside of the indie world—a wonderful treasure waiting to be discovered by the mainstream. The band was even ranked by review aggregator Metacritic as "Top Overall Artist of the Decade." One need not be a seasoned indie explorer to appreciate Spoon's charming synthesis of straightforward rock 'n' roll and forward-thinking production. If you are one of the aforementioned rock fans clamoring for good guitar music, or even a regular listener who wants to expand his or her musical horizons just a bit, I implore you to listen to Spoon's albums. You will not regret it.

BUT THERE IS GRIME AND DIRT BENEATH THE PRISTINE SURFACE OF SPOON; A HINT OF EXPERIMENTALISM LURKS IN THE BACKGROUND OF THEIR MUSIC, WAITING TO POUNCE.

All Hands on Deck: YU Continues to Navigate Troubled Financial Waters

By Alex Behar

In recent years, an abundance of information has cropped up about Yeshiva University's investment strategies and monetary dealings throughout the past decade. The reports have painted an unfavorable picture of YU's financial judgment as well as its organization. Major news sources, such as CBS and JTA, wasted no time in reporting the decline of one of the most prominent Jewish non-profit entities in the United States, an institution that has been characterized as a dimming beacon of American Jewry. As far as most of the media was concerned, the academic future of Modern Orthodoxy was now teetering on the edge. A pretty compelling read, is it not? The unfortunate truth is that the hull of YU's financial infrastructure has been quickly flooding, but that doesn't mean we need to abandon ship quite yet. Before we discuss the various strategic changes YU is in the midst of making, let's look at the history of the financial crisis.

It is undoubtedly true that the past few years have marked a decline in Yeshiva's financial status. The institution has been downgraded by both Moody's and Standard & Poor's, two big credit rating agencies, and has recently been forced to liquidate \$72.5 million worth of assets after monetizing \$128 million dollars in real estate during Winter of 2013. Most recently, YU announced that it will be ceding operations of Albert Einstein College of Medicine to Montefiore Medical Center, which will relieve the Yeshiva of significant annual costs. These post hoc measures are a response to a near \$525 million loss in investments and the accumulation of \$567 million in debt. That is a pretty big blow. How did it all happen?

Well, for starters, Yeshiva University deals with pretty significant expenses as is. As Carolyn McLean, an analyst at S&P, told the Forward, YU's 2013 operating deficit of \$64 million can be attributed to Einstein Medical Center alone, and YU's operating deficit in the past three years have been \$106 million, \$47 million, and \$107 million, respectively; pretty hefty stuff.

In YU's official financial statement, it appears much of its deficit is also attributable to reduced research grants and increases in financial aid—which had gone up to 50% from 2007 to 2008—as well as investments in faculty, facilities, and updated technology.

Considering YU's enormous expenses, due in no small part to its separate campuses for men and women, Yeshiva University is a gas guzzler of an institution. However, the conversation does not end there. A major paradigm shift in Yeshiva University's investment strategy played a big role in the deteriorating fiscal condition of the school.

Between 2003 and 2008, Yeshiva University's allocation of investments to hedge funds increased dramatically, which ultimately resulted in losses for Yeshiva. By the first half of 2008, alternative investments came to dominate 80% of YU's portfolio. Now, that number has decreased to about 60%, reflecting a transition to a more conservative investment plan.

The change in YU's approach to spending came largely with the installment of a new administrative body, beginning with the hiring of President Richard Joel in 2003. The president had lofty ambitions at the beginning of his term in office, ambitions which would entail dramatic campus-wide changes that required radical paradigmatic alterations, both in allocation of operating expenses and investments. President Joel's experience as International Director and President of the Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life tailored his skillset toward communal growth and outreach, and that is what he brought to the Yeshiva University table. He sought to transform Yeshiva University from an academic institution into a community, ushering in an era of campus renovations, construction projects, and other improvements to the quality of student life. The president entitled his agenda "E noble and Enable," but these high expectations for YU's future were met with equally high costs.

A thorough investigation of Yeshiva University's finances reveals a 68% increase in spending between 2001 and 2008. Although the report includes expenditure beginning two years before President Joel took office, this is a clear demonstration of drastic changes in operations. Not to mention that, over the same period, revenues only increased by 25%.

In 2004, President Joel set out to revamp Yeshiva University. This began with the issuance of \$100 million in bonds to

fund a whole host of projects, one of the larger projects being a biomedical research facility at Einstein. "I was aggressive with the board in wanting to spend," admits a reflective President Joel, "but the system wasn't geared toward aggressive spending."

In 2008, Yeshiva University was caught in a global economic landslide, yet Yeshiva University's annual expenses continued to grow. As President Joel recalls, "like many other institutions, we were severely impacted by the 2008 recession, yet chose to continue to build." Yeshiva University indeed continued to build, dedicating the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center for Jewish Study in August 2009.

Prior to 2012, no official department was devoted to overseeing investment activity or ensuring that investment strategies were in accordance with the fiscal capacity of the university. Under President Joel's leadership, the Board of Trustees organized an Investment Committee in 2003 that consisted primarily of prominent hedge fund managers. Notwithstanding the general business acumen of the committee, there was little diversity in the body of experts orchestrating Yeshiva Univer-

AFTER THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 2007, A ONCE WELL-FUNDED GIBRALTARIAN FORTRESS OF AN INSTITUTION MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLED THE RAVAGED CITY OF POMPEII, FINANCIALLY SPEAKING. THE QUESTION STILL REMAINS, WHERE DOES YESHIVA UNIVERSITY STAND NOW, AND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO RETURN YU TO ITS FORMER FINANCIAL FORTITUDE?

sity's investment strategy. This committee effectively took the reins and rode at a strong gallop toward the edge of a fiscal cliff.

