

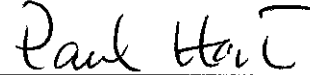
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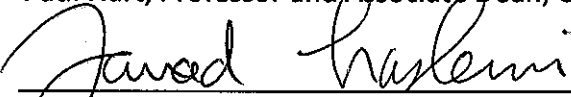
**Program in Jewish Studies
2012**

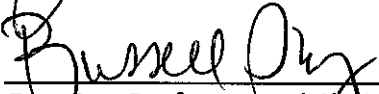
Program Review Committee Report


Program Review Committee Members:


 FOR JEAN AXELRAD CAHAN
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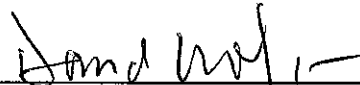

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Jean Axelrad Cahan, Director of the Norman and Bernice Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was the external reviewer for this program. She submitted the following report within two weeks of her visit to Florida Atlantic University which was on 4-5 September 2012. The FAU committee members have provided their comments in the Recommendation section. The final section of this report is a list of Critical Recommendations. All of the FAU committee's comments throughout this report are provided in italics, distinct from the external reviewer's comments which are in regular font.

I. Mission and Purpose

The Jewish Studies Program is an interdisciplinary program for the academic study of Jewish culture, history, society and religion. It is open to students of all backgrounds and seeks to contribute to the University's mission of providing a broad liberal arts education. Students taking this major are prepared for graduate studies in some area of Jewish Studies; careers in Jewish community service and leadership; and education.

There seems to be an underlying and unspoken indecision or confusion, on the part of both faculty and senior administrators, as to how to conceive the program: Either as an independent unit that functions like a department, with its own tenured and affiliated faculty; budget; office space and own major. Or as a small unit that can suitably be housed within another department (presently the Department of Languages, but in principle some other large department) relying on that larger department for administrative support, office space, and even some instructional support, and whose scope can easily be limited without harming the program's mission.

In the past the program seems to have been considered to be an independent unit, even though some of the faculty had their tenure homes in other departments. For reasons that were not entirely clear to the external reviewer, it was recently decided to base the program in the department of its incoming Director, i.e. Languages. This is not conducive to the cohesiveness or continuity of the program: if the directorship should change hands again, the program will then presumably have to be relocated again. For the cohesiveness, continuity and visibility of the program as a unit within the University – not even considering for the moment its visibility to the outside world – the program should have its own permanent space, if only a single office, and a few hours per week of secretarial support. Both of these should remain in place even when the Directorship changes.

In general the commitment of the College and University to the existence of this program needs to be more firmly demonstrated to all concerned – faculty, students, and the broader Jewish community – if the program is to develop at all. Small expenditures in terms of infrastructure, and a course release for the Director, in view of the large

tasks that lie ahead of her, are the minimum level of support. Otherwise the University's commitment remains mere lip service.

II. Instruction

Courses essential to the major (core courses) are taught by 4 faculty members strongly affiliated with the department/program. Additional courses/electives which count toward the major are taught by both core faculty and by "non-core" faculty in other departments. The courses taught range solidly from ancient times to the present, broadly covering important events, societal structures and texts from the Hebrew Bible to the history of Zionism to contemporary Jewish American fiction and literature of the Holocaust. In view of the declining number of majors it was recently decided to eliminate the capstone course; this decision could perhaps be revisited at a later date, when the program has stabilized somewhat under its new director. I will discuss the issue of the declining number of majors below (section V).

While the distinction between core and non-core faculty is not unusual for a Jewish Studies program, and does point to the general orientation of each faculty member (i.e. their degree of involvement in teaching and research in the field), in the present case, given the small number of core faculty, the program would be well served by seeking to draw in the non-core members more closely in both formal and informal ways. On the basis of a discussion with the external reviewer, it seems that they (the non-core faculty) are quite engaged in matters relating to Jewish Studies, and interested in developing new courses in the future that would be cross-listed between their own departments and Jewish Studies

The program's courses of instruction are very substantially complemented by the public programming and academic symposia organized through the offices of the Eminent Scholars/endowed chair holders. These lectures and symposia cover topics ranging from women and Judaism to interfaith dialogue in the face of terrorism. Students should continue to take advantage of these invaluable opportunities.

