

YU Today

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY • NO. 1 • VOLUME 9

ORIENTATION 2004

One Year On...

■ Hillel Davis Reflects on Improvements to Student Life

Hillel Davis, PhD, describes his state of being more than a year into his post as vice president for university life as “a deep sense of fulfillment.” Dr. Davis feels great enthusiasm in his day-to-day efforts to help build a campus environment that’s warm, inviting, and conducive to academic and spiritual fulfillment. He sat down with *YU Today* to discuss his progress and goals.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I relish the chance to interact with students who are *bnay* and *bnot* Torah, top-notch



Hillel Davis

academically, exude an active social conscience, and represent the pulse of the Jewish community.

What stands out most in your first year?

I’m awed at the sheer volume of wonderful stories that reflect the rich quality of student life. There’s truly so much that is outstanding about our students and faculty and community. I’m amazed at the caliber of our students and how they excel in what remains a difficult dual curriculum. Even with their demanding schedules, they find time to publish newspapers, run a radio station, play sports, debate, attract guest speakers, as well as undertake community projects.

What are the major challenges ahead?

There are internal challenges—creating a campus environment that fosters a culture in which we treat each other with respect and dignity. We are trying to give students a sense of empowerment in raising issues important to them and in improving their access to senior administrative staff. We continue to make academic excellence



Welcome From the President

Dear students,
It is both an honor and a source of pride and excitement for me to welcome each new class of YU

students. You are embarking on a special journey, in an academic environment that elicits respect for the human spirit, the pursuit of knowledge, and the love of learning. As tour guides on this life-enriching journey, we’re committed to ensuring its success for you. Thus we encourage you

to familiarize yourself with the resources listed in this issue—contact addresses and phone numbers of university counselors, student leaders, and key staff in the departments of Student Affairs, Admissions, and Student Aid.

Yeshiva University is the leadership incubator for the Jewish people and the resources of our university represent our investment in your success.

Our best wishes for your intellectual and spiritual fulfillment.

Richard M. Joel

meaningful with new faculty appointments that broaden our intellectual scope.

What are the major improvements and upgrades of equipment and technology for the upcoming academic year?

Many impressive physical improvements that will enhance campus life are underway. Both the Wilf and Beren campuses are undergoing major beautification projects. A new bistro-type cafe, with a sushi bar, will open at 215 Lexington Avenue and double as a student lounge. A new, greatly expanded Syms fitness center will open in the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf Campus. We’re looking forward this fall to the dedication of the Wilf Campus.

YU’s Board of Trustees recently approved a two-year budget, which will fund sweeping changes in academic programs and services to students, including an undergraduate advisement center, a new counseling center, the enhancement of career placement services, and a Mechinah Jewish studies program, among other initiatives.

A new computer center—with 65 state-of-the-art machines—has been set up on the Beren Campus. Wireless service is being expanded on both Manhattan campuses. Regarding e-mail, we’re replacing the five-year-old system with a more sophisticated server. What’s more, we’re instituting a lifetime forwarding service so graduates continue

to receive YU correspondence even after changing e-mail addresses. There’ll be new servers for academic computing labs that will enable students to log in from any location on Wilf or Beren.

Other improvements will include an entirely revamped YU Web site with greatly enhanced interactivity for faculty, staff, and students. I’m also thrilled with the videoconferencing distance-learning project being developed by our Max Stern Division of Communal Services through its Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools and Yeshiva High Schools (AMODS), which will take YU’s academic and spiritual resources to more and more people.

continued on page 4

Innovative New Undergraduate Courses

■ Classes in Middle East Politics, Filmmaking, Venture Capital, and Jewish Prayer

The 2004–5 academic year at Yeshiva University boasts a lineup of exciting new courses, covering the academic spectrum from physics to the arts to Jewish studies. The courses, a few of which are profiled here, knit together disparate fields of thought and respond to the latest developments in research, business, and world events.

Undergraduate political science courses in response to timely political issues, such as the war in Iraq and the US presidential elections, include “Authoritarianism in the Mid-

dle East,” taught by new SCW assistant professor of political science, Bryan Daves, PhD. It will examine the history of repressive Arab regimes and their potential for change in the wake of Saddam Hussein’s ousting.