In 2001, Yeshiva University had 46% of its endowment placed in alternative investments and 41% in treasury bonds. According to one report in 2005, YU sold a majority of its U.S. treasury bonds and invested the money in stocks and hedge funds. At this point, hedge funds came to constitute 65% of its investment portfolio. As mentioned above, this grew to a staggering 80% by 2008. Under the purview of the Investment Committee, trends changed rapidly and dramatically.

Hedge fund culture certainly pervaded the stock market in the years prior to the recession, but there are conflicting reports as to whether or not Yeshiva University's investment activity reflected the norm at the time. According to one investigation, at its highest, hedge funds constituted 21.7% of Yeshiva University's total endowment, which is over three times the average for institutions with a comparable allocation in investments.

Despite the foregoing numbers, a statement issued by President Joel in June 2014 refutes what he considers exaggerated reports of YU's risky investing. According to a chart disclosed in President Joel's statement, which records Yeshiva University's long-term investment pool, YU outperformed the median return for U.S. college and university endowments between 2002 and 2013 by 1%. Criticism of these numbers points to the ambiguity of the data collected and the absence of the phrase "long-term investment pool" in any financial statements, audits, or similar records. Additionally, this chart includes a year prior to when President Joel took office.

In the same statement, President Joel asserted that YU did not lose \$1.3 billion, as purported by many media outlets. This is a valid claim, as nearly half of the \$1.3 billion allegedly lost was actually accumulation of debt, which is not technically considered a loss in financial terms.

Little is known about the activity of YU's Investment Committee, as much of the exchanges between members have been in confidence due to the lack of transparency within Yeshiva University's financial infrastructure. However, in 2013, inves-

tigations carried out by JTA exposed dubious behavior and potential conflict of interest issues within the institution.

Yeshiva University's Investment Committee consisted mostly of hedge fund managers who had university money invested in their own funds. Ezra Merkin, who had been collecting management fees from Yeshiva for money invested in his fund, Ascot Partners, was the Chairman of the Investment Committee. Additionally, Merkin's company was a feeder fund for Bernie Madoff's ponzi scheme. According to President Joel's statement, Yeshiva University's previous conflict of interest policies had been "in line with other major universities." However, there were still many loopholes within the policy that allowed for conflict of interests to exist.

While investments with Madoff ultimately only accounted for \$100 million of the \$525 million lost in investments, the overall influence of Merkin and other hedge fund managers who were funding their own companies likely led to a greater reliance on hedge funds than was safe for the university.

In both fiscal years 2009 and 2010, YU experienced the brunt of its financial decline. According to a June 2011 Moody's report, Yeshiva University suffered a reduction in application volume as well as undergraduate enrollment. Its total financial resources declined from \$1.8 billion in its 2007 fiscal year to \$1.14 billion in 2010, a 38% drop. Although these percentages are not atypical of average university losses at that time, this marked the beginning of a persisting trend in YU's financial status. While the administration would not comment on its history regarding investment management, the Moody's report also mentioned that YU's high exposure to hedge funds and alternative investments left YU open to risk of further limitations on liquidity. This means that, until 2011, little change to the university's investment strategy took place, despite its losses.

Between 2007 and 2010, tuition revenues grew by a thin 2%, and pressure on the university caused by a weakening student market was projected to increase. Yeshiva University sought to resolve this issue by hiring more full-time faculty, investing more in its honors program, and hiring a Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies. These expenses were a long term investment for the university, but, as the data would suggest, they only increased annual deficits, and yielded virtually no returns. In fact, between YU's 2010 and 2011 fiscal years, revenues from tuition and fees dropped by near 2%.

The argument seems to be made quite frequently that YU endured no greater a loss than any other comparable university or institution. However, Yeshiva University saw a decline in total net assets by nearly \$95 million in 2010, despite 10.1% endowment returns. According to a Moody's report, this decline is "highly unusual" given that 2010 was a year of "strong positive endowment returns for most universities."

By the 2011 fiscal year, YU had reported larger deficits in operating cash flow than any other research university rated by Moody's. The administration turned to its donor base and tuition revenues to remedy this issue. In YU's 2013 financial statement, its tuition revenues increased by around 9% compared to 2011.

In an official credit report, poor ratings were also attributed to weak financial management. Yeshiva University is now working on installing a software system, known as Banner, to produce its financial reports. Millions of dollars are going into this project. Banner is a resource that has been on the market for years and is commonly used by universities. President Joel notes that, before Banner, the systems YU used to generate financial reports were "completely outdated."

After the global financial crisis of 2007, a once well-funded Gibraltarian fortress of an institution more closely resembled the ravaged city of Pompeii, financially speaking. The question still remains, where does Yeshiva University stand now, and what has been done to return YU to its former financial fortitude?

