

# Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati, Ohio  
Jerusalem, Israel  
Los Angeles, California  
New York, New York



## 2013 Self-Study

Prepared for the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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# Executive Summary

## Institutional Overview

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), the oldest institution of Jewish higher learning in the western hemisphere, was formed in 1950 through the merger of Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College (founded in 1875) and New York's Jewish Institute of Religion (founded in 1922). Both schools trained liberal rabbis for the American Jewish community. A site in Los Angeles was opened in 1954 to serve the needs of the growing Jewish population on the west coast; an additional site in Jerusalem was opened in 1963 to serve as a research and operations center for American and European archaeologists excavating in the State of Israel, a base for HUC-JIR students studying there, and a resource for liberal Judaism in the Jewish State. In 1970, the College-Institute initiated a Year-in-Israel Program required of all first-year rabbinical students (subsequently extended as well to all first-year students in the Cantorial and Education Programs).

The institution is governed by a Board of Governors and administered on a federal model: a national administration and four local administrations. Each site historically has exercised considerable autonomy in running its programs: in addition to the Rabbinical School, which is situated on all three stateside campuses (years 2-5) and in Jerusalem (year 1), the School of Graduate Studies is based in Cincinnati; the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music, New York School of Education, and the Doctor of Ministry Program are located in New York; the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, Loucheim School of Judaic Studies, and Magnin School of Graduate Studies are located in Los Angeles; and the Israel Rabbinical Program (for Israeli students) is located in Jerusalem.

The College-Institute has world-class academic resources, including an internationally respected faculty, the Klau Library system housing the largest collection of Hebraica and Judaica outside the state of Israel, and the American Jewish Archives, one of the world's largest archives of Jewish Americana.

The three domestic campuses of HUC-JIR have been accredited since 1960, each by its respective regional accreditation agency (Cincinnati by the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission, New York by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and Los Angeles by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges; Jerusalem's Year-in-Israel Program was accredited through the Cincinnati campus).

Since the last decennial re-accreditation evaluations in 2002, the College-Institute has been encouraged by its accrediting agencies to seek a single accreditation for the entire institution. This recommendation was also developed internally as part of an institution-wide strategic planning process that began in 2004. After extensive research using multiple data-gathering methods and broad institutional consultation, HUC-JIR decided to apply to MSCHE for single accreditation and was accepted in 2011.

A major theme of the past ten years institutionally has been regularization of policies and procedures across the institution and integration of programs across sites, while still respecting local cultures. This integration has been spurred not only as an organizational best practice but also by the recent financial challenges. As the intended outcomes below indicate, integration has been the central focus of this self-study. It has significantly contributed to the major progress the College-Institute has made in meeting its financial challenges. Perhaps of greater import, the complete report will demonstrate dramatic progress toward integration of learning, administrative, and strategic functions—a tribute both to the commitment of those involved in

the study and also to the clarity and streamlined nature of the MSCHE materials and process. There is currently a search to replace our president, who assumed office in 2001 and is retiring in 2014. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to preside over a substantially more integrated institution with more evidence-based decision-making processes.

## HUC-JIR Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

HUC-JIR's Self-Study Steering Committee articulated six intended formative outcomes of the study beyond the overall summative outcomes required for MSCHE affiliation, "to demonstrate that the institution possesses the characteristics of excellence described in the Commission's 13 Standards that are relevant to HUC-JIR." Both sets of outcomes are reminders to participants that the purposes of self-assessment and peer review include deepening institutional self-understanding and advancing its self-improvement.

- **Vision:** To create a common vision of the institution's future direction.
- **Integration:** To better integrate the programs, resources (human and material), and opportunities of the four campuses while preserving their fundamental cultural differences.
- **Planning:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in two critical planning tasks:
  - Creating mission-driven, evidence-based strategic plans for each program, administrative office, and campus.
  - Assessing the extent to which financial, planning, and administrative decisions are driven by the College-Institute's mission.
- **Assessment:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in three critical assessment tasks:
  - **Academic:** To fully implement and utilize manageable program assessment for evaluating and improving student learning results, and revealing the enduring commitments as well as habits of mind that students have built at the College-Institute.
  - **Administrative:** To help all sectors of the College-Institute community better understand the challenges and accomplishments of administrative sectors and provide their own perspectives on those challenges and accomplishments.
  - **eLearning:** To use manageable program assessment to assess the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning for College-Institute students.
- **Discovery:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in discovering new ways:
  1. To promote academic excellence and high-quality mentoring of College-Institute students without diminishing standards and quality of delivery considering HUC-JIR's complex organization, small size, scholarly commitment, and identity as a religious community.
  2. To address financial realities and exigencies while promoting the College-Institute's role as the intellectual center of Reform Judaism and advancing the academic support for learning of various aspects of HUC-JIR programs, both curricular and co-curricular.
- **System Development:** To compose a concise and constructive document that not only meets the needs of MSCHE but also serves as a valuable tool for institutional planning, assessment, change, and growth.

## Summary of Suggestions for Improvement

The self-study's findings and suggestions for improvement are summarized in Chapter 9. What follows are highlights of those suggestions<sup>1</sup>:

1. While respecting individual campus cultures, the *Suggestion on All-Campuses Integration* calls for further integration across the four locations of basic policies and procedures through wide community involvement, and for their subsequent prominent publication.
2. The *Suggestion on Program Assessment* further promotes the culture of program assessment across the College-Institute through ensuring that there continues to be: (a) updating by faculty of the definitions of their programs' missions and learning outcomes and communication of the value of both to their students and to other HUC-JIR stakeholders; (b) term-by-term assessment data collection in a timely, conscientious, and consistent manner; (c) analysis of assessment data provided to all programs on an annual basis; and (d) annual documentation of how the results have been used to create educational innovations.
3. The *Suggestion on System Development and Planning* calls for assurance that the self-study findings be integrated into the current strategic planning process and that the Governance Committee clarifies roles of committees of the Board as they pertain to setting institutional priorities and resource allocation. Several Self-Study Working Groups independently called for increased collaboration of financial and academic planning processes and results.

## Comprehensive Recommendations

A synthetic review of all the suggestions for improvement listed in Chapter 9 resulted in five comprehensive recommendations. It is these recommendations that College-Institute commits to implement and report on in its 2018 Periodic Review Report.

1. Show evidence that each program has updated its program learning outcomes and continues to implement a system of assessment based on them.
2. Each administrative unit and educational program will create brief annual reports that articulate goals, include innovations introduced in the prior year, assessment of recent performance, and propose innovations related to assessment results.
3. Show evidence of regularizing the periodic review, updating, and reporting to the President's Cabinet concerning the College-Institute handbooks including those for the Board of Governors, Boards of Overseers, Faculty (including policies and procedures for promotion and tenure), Personnel, and Students.
4. Develop and implement tools to assess the efficacy of our financial aid policies.
5. Make policies and protocols more easily accessible on line.

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted additionally that an Academic Vision Statement has been written and should be updated through wide participation when the new president decides.

## Glossary of Abbreviations

- AAC**—Academic Advisory Council. The institution-wide faculty-administration decision-making body.
- AALHE**—Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education. An organization of practitioners interested in using effective assessment practice to document and improve student learning.
- AJA**—American Jewish Archives. The AJA is committed to preserving a documentary heritage of the religious, organizational, economic, cultural, personal, social and family life of American Jewry.
- BoG**—Board of Governors. The governing body of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
- CCAR**—Central Conference of American Rabbis. The CCAR, the association of Reform rabbis, is the oldest and largest rabbinic organization in America.
- CN**—The Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
- DeLeT**—Day School Leadership and Teaching. A program of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education dedicated to fostering teaching excellence in Jewish day schools in North America.
- DFSSM**—Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music. The program that prepares and ordains students for lives as cantors.
- DHL**—Doctor of Hebrew Letters. A non-residence academic graduate degree program available only to Rabbinical School graduates.
- DMin**—Doctor of Ministry. A graduate degree in Interfaith Clinical Education for Pastoral Ministry. Offered on the New York campus.
- ECASA**—Executive Committee on Academic and Student Affairs. The cross-program administrative body on the Los Angeles campus that addresses issues of student learning.
- FC**—Faculty Council. A national faculty forum consisting of faculty members from all four Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion sites
- GTF**—Governance Task Force. An initiative of the Board of Governors. Recently converted into the standing Committee on Governance.
- HUC-JIR or the College-Institute**—Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education.
- JR**—The Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
- LA**—The Los Angeles campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.
- LON**—Learning Outcomes Network. A program assessment tool that requires ratings for every student in every course for as long as a student is in the program.
- MAHL**—Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters. The degree program preceding Rabbinic Ordination.
- MAJE**—Master of Arts in Jewish Education. A degree program offered by the Rhea Hirsch School of Education based on the Los Angeles campus.
- MAJNM**—Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management. A degree program offered by the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management based on the Los Angeles campus.
- MARE**—Master of Arts in Religious Education. A degree program offered by the New York School of Education.
- MODEL**—Matrices Organized Developmentally through Expertise and Labeling. Multidimensional rubrics created by grouping dimensions from developmental interviews of faculty. Each level within each dimension is summarized into abstracts and labeled with a one- or two-word title.

**MPhil**—Master of Philosophy. A degree granted to students enrolled in the School of Graduate Studies Ph.D. program after completion of all general and special requirements, excepting the dissertation.

**MSM**—Master of Sacred Music. The degree program preceding Cantorial Ordination.

**MUM**—Maintenance of Union Membership. Dues congregations must pay in order to maintain membership in the Union for Reform Judaism. 44% of these dues support the unrestricted annual operation budget of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

**NAC**—National Assessment Committee.

**NATE**—National Association of Temple Educators. The professional organization of Jewish educators of the Reform Movement.

**NCAHLC**—North Central Association Higher Learning Commission. The former accrediting agency of the Cincinnati campus.

**NSAH**—National Student Academic Handbook. A new institution-wide student handbook that will be implemented in the spring of 2013.

**NWF**—New Way Forward. A plan to achieve fiscal sustainability that was developed after the 2008 financial crisis.

**NY**—The New York campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

**NYSOE**—New York School of Education.

**NYU**—New York University. Has a cooperative agreement with the New York campus that allows students to access NYU’s library and other programs.

**OIRA**—Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

**PARDES**—Progressive Association of Reform Jewish Day Schools. The international day school affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism.

**RHSOE**—The Rhea Hirsch School of Education based on the Los Angeles campus.

**SGS**—The School of Graduate Studies based on the Cincinnati campus.

**SIS**—Student Information System.

**SJNM**—School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, based on the Los Angeles campus.

**UC**—University of Cincinnati. Has a cooperative agreement with the Cincinnati campus to offer joint academic programs.

**URJ**—Union for Reform Judaism (formerly Union of American Hebrew Congregations, UAHC). A network of Reform congregations, lay leaders, clergy and professionals across North America.

**USC**—University of Southern California. Has a cooperative agreement with the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management. HUC-JIR, through its Louchheim School of Judaic Studies, provides undergraduate instruction in Jewish Studies at USC.

**VPAA**—Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**VPFA**—Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**VPIA**—Vice President for Institutional Advancement.

**WASC**—Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The former accrediting agency of the Los Angeles campus.

**WUPJ**—World Union for Progressive Judaism. The international umbrella organization of the Reform, Liberal, Progressive, and Reconstructionist movements.

**XU**—Xavier University. Has a cooperative agreement with the Cincinnati campus. CN faculty members offer courses toward Xavier’s undergraduate minor in Jewish Studies.

**YII**—Year-in-Israel Program. The mandatory first year that all rabbinic, cantorial, and education students must spend at the Jerusalem campus.





## Chapter 1. Introduction and Institutional Profile

Over the last century, accreditation agencies in the United States have espoused two goals. The first goal emerged when institutions of higher learning decided to combine resources, with the aim of improving their effectiveness. This led to the formation of six regional accrediting bodies. The first half-century work of these bodies proved so valuable that the federal government requested them to take on a second goal—ensuring that citizens who had received federal assistance to pursue higher education received substantial value from this assistance. The first goal has come to be referred to as “formative” and the second as “summative.”

The decennial self-study process for re-accreditation serves both formative and summative ends. Through it, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR, or the College-Institute) is discovering ways to improve its offerings and operations. Members of the College-Institute have a tradition of asking useful questions, and the questions that guide this document are generating important ideas for its future. The self-study will also serve to assure the College-Institute’s students, Reform Jewish congregations and leaders, the Jewish organizational world, the religious and academic community at large, and the United States Department of Education (USDE) that all are receiving substantial value from their investments of time and resources.

To understand the methodology for HUC-JIR’s self-study, there needs to be clarity for MSCHE regarding the characteristics of HUC-JIR as a whole. This section portrays a unique institution: its mission, students, faculty, accreditation history, administration, resources, programs, and degrees awarded. It has an enduring mission, in some ways as old as rabbinic tradition itself, yet as modern as the new generation’s need to find meaning. Its students make a rare commitment to spend up to a half decade or more of post-baccalaureate study to master this mission by engaging with a dedicated faculty, world-renowned for its scholarship. The College-Institute’s history and relationship to accreditation show an abiding commitment to quality education. It is people who have made this institution. Their legacy is reflected in the rare and abundant resources amassed to serve the mission. This portrayal ends by identifying the offered programs and the credentials that they award, which prepare the College-Institute’s students for their career contributions.

### The College-Institute’s Mission

The Mission portion of the College-Institute’s Mission-Purpose Statement states that:

HUC-JIR is a religious and scholarly learning community dedicated to:

- Developing Jewish professional and lay leaders to transmit and apply to contemporary life the sustaining values, responsibilities and texts of our tradition.
- Applying the open and pluralistic spirit of the Reform movement to the study of the great issues of Jewish life and thought.
- Advancing the critical study of Jewish culture and related disciplines in accordance with the highest standards of modern academic scholarship.

### Students and Faculty

HUC-JIR prepares small but select and committed cohorts of students to lead the Reform Jewish community, to serve as visionary educational and communal professionals in the larger American Jewish community, and to teach and research in academic programs in Hebraic and Judaic Studies at colleges, universities, and seminaries. The numbers of full-time and part-time students are given as Unduplicated Enrollment in HUC-JIR Programs. Most higher education institutions have experienced tumultuous economic times since the Great Recession began in

2008 (HUC-JIR's endowment plummeted by 40% but has now returned to more than double the low level). This has also affected student enrollment figures. The enrollment differences among sites are affected by the distribution of programs: Rabbinical on all sites; Cantorial and Doctor of Ministry (DMin) only in NY; Education in LA and NY; Nonprofit Management only in LA; and PhD in Judaic and Cognate Studies only in CN. The 2011 uptick in part-time students in Cincinnati was due to the Executive MA in Education students being registered at that campus.

Preparing students to be visionary Jewish leaders is in itself a challenging mission. Yet, two-thirds of the mission statement refers to scholarship. Many faculty members are world-renowned scholars of the historical Jewish experience. Their contributions include more than 120 books as well as several hundreds of articles and chapters (see Faculty Productivity Data and Faculty Fields of Expertise). Over the last four decades Historical Faculty Counts show that there has been a de facto structural redistribution from a majority of faculty members in Cincinnati to approximately equal numbers across the stateside campuses. The current luxurious student-faculty ratio may be adjusted somewhat due to economic realities. Nevertheless, a low ratio reflects HUC-JIR's mission, purpose, and educational philosophy as documented in its admissions brochure, which states:

The chain of Jewish learning is embodied in the mentoring relationships forged at HUC-JIR, where you are mentored by renowned scholars who are gifted teachers.... Our extraordinarily low faculty-to-student ratio (among the lowest of any university or seminary in the world) means that you will receive daily guidance and support from some of Judaism's best minds. HUC-JIR's scholars are on the cutting edge in scholarship and research with a broad range of centers and projects that will enrich your studies.

## **Accreditation History**

Founded in 1875 in Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College is the oldest institution of higher Jewish learning in North America. Its founder, Isaac Mayer Wise—the great architect of American Reform Judaism—also established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, now the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ) in 1873 and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in 1889. In 1922, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise established the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. The similar orientation of the two schools led to their merger in 1950. In 1954 a campus in Los Angeles was added; it provided only the first three years of rabbinical training, after which students transferred to either Cincinnati or New York. In 1963 a further location was added in Jerusalem. At the beginning, the Jerusalem campus offered an optional year for rabbinical students, usually taken after the second or third year of the program; otherwise it was devoted to the Biblical and Archaeological School, which provided American and European archaeologists with an operational base in the State of Israel. The current required first-year in Israel program began in 1970. Originally it was only for rabbinical students. Students in the Rhea Hirsch School of Education were added in the mid-1970's, and cantorial students in the 1980's. In 1996, the rabbinical program in Los Angeles was provided with the resources to offer a full ordination program. The first rabbinical students to complete their four-year stateside program there were ordained in 2001.

In 1960, the three stateside campuses were accredited by three different regional accrediting agencies: Cincinnati by the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCAHLC), Los Angeles by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and New York by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. When founded, the Jerusalem (JR) Year-in-Israel program (YII) was added to the Cincinnati accreditation. That HUC-JIR committed to the accreditation process before it was tied to federal financial aid by President Johnson's

signing of the Higher Education Act of 1965 testifies to the College-Institute's enduring commitment to quality.

In 2010 HUC-JIR petitioned MSCHE to seek accreditation of all of the College-Institute's sites through them, provided that the College-Institute permanently retains its sole incorporation of all locations within Ohio, as has been the case since the 1950 merger (HUC earlier had been incorporated in Ohio in 1926). In the last few years, because of the College-Institute's unified administrative structure, each of the regional accrediting agencies began urging HUC-JIR to seek a single accreditor. A committee of the Board was organized in the spring of 2009 to study the matter. They produced a report finding that this recommendation would further the mission of the College-Institute. Two administrators were assigned to study the issue and expedite the process: the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the College-Institute's first Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. They began by meeting with key members of the Board of Governors (BoG) who emphasized deepening the commitment of the College-Institute to evidence-based decision making. The job description for the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment reveals the goal of the College not only to acquire solid evidence for its own decisions, but also to develop methods and analyses that will advance the field of higher education assessment.

One or both of these two administrators held numerous phone and email consultations with liaison officers of all three agencies; attended annual meetings of all three agencies; reviewed policies, procedures, and potential peer institutions in each agency; conferred with the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the College-Institute's BoG; held discussions with faculty on all three campuses; formed and held several meetings with a College-Institute committee including faculty and administrators from all locations; conferred extensively with the USDE; discussed the issue in detail with three nationally renowned accreditation experts; and obtained and gleaned the relevant information from thousands of pages of documents. This required more than 1,000 person-hours to complete. Twelve conclusions emerged from this comprehensive study and are included on pages 2 and 3 of the College-Institute's Complex Substantive Change Proposal to MSCHE. Based on these conclusions, the College-Institute wrote to Elizabeth Sibolski of MSCHE to seek permission to propose to Sylvia Manning of NCAHLC and Ralph Wolff of WASC to transition to sole accreditation through MSCHE. A letter of permission from Dr. Sibolski was received on September 7, 2010. The proposal was submitted on December 30, 2010 and was accepted by MSCHE on March 3, 2011, as indicated in the HUC-JIR Statement of Accreditation Status.

## **Administration**

The foregoing description portrays a College-Institute mighty in mission, small in size, complex in composition, dispersed in setting, and contrasting in culture. It would not be surprising for "arduous in administration" to come to mind as the next pair of descriptors. Certainly the question of how to organize such an institution is not readily answered. Fortunately, the administration of the College-Institute is basically defined through the HUC-JIR Regulations (often referred to as the "By-Laws"), which have been adapted throughout 137 years of experience. They first specify that the BoG selects, supports, and assesses the effectiveness of the president. In addition, the BoG convenes several standing committees that are served by administrative officers, including Academic and Faculty Affairs (VPAA), Student Welfare (VPAA), Finance and Audit (Vice President for Finance and Administration, VPFA), Institutional Advancement (Vice President for Institutional Advancement, VPIA), Legal (external counsel), and Buildings and Grounds (local campus deans). Each of the four campuses also has a Board of Overseers, which advises both the BoG and the local campus deans and program directors.

The Regulations designate that the chair of each of the four Boards of Overseers is a member of the BoG.

Additional national administrators include the Director of the HUC-JIR Library System and the Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) both located in Cincinnati. The campus librarians of the other three locations report to the Director of Libraries as well as to their local deans. This structure is reflected in the Organizational Chart.