III. Research

There can be no doubt that the faculty members of the Jewish Studies program, both core and non-core, are highly dedicated and accomplished researchers, thus contributing to the "High Research Activity" designation awarded to the University by the Carnegie Foundation. As was pointed out in the self-study document, the core faculty alone has produced five single-author monographs, numerous edited volumes and numerous articles in the last few years. It goes without saying that as very active researchers they are models for students and bring the latest research to bear on their teaching.

IV. Service

Through its wide range of well-established and well-enrolled courses, the Jewish Studies program already provides service to the College of Arts and Letters, that is to say, courses in the humanities and social sciences. Nonetheless, this is a potential area for considerable growth:

The Jewish Studies program could enhance its contribution to the larger role of the College of Arts and Letters and further underscore its importance to the University by developing a few large-enrollment classes (100+ students) on topics that are likely to be of interest to a broad swathe of students who are not necessarily interested in majoring in Jewish Studies. Such courses might include some aspect of the Holocaust; history and/or politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict; Judaism in antiquity/early Christianity.

Given its location, it would seem that FAU and the Jewish Studies program in particular is in a good position to attract students from both Central and Latin America. A course or courses relating to Latin American Jewish history and culture might draw in more students. The fact that this is a field of considerable contemporary interest is evidenced by the emergence of a vibrant Latin American Jewish Studies Association with a large and growing membership, as well as notable journals in the field.

The public programming mentioned above, i.e. the Gimmelstob Symposia; the lectures organized by the Center for the Study of Values and Violence After Auschwitz; and the Shemin Global Trialogue, also provide a great service, both intellectually and in terms of raising the profile of the University in the wider communities of Boca Raton and the state of Florida.

The Recorded Sound Archives (formerly Jewish Sound Archives) not only carries out a distinctive and vital role in the preservation of Jewish music; it also represents a model of cooperation with the Library on projects of mutual interest. It is now working on a project on preservation of early 20th century American music, especially jazz. Since the archive is mostly funded privately by donations from the Jewish community, the archive thereby underlines its usefulness and service to the University and integrates itself more fully with both the Library and the larger University community. This is a model which the Jewish Studies program could emulate in its own way, and has on occasion attempted to do. For example, it has sought to cooperate on course development with those interested in human rights education, peace studies and comparative religious studies. Discussions about possible collaboration have taken place with colleagues in the College of Education and College of Social Work. As mentioned earlier, the program could also work more closely with the departments of History, Political Science, English and Philosophy – homes of the non-core faculty - to develop large-enrollment courses of interest to students majoring in the humanities and social sciences as well as those majoring or minoring in Jewish Studies. Programs in Fine Arts and Film Studies are also

likely partners here. In this way the Jewish Studies program would demonstrate further that it is a fully integrated and very effective member of the College of Arts and Letters.

V. Other Program Goals – Recruitment and Retention of Students

From the point of view of the Jewish Studies faculty, the biggest problem that they face is the small and declining number of majors. While this is indeed worrisome, it need not be fatal to the program. Many programs offer a Minor/Certificate only and remain viable. Given the very large number of Jewish students on campus – an estimated 2500-3000 – it is somewhat mysterious why more students do not select the Jewish Studies major or minor.

The faculty see a principal source of the problem in the reduction and then elimination of an important pool of potential majors through the elimination of Hebrew language instruction. Instruction in Modern Hebrew regularly drew approximately 150 students per year; some of these students, who also traveled to Israel or became engaged in contemporary Jewish community issues, also chose to major in this field.

While elimination of this potential pool –because Hebrew instruction has been significantly de-funded – seems unwise, it is also not the only contributor to the problem. Another cause may be the number of credit hours required for the major. The new Director is planning to review the requirements of the major so as to reduce the credit hours needed, and also plans to encourage more students to double-major.

Another way to draw in more students is to encourage more Jewish Studies *Minors*, i.e. to encourage those majoring in History, Political Science, etc. to select Jewish Studies as a very compatible Minor. This could also easily be done with students in the Business College, Social Work, Education and the Fine Arts, especially music and film. Following this approach, it might also be advisable to distinguish between a minor and a certificate, with a different number of credit hours needed for each; this would allow still more flexibility to the students and their various interests. While none of this would necessarily increase the number of majors (though it might lead to more students choosing to major), it would enable the program to better serve the thousands of Jewish students who currently have no connection with the program, and might also encourage interest among non-Jewish students, for example in the courses relating to interfaith or comparative topics.