Unfortunately, the most recent financial report, issued this past March, forebodes a grim future for YU, given the cocktail of financial troubles the university faces. Moody's downgraded YU from B1 to B3 status, reflecting "weakening financial viability given the rapid deterioration of unrestricted liquidity from severe and ongoing operating deficits." The report took into consideration YU's ability to sell prime real estate holdings in order to pay off bondholders and other creditors. As mentioned above, YU capitalized on this real estate. The report also notes that YU's

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YU FINANCES, cont. from p.15

“extremely thin unrestricted liquidity” demanded enormous endowment draws and “release of temporarily restricted assets.”

Despite the negative outlook, liquidating real estate assets will certainly avail YU in paying down debt, but one of the more major shifts should come from the university’s new deal with Montefiore.

Montefiore will be assuming a majority of operational responsibility for Einstein, which had previously been responsible for two thirds of YU’s annual deficit. The contract is officially termed the “Memorandum of Understanding,” and allows YU to tap into revenues generated by Montefiore’s clinical operations while also giving Montefiore more control over management. This will free up a lot of capital that could be put to good use both in paying down debts and in rebuilding YU’s academic infrastructure with the hope of increasing enrollment rates. In addition to financial relief, Montefiore’s assumption of more ownership over Einstein will allow it to more effectively manage the system, because it will actually be within the system.

Yeshiva University and Montefiore will be involved in what President Joel refers to as “mutual due diligence.” Montefiore will take responsibility for operations and finances of research within the medical school, and Yeshiva University will take responsibility for the academic component of the medical school without the research.

Concern has been raised that selling Einstein to Montefiore will deprive YU of the prestige that came with its ownership of Einstein Medical School. President Joel retorts that the university is not selling the medical school; a new deal is being created in which YU will shift the “operating responsibility and fiscal responsibility to where it belongs.”

On March 26th, 2012, President Joel announced the installment of Ahron Herring as Chief Investment Officer at Yeshiva University. Among Herring’s credentials are positions with MIT Investment Management Company and Merrill Lynch & Co. The newly founded investment department should provide the necessary oversight to ensure more responsible fiscal decisions in the future.

Additionally, YU recently hired Jacob Harman as the new Vice President of Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer. Harman will be in charge of developing and executing financial plans and other initiatives to help stabilize YU’s finances. Harman has worked for over 35 years as a financial executive, working most recently as Senior Audit Partner in the Office of General Counsel at KPMG.

As of September 12th, 2014, Yeshiva University refinanced five Manhattan properties including Yeshiva College and Stern College for women. In the deal, YU sold \$175 million in taxable bonds. A spokesperson for the university tells the Mortgage Observer that this will help raise “additional liquidity and runway to support university initiatives in the coming years.” This debt replaced a series of short-term loans due this fiscal year, including \$60 million in debt with Bank of America. This should give YU some breathing room for the time being, and has been described as “exceptionally important” by a member of the administration, but it is still only a short-term solution to a long-term issue.

Although some action has been taken, much more needs to be done before YU can truly get back on its feet. The major fear at this point is total liquidity depletion before YU is able to implement a plan of recovery, and, as stated by Moody’s, “... it could take several years before management, in conjunction with consultants, can stabilize financial performance.”

After speaking with members of faculty and staff, it seems there is still one looming question on everyone’s mind. What now? Thus far, the administration has been focused on treating the symptoms without addressing the actual malady itself. A fundamental restructuring of YU’s financial strategy must take place, and the Board knows it.

YU currently takes in \$200 million annually from its Manhattan campuses and spends \$250 million. “This cannot continue,” cautions Dr. Selma Botman, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost at Yeshiva University. “We need to get our revenue in line with our expenses.” The administration, along with members of faculty and staff, collaborate weekly to devise a new plan.

Among the solutions proposed are changes in organizational structure of classes, blending shared services such as honors programs and advising, increasing blended courses—for which faculty would alternate between teaching an online class at the Wilf campus and an in-person class at the Beren campus and vice versa—and increasing class sizes. Task forces have also been formed with the intention of orchestrating horizontal and vertical integration, which would mean potentially offering courses that are interdisciplinary across graduate schools.

As of now, no official organizational plan has been offered by the trustees, although faculty has been prompted to aid in the development of a comprehensive plan. While there will still be a serious revision of spending, Dr. Botman notes that “we cannot cut our way to a balanced budget.” The university



will continue to tap into its philanthropic base and work to increase enrollment.

YU has also been working alongside Alvarez and Marsal (A&M), a leading global professional services firm that specializes in turnaround management and business advisory, to formulate non-academic solutions. Besides the refinancing of the Manhattan properties, which was immensely important, A&M has aided in cost cutting, promoting voluntary retirement, and other forms of damage control to relieve a total of \$20 million in debt.

Additionally, the university has been developing new Masters degree programs, such as speech pathology, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, in order to generate revenue.

During the YU faculty council meeting on September 18th, a flow chart was presented that outlined the projected outlook of the university’s debt. Currently, Yeshiva University has a \$150 million deficit, \$100 million of which will be taken over by Montefiore. Since Einstein generated \$23 million in overhead costs, only \$77 million will be realized of the \$100 million transferred to Montefiore, leaving the university with a \$73 million deficit. Yeshiva University has recently booked \$20 million in savings from its work with A&M, which places the debt at \$53 million. The expenses for the refinancing performed by debt services will hike the debt back up another \$9 million, which lands the deficit at \$62 million. A&M has expressed considerable confidence that it will be able to recover \$37 million of this \$62 million, which would reduce YU’s deficit to a manageable \$25 million, although it has not disclosed a specific plan by means of which it will accomplish this recovery.