Budding wordsmiths at Stern will explore their creative skills in a new apprenticeship-style course with Jay Ladin, PhD, David and Ruth Gottesman Professor of English, director of Stern’s Writing Center, and a published poet. The course will combine one-to-one sessions with workshops that enable students to

interact with one another.

An innovative new women’s studies course taught by Nora Nachumi, PhD, assistant professor of English, will examine how female writers, comedienne, and actresses use humor to call attention to, cope with, and challenge stereotypes about their nature and roles. “Women and Humor” will examine works such as Sigmund Freud’s essays, Virginia Woolf’s novel *Orlando*, and *I Love Lucy*.

New YC physics professor Sergey Buldyrev, PhD, will draw on his research into computational physics for

“Introduction to Complex Systems.” Using the Internet, students will analyze data from real systems in economics, ecology, bioinformatics, biochemistry, and physics, and build mathematical models to understand their behavior.

YC students interested in media production will learn the art and craft of filmmaking from Jerry Tartaglia, an internationally recognized filmmaker and scholar. “Film-making Techniques” will run as a workshop with the objective of producing a five to seven-minute film. Students will have access to the facili-

ties of Millenium Film Workshop, one of New York’s best-established independent filmmaking resources.

A new undergraduate men’s Jewish studies initiative, the Mechinah Program, will reach out to students with a limited yeshiva background. The program features a new curriculum that includes a class on Jewish prayer, “The Weekday Service,” and afternoon classes on the laws of Shabbat, Jewish philosophy, the weekly Torah reading, and question-and-answer sessions with RIETS

continued on page 2

Know Your Student Leaders

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Know Your University Counselors

Stop in and meet the staff in the Office of Student Affairs at the Israel Henry Beren and Wilf campuses. You may contact them to talk and to help you get acquainted with your new surroundings. They are also experienced professionals who are ready to support any students having trouble adjusting to the college environment, experiencing emotional difficulties, or wanting to discuss issues of a religious nature. Additionally, Student Affairs is helpful to students with learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, and special academic needs.

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Courses continued from page 1

roshei yeshiva.

For its new courses, Sy Syms School of Business has turned to top executives, who combine the theoretical underpinnings of business with practical solutions.

“Venture Capital,” which debuted last spring, will be taught by Peter Kash, senior

managing director, Paramount Capital, a hedge fund with about \$700 million under management. The course will teach the fundamentals for creating one’s own business, identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, writing a successful business plan, and presenting it for fund-raising.

In “Media Planning and Buying,” students will learn

about media strategy, venues, and budgets from Adam Berger, partner and group planning director, mOne Worldwide, a global digital and direct media buyer.

The business school has also introduced a real estate minor and will offer “Real Estate Law,” taught by Benjamin Weinstock, a real estate attorney. ■

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Students from US and Around Globe Choose YU

■ Academics, Torah Studies, Jewish Environment, NYC Are Factors

Though the exact numbers are not in yet, the trend is clear: The fall 2004 incoming undergraduate class is larger by far than last year's, and "will be a bigger part of the student body than new students were in 2003," according to John Fisher, PhD, director of enrollment management.

"We expect some 700 new students from throughout the United States and around the world this September at the New York campuses. That's at least 100 more than last September," Dr. Fisher said. "The majority spent at least one year post-high school studying in Israel."

Earlier this summer, a cross-section of newcomers told *YU Today* why they chose YU and what they hope to achieve while they are here.

Editor's note: When these students complete their undergraduate education, *YU Today* will ask them to look back and reflect on the goals they set for themselves as newly entering YU students.



Michael Stein, Teaneck, NJ: "I didn't apply anywhere else. I know where I'm headed in life and I think YU is the best way for me to get there. I'm looking for an intense focus on Judaic and secular studies and also hope to become more mature as I grow and face the challenges of the real world."

Daniel Nagel, Los Angeles: "My philosophy of life is the ideal of a broad perspective. I



hope to broaden my horizons at YU—in Jewish studies but also in fields like the humanities. I'm thinking about a major in economics. I want to capitalize on the liberal arts program at YU and become a well-rounded person."



Oleg Pantukhov, St. Petersburg, Russia: "I did not go to Jewish schools, so for me, a Jewish education is very important. My sister graduated from Stern College and she convinced me that YU is the best place for me. I am interested in business, or maybe law. When I finish my studies, I think I will return to the Russian Jewish community where I can put my education to good use. The main point is to study well."