Thus, the College-Institute Regulations specify that all four campuses are controlled by a national administration including president and vice presidents (Academic Affairs, Finance and Administration, and Institutional Advancement) with local support from deans and program directors. A renewed focus on efficiency in recent years has resulted in progressively more functions being nationalized, so that there are now several national offices reporting to the appropriate VP's. Reporting to the VPAA are the offices of the local campus deans, the national librarian, registrar, admissions, eLearning, information technology, and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). Reporting to the VPFA are the Accounting, Human Resources, and Financial Aid Offices. Reporting to the VPIA are the Offices of Alumni Affairs, Institutional Giving, and Public Affairs.

The president and VPAA—each is an ordained rabbi and PhD, has made significant scholarly contributions, and is an internationally recognized voice of Judaism—set the tone for administrative processes. In both cases, this is not only evidence-based, but also inclusive. For significant decisions, evidence is sought from any institutional office relevant to the decision. Systems of evidence-gathering are continuously being improved, not only by those functions with backgrounds in traditional systems fields, like operations and finances, but also in areas where systematization is a newer emphasis, like student outcomes and administrative services assessment. The commitment of the College-Institute to involve the new OIRA in such efforts is shown by weekly meetings with the VPAA. In addition to systematic data gathering, there is also a concerted effort to obtain input from representatives of any function within the organization that would be significantly impacted by the decision. Committees set up to further this goal include the President's Cabinet, the Academic Advisory Committee, the National Assessment Committee, the Student Information Services (SIS) Management Team, the eLearning Committee, as well as a national Faculty Council, program committees, and library committees.

Most of the offices described above have either been in existence for decades or are consolidations of duplicated local offices. The exception is the OIRA. This office was created in response to recommendations to improve assessment from all three regional accrediting agencies over the last 5-10 years. NCAHLC was especially forceful on the topic, recommending a Focused Visit in 2009. Within the first six months, the office not only produced a clean bill of institutional health from the focused visit (see Assurance Section from NCAHLC's Mandated Focus Visit Report and Advancement Section from NCAHLC's Mandated Focus Visit Report), but established professional support for the new VPAA in his commitment to make evidenced-based decision-making the new norm for the institution.

The Organizational Chart shows the resources that local campuses have, including their own dean and operations department. All programs have local directors reporting to the campus dean. Thus, the Rabbinical School has a local director on each of the four campuses. These are supported by Board-appointed full-time faculty members and adjunct faculty. The faculty, program directors, and deans are the persons to whom students go for help or support. In addition, the Jerusalem and Los Angeles campuses also have specialized student affairs or student life personnel. The special challenges of not only beginning rabbinical, cantorial, or educational training but also living in a foreign country for the YII program are met with support

from the program's Director of Student Affairs. In New York, there is also a specialized placement director for cantors. Rabbinical placement is conducted through the Joint Rabbinical Placement Commission of the CCAR, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, and the URJ; it is overseen jointly by the HUC-JIR Rabbinical School directors and the placement director of the CCAR. The result is that students are served by an abundance of faculty and administration, which creates a highly attentive and personalized educational experience.

## **Resources and Support**

With roughly 300 full-time students (335 FTE's in the 2011-12 fiscal year) distributed across four campuses, it might be concluded that HUC-JIR is a small, inconsequential institution. Such a conclusion, however, would miss the significance of its primary purpose: to be the educational and intellectual center of Reform Judaism. The extent to which the million-member community of Reform Jews in North America has committed itself to this purpose is underscored by the fact that approximately half of the Maintenance of Union Membership (MUM) dues collected from Reform congregations by the URJ are designated to the College-Institute.

The treasures do not end with faculty and students. They also include extensive physical resources; a world-renowned library system; a major archive of the American Jewish community; a dozen institutes, centers, and museums; and internationally recognized publications from the College-Institute's two presses and six periodicals. HUC-JIR Resources by Campus shows the quantitative breakdown of resources by campus. Supporting descriptions of HUC-JIR's renowned resources, the Klau Library and the AJA, follow below. The resources table clearly shows that every campus has rich resources not only for enabling its students to succeed, but also to serve all those who would understand and further Reform Judaism.

The College-Institute's world-class resources include its renowned Klau Library and the AJA. The College-Institute's library system contains extensive collections of at least 1,000 volumes per student on all campuses. Within this system, the Cincinnati's Klau Library is a unique resource to all. It alone preserves approximately 500,000 volumes, making it the world's second largest repository of Hebraica and Judaica from the 10th century to the present (second only in size to the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem). The Klau's collection includes thousands of rare volumes, illuminated manuscripts, Bible codices, communal records, legal documents, and academic publications. The American Jewish Periodical Center houses the nation's most complete collection of Jewish newspapers and magazines on microfilm. The Klau Library is one of the three conservators in the world of the negatives of the Dead Sea Scrolls. A new \$12-million, state-of-the-art facility was dedicated in fall 2009 to preserve this treasure and enhance its availability to scholars and other users from around the world. An additional advantage to students of such a treasure is that it enables reciprocal book-borrowing relationships for HUC-JIR students with the multi-million-volume libraries of the College-Institute's closest neighbors: University of Southern California (USC), University of Cincinnati (UC), and New York University (NYU). In 2010 the Klau Library provided over 500 books and photocopies to people outside of Cincinnati, more than half of which went to students or alumni in Los Angeles or New York.

The AJA is committed to preserving the documentary heritage of the religious, organizational, economic, cultural, personal, social, and family life of American Jewry. The late Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus founded the AJA in 1947 in the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. At that time, the Jews of America were the largest and best educated Jewish community in history and faced the awesome responsibility of preserving the continuity of Jewish life and learning. For over a half century, the AJA has been preserving American Jewish history and imparting it to

the next generation. It houses over ten million pages of documentation, containing nearly 8,000 linear feet of archives, manuscripts, near-print materials, photographs, audio and video tapes, microfilm, and genealogical materials. An example of the work of the AJA is the fact that it provided many hundreds of high quality facsimiles to Philadelphia's acclaimed new, \$150-million National Museum of American Jewish History.

Including the AJA, the College-Institute contains the following twelve specialized institutes, centers, or museums distributed across its four campuses: the AJA (CN), the HUC-UC Ethics Center and Starkoff Institute of Ethics (CN), the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation (LA), the Institute for Teaching Jewish Adults (LA), the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health (LA), the Skirball Center for Biblical and Archaeological Research (JR), the Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling (NY), the Archeology Center (CN), the Skirball Museum (CN), the Skirball Museum of Biblical Archaeology (JR), HUC-JIR Exhibitions (LA), and the HUC-JIR Museum in NY.

The OIRA is a resource to all campuses that is closely connected with the faculty and students but also serves the administration. The Self-Study Design (pp. 13-15) summarized activities of the Office and the Job Description of Director of Institutional Research and Assessment outlines the duties of the Office's director. During the last year many additional activities have been documented in the Office's Wiki, [wiki.huc.edu](http://wiki.huc.edu). The Director of the OIRA has very recently (January 11, 2013) left the employ of HUC-JIR. The College-Institute will be making staffing arrangements going forward to ensure that assessment and the other functions of the Office are maintained at the same comprehensive level of rigor and, indeed, improved.

## **Programs and Degrees Awarded**

The College-Institute fulfills its mission through three stateside campuses that offer programs in rabbinical training, cantorial training, Jewish education, Jewish nonprofit management, and graduate studies. Degrees and Certificates Offered by HUC-JIR's Stateside Campuses provides a summary. Several programs are supported by the YII program on the Jerusalem campus. Unduplicated Enrollment in HUC-JIR Programs provides the full- and part-time counts of students in these programs. It takes few descriptors of these programs to see the commitment that students sustain within them.

### **Rabbinical School**

The Rabbinical School offers a five-year program of full-time graduate study leading to the Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters (MAHL) degree and ordination. Students admitted to the Rabbinical School are required to spend their first academic year, beginning in July, at the College-Institute's campus in Jerusalem. Upon successful completion of the YII program, students return to one of the three American campuses to which they had been assigned upon admission to the Rabbinical School. Application is made to HUC-JIR and not to a particular campus. The Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and New York Schools offer four-year programs leading to the MAHL degree and ordination.

### **Cantorial School**

The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music (DFSSM) is dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and creating Jewish music. Originally conceived as an institution training cantors for the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Movements, its curriculum still reflects non-denominational origins. The faculty teaches the full range of cantorial styles, from traditional through contemporary music. As the cantorial profession has evolved, cantors have taken on the full range of clergy

responsibilities with their rabbinic partners, and in turn, the curriculum is adapting to prepare students for the changing cantorate of the 21st century. The program leads to the Master of Sacred Music (MSM) degree and cantorial ordination.

## **Schools of Jewish Education**

The Schools of Jewish Education have functioned separately on the two coastal campuses, Los Angeles (the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, RHSOE) and New York (the New York School of Education, NYSOE). Both offer a master's degree, and there is a new national executive master's degree that draws on faculty from all three stateside campuses. In addition, the RHSOE offers a certificate in Day School Leadership and Teaching (DeLeT). In 2012, the Director of the RHSOE was appointed National Director of the Schools of Education.

The three-year course of study leading to the Master of Arts in Jewish Education (MAJE) from the RHSOE begins with a year spent at HUC-JIR's Jerusalem campus engaged in the intensive study of Hebrew language and texts. The second and third years of the program are comprised of academic coursework and clinical education in Los Angeles. The focus of the academic courses in education is on the theory and skills common to a wide variety of educational institutions. The Judaica coursework places a strong emphasis on Hebrew and proficiency in both classical and modern texts, liturgy, history, and philosophy. The clinical education component of the program requires students to spend 10-12 hours per week in a supervised internship in a local institution, under the close supervision of a professional in the field and an HUC-JIR faculty member. In addition, every student is assigned a faculty supervisor each year who serves as mentor in terms of the student's academic program, professional training, and preparation for the field of Jewish education.

The School of Education in New York offers a Master of Arts in Religious Education (MARE) in several formats: (a) a three-year full-time degree; (b) a longer part-time master's degree for students who need a more flexible setting (mid-career-change students with less mobility); and (c) a program for practitioners and clergy already in Jewish education who want to upgrade their credentials or for general educators who wish to work in Jewish education. Each student completes the same Judaic and education core courses, a capstone project, and two years of supervised internships. Students will be prepared to work in all areas of the Jewish community: synagogue, religious schools, day schools, camps, central agencies, and communal organizations.

The Executive M.A. Program in Jewish Education is directed to educators with a minimum of five years of experience in a leadership position in the field of Jewish education, who cannot enroll in HUC-JIR's full-time programs due to employment and location. It offers a course of study that utilizes the cohort-based approach in a 24-month program, from May to May, designed for working Jewish professionals. It includes intensive onsite seminars at the campuses in Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles and Jerusalem, as well as participation in eLearning courses, study in Israel for ten days, guidance by clinical faculty mentors, and culminates in a capstone project.

## **School of Graduate Studies**

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) is a center for study, training, research, and publication in Judaic and Cognate Studies. The School, which excels in resources, faculty, library holdings, and research facilities, awards MA, MPhil, DHL, and PhD degrees to men and women who are preparing for careers in teaching and scholarship. Major areas of study include: Bible and Ancient Near East, History of Biblical Interpretation, Jewish Studies in the Greco-Roman Period,

Rabbinics, Jewish Religious Thought and Philosophy, and Modern Jewish History. The School welcomes students of all faiths and nationalities who meet the high standards of scholarship for which Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion is known, and who are devoted to the exploration of the Judaic heritage.

In New York the School of Graduate Studies offers the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree specializing in Interfaith Clinical Education for Pastoral Ministry. This program provides an opportunity to clergy and, in some cases, non-clergy of all faith groups to understand and respond to the variety of clinical problems encountered in ministry. Students who work in congregational, chaplaincy, counseling, or community settings are offered coursework and clinical supervision with attention to the specific context of the pastoral relationship.

### **School of Jewish Nonprofit Management**

Founded in 1968 as the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service to address the need for more highly trained and Jewishly committed professionals in Jewish life, the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management (SJNM) offers a two-year course of study integrating Jewish studies, Jewish communal dynamics, nonprofit management, and leadership training. The program leads to the Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management (MAJNM). It includes two years of supervised fieldwork internships in a wide variety of agencies throughout the Los Angeles area, the second largest Jewish community in the United States and one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the country. A capstone project explores issues of contemporary Jewish communal concern through original research and policy analysis. A bi-annual Israel Seminar explores the Israeli third sector<sup>2</sup>, assessing current trends in Israel-Diaspora relations, and networking with colleagues in the Israeli political, cultural, religious, technological, environmental, and social service sectors. The School also offers a Graduate Certificate in Jewish Nonprofit Management. Designed for rabbinical students, the program requires 22 credits taken over the course of two summers.

### **Joint Programs with Other Institutions**

In addition to programs offered solely inside the College-Institute, there are several cooperative arrangements with USC, Xavier University (XU), and UC. The SJNM offers five dual-degree options with USC including Masters in Business Administration, Public Administration, Social Work, Communication Management, and Public Arts Studies. The Rhea Hirsch School of Education offers a dual-degree program between HUC-JIR and USC in Jewish and secular education, for the individual who wishes to advance his/her secular technical knowledge and who may need the secular credentials for specific schools or for further studies. In addition USC contracts with the College-Institute's Louchheim School of Judaic Studies to provide the Judaic Studies portion of its Bachelor degrees in Judaic Studies.

The College-Institute in Cincinnati offers a joint program with the University of Cincinnati in Jewish and Christian Studies in the Greco-Roman Period. HUC-JIR and the Department of Classics at UC offer a student interested in Jewish and Christian studies in the Greco-Roman world an opportunity to pursue advanced studies in both institutions and to take advantage of their combined resources. Also in Cincinnati, HUC-JIR provides four courses of instruction a year to Xavier University for their undergraduate minor in Jewish Studies.

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<sup>2</sup>The "third sector" refers to the nonprofit arena or voluntary sector, as distinct from the governmental and private sectors.



In addition to the programs listed above that are accredited in the United States, the College-Institute also offers two programs on its Jerusalem campus for Israeli students. One leads to rabbinical ordination and includes an MA awarded by another Israeli institution (usually the Hebrew University in Jerusalem), and the other is a joint MA in Pluralistic Jewish Education awarded with the Melton Center for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University.

## Nature and Scope of the Self-Study

In choosing the model for the College-Institute's self-study, the Steering Committee followed the recommendation of HUC-JIR's MSCHE Liaison to adopt the comprehensive model. This model is especially fitting because this self-study follows so hard on the heels of the Complex Substantive Change Proposal to work with MSCHE as the College-Institute's sole accreditor. Though HUC-JIR is well-known to many peer institutions in the Middle States region, the complexity of its interregional and international presence is not.

In addition to serving MSCHE's need to review the entire College-Institute, a comprehensive self-study for a single accrediting agency is also a great opportunity to reconceive ourselves in a more integrated way that is nevertheless sensitive to the significant cultural differences found among the western, central, and eastern regions of the United States as well as those experienced by many College-Institute students during their year in Israel. Consequently, the self-study looks at thirteen of the fourteen standards of excellence identified by MSCHE (General Education is not included since the College-Institute awards no undergraduate degrees). Details on these standards are available in the MSCHE document *Characteristics of Excellence*.

## Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

The Steering Committee articulated six intended outcomes of the self-study. These, of course, supplement the overall summative outcomes required for MSCHE affiliation, "to demonstrate that the institution possesses the characteristics of excellence described in the Commission's 13 Standards that are relevant to HUC-JIR."

The formative outcomes below comprise a concise statement of the major expectations of the study. They are a reminder to all participants that the purposes of self-assessment and peer review include deepening institutional self-understanding and advancing its self-improvement.

- **Vision:** To create a common vision of the institution's future direction.
- **Integration:** To better integrate the programs, resources (human and material), and opportunities of the four campuses while preserving their fundamental cultural differences.
- **Planning:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in two critical planning tasks:
  1. Creating mission-driven, evidence-based strategic plans for each program, administrative office, and campus.
  2. Assessing the extent to which financial, planning, and administrative decisions are driven by the College-Institute's mission.
- **Assessment:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in three critical assessment tasks:
  1. **Academic:** To fully implement and utilize manageable program assessment for evaluating and improving student learning results, and revealing the enduring commitments as well as habits of mind that students have built at the College-Institute.

2. **Administrative:** To help all sectors of the College-Institute community better understand the challenges and accomplishments of administrative sectors and provide their own perspectives on those challenges and accomplishments.
  3. **eLearning:** To use manageable program assessment to assess the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning for College-Institute students.
- **Discovery:** To involve faculty, administration, and governors in discovering new ways:
    1. To promote academic excellence and high-quality mentoring of College-Institute students without diminishing standards and quality of delivery considering HUC-JIR's complex organization, small size, scholarly commitment, and religious community.
    2. To address financial realities and exigencies while promoting the College-Institute's role as the intellectual center of Reform Judaism and determining the academic support for learning of various aspects of HUC-JIR programs, both curricular and co-curricular.
  - **System Development:** To compose a concise and constructive document that not only meets the needs of MSCHE but also serves as a valuable tool for institutional planning, assessment, change, and growth.

## Structure and Process of the Study

The conduct of the self-study was faithful to the design. It comprehensively addressed all relevant MSCHE standards. It also employed the design's three-tiered structure. In the first tier is the steering committee, appointed by the College-Institute's president. The committee includes three self-study co-chairs, one from each stateside campus, and the seven working group chairs named on page 21 of the Self-Study Design. Each working group addressed one or two Middle States *Standards of Excellence*.

Each working group, the second tier, was designed to be highly representative with a balance of faculty and administrators from all campuses and representatives of the BoG and students where the fundamental elements directly addressed them (see Working Group Members). The working groups began by selecting or adapting research questions from the comprehensive list provided in the MSCHE manual, *Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report*. Each group then conducted a gap analysis, which listed documents that addressed every fundamental element and considered whether specific work by the College-Institute would be needed to assure basic compliance with each of them. One major outcome of the gap analysis was the initiation of a major project to create the College-Institute's first all-campus student policy handbook that unified all the diverse policies that had been developed over the decades during the years of separate accreditation. The resulting National Student Academic Handbook (NSAH, detailed in Chapter 5) was finalized during the fall term of 2012 and is being implemented in the spring 2013 term.

The working groups were responsible for obtaining input from the third tier, all relevant sectors of the College-Institute community. They were charged with addressing their research questions and any other issue relating to the fundamental elements of their standard(s). The Documents Inventory detailed on pages 33-37 of the Self-Study Design was greatly expanded (including references to several hundred web pages plus over 300 document index entries, many of which are themselves collections of documents) as a result of their work. Each group then drafted a report, which was sent to the co-chairs.

The Cincinnati co-chair and the Director of the OIRA collaboratively conducted a comprehensive editing of the chapters to create a unified approach and to check for accuracy and comprehensiveness. In order to facilitate the compliance sections of the self-study and make each Middle States standard and fundamental element readily available to the community, the

standards and elements were copied with MSCHE permission into [wiki.huc.edu](http://wiki.huc.edu) at [wiki.huc.edu/index.php/MSCHE\\_Standards](http://wiki.huc.edu/index.php/MSCHE_Standards). These links are used throughout all the chapters and are logically numbered beginning, for example, with S1\_1 and S1\_2 for the first and second fundamental elements of Standard 1 on Mission and Goals.

Each edited draft was periodically sent to the co-chairs, the VPAA, and the appropriate working group chair for further input. Ultimately each chapter was sent to the president, Board chair, and all members of each working group, for final review. When all of these had signed off on the document, it was sent to the entire community, including faculty, senior administration, governors, and student government representatives of the College-Institute. Their input was addressed in the draft sent to the Evaluation Team Chair on November 13, 2012. The Team Chair's observations on form and content, delivered during her preliminary visit to the New York campus on November 29, 2012, have helped to shape this final version. The concluding chapter will show that this process allowed the College-Institute to achieve with remarkable depth the ambitious intended outcomes of this study.