One major concern of the faculty, which has been expressed in articles past, is the disproportionate distribution of salary. Prominent members of the administration receive greater pay at Yeshiva University than similar positions at a majority of colleges nationwide. However, Dr. Selma Botman made it very clear in the council meeting that this is due to an understaffed

administration. “When I look around to see who’s getting the job done, every one of them rolls up his sleeves and does the work,” Dr. Botman insists. According to Dr. Botman, there are simply not enough members of the staff to distribute the labor evenly, and the administration is left to pick up the slack.

An even greater and more pertinent concern among staff members is what will actually be done moving forward. There has been a lot of discussion about potential plans, but nothing definitive. Faculty is still left in the dark by an administration that offers little to no transparency in their financial dealings, and when the cuts come, faculty members don’t know who will be affected. “We have been asked to make these cuts, but we have never seen a detailed financial plan” reveals one professor in attendance at the meeting. “There is a degree of skepticism among faculty.” A member of the administration reassures those in attendance, as a result of the new financial software system adopted by the school, “there is more transparency now than there has ever been,” but an ongoing failure to disclose hard numbers or strategies lends little substance to statements like this.

The faculty is also concerned about the academic restructuring being proposed. Larger classes and blended courses will compromise the academic excellence offered by YU. The intimate classroom environment that makes Yeshiva University such an attractive option for so many students will be substituted by an impersonal academic system run through YU Global, an online academic software system recently purchased by the university.

On September 23rd, President Joel came out with a statement updating the YU community about the current state of Yeshiva University finances. He mentioned a number of the changes discussed in the Council Meeting and entitled the financial plan for the future the “Roadmap to Sustainable Excellence,” but didn’t offer many details of the plan. He also did not mention a concrete timeline within which the school hopes to accomplish its goals, just that “the implementation of the Roadmap will take place with all deliberate speed.” Furthermore, the impression was given that there is, in fact, a finalized plan, when during the Council Meeting the reality seemed to be that no definite course of action had been agreed upon among the Board of Trustees.

Regardless, the point is well taken that steps toward improvement are being made and that we are in the nascent stages of recovery.

Despite the salvo of criticism that has rained down on YU governance, there is still comfort to be found in its unique strengths as an institution. Many reports have cited YU as having a distinct market niche; they offer services academically and religiously that exist nowhere else in the world. I would even venture to say that Yeshiva University has more than a market niche. Like the religious worldview it represents, it has a deep and inexorable sense of purpose as an institution. The administration knows that the survival of YU as a symbol of Modern Jewry is imperative. They understand that a fundamental change in the substructure of the university’s organization must be effectuated, and that is certainly a start. There are still issues that need to be addressed, most importantly the outlining of a comprehensive fiscal plan going forward, but the proper managerial oversight has finally been established. A lack of administrative management is what led YU into this fiscal trap, and installing financial leadership and forming departments that can localize and target specific issues is the first necessary structural step to getting out of it. It is important to be hopeful about the future of YU, and I believe we can be confident that, with the organizational restructuring that will come from recent changes in administrative management, there is reason to be. However, we must also be realistic; our limited access to the decisions being made upstairs makes it difficult for us to draw informed conclusions about YU’s future. Yes, YU has a substantial market niche, yes, we finally realize that we have to revamp our system, but we have to crystallize this realization into action. I do not believe we need to abandon ship—being optimistic about our future is exactly the wind in our sails necessary to move this institution forward—but we must have concrete action to supplement that optimism; we need a sail.

Keeping up with "Big Data": Syms Debuts New Business Analytics and Marketing Major

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen

Last semester, Sy Syms' Dean Moses Pava announced that among broader curriculum changes, the Information and Decision Sciences (IDS) major would be replaced by a new major, Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics. "At some point students lost interest in the major and the jobs changed," said Dr. Avi Giloni, Associate Dean of Sy Syms and Chair of the IDS Department, explaining why the major was replaced. The nature of business is rapidly changing; organizations, both public and private, have started relying more heavily on data to make key decisions. The new major is a joint effort of the Marketing Department and the IDS department, and is designed to teach core competencies from both fields. IDS majors who desire to finish their major are allowed to, but according to Dr. Giloni most have switched.

"Students should be excited about (the new major), because we are. This really is as cutting edge as we are going to get right now," Dr. Giloni said. Dr. Giloni developed the major in tandem with Dr. Tamar Avnet, Chair of Marketing and Management. Dr. Giloni said that the vision for the major came from his "experience with various firms and knowing what the firms' needs are and the types of skills they are looking for." More than ever, companies are trying to sort through data in an effort to refine their target customer base, track market trends and provide a better consumer experience. Students are now being offered the opportunity to gain the knowledge necessary to jump in to one of the hottest new fields. Dr. Avnet said, "a lot of the entry level marketing jobs that are out there require some sort of data analysis." Dr. Avnet noted that she spoke with the Career Center to get an idea of exactly what jobs were out there for students with this skill set. Dr.