The Jewish Studies students with whom I met believe that the visibility of the program – publicity, accessibility of information about the major and minor – is very inadequate. Apart from a makeover of the website (already being planned by the Director), what is needed is more information at the “point of entry” i.e. through the Admissions Office and/or through University recruiters, and a bolder brochure.

VI. Resources

The state-funded portion of the program budget currently consists of \$3,000.00 annually. There is no office space, no computer, telephone, fax machine or computer ports, and no support staff. If the Director were to utilize the \$3,000 for office support, for postage, posters etc., there would be no funds left for research costs, travel to conferences, invited lectures or any other of any of the normal costs of a program or department.

It appears that the state budget also includes about \$12,000.00 annually which may be used toward Hebrew language instruction. This is less than half of what a proper, 4-semester sequence of language instruction normally costs. The difference will have to be made up somehow if the program can return to providing this set of courses which is essential not only to the major but to the very identity of the program.

The privately-funded portion of the program budget seems to consist mainly of a) the funds associated with the endowed chairs, and b) scholarship funds. Since both chairs utilize their funds for lectures and symposia – which are very costly – it is also not clear how their operating expenses, especially in the form of support staff, can be met out of these private funds.

This –the area of private support - is one in which it is likely that there would be considerable room for expanded efforts. Jewish communities generally have a culture of generous giving. Many of the buildings on the FAU campus, including the very large and modern Levine-Weinberger Jewish Life Center which houses the Hillel student organization, have been significantly funded by gifts from Jewish donors. It is important that the new Director of the Jewish Studies program, together with the Dean and perhaps a representative from the office of the Provost, approach such donors again, and approach new potential donors, to raise funds to support various aspects of the program: Hebrew instruction, both Modern and Biblical (for students with an orientation toward Biblical and Rabbinic literature and history); graduate teaching assistants for large-enrollment courses; undergraduate workshops in different areas of Jewish Studies; research funds; visiting scholars (other than those already funded by the Gimmelstob and Raddock Chairs). By making a joint approach to potential donors, presumably identified by the University development office or foundation, and with the advice of the Eminent Scholars, the College and University will demonstrate their support of the program and requests for donations are likely to be taken more seriously.

VII. Statistical Trends

Not applicable.

VIII. Information and Appendices.

Not Applicable.

IX. Other

Not Applicable.

X. Strengths and Opportunities That Support Program Goals

1. Core and non-core faculty very strong in research and teaching.
2. Broad, solid range of courses in principal areas of the field, covering ancient times to modern period.
3. Large number of potential students for both Major and Minor already on campus (2500-3000).
4. Large “hinterland” of potential support from the Jewish communities of Boca Raton and other parts of the state.
5. Impressive resources in the form of the Levine-Weinberger Jewish Life Center; Jewish Sound Archive; public programming through the Eminent Scholars’ offices; Lifelong Learning at FAU; Klezmer Company Orchestra, and other resources.
6. Overall growth in enrollment at the University.
7. Appointment of a new Director who is very well liked by both faculty and students, who is open to new ideas, and who willing to undertake course-expansion, fundraising and other activities to enhance the program.

XI. Weaknesses that Impede Program Progress

1. Lack of an identifiable space, other than the Director’s smallish office in the Department of Languages, which would house the program’s paperwork, faculty publications, brochures and other publicity materials, as well as part-time support staff, computer and telephone. Lack of such a space undermines a sense of cohesion, continuity (when the directorship changes) and visible commitment from the College and University. This commitment should be visible not only to faculty and students at FAU, but also to potential donors. This lack of an independent space reflects a certain level of indecision as to the desired status of the program – should it be a strong, independent program or will it become a program of unclear value which might be fairly easily shut down at any time. If the latter, then it is not clear that anything further can or needs to be done.
2. Reduction or absence of instruction in both Modern and Biblical Hebrew. This is vital to any substantive, serious program in Jewish Studies. It would be the equivalent of a program in French Studies without instruction in French language, i.e. in translation only. As noted above, Hebrew language is essential for any intellectually

respectable Jewish Studies program, for the study of both central ancient texts and modern literature, and is vital to the sense of identity and cohesion among both faculty and students.