## Chapter 2. Mission, Goals, and Integrity (Standards 1 and 6)

### Overview of Charge

The working group charged with Standards 1 and 6 began their inquiry with general discussions about the College-Institute's mission, goals, and integrity. They identified documents to find and analyze, including the mission statement, public relations statements, curriculum committee meeting minutes, and handbooks for students, faculty, staff, and governors. This chapter is a synthesis of the group's analysis of these and other documents, in combination with notes from interviews with administrators from all four campuses. This group began with their research questions and integrated the evidence for compliance with the fundamental elements into their discussion of the questions (cf. editors' note<sup>3</sup>).

### Standard 1: Mission and Goals

#### Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance

##### *Research Question 1.1*

*How are the institution's operations consistent with its mission and goals?*

The Mission Statement of HUC-JIR is a two-part document ("mission" and "purpose") that appears in a prominent and accessible place on the website (S1\_01e). Specific statements of goals include professional training, higher learning, scholarship, and fostering a diverse community (S1\_01b). It is clear that the mission and goals relate to external as well as internal contexts and constituencies (S1\_02).

While this statement is highly inclusive of all the activities currently offered at the institution (satisfying S1\_01a), it includes some areas currently emphasized much less than others. This conclusion is acknowledged by the most recent Academic Vision Statement drafted by the VPAA. For example, the College-Institute does not devote as many resources to developing lay leaders as to professionals. Furthermore, ongoing alumni education may be a desideratum, but it is not an area into which substantial resources are currently being invested.

As documented in the 2002 MSCHE NY Self-Study (page 15), "HUC-JIR developed its most recent statement of purpose and mission in 1997-98, during a coordinated, institution-wide process that included representation from each of the four campuses." At that time, the president appointed a working group comprised of members of the faculty, administration, and Board of Governors. The Board approved the statement in February, 1998.

Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and governors have ready access to the mission statement, as it appears in all handbooks and is the first item listed under "About HUC-JIR" on the website. The statement is reviewed and discussed during periods of transition, such as the strategic planning process in 2004-06 (S1\_01a and S1\_01e; also see Standard 6: Integrity,

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<sup>3</sup>Unlike the remaining *inductive* chapters where a fundamental element is introduced, supporting evidence provided and conclusions reached, this chapter is written *deductively*. When a standard is addressed, compliance is first asserted and then the supporting evidence is provided. Since this approach did not bias the working group against making recommendations, the editors decided to preserve the group's process while being especially vigilant about the quality of supporting data.

below). In June, 2012 the Governance Committee of the Board called for an updated Governance Survey of Board Members, which includes the full mission and purpose statements plus three questions on their current relevance, accuracy, and usefulness (S1\_01c). Answers to this survey distributed in August, 2012 will guide the College-Institute's current strategic planning update (also mentioned in the survey and in the July, 2012 Governance Committee minutes), which is being guided by a new Strategic Planning Oversight Task Force and will be completed in time for discussion during the spring 2013 Board meeting (satisfying S1\_01d).

The mission and purpose guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation (see Chapter 3), program and curriculum development, and definition of program outcomes (see Chapter 7). Institutional goals that stem from the Mission and Purpose Statement have been set out in a variety of documents over the last years, some relating to administrative, some to academic, and some to financial goals. Most prominent among these documents are the New Way Forward, Academic Vision, Faculty Plan, 2006 Strategic Plan, and Strategic Plan Update Report 2012.

The Faculty Handbook demonstrates HUC-JIR's commitment to its mission, especially its focus on academic excellence. The mission statement, presented in the handbook, includes the following: "Advancing the critical study of Jewish culture and related disciplines in accordance with the highest standards of modern academic scholarship." The handbook also makes these goals clear to new and continuing faculty members, for example, by stating the following: "The faculty seeks to observe in a candidate a habit of scholarship, which promises to be a life-long pursuit. A faculty member is expected to demonstrate a habit of scholarship by publishing works that contribute significantly to her/his field of study, in a format that coheres with the specific field." In compliance with S1\_01, these expectations are in line with the mission, and they are enforced through the regular process of faculty review and promotion. Evidence of faculty compliance is detailed in Chapter 6 and in Faculty Productivity and Credentials.

### *Research Question 1.2*

*How does the institution determine whether it is achieving each aspect of its mission? For example, how effectively do stated purposes of scholarship and teaching guide all levels of planning?*

In compliance with S1\_04, evidence for this question revealed that program directors and other administrators regularly assess the College-Institute's programs, policies, and activities in accordance with the mission. One of the longest standing sources of assessment evidence has been the annual student exit interviews (e.g., see CN Focused Visit Report from 2009 for an analysis of CN exit interviews, YII Chapter from 2009 CN Focused Visit Report, YII Year-end Ratings 2011 and YII Survey Data, YII Growth Survey Results 2009-11, CN Rabbinical School Exit Interviews, NY Rabbinical School Exit Interviews, LA Rabbinical School Exit Interviews<sup>4</sup>). In addition, students and alumni have periodically been surveyed and interviewed about their experiences, and the results have sometimes led to curricular change. Faculty recommendations have also led to reviews and changes, as have meetings about specific elements of the program with stakeholders (for example, see Aronoff Mentoring Program End of Year Report). All curricular changes are made with the support and input of the campus-based curriculum committees, which are made up of administrators, faculty, and students. These committees deliberate about proposals for curricular changes from program directors, and sometimes they do more intensive assessment of specific programs. For example, in 2007-09

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<sup>4</sup>The highlighted portions in the last refer to the areas that the Los Angeles Rabbinical School is focusing on during the next two years.

the New York campus curriculum committee conducted an overhaul of the Rabbinical School curricular requirements, based on surveys of students, faculty, and alumni, as well as intensive deliberation (see NY Curriculum Committee Documentation). This was part of a broader assessment of the rabbinical curriculum on all four campuses.

Since the OIRA was founded in 2009, a more comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes has been developed (see Chapter 8). Based on extensive interviews with faculty and administrators, the OIRA created comprehensive assessment forms for each program. Each faculty member has rated at least one project in each course. The OIRA analyzes the data to determine the extent to which the students are achieving the multiple dimensions for each program (see Chapter 8). If some students are not achieving the goals, the faculty decides how to address the weaknesses in the program. The OIRA has made annual presentations to the Cincinnati faculty in all programs with the evidence collected, and faculty members meet to discuss how to better help the students achieve the goals of the programs. Since the other campuses began systematic program assessment later, their data has only recently been analyzed for similar presentations.<sup>5</sup>

Here are a few examples of the many changes that have come about due to program assessment (showing compliance with S1\_01d):

- Changes in the YII program based on evaluation forms and exit interviews are detailed in Recent Changes to the YII Program.
- The introduction of a mentoring program in Los Angeles for second- and third-year rabbinical students to support their fieldwork in small congregations based on data gleaned in the LA exit interviews.
- The revision of thesis guidelines in the Rabbinical School and in the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, as well as the introduction of a capstone paper requirement for joint education-nonprofit students in conjunction with their curriculum guides, also based on the Los Angeles exit interviews mentioned above.
- Based on a 2008 strategic planning process involving interviews, focus groups, surveys, and branding analysis, the School of Jewish Communal Service changed its name to the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management and revamped its curriculum to be more focused on management.
- A recent successful grant proposal for \$5.2 million dollars to enable service-learning in the Rabbinical School on the Cincinnati campus was consistent with the findings from the learning outcomes assessment related to the *Values* dimension. One of the defining characteristics of the program's targeted *Practical* level of commitment to values is "Understand that synagogue cultures need outreach and do structured service outside the Jewish community."<sup>6</sup>
- The introduction of the new Scribeshouse Writing Center on the Cincinnati campus to assist students in improving writing skills (see the link in footnote 6).
- A highlight of this self-study is the progress made in integrating learning across the multiple campuses. Learning outcomes assessment interview results and data were used as the basis for the institution's first all-campus mission statement of the Rabbinical School (see the discussion of Standard 14 in Chapter 8 for details).
- An application was submitted by the Director of the Graduate School for a Wabash Center Graduate Programs Teaching Initiative grant "to enable doctoral programs in theology and

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<sup>5</sup>See Results of Rabbinical Ratings 2012SP, released shortly before the self-study was finished.

<sup>6</sup>See Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Service Learning Grant and #LON

religion to assess their preparation of Ph.D. and Th.D. students for teaching appointments.” The award was approved in January 2013.

Not all curricular changes have been driven by assessment; some have been the result of program policy changes that resulted from the view of the College-Institute’s mission expressed in the 2006 strategic plan (see also the current strategic plan update). A prime example is the restriction of the School of Graduate Studies’ PhD program in Bible and Ancient Near East in service to the goal of widening the offerings of the School in other areas of study that are strongly supported, especially Rabbinics, History of Biblical Interpretation, Second Temple Judaism, Jewish Thought and Philosophy, and American Jewish History.

With respect to Research Question 1.2, assessment of the College-Institute’s operations is not limited to curriculum. Faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders suggest improvement of other operations, including student handbooks, the procedures for hiring and promoting faculty, and the process by which employee benefits are changed. The first half of Chapter 8 describes the administrative assessment survey and usage of its results.

Examples that assessment evidence includes diverse sources of suggestions for improvement are the following:

- As a result of the gap analysis encouraged by the College-Institute’s MSCHE Liaison Officer, the VPAA organized the Administrative Policies Committee to review administrative policies and procedures for the entire College-Institute. A key result of this extensive review is a unified National Student Academic Handbook reviewed both by all campus faculties and subsequently during several meetings of the large faculty-administration Academic Advisory Council (see Chapter 5 for additional details). It is notable that the entire, highly representative self-study working groups participated in the gap analysis.
- Improvement suggestions regarding procedures for hiring and promotion include a 2012 email from the chair of a faculty search committee to the VPAA. Proposals in that note were added to the plan to revise policies for the following year. Part of this revision process will involve coming up with protocols specific to the Jerusalem campus, which differs significantly from other campuses in the number of adjunct and full professors (see Interim Jerusalem Protocol for Faculty Appointment and A Process for Appointment to Full Professor). Also, in light of the increasing acceptance and even expectation of co-authorship and collaboration, especially in the social sciences, the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board of Governors recommended that the VPAA work with faculty to review the promotion expectations and protocols so that they address this changing reality (see below, in this chapter Standard 6, and in Chapter 6). The Faculty Council began this review in December, 2012.
- An example of changes in employee benefits is the addition of an eyesight plan that was requested by a number of faculty and staff members.
- Recent changes in student health insurance policies address student concerns about differences in costs among campuses. The new policy reduces health insuring costs to a level near that of the least expensive campus (the discrepancy is a major factor in the different costs of attendance at each campus documented in the Financial Aid Presentation to the Board of Governors in 2012FA).

In short, in compliance with S1\_03 the College-Institute’s operations are very much in line with its mission and goals. The institution regularly assesses the programs as a whole, as well as specific elements of them. Based on data from these assessments, as well as changing realities, modifications in curriculum and policies have been instated, ultimately making the institution more effective at achieving its mission and goals.

## Standard 6: Integrity

### Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance

#### *Research Question 6.1*

*How consistent is the institution in (1) communicating its stated policies to students, faculty and staff and (2) adhering to those policies?*

The College-Institute has fair and impartial processes, published and widely available, to address student grievances, such as alleged violations of institutional policies. These are available online at HUC-JIR Policies and have been updated periodically. As indicated above, the Academic Advisory Council (AAC) recently approved a unified National Student Academic Handbook, submitted by the VPAA and registrar, and being implemented in the spring semester, 2013. This is available on the same webpage and at <http://huc.edu/registrar>.

Student grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably (in compliance with S6\_01). The NSAH, for example, states:

A student who feels that a faculty member has violated good teaching practices shall first discuss the matter directly with the faculty member, accompanied by his/her faculty advisor, if applicable. If he or she feels that his or her grievance has not been properly adjudicated, he or she should request a conference with the School Director. If the intervention of the School Director still has not achieved reconciliation, the student may submit to the Dean a letter formally stating the nature of the grievance with specific reference to teaching responsibilities that have not been fulfilled. The student should also provide any materials supportive of the complaint.

Faculty and administrators are aware of these policies and have implemented them when the need has arisen, which is rare. In a survey of all deans and program directors conducted for this Self-Study Report, only one dean (in JR) reported a student grievance in the academic year 2011-12, which had been resolved. Three directors spontaneously mentioned that they do have other complaints but they are handled informally. The Office of the National Registrar maintains files on student complaints and grievances relating to FERPA policy. Campus deans and program directors have files concerning student complaints and grievances relating to academic matters.

The College-Institute's practices for the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of employees are published and publicly available, in compliance with S6\_02. Fair and impartial policies can be found in College-Institute's Personnel and Faculty handbooks, and in the section of the website with broadly applicable institution-wide policies. This section offers a significant breadth of general policies that are quite helpful in their scope. These policies cover campus security and crime reporting<sup>7</sup>, FERPA, disabilities, political campaigning, transcript request, sexual assault prevention, and sexual harassment. Naturally, these documents reflect legal differences governing some of these policies between the United States and Israel and even among the three states where the College-Institute has domestic locations. For example, New York requires short-term disability insurance, while the other states do not. In general, the policies are well written and have been reviewed by appropriate personnel (both internally and externally) to ensure their completeness and accuracy.

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<sup>7</sup>Also see the HR Annual Security Report compiled in compliance with Clery regulations.



Staff policies and procedures are communicated through the Personnel Handbook. While the handbook is dated October 1, 1999, it contains a number of policies and procedures that have been updated over the past decade. HR directors past and present have worked toward revising the handbook. The Personnel Handbook addresses all non-faculty employees of the College-Institute. While there may be some overlap (for example, in areas where instructional staff may find relevant information in the Faculty Handbook), the Personnel Handbook is the official statement of the school in relation to all non-faculty employees. It represents a set of guidelines rather than a contractual statement and is provided to every new hire as part of the package of employment materials.

The Personnel Handbook lays down an elaborate procedure for the resolution of disputes, concerns, and grievances. The rules are disseminated as a package to all new employees and appear fair and impartial. The policies and guidelines with respect to hiring and termination are extensive and were composed with the benefit of expert advice on these matters. The school's Sexual Harassment Non-Discrimination Policies are clear and establish an environment of equal treatment of various constituencies represented in the staff.

Faculty members are given the Faculty Handbook upon hire, and the officials in charge of their review send it to them again when they are up for promotion. The institution adheres to the review and promotion process. Some faculty members have reported not knowing that the Faculty Handbook (along with other resources) is available on the password-protected Sakai site (under Faculty Resources), so an area for improvement would be to inform faculty members of this set of resources on a regular basis or to make it more easily accessible online. The working group suggested that the Faculty Handbook needs to be updated more regularly. The updates should include changes to the Appendices, such as replacing the 2000 statement of policy for obtaining reimbursements from the Faculty Research and Travel Fund with the new 2008 procedures that superseded it.

The Faculty Handbook stipulates that procedures for promotion and tenure are based on the criteria of "scholarship, teaching, professional service, and collegiality." Faculty members considered for promotion are required to submit evidence of these four areas in the form of self-studies and copies of articles and books they have written. Students and alumni submit evaluations of the candidate's pedagogy. Outside scholars in the candidate's field submit confidential letters of evaluation. Faculty on the relevant campus and on other campuses write letters and determine whether the candidate has successfully demonstrated excellence in these four areas. The administration and the Board of Governors must approve each promotion. There have been a few instances in which candidates were denied promotion and a few instances in which candidates for promotion were advised to freeze the process for a year or two in order to give them the best chance of prevailing in the process. Confidential documents demonstrating that the procedures have been carefully followed are available in each campus dean's office.

In addition, the College-Institute offers handbooks to members of the institution-wide Board of Governors and to members of the Boards of Overseers for each campus. The Board of Governors Manual includes a statement of mission, details about the roles and responsibilities of governors, and information about the budgetary process. It also includes information about the history of the institution, facts about the four campuses including their faculty and administration, and rosters of the governors. A new Board orientation plan with considerable attention to written material is discussed in Chapter 4. The Jerusalem campus does not have an Overseers Handbook. There are differences in content coverage among the handbooks of the Cincinnati Overseers, the New York Overseers, and the Los Angeles Overseers. The campus

deans might develop a common set of standards for what should be included in the handbooks of all campuses.

The religious nature of the College-Institute makes it imperative to take seriously the notions of ethical practices and respect for individuals (S6\_03 and S6\_07). To get evidence on the success of the College-Institute's efforts to achieve respect among all constituents, an administrative survey (described in more detail in Chapter 8) posed one of three key question-types around the concept of respect. The idea was that people feel respected when others recognize their needs and roles. In order to accomplish this understanding, each of the thirteen administrative functions defined three developmental levels of what they do. The survey was distributed to all faculty, administrators, staff, and students affiliated with the College-Institute. Raters used the definitions provided by each function to identify what level of development they experienced. The results were that performance on the "respect" questions was highly correlated with performance in the other two areas. Respondents also provided narrative detail explaining their responses. The survey is planned for annual implementation. It is hoped that the data and narratives will lead to improved performance in the three areas identified. The effort to assess respect, itself, indicates an institutional commitment to it. Improved performance over the years will not only provide evidence of the depth of this commitment, but also contribute to it.

The policies articulated in the College-Institute's Student, Personnel, and Faculty Handbooks, and Governors' Manual address issues of conflict of interest and the appearance of such conflict as well as the treatment of all constituencies in an equitable and consistent manner (S6\_03). Such policies deal with student discipline, student evaluation, grievances, faculty promotion, tenure, retention and compensation, administrative review, curricular improvement, and institutional governance and management.

#### *Research Question 6.2*

*How are the needs of all the constituencies of the institution considered in terms of curricular improvement?*

By policy, all curricular improvements are approved by the faculty and the VPAA, guaranteeing the input of those constituencies. Thus, the College-Institute's policy documents support the concerns articulated in Research Question 6.2. Also supporting the concern for curriculum improvement meeting the needs of all constituencies are the diverse sources of input on curriculum. These include alumni as individuals or through collective surveys (see Alumni Survey Graphs and Alumni Survey Summary 2011); Reform movement leaders, donors, and members of the Board of Governors (see HUC-JIR special programs donors, and the reports of the standing Committee on Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Board Minutes); students (e.g., those documented in the exit interviews (see above for a list of links), and in their participation in executive committees on various campuses); and formal assessment results (see Chapter 8).

The campus student handbook policies have been applied consistently (S6\_04), but the several handbooks had not been fully aligned until the creation of the NSAH, one of the salutary by-products of the current self-study process that has aimed to create better integration of the campuses. Issues addressed include credit transfer, academic hour definition, when an incomplete becomes a fail, policies surrounding plagiarism, auditing, credit by examination, and cross-listed courses. The new Handbook deals with both standardization and the addition of policies needed to address new federal regulations regarding identity verification and foreign students. Finally, the registrar has worked with the faculty to improve the utilization of, and standardize practices regarding, the SIS's grading options.

Students are treated equitably, and the policies in the Student Handbook are adhered to. When students are performing poorly in their coursework or field placements, the administration follows the protocols. Students are sent letters informing them of the need for a student tenure committee. Based on the results of the committee's deliberations, students continue with modifications (e.g., academic probation) or are counseled out of the program (see examples of letters from the student tenure review process).

The College-Institute fosters a climate of academic inquiry and engagement supported by policies regarding academic and intellectual freedom (S6\_05). For example, the Mission Statement identifies HUC-JIR as "an innovative resource and learning center working with Reform congregations and leaders, the Jewish organizational world and the religious and academic community at large: acknowledging and supporting a diverse community of scholars, students and staff committed to academic freedom and rigor." The College-Institute is infused with a climate of respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration for the range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. As the Faculty Handbook states, "Students are welcome who meet the College-Institute's standards of scholarship and who, whatever their faith [referring specifically to the School of Graduate Studies], are devoted to the exploration of the Judaic heritage. The College-Institute sees itself as standing for freedom of research, publication, and instruction." Although the Administrative Policies Committee has not yet completed a formal statement of policy regarding the protection of intellectual property rights, it is on their agenda and the College-Institute respects and supports individual faculty members' publishing pursuits (S6\_06).