Avnet went on to say that there are very few undergraduate programs similar to the Business Intelligence major, but there are a variety of graduate level programs. Developing this skillset at the undergraduate level will make graduates of the Sy Syms School of Business that much more attractive to prospective employers. "I think it's very positive ... I would like to do it if I had the opportunity," Dr. Giloni said referencing the direction Syms has taken with the Business Analytics and Marketing major. When asked about staff changes for the new major, both Dr. Avnet and Dr. Giloni used the opportunity to praise their staff and highlight their research and expertise, and suggested that staff changes were unlikely. Dr. Avnet pointed out that all of the marketing faculty does research in consumer behavior which includes social media, and that Dr. Steven Chan, who is teaching the new social media course is an expert in the field. Dr. Chan has been in touch with a few businesses to help provide the students with real life data and practical examples. "There's nobody in this field, in statistics...who is not familiar or up to date with the trend of big data...The skills that they already have are very much necessary," said Dr. Giloni, of the IDS staff. Dr. Avnet also said that because the marketing and IDS departments are very strong, the major provided an opportunity for the University to play to its strengths. Both Dr. Giloni and Dr. Avnet stressed the fact that because Syms is a smaller school, it is much easier for departments to come together and create new majors and courses. Dr. Avnet added that the marketing department was working with YC's psychology department to create an organizational behavior course, to be launched this spring.



Dr. Avi Giloni | photo courtesy of: <http://blogs.yu.edu/news-and-views>

A strategy to promote the new major to current and potential students is in the works. The Sy Syms School of Business is designing a brochure for the major, which is expected to be ready in time for the open houses, when prospective students can visit the campuses. Dr. Giloni said that all students enter college thinking about big data, even if they do not want to work in it. Dr. Giloni went on to say that "we have bright and motivated students here" and that this major will allow them to pursue a master's degree. Dr. Avnet noted that she actively recommends the new major to students interested in any field requiring data competency.

Regarding how to judge the success rate of the major, Dr. Giloni said the most important metric to determine success is what kind of jobs students get, and that it will be a few years before it could be judged. Dr. Avnet said that the primary short-term metric to look for is how the major affects levels of enrollment. Dr. Avnet, as a true marketing professional, said that word of mouth is the best measure and that the University will look for higher enrollment in coming semesters. When I asked Dr. Giloni what he sees as the growth potential for the major, he said that as a statistician, he did not believe there was enough data to predict that, and advised me to ask him again in six months.

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Syms is Soaring: Student Enrollment Continues to Increase

By Raymond Cohen

The Sy Syms School of Business is on the rise. An ever increasing amount of students are deciding that Sy Syms is their college of choice. Enrollment in Sy Syms has skyrocketed from 409 students in the Spring of 2012 to 619 students enrolled for the current Fall semester. Over the last three years, Syms has seen its student body increase by 48 percent. At one point (2008), Syms had as many as 693 students, but amid rumors that the business school was closing, students became more hesitant to enroll; enrollment continued to decline until 2012. While students have been flocking to the business school, Yeshiva College and Stern College have seen a mild decline in their student enrollment. Since 2012, enrollment in Yeshiva College and Stern College has dropped by 11.5 and 3.5 percent respectively.

The focus on business among undergraduates is hardly specific to Yeshiva University. With student debt exceeding \$1 trillion (NYTimes.com) and a bleak job market, students across the country started to invest their efforts in degrees that they felt would help them pay off student loans more quickly and that would lead to financial stability in the long run. Also, with tuition prices rising every year, reports like Forbes' "Top 50 Return on Investment Colleges 2014" have come to the forefront of conversation among high schoolers and their families. It also comes as no surprise that less students are pursuing degrees in liberal arts disciplines. A study conducted by Beyond.com and published in Business Insider and found that only 2 percent of employers are actively recruiting liberal arts degree holders.

But Syms' growth is not completely attributable to external factors. Over the past three years much has changed at Sy Syms. In June 2012, Dr. Moses Pava took over as Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business. Along with Associate Deans Michael Strauss and Dr. Avi Giloni, Dr. Pava has been working tirelessly to make significant improvements to the business school and provide students with an undergraduate experi-

ence that will yield tremendous benefits upon graduation and beyond. "We're (the deans) in meetings every day, either by phone or in person, discussing how we can make things better" Dr. Pava told me.

In March of 2013, the Sy Syms School of Business became



accredited by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International). AACSB International is one of the oldest and most well known global accrediting bodies for business schools that offer undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees in business and accounting. As of the March 2013, only 672 business schools worldwide held the accreditation. Not only did Syms' accreditation affect current students in terms of their chances on the job market, but it also played a key role in making Sy Syms a more attractive place to enroll. Since the announcement of Sy Syms' accreditation, they have seen a net gain of 127 students.

Sy Syms' accounting department has always been strong, the Sy Syms front office has ensured the continuity of the accounting program by adding a Masters program for account-

ing students. By offering the MS program, Sy Syms, by definition, strengthened its accounting program as a whole. Two years ago, Sy Syms students scored second overall among all schools in New York on the CPA exam. "The top accounting students (at Sy Syms) perennially get big four offers, which most schools can't say" said Dr. Pava. The new programs along with the track record of the school have been able to reinforce its overall attractiveness to aspiring accountants.

Another major contributor to the wealth of students signing up for Sy Syms is the Sy Syms Business Honors and Entrepreneurial Leadership Program. Launched in 2012, and under the direction of Associate Dean Dr. Avi Giloni, the mission of the program "is to enhance the educational experience of its high-achieving business students" and focuses on "providing honors students with enhanced entrepreneurship opportunities; significant interaction with senior faculty in business, the liberal arts and sciences; and career-changing contacts with global business leaders and senior executives" (<http://www.yu.edu/syms/honors/about/>). Currently, 76 students are enrolled in this program. "most of these students would not be in the business school if not for the program" Dean Pava told me. "this honors programs gives students access to scholarships that would otherwise not be available to them."