Ronit Gelman, Ra'anana, Israel: "I just finished *Sherut Leumi* [army service for observant women] and want to attend school in the US, where I have some family. YU is perfect for me because I want to remain in a Jewish environment. I plan to enroll in Sy Syms, but also will make the most of my Judaic studies. I couldn't have all these things at any other school."

Elyssa Riss, Lakewood, NJ: "I looked at several universities, and what I liked about them



—nice campuses, the social aspect—I found at Stern, with the added aspect of *shiurim* [Torah lectures]. I'm excited to be surrounded by the culture of New York City and to learn from professors who have PhDs and *semikhah* (ordination). I'm really looking forward to taking classes with these brilliant people."



Shoshana Fruchter, Brooklyn, NY: "One reason I wanted to be at YU is that my father and five of my siblings are YU alumni, and I'd be carrying on a family tradition. But also, I know that the classes at Stern will help me become more articulate. That's important, especially when representing the Jewish community. I want to be a leader." ■

New Faculty Enrich Learning

■ 18 Appointments Bring Diverse Fields of Research

Fourteen undergraduate and four graduate professors have joined the faculty this year, as part of vice president of academic affairs Mort Lowengrub's sustained efforts to attract new teaching talent to YU. The professors, Dr. Lowengrub said, bring with them new bodies of research that will enhance the knowledge and skills base at the university.

Undergraduate physics gets a boost with the appointment of Sergey Buldyrev, PhD, who brings his world-famous expertise in computational physics to Yeshiva College, and Neer Asherie, PhD, who will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of biophysics.

Dr. Buldyrev, YC professor of physics, will draw on his research at Boston University's Center for Polymer Physics, where he applied statistical mechanics and computer simulations to areas such as Alzheimer's disease and economics.

Bolstered by growing student interest, the undergradu-

ate political science departments have recruited faculty with expertise in Israeli studies and international affairs. Bryan Daves, PhD, SCW assistant professor of political science, will teach courses in Middle East, Israeli, and comparative politics (see page 1); Evan Neil Resnick, YC visiting assistant professor in international relations, 2004-5, will teach "American Foreign Policy"; and Stephen Pimpare, PhD, YC assistant professor of political science, will focus some of his teaching on the US media and elections.

In a new effort to link the undergraduate and graduate schools, Dr. Pimpare will also teach a public policy course with Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

YC's psychology department will be led by David Moore, PhD, professor of psychology, who taught at Pitzer College in Claremont, CA, and directed the Claremont Infant Study Center.

Jewish studies at Stern College will be enriched with the arrival of Rabbi Binyamin

Tabory, instructor of Jewish studies, 2004-5. He is a well-known rabbinic scholar and senior faculty member at Yeshivat Har Etzion and Midreshet Moriah in Jerusalem.

The following faculty have also been appointed: Nachama Price, SCW instructor of Jewish studies; Richard White, PhD, YC lecturer in Jewish studies; Hilla Goldwicht, SCW instructor of Hebrew language; Esther Scheiner, SCW instructor of education; Sarah Kasher, YC lecturer in Hebrew; Ronit Levy, PsyD, SCW visiting assistant professor of psychology; and Allison Smith, YC lecturer in English and assistant director, YC Writing Center; David Pelcovitz, PhD, professor of education and psychology at Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration (see page 4); Alex Stein, PhD, professor of law at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law; and Jonathan M. Feldman, PhD, and Roe Holtzer, PhD, both assistant professors at Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. ■

Building Stronger Bridges

■ Mashgiach Program Expands Support Network for Students

This semester, among the hum of learning in the *batei midrash* (study halls), students will notice some new, friendly faces. Meet Rabbi Elisha Bacon YH,'97Y,AG,R, the coordinator of clinical pastoral services at the Office of Student Affairs. Rabbi Bacon is part of a new team of *mashgichim* (mentors) who will be getting to know students in the *batei midrash*.



Rabbi Elisha Bacon

Rabbi Bacon's newly created role and high visibility will "add a level of attention, care, and concern for students," said Hillel Davis, PhD, vice president for university life.

Student Affairs has also appointed Rabbi Joshua Blass '99R, leader of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine Student Synagogue, as a *sgan mashgiach* (assistant mentor).