This spirit of integrity pervades the institution's public relations announcements (S6\_08), as well as advertisements and recruiting and admissions materials and practices. Many of these can be found in the new brochure that was made available in the summer of 2012, the weekly e-blast archives, the College-Institute's *Chronicle*, and the student blog, which replaced the *Kesher* newsletter. As these documents indicate, HUC-JIR's public statements have become more extensive and focused over the past decade. The e-blasts, sent to constituencies of the school, as well as the press, highlight activities taking place on the campuses, lectures and publications from faculty members, and relevant articles and information that relate to the Reform movement and the larger Jewish community. Press releases are also issued for specific events when deemed appropriate. The constant output appears to be well-tuned to the habits of the current electronic age, and focus on social media has recently increased through a strategic hire, who creates daily posts on Facebook and Twitter that periodically feature video links. These have grown the number of HUC-JIR friends and followers substantially over the past two years. Additionally, a major redesign of the College-Institute's website is currently in progress.

Required and elective courses are sufficiently available to allow students to graduate within the published program length (S6\_09). When budget cuts have led to reductions in course offerings, alternative arrangements have been made, such as the use of cross-campus distance learning to compensate for faculty reductions, as discussed in the *Instruction* section of Chapter 6. Students have direct access to the academic catalogues for all programs in electronic format on the website (S6\_10 and S6\_11). The Information Systems Department has archived copies of prior catalogues (S6\_12). The last printed catalogue (2001-04) is available in the libraries and also on the website (S6\_10).

Changes and issues affecting institutional mission, goals, sites, programs, operations, and other material changes are disclosed accurately and in a timely manner to the institution's community on [www.huc.edu](http://www.huc.edu) and to MSCHE (S6\_13). The College-Institute also accurately reports and keeps current with the OIRA Annual Reporting Timeline including annual data reporting to IPEDS and to MSCHE for the Institutional Profile of the College Institute and for the

accreditation details mentioned in the MSCHE Statement of Accreditation Status, such as the self-study and periodic review report, the team report, and the Commission's action. Information on institution-wide assessments, including recent graduation, retention, and certification rates is available to prospective students (see Retention and Completion Rates, fulfilling S6\_15). The very high value of these rates has long been typical of the institution.

Throughout the financial crisis that rocked the College-Institute in 2008-9 (see also Chapter 3), changes and issues affecting the community were disclosed in an accurate and timely way (S6\_14). The lines of communication remained open and frequent. Over this difficult period, March 2009-Nov 2009, as a recovery plan was being developed and put into place, letters and communication from the President's Office were essential and frequent (letter to HUC Staff; Board Update from J. Geller; NWF Update for Reform Community; David Ellenson Letter to HUC Alumni; David Ellenson Letter to HUC Community). Letters were sent out in March, April, and November 2009 and in January 2010. The president described the details of the plan, how it met and promoted the mission of the College-Institute, and the vision going forward. Not only were all constituencies of the College-Institute and sister organizations kept informed of the plan called "the New Way Forward" (NWF), but representative faculty and students were included in the working groups that explored the feasibility of the plan prior to its adoption by the Board. Over the ensuing years as the program has been implemented, the Board and the Faculty Council have remained updated. HUC-JIR has a longstanding practice of transparent reporting to its constituent bodies: faculty, staff, alumni, as well as sister organizations of the worldwide Reform Movement (URJ, CCAR, World Union for Progressive Judaism, WUPJ) on an annual, monthly, and sometimes weekly basis. The Board of Governors has authorized a new standing Communications Committee, which includes student and faculty participation.

In compliance with S6\_14 this Self-Study Report has been made accessible for input from all faculty, senior administrators, Board members, and student government representatives. There are a small percentage of documents that have been password-protected to be viewed only by the Board, executive officers, self-study co-chairs, and the evaluation team. This Self-Study Report is accessible with a password from the open front page of [wiki.huc.edu](http://wiki.huc.edu), which also includes extensive institutional information including assessment tools and summarized results (S6\_16).

The College-Institute fulfills all applicable requirements of the Commission, including reporting (S6\_17). The faculty and administration engage in frequent assessment of the integrity evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented. Such integrity assessment occurs both driven by the accreditation process and independent of it. It often results in changes in policies and operations. Formal assessment is documented in the 2009 Board Survey detailed in the Focused Visit Report to NCAHLC (discussed in Chapter 4), the 2012 Board Survey and the Administrative Survey mentioned above, which has been used by the Administrative Policies Committee (S6\_18). In addition, extensive informal assessment occurs through the normal committee structure of the College-Institute and leads to discussions that ultimately affect policy. Thus, the work on the National Student Academic Handbook entailed extensive informal data-gathering and deliberation among the registrar, VPAA, local faculties, and the AAC.

There have been times when the policies on the books have been ambiguous when it comes to a specific situation. For example, a promotion process involves review of the candidate's dossier not only by outside scholars but also by scholars on other campuses of HUC-JIR. A question arose as to whether it was acceptable to use reviewers only from one campus due to a dearth of scholars in that field on the other campuses. When questions like this arise, the VPAA makes a decision based on his interpretation of the spirit of the regulations.

Similarly, the changing realities of academia sometimes lead to policy changes. Mentioned above (Standard 1) is the recommendation of the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board of Governors that the VPAA work with faculty to review the promotion expectations and protocols so that they address the fact that co-authorship and collaboration are increasingly accepted and even expected, particularly in the social sciences. The committee does not want to make exceptions: it wants the protocols to reflect the current state of the field.

## **Suggestions for Improvement for Standards 1 and 6**

For the most part, this working group's analysis paints an overall positive picture of the mission, goals, and integrity of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Even so, there is always room for improvement. The working group's suggestions, in the order in which they appear in the chapter, are:

1. Offer more education for alumni and lay leaders, as mentioned in the statement of mission and purpose, or adjust the statement.
2. The VPAA should follow through on his plan to revise the protocols for faculty promotion in line with the suggestions from faculty and relevant committees.
3. Make policies and protocols more easily accessible online, incorporating the Faculty Handbook onto the HR page, and consider incorporating both the Faculty and Personnel Handbooks onto the "Policies" page that already includes the NSAH. Continue to review and update them regularly.
4. Update the Faculty Handbook more regularly, including changes to the Appendices.
5. Create a handbook for members of the Jerusalem Board of Overseers, finish the revision of the Cincinnati Overseers Handbook, and develop a common set of standards for what should be included in the handbooks of all campuses.
6. Create a policy regarding the protection of intellectual property rights.
7. In public relations activities, incorporate more streamed video and social media.

## **Chapter 3. Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal & Institutional Resources (*Standards 2 and 3*)**

### **Overview of Charge**

The working group charged with Standards 2 and 3 studied two sets of College-Institute documents. These included, but were not limited to, the Strategic Plan from February 2006 for the College-Institute, the Bell & Trice financial study from October 2006, and the more recent New Way Forward paper of December 2009. The working group also reflected upon and discussed administrative and Board operations to ascertain the availability and accessibility of resources that are needed to achieve HUC-JIR's mission and goals. The group reconsidered their original choice of research questions for Standard 3 and considered that studying research question 3.1 (B-3 in the Self-Study Design) would best serve the planning goals of the report and that the other two questions would be sufficiently answered in the compliance material that follows. After the working group addressed the research questions and fundamental elements, they took the unusual step of posing a series of questions to guide their suggestions for improvement.

### **Standard 2. Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal**

#### **Overview of HUC-JIR Planning, Decision Making, and Assessment Processes**

The following description relates to a number of the MSCHE standards. It is designed to illustrate how HUC-JIR "conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its missions and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal" (Standard 2); and that "[i]n the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment" (Standard 3). Further, this narrative is intended to show that the College-Institute's "system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making" (Standard 4), and that HUC-JIR's "administrative structure and services ... foster quality improvement" (Standard 5), as well as demonstrating compliance with the Standard 7 requirement that HUC-JIR "has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals..."

As noted in Chapter 2, the College-Institute's mission statement is centered on three activities: (1) developing leaders, (2) applying the spirit of Reform Judaism, and (3) advancing critical study. The HUC-JIR statement of purpose describes three core functions. To further the mission, the College-Institute is called upon to be "the educational and intellectual center of Reform Judaism," "a Jewish religious community" founded on certain principles, and "an innovative resource and learning center." To fulfill the mission and purpose, seven kinds of planning and decision-making produce achievable institutional goals that can be promulgated, furthered and assessed. These areas of planning are: (1) strategic planning, (2) annual budgeting, (3) curricular improvement, (4) promulgation of policies and procedures, (5) improvement of administrative systems, (6) staffing and human resources decisions, and (7) emergency decision-making.

In order to describe the ways in which the College-Institute relates to each of these kinds of decisions, a specific example of each will be given identifying (1) individuals and groups

involved in making the decision and (2) the process by which the decision is made and the ways in which it is informed by evidence, and is itself assessed for the sake of future decisions.

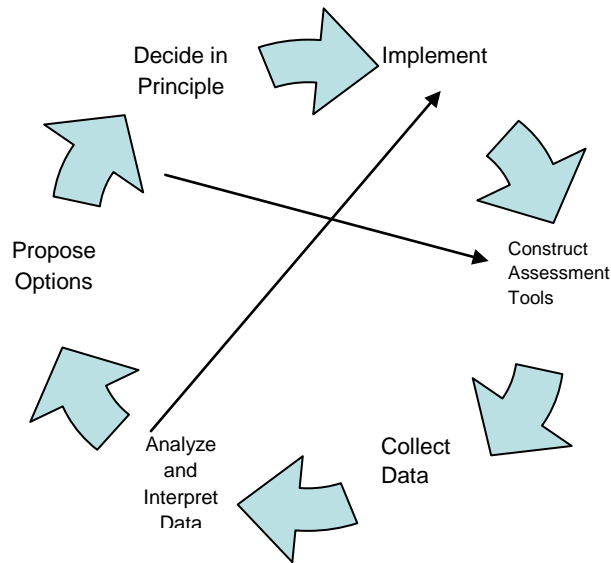
*Individuals and groups involved in making the decision*

The College-Institute has a complex structure, and a number of functions and interests are engaged in the decision-making processes. The main ones are

- Board of Governors: (1) Chair, (2) Executive Committee, (3) Specific Board Committees, such as Academic & Faculty Affairs, Investments etc., (4) Plenary
- President's Cabinet: (1) President, (2) Vice Presidents, (3) The full President's Cabinet including President, Vice Presidents, and Deans
- Campus: (1) Deans, (2) Associate Deans (who are usually the local directors of the Rabbinical School), (3) Program Directors, (4) Faculty Chairs, (5) Chairs of Faculty Committees, (6) Student Representatives, (7) Local Administration, (8) Boards of Overseers
- Trans-Campus: (1) Faculty Council, (2) Academic Advisory Council, (3) Ad Hoc Committees, (4) Trans-Campus Student Representatives, (5) Directors of Administrative and Academic Support Departments, (National Registrar, National Director of Libraries, Senior National Director of Schools of Education, Director of Information Technology, Director of eLearning), (6) Fund Managers
- Others: (1) Alumni Representatives and Organizations, (2) Reform Leadership Council, (3) Funders, (4) Consultants

*Decision-Making Processes*

Decisions in the College-Institute are made in furtherance of goals that stem from the Mission and Purpose document (see Chapter 2). Each of the seven kinds of decision-making systems described below involves use of a planning/assessment cycle. While these systems are distinct, they have in common a process: to further the mission of the College-Institute and to respond to a variety of factors (assessment data, budgetary realities, new circumstances, etc.) leading to the development of specific goals to be achieved. In this way the overarching mission and purpose of the institution is advanced. This process can be expressed in a simple diagram:



The two straight arrows in the diagram are intended to express that after a decision in principle is made, tools to assess the nature of the implementation are selected, and after data is analyzed, the next step is implementation. To give an example, after a decision in principle to apply for single accreditation, tools for choosing the most appropriate accreditation agency were created. After these data were analyzed, a choice was made and the decision was implemented.

### *Strategic Planning*

Strategic planning processes have been initiated by the chair of the Board twice in the last seven years. In each case, much of the initiative for the process has been carried by the Board with significant input from the President's Cabinet. For example, the process leading to the adoption of the 2006 Strategic Plan can be described as follows: Based on a variety of factors, the Executive Committee of the Board made a decision in principle to engage a firm to lead a strategic planning process. A small group decided upon an organizational consultancy firm that worked intensively with governors and administrators to produce SWOT analyses of all the major programs of the College-Institute. These and other assessment tools were used to generate data, the analysis of which led to the promulgation of the strategic plan. (See also below at "Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 2")

The 2012 strategic plan update process has taken as its base line the previous strategic plan. Recommendations from the earlier document are now being tracked to gauge the extent to which they were carried out, and the effect they had on the College-Institute.

### *Annual Budgeting*

This process is driven by the President's Cabinet, subject to the approval of the Board. The fund managers are centrally engaged in this process, as are the deans. A specific example is the budgeting process for the 2012-13 year. To ensure that the process would be timely, efficient, thoughtful, and collaborative, it began with training sessions directed to fund managers and others engaged in entering data to the MIP accounting software system. This step was added to the process in response to feedback from a number of administrators that better training on the local level would eliminate data bottlenecks at the National Business Office. The Budget Committee of the Board set out the parameters of the budget, and the President's Cabinet was charged with the task of preparing a number of contingency plans in the event that income predictions proved too optimistic. Fund managers and, where different, the program directors were given the task of preparing initial budget proposals, overseen by deans and vice presidents. The President's Cabinet, with the assistance of the Business Office, was charged with the task of examining the proposals and responding by a certain date. The Board Budget Committee was kept informed throughout the process. Once the President's Cabinet had approved the budget proposal it was brought to the Budget Committee and to the entire Board for ratification. Feedback relating to budgetary decisions takes a variety of forms. There are the usual tools designed to gauge budget performance and discipline, as well as responses from key constituencies relating to decisions that have been taken. An example of a specific budgetary decision ensuing from assessment of the 2012-13 budget is the decision taken by the President's Cabinet to reduce the number of fund managers from 55 to 15, in an effort to enhance efficiency and budget controls. Campus deans now manage the budgets and review the programs of many operations located on their campuses that had previously reported directly to the Business Office. In addition, the VPAA and VPFA met with each campus dean at the beginning of the 2013-14 budget process to ensure that financial goals are accurate, clear, and attainable. The Budget and Finance Committee endorsed these innovations and will assess their effectiveness throughout the fiscal year.



### *Curricular Improvement*

Responsibility for the curriculum lies primarily with the faculty. In conjunction with the VPAA, they prepare proposals for curricular change. Budgetary dimensions have to be ratified by the President's Council and the rest of the budgeting process. Decisions involving a change to the national curriculum are ratified by the AAC. The specific example of a process towards curricular change is the initiative to re-examine Hebrew instruction in the Rabbinical Program. This process has not yet reached its fulfillment. Following a number of discussions among faculty colleagues, and a session devoted to language learning at the all-campus faculty retreat in 2002, new impetus to the discussion was provided by evidence gleaned from the assessment rubrics coming out of the Cincinnati school. Further, calls to re-examine the Hebrew entrance requirement were made by the recruitment and admissions administration team. In June 2012 a group comprising faculty representatives from each campus convened in Jerusalem, and a position paper was generated. Responses are being solicited from faculty colleagues and in early 2013 the issue will be discussed by each local faculty. Proposals for curricular change will be brought to the AAC, and budgetary dimensions will be discussed as part of the 2013-14 budgeting process. Any curricular and policy changes, such as a change in the current Hebrew requirement for entry into the program, will be assessed for their implications on student learning outcomes as well as for their impact on other areas such as recruitment and admissions.

### *Promulgation of Policies and Procedures*

Depending on the nature of the policies in question, those involved in the planning and decision-making process will include administrators and faculty members. A particular example is the process leading to the completion of the National Student Academic Handbook. Impetus for the creation of this handbook came from the gap analysis that formed part of the preparation for this self-study, as well as from the recommendation of a new national registrar hired in July 2011. The registrar and his team spent some 120 hours (from September 15, 2011-March 1, 2012) reading through all the existing handbooks and catalogues and preparing the draft of an integrated handbook. This was then discussed at length, modified and approved clause by clause by the AAC. The most contentious issue has proven to be the question of grading policy, which was finally ratified by the three stateside campuses in December 2012. The AAC has mandated that the first year of the new handbook be deemed a trial year, and that the impact of these new policies be monitored carefully by program directors and periodically by the AAC.

### *Improvement of Administrative Systems and Practices*

Many different constituencies are involved in these processes. Each administrative director is encouraged to suggest areas for improvement. A particular example relates to the decision to introduce a Student Information System, described below. The planning and assessment cycle described above is well exemplified by this case. A decision in principle was made by the 2006 Strategic Plan to introduce a SIS, based on a reading of the needs for greater integration and efficiency. A small group was mandated to go through an assessment process, to construct assessment tools in order to choose the best system, and after this data was collected, analyzed and interpreted, a decision was made to contract with a particular vendor. After implementation, much evidence began to emerge through faculty consultations and other assessment tools. Once this data had been collected, analyzed and interpreted, steps were taken to suit the personnel of the SIS team and changes to the system were effected by Empower, the vendor. These decisions were implemented, and so the process continues.

Details of this process typify HUC-JIR's approach to decision-making and implementation, and are captured in SIS Story in Relation to Standard 2.

### *Staffing and Human Resources Decisions*

In 2011 a new national registrar was selected (see fuller discussions at the end of Chapter 4 and *Research Question 9.2* in Chapter 5). His predecessor had been situated on the New York campus. A committee comprising faculty and administrators from all four campuses was selected by the VPAA, and the final candidates for this position were interviewed in New York and Cincinnati respectively. Throughout the process, the Director of Human Resources was consulted. Following the selection of Clyde Parrish, he worked with the VPAA to create an economically viable system to provide coverage for the Registrar's Office across the four campuses. Since budgetary exigencies made it impossible to continue with a full-time registrar on each campus, a new system was created. A full-time assistant was hired in Cincinnati, and a staff member who had been working full-time in New York now serves both the Registrar's Office and the Office of Financial Aid. Meanwhile, the staff member providing support to the Louchheim School in Los Angeles and the secretary of the YII program in Jerusalem have been deputized to work as part of the registrar's teams. In this way, imaginative staffing decisions can be made even in times of budgetary challenge. Annual reviews and administrative surveys help provide data by which the efficacy of these decisions can be gauged.

### *Emergency Decision-Making*

Not all decisions can be made according to the timetable of the budgetary year. Unforeseen circumstances demand immediate response. The programs in Jerusalem have provided a number of such examples over the years. The YII program has established regular procedures to deal with emergency situations. During December 2012, Operation Defensive Pillar was accompanied by missile attacks on several Israeli targets and air raid sirens went off twice in Jerusalem. During that time, the directors of the Schools of Education and the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management had to decide if the planned trips to Israel of students in their programs would go ahead; if there were legal and financial dimensions to any cancellation; if the advice given by the US State Department had to be followed; and what the procedure would be to deal with the curricular implications of any decision to cancel or suspend the trips, or to make them voluntary. Both of these directors and senior members of their teams held meetings with the president and VPAA. Decisions included the creation of a communications plan designed to keep students informed of the school's decisions, and a process of review to be implemented if the situation would deteriorate. In this way, too, planning and decision-making can be seen to be part of a planning and assessment cycle. Circumstances may change, but the same essential process is in place.

## **Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance**

### *Research Question 2.1*

*To what extent is the relationship between the institution's vision/strategic plan and the budget development process (both operational and capital) well understood and effectively implemented? Is a process for establishing and implementing priorities transparent and clearly understood?*

HUC-JIR has taken steps at the Board level and in the National Business Office to create an effective budget development process (see the preceding "Overview" section on annual budgeting). The chief financial officer and controller work in partnership with governors who

serve in financial capacities to achieve a balanced budget. Throughout the process the president, vice presidents, and deans are informed of progress that is being made. Numerous recommendations are shared concerning strategies to reach the desired result.

Ultimately, the completed budget is presented to the Finance Committee, whose chair leads the Board approval process. The custom is not to bring a budget to the Board without sufficient preparatory conversation to ensure its passage. Once passed, the VPFA and her staff monitor charges against the budget to make sure that HUC-JIR stays within its means.

Observations of the working group that were not documented in the Administrative Survey Results suggest that some members of the faculty and some others with oversight responsibilities do not sufficiently understand the budget process. This was supported by the VPFA, who noted that too many fund managers request more than they need without realizing that this unnecessarily ties up funds during the year that might have supported important resources, such as additional faculty. This observation also correlates with the working group conclusion that there is not a sufficiently articulated relationship between preparing the budget and the Academic Vision. In an environment where “survival mode” has been the norm for the last three years, the working group expressed concern for how much discretion the VPAA and the faculty have in making the budget reflect academic interests. Several of the group’s suggestions detail how these concerns need to be reflected in the renewal of the 2004-06 strategic planning process, with special attention to S2\_02. It should be noted that the Administrative Survey did document considerable improvement in accounting services under the new VPFA.