Some may argue that too much focus on business at the undergraduate level takes away from the college experience and doesn't provide students with the necessary intangible skills to survive in the workplace. Professor Rachel Mesch, Associate Professor of French and director of the YC core explained: "scores of recent studies, opinion pieces and data have shown that business students benefit tremendously from a liberal arts education and courses in the Humanities (English, History, Philosophy), where they learn crucial critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills...through the kinds of classroom interactions and discussions which these kinds of classes encourage." She noted that the liberal arts classroom is the best place for as-

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Syms Curriculum Incorporates Business Ethics

By Avishai Cohen

Business Halacha was recently added to the Sy Syms School of Business curriculum as a required class for all students, filling a Jewish studies requirement. I spoke to Sy Syms Dean, and Alvin Einbender Professor of Business Ethics, Dr. Moses Pava and RIETS Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Ozer Glickman about the origins and development of the course. Dr. Pava has dedicated his life to the study of business ethics and has published about ten books and dozens of journal articles on the topic; he explained that the recent changes to the Jewish core in Sy Syms were made because “students should be the ones that are in charge of their education and I want to give students more choices. This is really a part of giving students more choices.” Dean Pava went on to say that he tried to keep the Sy Syms core curriculum in line with YC while keeping the business component robust.

About three years into his tenure at YU, while he was still an accounting professor, the then-dean asked Dr. Pava to create a course on the Ethical & Legal Environment of Business. Dr. Pava noted that the course remains a core requirement for non-accounting majors. “So I got a textbook, and I used the textbook...it was a great textbook, I had a great semester, but I felt something huge was missing from our discussion,” Dr. Pava told me.

“It wasn’t really the way I do ethics, and it wasn’t the way our students do ethics in practice either,” the dean continued. Dr. Pava decided to integrate Jewish material and readings into the course itself. Rabbi Aaron Levine, who Dr. Pava described as “the father of Jewish business ethics” took Dr. Pava “under his wing” and Dr. Pava says he used many of Rabbi Levine’s readings for the course. Rabbi Levine was the Samson and Helina Bitensky Professor of Economics in YC and Chair of the Economics department. Rabbi Levine was also rabbi at the Young Israel of Avenue J and involved in the Beit Din of America. Dean Pava says that “with him, I started doing some of my own writing,” it was then that his career as a Jewish ethicist began. Dr. Pava wrote a book specifically for the business ethics course, published by Ktav in conjunction with Yeshiva University Press, with an introduction by former YU president and Rosh Yeshiva, Dr. Norman Lamm.

Dr. Pava wrote several other books, including the Jewish ethics workbook consisting of cases written up by students. Dr. Pava says he re-worked the student’s papers, but tried to maintain their originality. He said that to an extent, he still uses it. “Ethics fit with the mission of the university...and was kind of getting brushed under the rug,” Dr. Pava said. Professor Robert Greenberg, and Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman, who teach Ethical and Legal Environment of Business, were asked to integrate Jewish sources into their courses. “One of the best things about being the dean, is that I can begin to institutionalize some of the ideas I write about in my book and go beyond a single person teaching a single course,” Dr. Pava told me. He described the University’s decision to require a business halacha class as a “major breakthrough.” The new business ethics curriculum allows the business school to work closely with RIETS. Dean Pava mentioned that he had spoken with Rabbi Kalinsky about possibly creating a second, upper-level course.

“I think there’s a lot of topics that one could cover in these

kinds of classes,” Dr. Pava said. The secular classes have a focus on ethics, regardless of whether or not the professor is Jewish, but the focus on ethics is relatively unique to Sy Syms, as a Jewish business school. Dr. Pava said that when creating the ethics curriculum they looked to NYU Stern and Wharton, as well as the University of Seattle, a Catholic school that integrated business ethics from a Catholic perspective into the curriculum. Many religious universities, Catholic especially, have integrated ethics into the curriculum, and Dr. Pava said he worked closely with them. He also conveyed the fact that Rabbi Glickman and Feldman were selected because they were relatable to the students and are experts in the subject material; he described them as being “among the best teachers in Sy Syms.”

I was unable to get in touch with Rabbi Feldman for this article, but I did communicate via email with Rabbi Glickman. Rabbi Glickman only started teaching the course last year,

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after Rabbi Feldman started, and described Rabbi Feldman as “a wonderful scholar with deep knowledge of Choshen haMishpat” and noted that he is a dayan, in addition to being a Rosh Yeshiva and synagogue rabbi. In contrast, Rabbi Glickman is a business executive and a Rosh Yeshiva, and was encouraged by Dr. Pava to add his personal experience to the course. Rabbi Glickman has worked as a trader, bank executive, and in hedge funds over his career. “I wanted to give the students a taste of my 35-year career in the business world and what it has meant to mediate it through my knowledge and commitment to Halacha,” he wrote. “I want Sy Syms students to understand that the advancement of the economy is a noble activity...bringing economic stability to the world helps advance civilization. It provides the capital for life-saving drugs, for education, to feed and clothe society.” Rabbi Glickman went on. “Yafah Torah im Derech Eretz...I want to convey that enthusiasm for Torah im Derech Eretz to my students,” says Rabbi Glickman.