3. Low enrollment in both Major and Minor

4. An apparent falling-off in fundraising from private donors to complement existing resources.

5. Severity of budget cuts within the University as a whole.

XII. Major Recommendations

1. Senior administrators should demonstrate more clearly their serious commitment to the future of the Jewish Studies program by making a minimal contribution of space, administrative support, and a course reduction for the Director. It is unlikely that cuts to the program in these areas are a significant source of revenue savings. The amounts of state money involved in the administration of such a program are likely to be very small compared to other departments and programs, to educational benefits, and to potential gifts to the University (as can be seen from the very large gifts which have already been made across the University). In turn, the Program can demonstrate its integral role in Humanities and Social Science education.

The committee particularly wants to point out need for a dedicated space for the Jewish Studies Program. This is especially important in dealing with community supporters and donors, who are more likely to be supporters and donors if the program is presented as one that the university considers important. The absence of a dedicated space for the director and the program can send the wrong message to the community.

2. The core and non-core faculty, together, under the leadership of the new Director, should engage in an annual or biannual strategic-planning process, laying out what their goals for future hires and future course development would be when budget conditions permit. While such annual or biannual exercises, especially for smaller programs, often seem superfluous, they do help to foster a sense of unified purpose and constitute a guide for the Director, who is then more prepared to seize opportunities that may come along.

The committee concurs with Dr. Cahan's recommendation that the core and non-core faculty for the Jewish Studies program engage in strategic-planning processes. The external reviewer has provided a number of suggestions the faculty might consider, for example those listed in the Service section of the report related to enhancing the contribution of the Jewish Studies program to the larger role of Arts and Letters in the University.

3. The Director, together with more senior administrators and the University's development office, should approach potential donors in the Jewish community for student scholarship, research and other forms of support. If funds for Biblical and Modern Hebrew instruction are not available from the state budget, every effort should be made to assist the Director in raising such funds from private sources.

Modern and/or Biblical Hebrew study is essential for any credible Jewish Studies program. The courses have been historically popular, and the committee recommends that there be an effort made to identify and hire a SACS-qualified adjunct instructor who can dependably cover a two year cycle of these courses.

4. Encourage more students to Minor in Jewish Studies; find ways to contact incoming students of Jewish background and interest them in some level of Jewish learning – it does not have to be at the level of the major. Better publicity for the program, from the (student) admission stage onward, is needed.

Dr. Cahan pointed out, correctly, that few Jewish Studies programs have large numbers of majors, but the impact of the program on the university community is broad. The minor is a popular one, and courses that serve the program can be found in a variety of departments, including History, Political Science, Anthropology, and even Art and Music. Further, the impact on the local Jewish Community, which is large and committed to support of such programs, is hard to underestimate. The program should consider rewriting their mission statement to emphasize the breadth of the impact of the program, which is far greater than can be measured only in numbers of degrees completed.

5. Develop courses that serve large numbers of students with all kinds of majors and minors, further anchoring the program in the College.

Note: I would like to note that while every courtesy was extended to me as external reviewer, the current method for carrying out program reviews at FAU strikes me as problematic. It places an enormous burden on the team of internal reviewers, who must go through the review process for seven different programs and departments. This is in addition to the extensive committee work and other services, not to mention teaching and research that they already perform. It also perhaps places undue weight on the perspective of a single external reviewer. It might be advisable to follow the more conventional method of having a separate 3-person team of outside reviewers, combined with one internal reviewer, for each unit under review. If this is not feasible in the present budget conditions, perhaps the period between reviews could be lengthened.

XIII. Critical Recommendations

- *Establish a dedicated space for the Jewish Studies Program and chair, with the goal of improved community relations and fundraising.*
- *Offer courses in Modern Hebrew on a regular basis with, at a minimum, a SACS-qualified adjunct instructor.*
- *Engage in a strategic-planning process with the goal of enhancing the Jewish Studies' contribution to the College and University.*