#### *Research Question 2.2*

*What issues should the institution be planning for in areas like human resources, technology, and physical plant? How will an integrated system of planning and resource allocation help address those issues?*

#### *Human Resources*

The VPAA is addressing the future composition of the faculty. In addition, certain assumptions about some phased retirees have been revisited. It has become clear that some of the cuts, especially to support staff, had to be restored, particularly relating to admissions and recruitment (see the section on “Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 8” in Chapter 5). These actions demonstrate the importance of revisiting decision-making on some regular basis, especially to balance “financial sustainability” with “institutional objectives” as implied by S2\_01 and S2\_02. The VPAA presented an Academic Vision and Faculty Plan to the Board at its June 2012 meeting. The plan is currently under discussion with the Faculty Council and local faculties. In general, the working group faculty members believe it is a fine vision but question whether the portrait of the faculty is sufficiently bold. Metrics described in the plan pertaining to the future composition of the faculty reflect what will most likely happen as faculty become promoted or leave the College-Institute upon retirement. The group proposes that planning should simultaneously consider not only the objectives currently considered practical, but also the highest aspirations for the faculty. This would help identify what it would cost to realize an optimized vision of faculty members’ impact on the College-Institute and its renewal.

#### *Technology*

Distance learning places demands on equipment, and calls for staff to maintain equipment and help faculty and staff create courses and hold video calls. HUC-JIR has recently expanded band

width to a sufficient level on all campuses to make its programs more widely available. Faculty involved in distance learning reported some difficulties in their comments in the Administrative Survey Analysis, but individual faculty members have already indicated improvement since the survey.

### *Physical Plant*

Currently, deferred maintenance budgets are developed locally (c.f., CN and NY, LA, and JR Maintenance Projections and Maintenance Plan). However, the chair of the Board Buildings & Grounds Committee and the stateside campus deans are developing maintenance budgets for the entire institution (see below). The Jerusalem campus has just started its first significant maintenance project in twenty-five years. The renovation of the campus will cost \$1.3 million, which has already been raised, and will restore the campus' physical plant completely.

## **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 2**

In February 2004 the College-Institute launched a comprehensive strategic planning process under the direction of a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of eleven Board members (a majority of the committee members), seven key administrators, and a faculty member from each stateside campus (fulfilling the participation aspects of S2\_02). An outside consultant guided the committee to "establish a vision for the College-Institute's future, establish priorities for the College-Institute's program and resources, address concerns of the accrediting bodies, and clarify fundraising priorities."

The introduction to the strategic plan noted both the goal and its connection to the HUC-JIR mission (complying with the institution-wide aspects of S2\_01a, S2\_01c and S2\_01d):

The overall goal of the strategic planning process has been accomplished: to create a framework for decision making that would be anchored in HUC-JIR's mission and reflect both excellence and financial sustainability. Embedding this approach to priority setting in the culture of the institution will strengthen HUC-JIR's capacity to respond thoughtfully and creatively to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Data was collected via site visits, surveys, interviews, and SWOT (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats) analyses (fulfilling the "assessment" aspects of S2\_01b and S2\_02). The forty-eight page Strategic Planning Committee Report was supplemented with almost 250 pages of Appendices. The Board of Governors discussed the report at its February 2006 meeting in Los Angeles, where the report was unanimously adopted.

Criteria for Decision Making (p. 6 of the Strategic Plan) provide a historical context for this working group's charge. The decision-making process was viewed through three lenses that fulfill compliance with S2\_03: (1) Institutional Objectives, (2) Financial Sustainability, and (3) External Factors. *Institutional objectives* advanced the mission of the College-Institute and focused on the ability to attract and support outstanding faculty and students, as well as the initiatives that they would create. *Financial sustainability* dealt with allocating resources for teaching and learning, as well as securing permanent funding (endowment). *External factors* looked at HUC-JIR's relationships with the wider Jewish community, including the URJ and its member congregations, the CCAR, and other Jewish institutions of higher learning such as the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Since the criteria had been applied on a case-by-case basis even prior to receiving Board approval, the report noted that this decision-making method "has already proven to be an

effective tool for assessing individual programs and financial commitments.” However, the report cautioned that “the greater difficulty of choosing among competing priorities” still remained.

To help identify institutional priorities, the report recommended that HUC-JIR use the decision-making criteria over the next two years (2006-08) to determine resource allocation and to guide deliberation regarding the continuation, elimination, or reduction of programs. Decision-making criteria would also be used to prepare annual budgets beginning in FY 2006-07. The Strategic Planning Committee thought that “by using the criteria, the focus of the budget will shift from a set of incremental numbers on a page to a true reflection of the goals and priorities of the institution.” The report further suggested that HUC-JIR “develop annual budgets and long-range financial plans for the Board’s consideration that take both a *vertical approach* – validating expenses within individual programs and policies – and a *horizontal approach* – by assessing the budget across all programs – to determine institutional priorities.”

Employing these decision-making criteria led to paradigm shifts. Going forward, for example, the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology at the Jerusalem campus would be funded solely by proceeds from its endowments and from grants solicited exclusively for the School’s use. This was a reflection of diminished interest in allocating College-Institute operating funds for archaeology. The decision freed vitally-needed operating support for what were defined as “core” activities.

Decision-making criteria also resulted in new initiatives that were designed to enhance the College-Institute. The College-Institute invested in what were clearly institutional priorities in a process that showed strong fulfillment of S2\_05. A new SIS was purchased to strengthen internal management. The OIRA was created to elevate the importance of assessment and evaluation. The renovation of the Klau Library was undertaken, further advancing the Cincinnati campus’ reputation as a center for research and scholarship. Electronic learning was introduced, enabling HUC-JIR to maximize faculty resources while seeking to achieve economies. These were but a few examples of the administration deciding to direct internal resources to, or to raise funds from individuals or foundations for, activities that were clearly deemed important. The criteria, decisions, and ensuing actions described above showed compliance with S2\_03.

Another action recommended in the plan immediately followed its endorsement: the Board hired the consulting firm of Bell & Trice to study how the College-Institute could strengthen its balance sheet so as to ensure fiscal sustainability. The 2008-09 financial climate only deepened those concerns. As the stock market plummeted, HUC-JIR lost 40 percent of its endowment, dramatically depleting annual operating revenue. The weakened economy also made it difficult for URJ congregations to meet their dues projections, thus beginning the decline in revenue from MUM<sup>8</sup> income. This further eroded support for the College-Institute’s operating budget.

Under these circumstances there was no choice but to focus on survival as the College-Institute struggled to meet its financial obligations. The most controversial Bell & Trice recommendation was to close a stateside campus in order to reduce operating expenses. Intense deliberation with internal and external constituencies revealed numerous unforeseen negative financial consequences of this recommendation, such as its impact on regional support for the College-Institute and the URJ (see the Minutes of the Board of Governors meetings from October, 2008 and March, May, June and September, 2009) The Board decided to retain HUC-JIR’s current organizational structure and seek other immediate and dramatic means to weather the economic crisis.

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<sup>8</sup>The URJ assesses dues from each member congregation and splits them with the College-Institute at a ratio of 56% for the Union to 44% for the College-Institute. The HUC-JIR portion supports unrestricted annual operating expenses.

The response was to generate multiple ad hoc committees of Board members, administrators, faculty members (chosen by and representing the faculty), and, when student life issues were addressed, also students. This clear developmental advancement in the strategic planning process led to a more complex list of recommendations that provided a practical strategy for advancing sustainability.

The strategy was communicated in the New Way Forward Plan to achieve fiscal sustainability by June 2014. The road map provided was approved by the Board of Governors in November 2009. It is detailed in the 2009 minutes of the Board of Governors meetings in September and November. Relevant reports include those of several ad-hoc Task Force Committees (pdf pages 102-111), a preliminary Academic Vision by the VPAA (123-132), the Board Oversight Task Force report (144-150), a final New Way Forward Academic Vision (158-161), and the formal public announcement (162-163). Besides reinforcing HUC-JIR's compliance with S2\_03, these reports document assurances of accountability and assignment of responsibility as required by S2\_04.

A combination of cost reductions and increased attention to maximizing revenue continue to be central to achieving NWF goals. Cost reductions impacted faculty and staff compensation, decreased personnel numbers, and diminished operating budgets across all sites. Increased income would be realized through programmatic partnerships, rental revenue, monetization of assets (campus non-essential land sales), and accelerated fundraising to grow endowment and increase annual unrestricted operating support.

Supporting S2\_06, a Board Oversight Committee was created to monitor HUC-JIR progress toward meeting NWF goals. The Oversight Committee meets regularly, providing quarterly financial reports to the president and governors. These communications ensure that the College-Institute continues to be guided by NWF strategies. Although some NWF goals remain to be met, recent reports to the Board have shown that NWF is on course toward solid financial footing for HUC-JIR.

To date, NWF has resulted in significant reductions in operating costs and significant revenue growth. Assets have been monetized through the sale of land at the Los Angeles and Cincinnati campuses, adding \$37 million to the endowment. As of December 31, 2012, the value of the endowment was \$176 million. This sum is more than three times the value of the endowment when Rabbi David Ellenson assumed the HUC-JIR presidency in June 2001 and double its value following the adverse impact of the 2008-09 recession. Over \$76 million for all purposes was raised between July, 2009 and September, 2012. This dramatic growth attests to the importance of two strategies that Board leadership put forward – the decision to monetize assets and to fundraise aggressively.

Further demonstrating the Board commitment to development, a new Vice President for Institutional Advancement was appointed in July 2010. Her role at HUC-JIR includes guiding the capital and annual campaigns, supporting executive staff and volunteers, and overseeing national and regional institutional advancement staff, including alumni relations and communications, and public affairs.

Following the completion of a campaign planning study, the Board authorized a comprehensive fundraising campaign with a working goal of \$125 million at its June 2011 meeting. Including a "silent" fundraising period that mirrored the launch of NWF in the prior year, over \$83 million has been raised as of January 2013 to grow endowment, support faculty and academic programs, enhance technology, and meet student needs. The FY 2013 operating budget is balanced, whereas a budget deficit amounting to \$10 million existed only four years ago. These results

provide a convincing proof of the College-Institute's record of institutional and unit improvement based on strategic planning, required by S2\_05.

In providing a prescription for achieving financial sustainability, the Board defined institutional priorities. Financial sustainability, one of three criteria for decision-making in the 2006 strategic plan, had become by 2009 the most important factor in decision-making. The other criteria, "institutional objectives" and "external factors," were minimized. The Board, as expressed in the NWF, demanded cost-saving innovations rather than educational innovations that did not increase costs, and revenue-producing services rather than services that engaged the College-Institute's partners without impairing finances. This led to the most powerful evidence that the plan has been assessed from its inception.

The assessment of the planning recommendations, documented in the Board of Governors Minutes, together with the dramatic change in process showed impactful assessment, which nevertheless was more of the "authentic" sort than had been planned.<sup>9</sup> The reaction to the Bell & Trice recommendation for campus closing was a powerful and authentic response to weaknesses in the process that led to it. The advancement demonstrated in the processes used to generate the NWF illustrates the value of wider community engagement in assessment processes.

To emphasize the role of assessing and broadening the implementation of the NWF, the Governance Task Force mentioned above was converted in 2012 to a standing Committee on Governance. In July 2012 this group discussed a renewed strategic planning process, which the Board chairman envisioned to occur before the May 2013 Board meeting. The minutes of the Governance Committee for 07/2012 include a discussion of updating the strategic plan. Subsequently, a Strategic Planning Oversight Task Force was appointed to work in concert with the Presidential Succession/Transition Committee (see Chapter 4) and the Governance Committee. The Task Force led a session at the October 2012 Board meeting. As the strategic plan update moves forward, its success will depend on ensuring broad input, consensus, and commitment across the entire community. The July 2012 meeting of the Governance Committee also saw the initiation of a Board survey to document changes since the 2009 Board Survey and to discover governance areas needing improvement. This new survey was conducted in August, 2012 with results available in the October 2012 Board Survey. The survey shows sustained compliance with assessment (S2\_06).

## **Standard 3. Institutional Resources**

### **Discussion of Research Question and Compliance**

#### *Research Question 3.1*

*What steps have been taken to evaluate how effectively resources are allocated and expended? What specific changes have been implemented and with what results?*

To contextualize the working group findings it is important to note that HUC-JIR would have had greater difficulty in evaluating and ascertaining compliance with Standard 3 prior to August 2009. Simply put, the College-Institute did not have an OIRA. The capacity for identifying data that merited collection, implementing collection processes, and interpreting and applying data were limited. A decision was made in 2009 to create a national OIRA organized by a recognized

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<sup>9</sup>Here the educational use of "authentic assessment" is extended to the institutional context. In the link referred to in the text, Jon Mueller defines the term as "a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills."

expert in the field, under the supervision of the VPAA. This signaled a transformation in HUC-JIR's attitude toward institutional assessment. In announcing the appointment, the VPAA noted that,

despite considerable economic challenges, we have created this new position as part of our commitment to creating a culture of evidence across HUC-JIR. This strengthens our efforts in the area of compliance and education, and speaks to a more profound goal—to make significant decisions based on good data to deepen teaching and learning in our institution.

Further affirmation of the growing importance of institutional research and assessment is found in the appointment in 2010 of an assistant to the director. The OIRA has helped administrators, members of the Board of Governors and Boards of Overseers, deans, faculty, and staff to become increasingly familiar with the characteristics of excellence articulated by MSCHE in its publication, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. The OIRA created processes for delivering information that has led to evidence-based decision-making. The significant financial investment that HUC-JIR has placed in the Office and in embracing best evaluation and assessment practices is evidence of compliance with S3\_01 and S3\_02.

Over the past year the VPAA has been working with the deans of the stateside and Jerusalem campuses to develop a plan for the allocation of faculty across the College-Institute. The paper analyzed tenured and tenure-track faculty by gender, faculty rank, and areas of specialization. In addition, the College-Institute's use of adjunct faculty at its US campuses was also assessed. Findings were presented at the June 2012 meeting of the Board of Governors. Recommendations were made as to the long-range composition of the tenured faculty and the engagement of adjunct faculty. The commitment of the VPAA and the deans to further refinement and implementation of the strategic plan for the allocation of faculty resources illustrates compliance with S3\_03.

In January 2012 the College-Institute appointed a new national Director of Human Resources, reporting to the Vice President of Finance and Administration. The College-Institute had made a deliberate decision to upgrade the role, recognizing the need for an individual who could lead a strategic assessment of College-Institute staffing needs in years to come and who could engage colleagues in enhancing strategies for staff development. The new director is redesigning the performance review process, helping to define career paths for staff, and contemplating how College-Institute personnel needs could be met most effectively. His commitment to undertaking these projects and bringing their outcomes to bear on College-Institute management across the campuses demonstrates compliance with S3\_03.

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 3**

To ascertain compliance with Standard 3, the working group sought evidence of deliberate, coherent, and transparent processes that would affirm that decision-making regarding the allocation of assets is connected to institutional planning processes. Moreover, the working group also sought evidence to demonstrate that mechanisms for reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of asset allocation were in effect and utilized. The evidence for compliance with the fundamental elements relating to financial management (S3\_04, S3\_08, and S3\_09) is described in the following paragraphs.

In April 2011 a new Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer was promoted from Director of Finance and Accounting. A qualified CPA, the new VPFA had extensive nonprofit accounting experience, which enabled the College-Institute to enhance its capacity for financial oversight. She assumed responsibility for all financial, budgeting, and



accounting functions and was tasked with staffing the Audit, Finance, and Investment Committees of the Board of Governors.

The skillfulness of the new VPFA in leading these committees is reflected in the minutes of their meetings. There is a clear process at work in preparing the budget. Deans and vice presidents make recommendations and work collaboratively with the VPFA and her National Business Office colleagues to achieve a balanced budget. Their deliberations are informed by analyses of local and global economic trends that are sure to impact the performance of the College-Institute's endowment. Funds released from endowments and quasi-endowments are key to providing a base of support for the coming academic year. The budget process is also affected by the NWF, which takes a multi-year approach to budgeting (see Chapter 4 as well as the 2010-12 NWF updates, which demonstrate compliance with S3\_04).

During the past fiscal year, new projects demonstrated a new commitment to S3\_08. In collaboration with the Institutional Advancement Office, all endowment accounts were audited and evaluated against original gift agreements. Deviations were examined and, when necessary, accounts were made whole. Most important, the exercise revealed that HUC-JIR had too many fund managers, leading to inefficiency and wastefulness. As noted above, the National Business Office has adopted a new budget management system that reduces 55 fund managers to about 15 and allows for greater accountability.

Also in partnership with the institutional advancement staff, CASE (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education) standards for campaign reporting were introduced to the College-Institute. The standards reflect "best practices," enable comparisons among institutions, and, of greatest importance, avoid double accounting (cf. CASE Reporting Standards and Management Guidelines, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2009) The CASE Standards also allow for greater levels of analysis (gift type, gift donor, project funded, etc.), enabling staff to be more strategic in their approach to aligning fundraising opportunities with budget needs.

Throughout the year the VPFA confers regularly with the president, deans, and vice presidents, as well as with members of the Audit, Budget, and Investment Committees of the Board and fund managers, to make sure that budget projections are being met. When necessary, mid-year corrections are made. The annual audit management letters (audits for 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12) are shared with the president, deans, and vice presidents, as well as with governors who are assigned to the Audit Committee. A report on the letter is also routinely shared with the Executive Committee of the Board. If issues are raised in the management letter they are addressed immediately, showing compliance with S3\_09.

Standards S3\_05, S3\_06, and S3\_07 pertain to facilities acquisition, maintenance, and replacement. The counselor to the president serves as the staff liaison to the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Governors. The committee is chaired by a governor who is co-chair of one of the largest real estate investment trusts in the world and has extensive experience in evaluating and maintaining facilities. Under his leadership the College-Institute is preparing a detailed facilities master plan for each campus, indicating priority and longer-term needs. Deans gave their campus information to the counselor to the president during fall 2012 (CN Maintenance Projections\_provides an example of the input being provided). The Buildings and Grounds Committee will use these reports to prepare a comprehensive budget for capital repairs. The campus reports amount to rudimentary compliance with these fundamental elements, but given the high-level leadership, the ultimate plan will provide exemplary compliance.

Finally, S3\_10 calls for periodic assessments of the efficient use of institutional resources. The weekly President's Cabinet call (see President's Cabinet Call Agendas), comprised of the

president, deans, and vice presidents, serves as a forum for an ongoing review of the use and allocation of resources. Requests are made for further in-depth studies as they are deemed necessary. These studies will often include members of the Buildings and Grounds Committee or other Board committees. In addition, a technology survey was conducted in spring, 2012 with the analysis distributed to the Director of Information Services.

## **Review of Findings Leading to Suggestions for Improvement**

In finding examples of HUC-JIR compliance with Standards 2 and 3, several issues were highlighted that could further enhance improvement in achieving characteristics of excellence.