Sy Syms at Beren, for the moment, does not have the same course, but it is currently being developed with Rabbi Saul Berman. Sy Syms at Beren students will be encouraged to take the course, but the course will not be launched as a requirement.

The course is expected to launch in the spring. It will likely formally become a requirement for incoming students in the fall. Israeli visiting professors have also been coming for one-semester residencies on campus, as a component of the University’s commitment to Zionism, and because Dr. Pava feels there is a lot to learn from Israeli business at the moment.

Dr. Pava said he hopes the ethics curriculum would reduce cheating and plagiarism, which he described as “perennial issues.” He also noted that the career center runs programs together with the Roshei Yeshiva to teach Jewish ethics in the business environment. Dr. Pava wants the Roshei Yeshiva to work with the Sy Syms on reducing cheating, and getting students prepared for the real world.

The Dean plans to teach a mandatory course for incoming Sy Syms Honors and Entrepreneurial Leadership students on business and ethics in society, informed by a Jewish perspective. He expects the course to launch next fall and is part of a broader plan to strengthen the honors program.

Dr. Pava expressed that the reason why he is at Yeshiva University is to create courses like the Jewish ethics curriculum, he described the successful implementation as “gratifying”. Dean Pava explained that the new curriculum is part of the experience of being in the Jewish business school that goes beyond the morning Yeshiva program, and that this type of offering distinguishes Sy Syms and is not available anywhere else, even at the Catholic schools. He then channeled President Joel and said “nowhere but here.” With obvious pride, Dr. Pava went on to point out that Brandeis University offers a course in Jewish business ethics, and that a book he co-authored with Rabbi Levine is one of the required texts. “If you want to get it at Brandeis second hand, that’s fine, or you can come to Yeshiva University,” Dr. Pava said.



photo courtesy of: <http://www.greenfieldjudaica.com/shulchan-aruch-choshen-mishpat-morasha-l-hanchil---volume-1-306792.html>

Syms Enrollment, cont. from p.17

to learn “how to communicate with people with different ideas or who come from different backgrounds” She added by saying that “These are invaluable skills for career success”.

The Deans of Sy Syms have taken note and, as of last semester, have removed operations management and microeconomics from the Sy Syms Core in order to make room for students to experiment with courses that they find interesting. Especially at YU, where most students spend only three years on campus, this change to the curriculum enables students to make, even the most slight, decisions about what they want to gain from the University as a whole. Other changes that Sy Syms has made to the curriculum include the new Business Analytics and Marketing major and incorporation of Business Halacha into the core.

When it comes to Finance, The Sy Syms School of Business

professionals

has made a concerted effort to provide students with a balance between the theoretical aspects and the technical & practical skills directly relevant in the workplace. For the last couple of years, with sponsorships from a private donor, Sy Syms hosted a financial training course on the Beren Campus given by Adkin Matchett & Toy (AMT). AMT is known, throughout the finance industry, as leaders in financial training for analysts and investment bankers.

The course covered topics including financial modeling and valuation fundamentals. “The course gave me a chance to apply what I learned in the classroom and broaden my knowledge of finance and related fields” said Sammy Baniliv (Sy Syms ‘15). Sy Syms is also adding two courses for next semester including a course on real estate investments and another that will focus on mergers & acquisitions.

Dr. Pava noted that another one of the main features unique to Yeshiva University, and the Sy Syms School of Business

is its strong connection with Israel. Sy Syms currently has a multitude of Israeli professors on staff including Marketing & Management Department Chair Tamar Avnet, Finance Department Chair Abraham S. Ravid, Professor Rachel Calipha and Professor Galit Ben-Joseph. Sy Syms has been working hard to strengthen its relationship with Israel; Dr. Pava added by saying that every year that he has been Dean, Sy Syms has had at least one visiting professor from Israel.

Dr. Pava predicts that there is going to continue to be an demand for business education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. When I asked him about his qualitative goals for the student experience at Syms he replied: “Not only are they getting a good education but also good advising, career services and professors to talk to outside of the classroom, almost of our faculty serve as role models to our students.”

From an Accounting Major's Journal: 6 Things to do with an Accounting Degree

By Jonathan Tavin

If you major in Accounting (CPA-track) in Syms, the overwhelming direction you will receive from the Career Center is to find an internship, then a full-time position, in one of the "Big Four" CPA firms, where you will work while studying for your CPA. When you get to one of these firms, you may realize that you can't handle the hours or are interested in something else. What else can you do with an accounting degree?

Public Accounting

I would like to quickly review public accounting for those who, somehow, haven't heard about it yet. While the best-known accounting firms are the "Big Four," there are actually over 46,000 public accounting firms in the United States, according to the AICPA. These firms range in size from the largest firms, which have tens of thousands of accountants to small firms, which might have only one or two.

The two most common types of public accountants are: those who do taxes and those who do auditing. Tax accountants help their clients—usually companies, in the case of the largest firms—complete and file tax returns. They are in charge of filing for earnings of companies and individuals, and supporting them throughout the process of preparing tax returns for the IRS (based on <http://educationcareerarticles.com/career-information/job-descriptions/tax-accountants/>). Independent auditors go to companies and pass judgment as to whether their financial statements are correct under GAAP. In order to do this, the auditor analyzes the company's financial statements and other documents, measures inventory levels, confirms accountants receivable and inquires with management to understand the company as a whole. He or she then makes an opinion as to whether the financial statements are free of fraud and unintentional errors (based on <http://www.grfcpa.com/resources/publications/auditor-responsibilities/>).