Stationed in the Ruth and Hyman Muss Residence Hall, Rabbi Blass and Rabbi Bacon will introduce themselves during Orientation and hold evening *chabura* (informal group classes) on issues of student interest.

"We want to create personal relationships to further enhance the support network on campus," Rabbi Bacon said. He will coordinate efforts with Rabbi Yosef Blau, *mashgiach ruchani* (spiritual counselor).

Rabbi Bacon received a master's in social work from New York University. He previously worked as a social worker for Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey and as a high school guidance counselor at The Frisch School in Paramus, NJ, and at Rabbi Teitz Mesivta Academy in Elizabeth, NJ, part of the Jewish Educational Center. ■



Bringing Healing into the Classroom

■ *David Pelcovitz, PhD, Trains Teachers and Rabbis to Help Families in Crisis*

David Pelcovitz's fascination with the complexities of parenting, adolescent development, and other child-related issues underscores a passion for making lives whole, especially in times of crisis and trauma. Joining Yeshiva University this fall as professor of education and psychology at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, Dr. Pelcovitz looks forward to using "teaching" and "discovery" to improve the quality of life for people in distress.

He will teach courses on developmental psychology and psycho-social issues in the Jewish community to Azrieli students, as well as pastoral counseling and family education at YU's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. He will also serve as special assistant to the president on issues important to Jewish life. We caught up with Dr. Pelcovitz outside his Belfer Hall office, where he talked about his goals and aspirations.

What attracted you to YU?

The exciting challenge of building something important and lasting for the Jewish community, the training of quality Jewish teachers, educators, and rabbis, which makes Azrieli and RIETS such special institutions, and to be doing so under the umbrella of Yeshiva University. For me, YU represents an incredible opportunity for personal and professional growth.

What goals are you setting for yourself?

My hope is to help broaden the scope of Azrieli's already strong curriculum and outstanding faculty—educating our educators to become more attuned to the urgent needs of youth at risk. The classroom is the ideal place for synergy between psychology and education.

Where do you feel you will have the most impact?

I want to bring to my courses real-life experience that comes from my years working with parents, teachers, principals, and others in addressing chil-



dren in crisis. I want to expose rabbinic students to hospice programs and bring in bereavement counselors as guest speakers.

Can you define children at risk?

These are young people who come from broken homes and dysfunctional families and often carry the scars of an unsettled home-life well into adulthood. I've spent much of my career helping create programs that emphasize parent-training to foster a more effective home-school relationship. The idea is to step in with help before student anger finds its outlet in tragedies like school violence.

Can you talk about your work at Ohel in the wake of 9/11?

It was at Ohel Family and Chil-

dren's Services that I helped set up programs for families impacted by the September 11 terror attacks. These included education, outreach, and supportive counseling for related trauma and its aftermath.

Are you continuing your clinical work?

Every Friday afternoon, I gather with my former colleagues at North Shore University Hospital-NYU School of Medicine [where Dr. Pelcovitz worked and taught before YU] for research into post-traumatic stress disorder, with the

hope of eventually producing data for future doctoral dissertations by Azrieli graduates.

As a highly respected child psychologist, who are your mentors?

At the top of the list is my father, Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz, whose insights and wisdom on the Torah's approach to child-rearing served as a role model for fatherhood and was the inspiration behind my book, *The Parenting Path*. I hope to collaborate with him on a more expansive version of the book. ■

Hillel Davis continued from page 1

What is the core of YU's educational mission?

Transporting our central values of Torah and discovery. Our success in transporting these values determines our success in enriching Jewish life and advancing society. President Joel, in addressing our constituencies throughout North America, promotes a "yeshiva without walls" with distance-learning, summer Torah seminars nationwide and abroad, extension kollelim, and other community-building programs. We are, as he says, a university with a yeshiva at its heart.

We are growing programmatically, with new initiatives

such as the Schneier Center for International Affairs and the Graduate Fellowship in University and Community Leadership. I think the fellowship program is an exciting initiative. Here we have outstanding graduates, representing our best and brightest, who are willing to invest a year of their lives to stay connected to YU and help improve its campus and academic programs.

For me personally, there is incredible value in seeing issues through the eyes of recent graduates and understanding the passion and perspective they bring to the fore. ■