- Resource allocation and institutional renewal need to be tied to the academic vision. Once an academic vision is put forward and embraced by the HUC-JIR community, the financial, technological, and human resources needed to realize the vision should be developed. The leadership of relevant departments across the College-Institute could then be mobilized to provide the requisite resources. New methods are needed to make sure that priority needs are widely communicated across the four campuses.
- During its early activity, the Board's Governance Task Force discovered a lack of familiarity among governors with the operation and on-going work of academic programs. Better orientation materials and activities for the Board concerning the impact of educational activities on budgetary issues could help the Board to be more effective (see also Chapter 4 below). Thus, the new Board Committee on Governance will play an important role in helping prepare the Board to better understand major planning and organizational issues.
- Over the past few years several non-credit academic programs have received restricted funding (see the section in Chapter 7 "Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 13"). Some of these programs are offered to a limited number of students on particular campuses. Methods are needed to determine the educational and resource issues involved in continuing these programs beyond their funding cycles.
- The VPAA aspires to offer a "sixty-year curriculum," a life-long commitment on the part of HUC-JIR to equipping its graduates to achieve their goals. Details of implementation, cost, and assessment are needed. (See also Chapter 2 on mission).
- HUC-JIR is doing synchronous distance learning successfully (using videoconferencing to link students across remote classrooms). Asynchronous learning requires different sorts of resources, especially of faculty time. There needs to be more evidence on the educational costs and benefits of making more use of asynchronous methods. (See also in Chapters 6 and 7 on eLearning).
- The 2006 Strategic Plan recommended an oversight structure for planning that included an implementation committee of Board members, administrators, faculty, and professionals, a finance subcommittee, and a visions subcommittee. With the advent of the 2008-09 financial crisis, this structure became focused on finance and was not always as broadly consultative as originally recommended.
- Working group members perceive that processes around setting priorities and allocating resources call for greater clarity. In particular, there needs to be more integration of financial and academic priorities.
- The Board Finance Committee and NWF Oversight Committee assume faculty and staff are determining how to achieve financial sustainability within the context of an academic vision. Managing resource allocation in times of scarcity is especially challenging.
- There will be a change in the HUC-JIR presidency, hopefully to be appointed by July 1, 2014. Clarifying Board, staff, and faculty roles and processes in setting priorities that impact upon resource allocation would be helpful through the period of this leadership transition.

What could emerge from the MSCHE accreditation exercise that would help a new president make decisions about planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal?

### **Suggestions for Improvement for Standards 2 and 3**

1. Renew and enhance strategic planning and improvement processes to be more timely and provide for broader community participation in both conception and application.
2. Ensure that the self-study findings are integrated with the updated strategic plan.
3. Involve faculty deeply in institutional planning, especially in articulating their highest aspirations for the College-Institute.
4. Have the Governance Committee clarify roles of committees of the Board as they pertain to setting institutional priorities and allocating resources.
5. Continue to revise the materials and events for Board orientation to include more information on academic programs and related activities.
6. Have the Faculty and Academic Affairs Committee of the Board play a more prominent role in communicating with faculty bodies around budget development to ensure that processes are clear and that budget development reflects HUC-JIR's academic mission.
7. Identify means of providing HUC-JIR "financial literacy" to governors, faculty, and staff.
8. Insure that the updating of the strategic plan addresses objectives, costs, and assessment of specific educational initiatives, such as asynchronous distance learning and the "sixty-year curriculum."
9. Reconstitute a strategic planning implementation committee of Board members, administrators, faculty, and professionals that includes a visions subcommittee as well as the finance subcommittee. (See also now Proposals 1 and 2 in the Strategic Planning Update Report.)
10. Have the National Assessment Committee resume its study of specially funded Co-Curricular Activities.
11. Have the eLearning department make available research reviews of the relative costs and benefits of synchronous and asynchronous methods.
12. Implement justification of budget proposals at all levels by reference to the mission.

## **Chapter 4. Leadership, Governance, & Administration**

### **(Standards 4 and 5)**

#### **Overview of Charge**

The College-Institute's four-campus structure informs both governance and administration in both functional and conceptual ways, with multiple layers and interwoven realms of responsibility. As such, the working group charged with Standards 4 and 5 organized its tasks on the basis of the evidence, including, for example, Board manuals, meeting minutes, the 2009 and 2012 Board Surveys, and a student survey.

#### **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

##### **Discussion of Research Question and Compliance**

###### *Research Question 4.1*

*To what extent are the distinct roles and responsibilities of each constituent group within arenas of shared governance understood and accepted by those involved? To what extent are existing structures utilized for decision-making, and to what extent are structures circumvented?*

Though not undertaken as a strategic plan, the New Way Forward Plan has emerged from the crisis of 2008-09 as the governing plan for financial sustainability, complete with benchmarks in periodic NWF Updates (see also Chapter 3). This plan inevitably has shaped many aspects of shared governance. Appropriately, the president and the chair of the Board of Governors have been the primary parties in shepherding the NWF on its five-year course. The regular president's reports recorded in the Board of Governors Minutes stress works in progress and ones completed that speak to the mission of the College-Institute, always in both directions: to the governors and to the community stakeholders as a whole. This communication has succeeded in representing the evolving, near-term situation with clarity, reliability, and context. The success of the plan as a financial guide is well represented in the NWF Pro Forma projections.

At the national level, the deans, VPs, and president collaborate with the governors, directly or indirectly, to keep on track with institutional goals. The president, VPs, and deans meet as a President's Cabinet weekly to confer about all of the College-Institute concerns, with NWF and related matters always present, though not always in the forefront. Deans and program directors report mission-driven activities, including growth in programs, newly funded programs, and student scholarships. In these meetings, the president always reports on ongoing discussions with the Board of Governors, and the sessions therefore serve as the primary vehicle for aligning the administration and the Board of Governors. Because sensitive personnel issues are often discussed at these meetings, minutes are not kept. However, see the President's Cabinet Call Agendas (09/2011-06/2012) for the major topics.

At the local level, directors of various programs on each campus regularly report to their deans. To various degrees, school directors avail themselves of formal and informal opportunities to keep members of both the Board of Governors and the local Boards of Overseers informed about their respective program needs and accomplishments. The mission of the Boards of Overseers, as articulated in the Board of Overseers Manuals from CN<sub>1</sub>, LA<sub>1</sub>, and NY is to

promote and provide support (financial and otherwise) for programs, promote student services and activities, promote faculty welfare, endorse HUC-JIR's mission, and serve as its ambassadors in the local and regional communities.

More challenging is the need to connect the Boards of Overseers and Board of Governors to the students (S4\_03). The Board of Governors minutes document student reports from 2009 and 2011 that indicate a desire for more transparency on the part of the Board. As a result, the Governance Task Force (GTF) implemented specific and well-received initiatives to increase the direct engagement between governors and overseers on the one hand and students on the other (see Governance Committee Materials). In addition to student reports at Board of Governors meetings (a well-established agenda item), the GTF initiated a Board luncheon with students to familiarize Board members with students, their needs, and their interests, as well as to engage in substantive conversation with students, in small groups, around questions of their expectations as both students and future professionals. These initiatives address the students' expressed interest in expanding their opportunities "for student input regarding decisions that affect them" as identified in the fundamental elements of Leadership and Governance. The Board also has a long-standing Student Welfare Committee, which has met with students on each campus at the time of the Board meeting and addressed their concerns. The Committee has brought matters to the Board that needed attention. Even with selected students now reporting directly to the Board, the Student Welfare meetings on each campus remain important. Additional evidence for the College-Institute's extensive compliance with element S4\_03 can be found in Chapters 2, 5, 7, and 8.

The 2009 Board Survey showed that many members of the Board of Governors from all constituencies were unclear about their roles and responsibilities, that they did not feel well oriented to their work on the Board or well educated prior to being asked to make decisions, that communication with Board members needed improvement, that Board members did not feel included in the strategic planning process and that once the strategic plan was completed (in 2006) it had been filed away and was not implemented consistently.

After almost two years of work, the GTF created a plan for Board orientation, education, development, structure, communication, and ongoing self-evaluation that includes the review of roles and responsibilities of constituent groups (see Governance Task Force Report of the Board Orientation and Education Subcommittee and Chapter 2). In February 2012 a standing Governance Committee of the Board was established and charged with continuing and implementing the work of the GTF. The Resolution on Governance, passed in June, 2012, included the assignment of a professional staff liaison to serve on the standing Governance Committee. Recently, the 2012 Board Survey found the governors to be much more knowledgeable. However, there were still areas needing improvement, especially their knowledge of MSCHE accreditation requirements and the use of assessment results in decision-making.

The Board of Governors Manual clearly spells out the mission statement and purpose for the legally invested governance of the Board of Governors, the "ultimate responsibility for the operations and activities of HUC-JIR." Its Regulations establish the basic structure and powers of the Board, its members, and its committees. The committees are structured to cover every aspect of life and activity at the College-Institute. To the extent that the Board of Governors members read and understand this manual, they are well informed about their roles and responsibilities. The Board of Governors Manual also delineates the role of the four Boards of Overseers. The NY Board of Overseers Manual includes the Mission Statement and Regulations of the Board of Governors, so that local overseers are aware of their role vis-à-vis the entire system of governance. The NY Board of Overseers has its own clearly framed

Mission Statement, to promote and strengthen the educational, religious, and organizational aspects of the College-Institute, as well as the well-being of, and advocacy for, the New York School.

In contrast to the central role of the Board of Governors, the role of the Boards of Overseers has been less clear. For example, the LA Board of Overseers Manual delineates the differences between the national Board of Governors and the Los Angeles Board of Overseers in the following way:

The Board of Overseers shall concern itself with the aid and support of the College-Institute and the management of the Los Angeles School, subject, in all cases to the control of the Board of Governors, and shall have such power and authority as shall from time to time be delegated to it by the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Board of Governors, or the President of the College-Institute in conformance with his/her authority as set forth in section 3(a) of Article V of the Regulations of the College-Institute.

While this makes the division of labor between the two groups clear, the type of “aid and support” that overseers are expected to give is not spelled out explicitly.

The overseers meet at least two to four times a year. The NY Board of Overseers Manual specifies the number of overseers and their terms of office. There are 25 overseers (9 of whom are also governors) with each having a 3-year term so that approximately one-third of the terms end per year. However, it does not say if members can be re-elected after their terms are over. It does offer the option of emeritus appointments:

Overseers whose term has ended but who have offered exceptional service are eligible for emeritus status, which they enjoy as long as they continue to contribute.

Again, it does not spell out what “contributing” entails, which perhaps best encapsulates the sometimes equivocal role of the Boards of Overseers in contrast to that of the Board of Governors. Nevertheless, insofar as the Boards of Overseers do not exercise any fiduciary responsibilities, this indeterminacy need not pose a problem. All of the campuses rely on their respective overseers for essential contributions, be they in dollars, time, or wisdom.

#### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 4**

At first glance, the governance and administration of HUC-JIR function in similarly federal structures, with a national body and local bodies for each. National offices, spread out among the various campuses, interact with the campus administrations along clear organizational lines. However, governance does not trickle down from national to local in the same fashion. The HUC-JIR Regulations define the College-Institute’s collegial system of governance (fulfilling S4\_01). Thus, they prescribe:

The Board of Governors has final authority in all matters affecting the College-Institute. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Faculty, working in concert, has [sic] primary responsibility for policy in all academic areas, including academic standards, curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.

The Regulations also clearly delineate governance structure, assign authority and provide for Board member selection, and preclude the Board from being chaired by the chief executive officer (fulfilling S4\_02 and S4\_05), whose duties to the institution are carefully spelled out (S4\_11). As they indicate, the fiduciary responsibilities of governance lie solely with the Board of Governors, whereas the local Boards of Overseers have no such responsibility, despite their

crucial role as advisors and supporters on their respective campuses. Therefore governance, strictly speaking, does not function federally. Nevertheless, governors frequently participate in their local Board of Overseers (the chairs of which are also governors), and overseers have opportunities to interact with governors during Board of Governors meetings. Thus, the local-national dynamic is at the heart of the administrative and governance life of the College-Institute, even if it plays out somewhat differently in the two contexts. These local-national relationships loom in the background, even if they do not emerge specifically, and they give shape to both the culture and the workings of HUC-JIR. In this context, documents such as the articles of incorporation of HUC in OH, JIR in NY and the merger information have not ceased to have cultural impact on current structures, authority, and Board member selection. Further efforts could be made to make the role of the Boards more transparent to students and other community constituents. This could be easily accomplished by making the Regulations accessible on the HUC-JIR website with links to it in the faculty, personnel, and student handbooks.

A major accomplishment that led to this report was the application for single accreditation by MSCHE that was submitted by the president on behalf of the Board of Governors on August 2, 2010 (see the fuller account in Chapter 1). The acceptance of this letter along with the Complex Substantive Change Proposal has enormously facilitated College-Institute's compliance with S4\_06. Before, four campuses submitted three self-studies to three different regional accrediting agencies. HUC-JIR followed up its acceptance by MSCHE with letters of resignation from the other two regional agencies. The simplified structure was in part enabled by the creation in 2009 of the national Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. When the assistance of this office is combined with the simplified structure, keeping the College-Institute up-to-date with all of its reports to MSCHE and other governmental agencies requires substantially less resources. The Board of Governors Manual clearly specifies on page 15 the responsibilities of governors in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution (S4\_08). The Board recently updated its conflict of interest policy, which clearly complies with S4\_07 in all of its details. The results of the 2009 Governance Survey and Responses made clear that, although the governance structure itself posed no major problems, the standing committees needed some reconfiguration to meet the current needs of the College-Institute. These needs precipitated the Governance Task Force. The GTF has initiated, to date, two crucial processes. First, they recommended, in February 2011, that the Board of Governors institute a standing committee on governance, which the Board duly resolved to do. Second, in June, 2012, the Board of Governors amended its Regulations; it clarified the distribution of responsibilities by breaking down the committee structure along different lines. Under Article VI (Committees), the former Nominating and Governance Committee will now be broken out into two committees. These new, more narrowly defined committees obviously attend to the precise concerns of this element, but critically, they also represent a consciousness on the part of the Board of Governors that the committees need to represent both the state of affairs and the desired direction of the Board of Governors, both of which shift with time. These latest amendments, therefore, also include two new committees to reflect those shifts in attention: Communications and Israel.

Perhaps most saliently, the College-Institute has taken aggressive steps to comply with the requirement to establish "a governing body that certifies to the Commission that the institution is in compliance with the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards and policies of the Commission...." In this regard, the primary work in filling the gap came by way of compliance with the financial, assessment, and governance issues that led to the 2009 Focused Visit mandated by the NCAHLC, when each campus was accredited by its local accrediting body. At that time the College-Institute established an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at

the forefront of all of the assessment and accreditation processes (see Chapter 8). It has served not only to consolidate the College-Institute's efforts and its idiom of assessment and accreditation but also to initiate new, standard processes for academic program assessment, at the very heart of the institution's mission.

As part of the larger discussion surrounding the GTF, the College-Institute addressed the ongoing need to orient incoming governors (S4\_09, see Board of Governors Orientation Plan and Governance Task Force Report of the Board Orientation and Education Subcommittee). An orientation for new governors, under the new plan, was held at the October, 2012 Board meeting. While there is ample documentation established in the Board of Governors Manual, the pending questions concern in-person orientation and updating of the manual. There are significant information updates relevant to decision-making on an annual basis. These include, but are not limited to, (1) turnover in offices due to promotions, hires, and departures, (2) additions or terminations of programs, (3) changes in enrollments, (4) changes in endowment and financial status, (5) changes in policies and Regulations, and (6) changes in Board membership and committee rosters. Instead of requiring Board members to shuffle pages on an annual basis, the manual might use website links to the relevant information and supplement the paper versions of the manuals with pdf's that include those links. Consequently, the College-Institute complies with this fundamental element and is also taking steps to improve its implementation.

In the meantime, major strides have been taken in relation to expanding Board engagement and information. Since the adoption of the GTF recommendations, regular email communication to the members conveys the minutes of Executive Committee meetings, shared with the overseers as well. Moreover, the Board of Governors meetings now include formal, routinized opportunities for overseers to interact with governors, both as a means to community- and leadership-building and as an opportunity to expand the governance discussion, even if more informal and not binding.

Finally, the College-Institute is taking active steps to establish periodic assessment of institutional leadership. A comprehensive self-assessment survey of the Board was conducted in 2009, and analyzed and documented for the 2009 Focused Visit Report to the NCAHLC. Subsequently, the work of the GTF, the initial acceptance of its recommendations, and the institution of a standing Committee on Governance have created the vehicle for this assessment. A comparative and embellished Board of Governors Survey 2012 was distributed in August 2012 with the results summarized in time for the October, 2012 meeting. These steps provide strong support for S4\_10 and the governance portion of S4\_12 (support for the leadership portion of S4\_12 is noted below in the discussion of Standard 5).

## **Standard 5: Administration**

### **Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance**

#### *Research Question 5.1*

*In what ways and for what reasons have staffing patterns and reporting lines been changed within the past five years? How appropriate were those changes?*

This question addresses the issues related to S5\_04 and shows that the College-Institute has fulfilled this element. The discussion provides details for further improvements to be made in the near term.



The NWF plan for financial sustainability was adopted in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008-09. Through it, the College-Institute has taken steps to strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and functionality in four departments: operations, finance, recruitment and admissions, and institutional advancement. In the first instance, the College-Institute chose not to replace the outgoing chief operating officer in 2011, choosing instead to redistribute his former duties among the remaining Offices of Finance and Administration, Academic Affairs, and Institutional Advancement (with the promotion of the VPFA, all three offices are now led by vice presidents). This cost-cutting measure has proven feasible, but a stretch on human resources. The College-Institute did materially alleviate this stress by recruiting a National Director for Human Resources, who reports to the VPFA. Even more aggressively, the hire of a new VPFA provided an opportunity to increase the College-Institute's development staff to include a researcher, a regional director in Cincinnati, and a replacement for a regional director in Los Angeles who became assistant VP for Major Gifts. These investments have proven prescient in assuring the success of the current comprehensive campaign, which is proceeding apace, as documented in the Board of Governors Minutes for 2012. In a separate category is recruitment and admissions, under the auspices of the VPAA. The NWF stipulated rather drastic cuts in this department, leaving only a national director, who happened to reside in Los Angeles, and a regional director in Jerusalem. A very slow recruitment year in 2011 prompted reconsideration of the cuts and ultimately caused the College-Institute to re-invest in regional directors. All of these investments have demanded heavy budgetary commitments at a time when the College-Institute continued to experience the pressures of a weak economy. However, a \$5.2-million dollar grant from the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati is helping to defray costs for a new National Director of Recruitment and Admissions to be located in Cincinnati. Thus, the administration and governors have collaborated successfully to isolate these problems and solve them within the context of rigorous standards for financial sustainability.

At the level of the VPs, the above-mentioned changes since the NWF implementation have had the broadest effects in the system. As a result of them, for example, the VPAA currently bears the weight of a notably large brief, beyond the strict scope of academic affairs, including the OIRA, recruitment and admissions, and information technology. Despite the fact that this consolidation may have been necessary and despite the VPAA's widely hailed success in managing it, this organization bears consideration as a long-range priority for investment in an additional VP or in reconsidering the distribution of responsibilities and resources allotted, pending budgetary opportunity. In many ways, this particular staffing concern reflects the very heart of the federalism of the College-Institute. In truth, the breadth of both the mission and geographical dispersion is out of proportion to the College-Institute's size, which is a structural challenge that stretches resources. The staffing of the VPs, a major investment, is symptomatic of that structural challenge. Through the NWF the College-Institute unflinchingly confronted this breadth of mission and geography, and affirmed the simple fact that the mission requires the College-Institute to retain the four-campus structure. So, this self-study seeks to acknowledge and work through this structural challenge, while affirming the validity of the demands behind it.

Another significant staffing change occurred in May, 2012, with the appointment of the Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education to become the senior National Director of the Schools of Education. This appointment was the culmination of at least five years of deliberations, first initiated by the former VPAA. The purpose of these deliberations was to align the education programs going forward now on each of the three state-side campuses, so that students in each program were offered comparable courses and required to submit comparable capstone projects. The process of decision-making accelerated as a result of the College-Institute's receipt of a multi-year multi-million-dollar grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation. Tenure-track education faculty members at all locations and the directors of the programs in New York and

Los Angeles met face-to-face twice over this period and by video-conference three or four additional times.

As a result of these meetings, and the preparatory work done between them, faculty members reviewed the courses of study leading to the masters' degree in education in Los Angeles, in New York, and in Cincinnati (the latter, which began this year, is joined to and credentialed by the MARE program in NY). Where differences were found between the programs, decisions were made as to which option (or combination of options) led to more rigorous and high-level learning. The new position of National Director of the Schools of Education ensures that all of the decisions will be implemented (many have already taken effect), and that the three degrees will remain fully aligned.

The new national education director's position represents a successful approach to managing and leveraging the strengths of the federal nature of the administration. When programs span campuses, as almost every one of them does (be it between the States and Jerusalem or among stateside campuses), each one requires its own solution to curricular and programmatic administration. This obligation does and will continue to apply to the College-Institute's expanding number of executive and certificate programs (Cantorial, Education, and Jewish Nonprofit Management), which have, thus far, also successfully remained under the purview of the directorship of the local schools out of which they grew (NY for Cantorial, LA for Jewish Nonprofit Management, and both LA and NY for Education).