Although both tax accountants and auditors interact with clients and thus, both need to have good interpersonal skills, auditors spend more time face-to-face with their clients, often traveling to their offices to meet with them and perform the audits.

Cost Accounting

Every Accounting major in Syms must take Management (Cost) Accounting. What do cost accountants do? According to MBAToday, "the role of a Cost Accountant is to systematically assess the costs that are associated with manufacturing the product(s) or distributing the service(s) of the hiring organization."

The information obtained by the Cost Accountant is then shared with management, who use it to make day-to-day and

long-term decisions about how to lower cost and increase efficiency and productivity. They can work for manufacturing firms or even service organizations. The median starting salary for an entry-level Cost Accountant is \$50,924 (Salary.com).

Private Accounting-Corporation

Every large corporation has an accounting department. Although some of the accountants in the accounting department are cost accountants, others are responsible for recording transactions and preparing financial statements to be audited and then released (usually) quarterly and as a focus point of the company's annual report. These private accountants are in charge of making estimates about everything from depreciation and amortization to receivables and contingent liabilities. Although every organization has bookkeeping or accounting functions, in small organizations, such as small stores, these can usually be handled by one or two people. However, large corporations hire hundreds or even thousands of accountants to perform their accounting

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functions. An accounting department is more important to a large company than a marketing or sales department because if a firm's finances are not approved with a clean audit and the business does not have a good credit history, creditors will not want to lend it money and investors will not want to invest the capital necessary for growth. Accounting is the backbone of an organization. Without a strong team of accountants, a company will not be able to survive in the long run.

Non-Profit Accounting

Even not for profit organizations, such as schools, synagogues, and charitable organizations have accounting functions. Yeshiva University has an accounting department with offices in Belfer Hall. Accountants who work in not for profit may be responsible for preparing the special set of financial statements required by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) or obtaining tax-exempt status. Did you know that there are kinds of tax-exempt status? Some not for profit organizations do not pay taxes themselves, but their

benefactors do not receive an exemption for their donations, while contributions to certain other organizations can be tax-exempt (accountingcoach.com).

Government (SEC/IRS)

If you want a career with a more manageable work-life balance than public accounting, consider working for the government. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) hires accountants for the Division of Corporate Finance, which is in charge of selectively reviewing the financial disclosures of public companies to check for quality, timeliness, and accuracy, as well as for the Office of the Chief Accountant, the main adviser to the SEC on issues of accounting and auditing regulation. According to the agency's website, "The Office of the Chief Accountant advises the Commission on accounting issues, develops precedents in SEC accounting matters and consults on investigations involving questionable accounting or auditing practices." I spent the past summer working in the Economics Department of Israel's SEC equivalent, the Israel Securities Authority, where I researched and presented on NASDAQ and summarized scholarly articles on finance and economics topics, such as liquidity and deep markets in corporate bonds that were necessary for making timely accounting-related decisions.

There are many opportunities for accountants in the IRS, including as Internal Revenue Agents, who act as "proactive decision-maker[s], working side-by-side with customers, businesses, CFOs, CEOs and the legal and financial communities" and counseling them on tax-related forms, laws, and disclosures. Another potential career choice is that of a Tax Specialist, who provides technical, tax-related guidance and tax accounting consultation. You might also consider becoming a Tax Compliance Officer, who investigates individual and corporate taxpayer and provides legal and accounting advice, or a Tax Examiner, who is responsible for answering taxpayers' questions about their tax returns and reviews the tax returns for accuracy and completeness (based on <http://jobs.irs.gov/student/accounting-budget-finance.html>).

Forensic Accounting

Have you ever wondered how high-profile and everyday financial scams, such as money laundering, securities fraud, and other kinds of 'white collar' crime are exposed? That is the task of the forensic accountant. Forensic accountants do investigative work for the SEC—in the Division of Enforcement—for courts of law, and in private practice. They are often employed for bankruptcy and divorce cases, in addition to cases of fraud. They are responsible for analyzing financial statements, internal company documents, as well as other disclosures and information that wasn't disclosed, in order to find fraudulent accounting and financial practices, and to provide evidence for use in legal investigations and trials. If you are intrigued by the idea of putting your accounting skills toward pursuing justice and want to make 1.5 times more than the average salary of all accountants while working fewer hours, consider forensic accounting (based on forensicaccounting.net).

Although there is a career-specific certifications for cost accountants (CMA) and a few for forensic accountants, including Certified in Financial Forensics (CFF) and Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), it is generally a good idea to become a CPA as well. Why is this? Passing the CPA exams shows employers that you are committed to the profession and that you have a wide knowledge of financial accounting, regulation, and auditing. Employers tend to reward those with CPA certification with a 10% salary increase, on average (<http://nasba.org/licensure/gettingacpalicense/whygetlicensed/five-popular-reasons-for-earning-a-cpa-license/>).

I hope readers find this article informative and that it acts as a springboard to discuss potential shift in focus in Syms and the Career Center from emphasizing mostly public accounting to educating and preparing students for careers in all fields of accounting. An accounting degree is a versatile one, and no student should feel that they are being pushed into one field without being introduced to and trained for other fields they might enjoy more.



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