#### *Research Question 5.2*

*In what ways do administrative structures facilitate learning and how do students and faculty perceive the effectiveness of that facilitation?*

This question directly addresses the single aspect of element S5\_05 that is of the highest concern to the fulfillment of the College-Institute's mission, student learning. Other aspects of this element are addressed in the discussion below and in the compliance section that follows.

At the national level, the College-Institute administration has pursued a number of important policies that impinge directly on student learning. One key element from the perspective of the NWF is the commitment to fund scholarships. Depending on a number of variables, scholarships may or may not relieve budgetary pressures. When they do not do so, they do, of course, relieve financial pressures on the students in question, furthering the College-Institute's educational mission. The pursuit of new student scholarships will facilitate student life and, in as many cases as possible, will also strengthen program initiatives, such as the Executive MA in Jewish Education, Cantorial Certificate, and the Certificate in Jewish Education for Adolescent and Emerging Adults.

Also centered nationally and characteristic of the federal structure of the College-Institute is the VPAA's study of faculty distribution among the various campuses and investigation into how the faculty can better be deployed and, prospectively, hired to serve students and curricula on the different campuses. The result has been a plan, worked out in close consultation with the deans, to strike a sustainable balance of full-time faculty on all campuses, taking into consideration curricular demands and the possibility for distance learning (a signature goal of the NWF). The newly reconstituted Faculty Council, together with the VPAA, assesses academic needs, all of which are at the heart of this calculation of faculty distribution and hires.

The stateside campuses all have administrative mechanisms to address concerns of student learning. The names of the committees differ, as do their purviews, but they all ensure that the administration of the College-Institute is successfully deployed for the educational mission.

The convening body in Los Angeles is called the Executive Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (ECASA), constituted by: school directors (RHSEO, Louchheim School of Judaic Studies, Rabbinical School, Magnin School of Graduate Studies, and SJNM), faculty chair, dean, and chaired by the associate dean. ECASA sets the campus agenda, convenes the campus administration, sets local policy, and generally concerns itself with matters bridging schools or beyond the purview of faculty and student governance. The LA Executive Committee on Academic and Student Affairs Minutes document that ECASA has ample opportunity to promote student learning, be it indirectly or directly. In Nov. 2010, the group discussed the teaching loads of faculty members and their schools in relation to curricular needs and, crucially, the particular attention given to advising. In the same meeting, the group discussed the policy of program assessment, including extra-curricular programs, as part of the larger goal of student learning. In March, 2011, the group discussed the attendance policy and explicitly queried that of the faculty, as well as that of the students, in terms of course continuity and professional modeling. ECASA deals, in sum, with the full range of issues that connect policy-makers to the ultimate goal of the College-Institute, namely, to teach.

In New York, the Curriculum Committee more explicitly melds the faculty purview with that of administration, with the connection to students explicit in its title. The committee, however, does not merely set curriculum policy in relation to the requirements and nature of requirement-fulfillment. In more engaged fashion, it developed a survey to assess the value of the fifth-year rabbinic thesis, the capstone of the rabbinic program. This can be found in NY Curriculum Committee Documentation. It sent the survey not only to current fifth-year students but also to recent rabbinic alumni of the New York school. With questions such as "Did preparation of a thesis provide you with an opportunity to appreciate and apply skills and knowledge you gained over your years at HUC?" the committee tried to get at the summative and formative value of such a capstone. Though the survey has not been repeated annually, it represents the New York campus's ongoing efforts to assess and shape curriculum and to constantly improve student learning.

In Cincinnati, the dean and program directors of the Rabbinical School and the Graduate School collaborate with faculty through each program's faculty executive committee and ultimately with the faculty as a whole. For example, the CN Faculty Minutes from August, 2011 describe the beginning contacts of the dean with the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati that ultimately led to the service-learning grant. The dean indicated the routine administrative procedure that "the faculty will be kept informed and will have a voice if curricular issues might be involved." Because innovations in curricular delivery are required for the grant, the faculty will focus on the changes as major topics in its monthly meetings and in two retreats during the current year. As another example, the Cincinnati faculty, in November, 2011, engaged in a recurring discussion about Hebrew language learning. The national administration most recently has facilitated further discussion on Hebrew curriculum across all four locations.

In Jerusalem, there is a "management team" that reviews students' needs constantly. Not only does every course have an evaluation, but all outings and extra-curricular programs get rated by students. These ratings are carefully read by the director of the YII, head of Student Services, and the dean. In addition, the YII director and the dean have individual meetings with students at the end of the year to hear their feedback (see, YII Year-end Notes for the last two years). Based on student feedback, improvements are made yearly. In addition, the VPAA meets with students throughout the year.

At the level of the national administration, the president convenes the aforementioned President's Cabinet and the VPAA convenes the Academic Advisory Council (see Academic Advisory Council Minutes). The President's Cabinet serves as a key (though not sole) venue for

both the president and the VPAA to work through the educational agenda in terms of the administration's allocation of resources. For example, the VPAA recently consulted the President's Cabinet on the aforementioned faculty plan.

The AAC is a large group comprising local directors as well as deans, faculty chairs, and some other representative administrators. It meets periodically when national academic policy issues arise. For example the AAC minutes for March and August of 2010 document crucial discussions of the single-accreditation issue that substantively informed the final decision to recommend to the Board of Governors that the College-Institute seek accreditation of all HUC-JIR campuses through MSCHE. In addition recent meetings were devoted to reviewing the registrar's drafts of the National Student Academic Handbook.

Another way that the national administration has supported learning is through the National Assessment Committee, which explicitly leveraged the accreditation process for the purpose of focusing the Rabbinical School's mission. This group worked with the faculty as a whole on each campus to adapt the language to local needs. Additional facilitation of student learning is accomplished through biweekly meetings of the Student Information System Management Team. As mentioned above, this group has resolved numerous difficulties involving the storage and retrieval of student learning information.

Overall, the federal system works so that the local committees leverage their proximity to both the faculty and the students on their respective campuses to efficiently assess student learning and deal with challenges that arise. The President's Cabinet, the Academic Advisory Committee, the National Assessment Committee, and the SIS Management Team offer the VPAA ramified venues for setting the learning agenda of the College-Institute and initiating implementation with appropriate consultation.

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 5**

The Regulations describe the role of the president as chief executive officer (fulfilling S5\_01). The current president's credentials and huc.edu president's listing reveal a strong academic background. His prior service for 23 years as a faculty member meant that he knew practically everyone when he assumed office, and those relationships were important building-blocks for cementing institutional stability even during a time of crisis. Other sources document the way that his character and leadership have inspired others. One example is the 2001 HUC-JIR Chronicle article that announced his appointment as president. His leadership in formulating and seeing through the success of the New Way Forward Plan provides strong evidence for the role of this office in achieving institutional goals and managing the administration of the College-Institute (S5\_02). The current president is retiring in 2014 and a search is currently beginning for his successor.

Perusal of the administrative résumés reveals a high level of qualifications and experience related to all of the administrative functions of the College-Institute (fulfilling S5\_03). The improvements and efficiencies resulting from the staffing changes described under *Research Question 5.1* attest to the efficacy of these qualifications for both new and old appointments.

The communication of information and processes for decision-making include the previously mentioned President's Cabinet and Academic Advisory Council, as well as the deans' and program directors' groups. In the last three years, three new groups have been added that have played instrumental roles in supporting the work of administrative leaders: the aforementioned Student Information System Management Team, the National Assessment Committee, and the IT Strategic Planning Group. The first is headed by the Director of Information Systems and includes the Admissions Coordinator, Director of Financial Aid, Director of the OIRA, registrar,

and the VPAA. The second is chaired by the Director of the OIRA and comprises faculty members from each of the four campuses and the VPAA. The third includes the VPAA and the Directors of eLearning and Information Systems. These structures fulfill the remaining aspects of S5\_05 not covered above.

The administration faced particular challenges regarding the functions of the registrar (see *Staffing and Human Resources Decisions* in Chapter 3 above, and the fuller discussion at *Research Question 9.1* in Chapter 5, below). The relatively recent implementation of the current SIS reflects the consolidation of the registrar's functions in one national office, in Cincinnati. The previous state of affairs included not only individual registrars for each campus but also varying standards and cultures regarding their functions. The current registrar, with the help of the national SIS Committee, has begun to adapt the relatively new SIS to better fit institutional needs and cultures, on many levels. First, he has helped to bring more coherence among campus cultures and expectations in grading systems, calendars, policies, and channels of communication. Second, aided by vendor improvements and enriched IS support, he has adapted the SIS to College-Institute needs. The new National Student Academic Handbook (initiated in fall 2011, reviewed by the Academic Advisory Council in summer-fall 2012, and being implemented in spring 2013) and the Administrative Survey Results testify to the success of the efforts to achieve better coordination, which have involved working closely with the VPAA, deans, and Directors of Institutional Research and Assessment, Human Resources, and Information Technology (fulfilling S4\_12).

The organizational chart for the College-Institute demonstrates the fulfillment of S5\_06. The Administrative Survey addressed all administrative functions of the College-Institute and was filled out by over 120 respondents. The findings are detailed in Chapter 8 and reveal that systematic assessment of administrative functions occurs, fulfilling S5\_07.

The College-Institute entirely lacked a uniform, institution-wide vehicle for assessment until the establishment of the OIRA. Concurrent with this self-study, the entire institution has embarked on its first full-scale administrative and academic-program assessment. The OIRA has instituted a system-wide survey, which all instructors and administrators fill out on a term-by-term basis. The survey frames the entire instructional and administrative universe of the College-Institute on the web-based platform, which solicits both quantitative and qualitative responses about student progress in relation to their advancement through their programs, for example.

## **Suggestions for Improvement for Standards 4 and 5**

1. From the point of view of governance, the Board of Governors needs to continue its commitment to the evidence-based reflective process engendered by the GTF and carried on by its new Committee on Governance (see the materials generated by this committee at Governance Committee Materials\_and Minutes 06/2012\_and 07/2012, as well as the Governor's surveys from 2009 and 2012). These already have served as important vehicles for improving governance, not only in terms of the internal resolutions cited above but also in the realm of governor-overseer relations, governor-student relations, and new governors' orientation. These last two pursuits have resulted in programs that bring the governors more directly in contact with the individual campuses (through the overseers) and the students. Such commitments produce salutary effects in other areas, such as communications, and generally improve morale and working conditions. An easy way to further this communication would be to make the Regulations readily accessible on the HUC-JIR website.

2. The College-Institute must consider next steps in relation to administrative hiring or organization. The reorganization of the VPAA's position may yet prove, like the attempted reorganization of the recruitment and admissions department, unsustainable. And though the VPAA has borne that weight remarkably well and to good effect, and though the budget does not truly allow the College-Institute to consider hiring a new VP, it might consider the possibility of a long-term strategy that prioritizes the strengthening of the VPAA's office or the addition of a new VP. Such a person's brief might be construed in any number of ways, as long as the goal is to relieve the VPAA of as much non-academic responsibility as possible.

## **Chapter 5. Student Admissions, Retention, and Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)**

### **Overview of Charge**

The working group's examination of the evidence for compliance with Standards 8 and 9 occurred within a context of previous and (as was discovered) repeated discussions among faculty and students on all three American campuses: topics of concern that must be addressed in order to improve the College-Institute's recruitment and admissions programs, and the services offered to its students. The evidence has several sources. It is located in the campus student handbooks and the new integrated NSAH. These describe the academic requirements and procedures of the College-Institute's several academic programs. It is also found on websites issued and overseen by the national administrative offices, such as the Offices of the Registrar, Admissions and Recruitment, and Financial Aid. The third source is the reports of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, many of which are available on <http://wiki.huc.edu>.

The group revisited the charge to focus the research questions more specifically on current issues of student recruitment, retention, and support facing the College-Institute. The four new questions are stated at the beginning of their respective sections. The contrast with, and rationale for, changes from the design document research questions are available in Working Group D Research Question Changes.

### **Standard 8. Admissions and Retention**

#### **Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance**

##### *Research Question 8.1*

*Would a merit-based financial aid policy increase the quality and number of students admitted to HUC-JIR's professional programs?*

The College-Institute follows a needs-based financial aid policy in the Rabbinical School, the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music (DFSSM), and the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management (SJNM): a student who demonstrates financial need may be awarded annual scholarships not exceeding \$12,000. The scholarship is applied immediately towards payment of the student's tuition, which currently is \$21,000 per year. No "merit" scholarships or stipends are available across all campuses to students in the Rabbinical School,<sup>10</sup> the DFSSM, or the SJNM. The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) awards both scholarships and fellowship stipends. Graduate student scholarships and fellowships are drawn completely from restricted funds. Similarly, because of a recent grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation, students in the Schools of Education are awarded scholarships that cover full tuition and, in some programs, also additional stipends for living costs.

Some of the College-Institute's faculty and administration insist that a more generous financial aid policy, especially one that recognizes and awards "merit," would attract more and perhaps

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<sup>10</sup>In New York, the Bonnie and Daniel Tisch Rabbinical Fellowship is awarded annually to a selected group of five students. It begins in the third year of the Rabbinical School program, continues for two more years and provides both a full-tuition scholarship and a living stipend, which reduces the fellow's need to take on outside work. A similar fellowship is awarded annually to one cantorial student (Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Leadership Fellows Program).

more highly qualified students to the DFSSM, the SJNM, and especially the Rabbinical School. Those who favor such a policy change point out that enrollment has increased in the Schools of Education since the awarding of full-tuition scholarships began. In addition, a more generous financial aid policy will minimize a student's indebtedness, which is an increasingly important issue to many students and might be the deciding factor in many students' choice of profession. A further consideration is that today the applicants to the Rabbinical School are more likely than in the past to apply as well to other rabbinical programs. This implies that the College-Institute needs to compare costs of attendance and availability of student support awards with those of other rabbinical programs, which was recently accomplished (see Financial Aid Presentation to the Board of Governors, 10/2012).

Others disagree. In their view, a more generous financial aid policy would have little or no effect on recruitment and admission to the SJNM, the DFSSM, or the Rabbinical School, given what they consider to be both relatively low tuition rates and indebtedness (as opposed to students who pursue training in schools of law, medicine, or business). Many who hold this point of view also contend that students who apply to the DFSSM, the SJNM, and the Rabbinical School choose a life of service to the Jewish people for other than financial reasons. So increased financial aid, while certainly helping students in the College-Institute's professional programs to reduce future indebtedness, would not be a motivating factor in their choice of profession.

The members of the working group did not have an answer to the merit scholarship question. But they did agree that the College-Institute must pursue the question, and that any answer (or answers) that emerge from that pursuit must be based not solely on opinions (as strongly held as those opinions might be) but on evidence. Accordingly, they added two logically prior questions to Research Question 8.1, which itself has been slightly rephrased:

1. What changes in financial aid policy have been implemented over the past five years?
2. What evidence demonstrates that such changes were based on appropriate assessment results?
3. To what extent would a merit-based financial policy demonstrate an institutional commitment to student success and the achievement of student learning outcomes?

Evidence to investigate these questions comes from internal HUC-JIR documentation, published empirical studies on financial aid systems, and published analyses of current best practices and trends in how financial aid is administered.

#### *Changes in financial aid policy implemented over the past five years*

Through email correspondence with the College-Institute's Director of Financial Aid, summarized in the Table of Recent Financial Aid Policies, and on the College-Institute website at [www.huc.edu/financialaid](http://www.huc.edu/financialaid), the working group was able to construct a picture of an ongoing, two-fold concerted effort:

1. To ensure that the College-Institute's policies are always in compliance with the United States Department of Education's Title IV requirements.
2. To ensure that the College-Institute's financial aid policies are always synchronized with the ever-changing needs of the institution and its students.

#### *Evidence that changes were based on appropriate assessment results*

Beginning in 2010, the Financial Aid Office has administered surveys every other year to collect cost-of-attendance information for each of the various programs offered on the four campuses of the College-Institute. Based on the numbers that students provide, and through consultation



with program directors on each campus, the average cost of attendance for each respective program is calculated. These averages determine the maximum amount of loans that a student may borrow. The Table of Average Costs of Attendance highlights the cost-of-attendance data for the Rabbinical School for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic years.

Currently, the cost-of-attendance survey is the only method by which the College-Institute actively assesses and adjusts to the financial needs of its students. Additionally, as part of the self-study process, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment created an Administrative Survey which was sent to the entire College-Institute community (students, faculty, and staff on every campus). The goal of the survey was to examine responsiveness, reliability, and respect within the various administrative functions in the College-Institute. One of the functions that respondents had a chance to rate was the Financial Aid Office, which was found to be quite responsive to student needs (see below at discussion of S9\_09).

Subsequently, the results of the survey were discussed with the heads of each function, and their conclusions can be found in Chapters 4 and 8. The plan and suggestion in Chapter 8 is to continue this on an annual basis. Some of the findings were also included in the director's Financial Aid Presentation to the Board of Governors at their October, 2012 meeting.

*To what extent would a merit-based financial policy demonstrate an institutional commitment to student success and the achievement of student learning outcomes?*

This was a challenging research question to deal with. None of the institutions to which the working group reached out (local seminaries, other national Jewish seminaries, the University of Cincinnati's College of Law) was able to provide data sets that illustrate a linkage among merit-based financial aid, the achievement of student learning outcomes, and/or an impact on recruitment. Furthermore, assessment of student learning outcomes needs to be combined with admissions data to fully resolve this question. It should be noted, however, that, as institutional and academic assessment models become more entrenched over time through use, these types of data sets should become more readily available. Nevertheless, the working group was able to gather enough internal data and glean information from recent studies and articles that suggest that an extensive merit-based financial aid system would not necessarily improve 1) achievement of student learning outcomes, and 2) recruitment.

During the planning for their grants to the Schools of Education, the Jim Joseph Foundation in the Fall of 2011 commissioned an initial price analysis (tuition) conducted by the American Institutes for Research. One of the outcomes of the survey, whose respondents included current students and recent alumni, that was most relevant to this research question was that a blanket policy of a full-tuition waiver to all students is an inefficient strategy given that at least half of the students surveyed would be willing and able to pay at least half of the current tuition. This finding indicates an optimal price point of \$11,000. It should be noted that the original Jim Joseph funding resulted in a marked increase in enrollment in the education programs.

Merit-based financial aid is made available in the DFSSM through the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Leadership Fellows Program. The program is "dedicated to transforming synagogue life for the next generation through intensive and specialized training designed to create synagogue professionals who will become spiritual and moral leaders." Through a rigorous application process that includes essays, an interview, and three references, one student is chosen per year for the fellowship program. Some of the "specialized training" includes working with a rabbinical cohort for 2½ years, monthly study sessions supplemented by a substantial book list, a yearly weekend retreat, and a week at a congregation involved in ground-breaking leadership models. In addition to a seven-week paid internship at a cutting-

edge congregation, the student also receives full tuition (\$21,000) plus a \$10,000 stipend for years three and four. In year five, that amount is \$12,000 in tuition and a \$5,000 stipend.

In wanting to learn more about the impact that this fellowship program has had on the achievement of student learning outcomes and recruitment, the working group posed four questions to the director of the DFSSM:

1. What are the specifics of the DFSSM's scholarship program (requirements, guidelines, etc.)?
2. How effective a recruiting tool is the scholarship? Do you have numbers and data to illustrate effectiveness?
3. What is the caliber of student that the DFSSM tries to attract with its scholarship?
4. How do these students perform in the program compared to students who do not receive the scholarship?

His responses reveal a fellowship program the academic success of which is hard to quantify, and that has not necessarily had a huge impact on recruitment for the DFSSM. As the scholarship can only be offered to one student per class, it would be unfair to raise the expectations for each student in a class. Hence, measurement of student learning outcomes is not feasible. The director even stated that, due to the academic caliber of the students chosen for the fellowship program, they would have been standouts with or without it. As it relates to recruitment, the students chosen for the fellowship program are all top-notch in their class in the areas of leadership and academics. Yet, the fellowship program is not available to students until their third year, meaning that it more than likely has no bearing on a prospective student's decision to attend the DFSSM.

For an overarching view of merit-based financial aid, the working group turned to several publications on the subject summarized in Literature on Trends in Higher Education Merit Aid. This review concluded that merit-based aid may not always be a particularly effective recruiting tool because it can potentially divert funds from students who have a viable financial need.

By its nature, the College-Institute attracts highly qualified and engaged students and leaders who do not require a lot of motivation to learn and to develop as rabbis, cantors, educators, etc. The College-Institute's assessment system has been significantly advanced by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment through the use of a manageable program assessment. As it relates to this issue, the achievement of student learning outcomes isn't the problem; the problem is whether any sort of merit-based aid system would price some students out of the College-Institute. Due to the demanding nature of the College-Institute's programs and the various commitments incumbent upon students, generating any sort of income outside of the College-Institute is incredibly hard, if not impossible in some cases. Students depend on their need-based aid to live on a semester-to-semester basis. To alter that system, especially since there is no documentation suggesting that the College-Institute's current financial aid structure is broken, would be unwise. The working group recommends that expansion of scholarship support should be directed toward educational innovation that will benefit all students in their respective programs or toward student financial need rather than any selectively applied criteria relating to student merit.

### *Research Question 8.2*

*What are the criteria for assessing whether or not HUC-JIR's two-year Hebrew requirement for admissions has had an effect on recruitment and admissions? Are the criteria adequate? If not, what criteria should be in place?*

This research question grew out of the working group's concern about declining enrollment in the Rabbinical School. There has been a declining trend in first-year enrollment in the Rabbinical School since a one-year spike in 2003. This has often been anecdotally interpreted in diverse ways that are not consistent with the long-term trends, which showed a modest increase due to increasing numbers of female applicants offset by a small but significant decline in males. HUC-JIR has taken a number of steps in an effort to increase student enrollment in the Rabbinical School, most notably, investing in expansion of the Admissions Offices nationally and on all campuses, and establishing regular communication through weekly meetings and information updates. In addition, the school has engaged the services of a consulting firm to help the administration and admissions personnel develop new materials, policies, and procedures for applying to all HUC-JIR programs (see their report and supplementary materials at Admissions Consulting Overview and Admissions Consulting Outreach Plans).

Prior to 1995, HUC-JIR urged applicants to the Rabbinical School to study as much Hebrew as possible during their undergraduate years, but there was no formal admissions requirement to do so. Beginning in 1995, applicants were required to complete a year of college-level Hebrew or its equivalent. From 2002, the admissions requirement was raised to at least two years of college-level Hebrew or its equivalent.

During the course of the working group's deliberations, some of the members (and many members of the faculty) noted that applications to the Rabbinical School began to decline shortly after the two-year Hebrew requirement was put into effect. Some working group members and members of the faculty posited that the more expansive Hebrew language requirement contributed to, or in fact might be the principal cause of, the drop in enrollment. Concomitantly, they reasoned that easing the requirement to one year of college-level Hebrew (again) or dropping the Hebrew language requirement altogether would therefore result in an increased number of applications to the Rabbinical School.

It is clear that extensive study is needed in order to determine if a Hebrew language requirement affects a student's decision to apply to HUC-JIR's Rabbinical School, and whether or not this requirement makes its programs less competitive with other liberal rabbinical school programs that might be viewed by applicants as alternatives. It is also clear that a study of this nature goes beyond the scope of a small working group. The working group, therefore, has asked the National Admissions Director to urge the consulting group to incorporate such a study into their assessment of the College-Institute's admissions and recruitment program. The working group also compiled some data that might help the process and give it direction.

First, in 2011-12 the working group compiled a list of HUC-JIR's then-matriculating rabbinical students' majors as undergraduates. This revealed that 61% of rabbinical students majored in some area of liberal arts; 8% held majors in science or business; 31% majored in some area of religious or Judaic studies. This study also revealed that there were eight universities from which four or more of the College-Institute's rabbinical students had graduated: Brandeis University, George Washington University, Indiana University, Michigan State University, The Ohio State University, Stanford University, the American Jewish University, and the University of Wisconsin.

These figures do not in themselves suggest conclusions. But they do raise questions that the working group believes should be answered by more extensive studies. For example:

1. Some colleges and universities offer strong and extensive Hebrew language courses, but *most* colleges and universities do not. Is not HUC-JIR excluding bright, talented, and dedicated students from rabbinical school simply because they do not attend an "elite" college or university that offers college-level Hebrew courses?

2. Should not the College-Institute have in place (in Jerusalem, or at one or more stateside campuses) Hebrew language programs of instruction for students who major in fields other than religion and Judaic Studies or who decide to apply to rabbinical school too late in their college years to take the required Hebrew instruction even if it were offered at their universities (or perhaps after graduating from college)?
3. Does a two-year Hebrew requirement for admission to the Rabbinical School – or, for that matter *any* Hebrew language requirement – result in more qualified rabbinical students?

Our second study addressed that last question. The study took the form of a survey sent to all faculty on the three stateside campuses. The survey posed three questions:

1. Has the two-year Hebrew requirement improved the academic quality of admitted students?
2. Has the two-year Hebrew requirement resulted in an improvement in rabbinical students' Hebrew proficiency?
3. Were you teaching at the College prior to the implementation of the two-year Hebrew requirement?

Responses were received from nearly all full-time faculty members, indicating the salience of the issue. The tallies were as follows:

1. Faculty who were not at the College-Institute before the two-year requirement was initiated unanimously checked that they did not know whether it improved the quality of the admitted students or even their Hebrew proficiency.
2. The remaining faculty divided their answers by campus for both questions with significantly fewer Cincinnati faculty indicating improvement than New York, while Los Angeles faculty responses were in between.

Complicating the interpretation of this variation among campuses is a variable that has not been corrected for: whether or not variation in the level of Hebrew performance was evenly distributed among the three student populations and whether or not it remained evenly distributed among those populations before and after the introduction of the two-year Hebrew language requirement.

The survey study also did not consider the relevance of multilingual students for whom no prior language was Hebrew. There is much evidence that each new language becomes easier to learn. Thus, multilingual students who do not know Hebrew may ultimately be at least as effective Hebrew learners or even more so than those who fulfill their second language requirement with Hebrew. To the extent that such people are excluded from the program on the basis of no prior Hebrew, the College-Institute is undermining its own recruitment priorities. In addition, the curriculum in the Year-in-Israel Program changed in concordance with the two-year Hebrew admission requirement. Thus, the answers to the survey are confounded by two possible causes for changes in Hebrew performance.

The question of the impact of the two-year Hebrew language admissions requirement was discussed at length by an all-campus faculty consultation on Hebrew instruction which met in Jerusalem in June of 2012. This group considered all aspects of Hebrew language instruction at the College-Institute, and generated a position paper, which will be discussed by each local faculty (see *Curricular Improvement* in Chapter 3).

In summary, the College-Institute still must have more, and more extensive, studies to determine what role, if any, a two-year Hebrew requirement or a multilingual background plays in a student's decision to apply to HUC-JIR's Rabbinical School. Moreover, any decision HUC-JIR might make regarding a language requirement, Hebrew or otherwise, for admission to the Rabbinical School must be tested over time, combining the manageable program assessment

data and processes described in Chapter 8 with admissions data on language background to see if the decision does, in fact, lead to desired outcomes. Assessment will also help determine if the decision results in unintended consequences.

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 8**

HUC-JIR's A Guidebook for HUC-JIR Admissions and Interview Processing clearly shows carefully crafted policies that are thoroughly in line with the mission of the College-Institute, thus fulfilling S8\_01. The Guidebook makes specific mention of every program and, like the mission and purpose statements, emphasizes Jewish commitment, academic scholarship, leadership, service, and community. The Israel experience provided by the College-Institute is mentioned several times, but, like the Cincinnati course descriptions in the 2009 study for NCAHLC, nothing was mentioned relating to the candidate's potential for contributing to "the growth of the Reform Jewish community worldwide."

As the admissions guidebook details, HUC-JIR undertakes an extraordinarily thorough examination of students before admitting them, including evaluation of academic and personal data as well as a psychological examination. In particular, the admissions committee is charged that "a candidate receiving 'Not at this Time'<sup>11</sup> must be given a small list of clearly defined actions to undertake." Once admitted, if it is found that a student needs special help in Hebrew, special Ulpan classes are provided before the Year-in-Israel Program (YII) and special tutoring is made available even after the YII on each stateside campus. Given the small student body of the College-Institute and the careful admissions process, accommodations for handicapped or learning-disabled students are made on a case-by-case basis by program directors, who develop individualized plans based on diagnoses and guidance from medical or psychological professionals as well as faculty members. All of the items noted in this paragraph fulfill S8\_03.

Admissions criteria and information about how to apply to particular programs are easily accessible from a prominently-displayed admissions link on the home page of the HUC-JIR website, and detailed in sections on frequently asked questions and financial aid, fulfilling S8\_02 and S8\_06. A new brochure, *Your Extraordinary Life*, was made available in the summer of 2012. Basic information about academic requirements, such as the Hebrew placement exams, GRE's, TOEFL, recommendations, and so forth are on the admissions pages of the HUC-JIR website with supplemental details on the pages for each program. Thus, there is additional information for rabbinical admissions, cantorial admissions, and admission to the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, the Graduate School, and the Executive MA in Jewish Education.

The admissions office is in transition. A search for a new National Director of Recruitment and Admissions located in Cincinnati is currently underway with the hope of having the position filled early in 2013. This will inevitably result in changes in procedures with a primary goal of enhancing recruitment, a process already begun by the current director (see the September-December 2012 Admissions Updates). The current procedure requires a preliminary interview with admissions staff or program directors, to ascertain whether the candidate is appropriate and ready to apply, before formal application materials may be accessed electronically and submitted. Together, these procedures fulfill S8\_04.

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<sup>11</sup>Defined in the Admissions Committee Candidate Rating Scale (the second Appendix of the Guidebook) as "This candidate falls short of being admissible now but holds promise. I would like to see the candidate again in two or more years. He or she should be provided the following specific recommendations for activities to undertake before reapplying [*List specific activities*]."

The College-Institute has done extensive work on student learning outcomes over the last half decade. This has led to clearer online program descriptions (see for example, Rabbinical Curriculum, Academic Information Leading to Investiture, Academic Information for the CN Graduate School), also fulfilling S8\_04. In addition, a major project to carefully define the expected development of rabbinical students led to the 45-dimension Rabbinical Matrix completed in 2008 that is described in Chapter 8 on assessment. From 2009-11 a further project was undertaken to create a vehicle for manageable program assessment. That project involved interviewing every full-time faculty member in every program to create Learning Outcomes Networks for each program (also described in Chapter 8). These form the basis of the learning outcomes rating forms being used by every program. A detailed study of alumni and student placement was conducted to guide admissions, faculty, and financial projections, and a summary of the results have been placed on the website<sup>12</sup> in compliance with S8\_05.

The College-Institute provides extensive and generous financial aid that is detailed on the website both in the admissions and financial aid sections, fulfilling S8\_06. Compliance with this element is further supported by the establishment in spring 2012 of a Scholarship Committee comprised of the Director Financial Aid, the VPAA, the VPFA, the program directors of the Rabbinical and Sacred Music Schools, and the chair of the CN faculty.

Transfer credit policies have recently been consolidated across campuses through the work on the National Student Academic Handbook, fulfilling S8\_07.

The Rabbinical School used the new all-campus learning outcomes to craft a new HUC-JIR Rabbinical Mission Statement for the program. The first draft of the program mission was approved by the National Assessment Committee and then edited by the rabbinical faculties of each campus. Since the 2009 CN Focused Visit Report had already documented the relations of the College-Institute's mission to learning outcomes, this completed the mission-integrating process for the original and largest program of the College-Institute. Special assessment work has been conducted for the YII program and was also reviewed recently in the 2009 CN Focused Visit Report. Because the other programs are campus-specific, they continue with their campus-specific mission statements. Because the number of non-retained students per year in all levels of each of HUC-JIR's programs is quite small (see Retention and Completion Rates), aggregated connections to retention are not especially informative. On the other hand, the manageable program assessment tools provide a detailed picture of student success that is shared with each student's advisor, and the aggregated results for all students are shared with the entire faculty of each program, fulfilling S8\_08.

Fulfillment of S8\_08 is further supported by experience with individual cases gained by program directors, who according to policies described in the National Student Academic Handbook meet with each student seeking a leave of absence or withdrawal from the program. In order to address performance closer to the admissions point, the OIRA began this year to add ratings from the YII to the Learning Outcomes Network (see Chapter 8 for details of this assessment along 9-12 dimensions for every student in every course). Thus, the manageable program assessments provide evidence of compliance with the "ongoing assessment of student success" aspect of S8\_08. The anecdotal experience of program directors is used during their input on admissions policies (the minutes of the Academic Advisory Council show that all program directors and deans have met and provided input to the National Student Academic Handbook). Thus, the College-Institute evaluates through case discussions "the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution's mission and programs, and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies." The manageable program

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<sup>12</sup><http://huc.edu/admissions/frequently-asked-questions/> under "Will I get a job when I graduate?"

assessment tool will need to be in use for enough years to aggregate the data on retention and use them for mutual validation.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

1. Direct the expansion of scholarship support toward educational innovation that will benefit all students in their respective programs or toward student financial need rather than any selectively applied criteria relating to student merit.
2. Match the manageable program assessment data with retention figures after data have been collected from several classes on all campuses.
3. Have the Admissions Committees arrive at predictions after interviews concerning whether or not they believe the candidate will achieve the *Practical* or better level of each area of the program's mission or rubrics dimension by the end of the program.

## **Standard 9. Student Support Services**

### **Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance**

#### *Research Question 9.1*

*Do psychiatric and evaluations administered by HUC-JIR during the admissions process further HUC's efforts to foster professional and personal development? How might the evaluations and the process be changed to help HUC-JIR foster its students' professional and personal development?*

The goals and procedures of the psychological evaluations are clearly defined and shared appropriately with the evaluators. Some members of the working group wondered if the psychological tests might be helpful beyond the admissions process. That is, might the tests reveal information that would help the College-Institute's faculty address each student's unique learning style? Could test results help faculty become better advisors and mentors for their students? Indeed, these questions have been asked before. But they have not been addressed in a manner that provides measurable data that is appropriate for effective assessment.

#### *Areas of Success*

Ultimately the psychological examinations are fulfilling several important roles. Based on the interviews that were conducted, it is generally thought that the psychological examinations are in place to ensure, as best the institution can, that the students who are admitted to HUC-JIR are able to meet the challenges of the school's program and the profession. The psychological examinations help determine if a candidate is mature, capable of taking on the demanding course of study, capable of balancing academics and work in the community, and capable of navigating life as a pastoral counselor. Moreover, the psychological examination helps to ensure that the students who set off on this path are in a healthy place as they start out.

The psychological examinations can also accomplish several tasks that benefit the admissions process. First, some individuals self-select not to apply to HUC-JIR after learning about the psychological examination. The psychological examinations serve as a deterrent to individuals who already are aware of psychological reasons why they are not suited for the rabbinate. Second, the psychological examinations have been able to identify substance abuses that were not identified by the applicant. Third, an applicant's learning disabilities have surfaced during the process of the psychological examination. Fourth, the information gleaned by the psychologists

aids admissions committees as they make decisions about applicants. The examinations have provided vital information to admissions committees about an applicant's maturity, ability to handle stress, mental health, problematic tendencies, or inhibiting emotional traumas.

### *Areas for Improvement*

While there are many reasons to retain the psychological examination as part of the admissions process of HUC-JIR, there are ways to improve the process. The first way in which the process could be improved is to set up regular opportunities for the psychologists employed by HUC-JIR to come together to discuss how they make their recommendations. This has only happened on one previous occasion. Much of the psychologist's report currently depends on the subjectivity of the individual psychologist. While this may always be true to some degree, having regular meetings among all the psychologists will help ensure that there is a level of uniformity among the decisions being made on all four campuses. A second way in which the process could be improved is to standardize the form utilized by the psychologists. Despite attempts by the College-Institute to create a uniform report, the psychologists provide their respective reports in their own manners. Standardizing the reports will further ensure that there is a level of uniformity among the decisions made on all four campuses.

### *Research Question 9.2*

*What changes in the role of the registrar and the structure of the Registrar's Office have been implemented over the past five years? What evidence demonstrates that such changes were based on appropriate assessment results? What type of assessment system should be developed for the Registrar's Office to demonstrate HUC's commitment to student success and the achievement of student learning outcomes?*

Prior to 2008, each campus had a separate Registrar's Office. The campus registrars maintained the academic records of the academic programs housed on their respective campuses, and helped the campus deans administer the academic policies and procedures of the campus academic programs. In addition, the campus registrars often served in an advisory capacity to faculty, students, and the campus deans and program directors.

In 2008, the College-Institute appointed one national registrar, based on the New York campus. The intent was to utilize technology (in the form of a newly-installed Student Information System, SIS) in order to eliminate the redundancies (and the administrative expense) of separate campus registrars (see also *Improvement of Administrative Systems and Practices* in Chapter 3).

The system worked in some respects, but the College-Institute quickly learned that the new SIS system could not accommodate the differing academic policies and procedures of the several campuses. For example:

1. Each campus and academic program defined "incomplete" differently and, compared to other campuses, had different requirements and procedures to guide students from "incompletes" to final grades.
2. Each campus had its own class schedule and academic calendar.
3. The Los Angeles and Cincinnati campuses had joint academic programs with the University of Southern California and the University of Cincinnati, respectively. USC and UC students received "transfer credits" for courses they took at HUC-JIR, and HUC-JIR students received "transfer credits" for courses they took at USC and UC. As a result, the SIS system needed to accommodate not only HUC-JIR's academic schedule and requirements, but those of the sister institutions.



4. Problems with the SIS system created bottlenecks in the Registrar's Office. Faculty grades were sometimes recorded late, or recorded improperly. Some students received their grades long after the conclusion of the academic semester, which led some students to miss deadlines for loan applications.

The implementation of the system simply did not accomplish the task assigned to it. Nor were the registrar and the assistant able to solve the problems or answer the ever-increasing complaints from faculty and students from all three stateside campuses.

Clearly, major and immediate changes were needed. In summer 2011, the College-Institute appointed a new registrar, and moved the Registrar's Office from New York to Cincinnati, where it is in proximity to the College-Institute's Department of Information Technology. Upgrades to the SIS system were implemented, and additional personnel in the Registrar's Office were hired. The registrar, together with the VPAA and a faculty advisory committee, initiated measures to standardize academic policies, procedures, and class schedules among the American campuses and among the academic programs housed on each campus, resulting in the creation of the NSAH.

Further upgrades are needed to improve the College-Institute's academic technology. But the College-Institute's faculty and students seem to have benefited from the steps taken. Most importantly, the Registrar's Office is now seen as an important component of the academic life of the College-Institute, one that furthers learning and teaching in significant ways. The Administrative Survey Results showed that the Registrar's Office was functioning at a *Practical* level only a half year after the new registrar was hired. That the Office was not yet considered to be functioning at the *Inspiring* level is not surprising, given that there were many problems previously. It is important that this assessment be repeated annually so that its evidence can be used to ensure continued progress.

In summary, the working group's investigations revealed that the College-Institute has in place the student services that are required of accredited institutions of higher learning, but prior to the major revision in policies incorporated in the new NSAH, those services were not always clearly described in all College-Institute academic handbooks nor uniformly applied on all of its campuses

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 9**

A program of student support services appropriate to student strengths and needs is available to all students in all programs. Many of these services are documented in the National Student Academic Handbook and in the Year-in-Israel Academic Handbook. The special needs of students embarking on a new program in a new culture are extensively addressed through an extensive website for the YII program and Year-in-Israel Student Services Portal Documentation, both deeply supported by Jerusalem personnel. A special issue for the College-Institute is the acquisition of skills in ancient and modern Hebrew. Extensive programs during the first year in Israel contribute to this, and tutors are hired on each campus to provide support to students needing it. These and other student support issues are documented in the Joint Commission on Rabbinic Mentoring, Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Advisors Policy, CN Rabbinical School Advisors Policy, and the Graduate School Orientation and Guidance Procedures, thus fulfilling S9\_01. In fulfillment of S9\_02, support services are provided and organized by qualified professionals on each campus (see Student Support Services Professional Credentials).

The NSAH allows students considerable but appropriate flexibility involving add/drop, leaves of absence, withdrawing, changing or adding a program, incompletes, repeats, reduced load,

independent study, appeal of an adverse academic standing decision, financial assistance, FERPA protection, and probation. The NSAH also provides extensive and careful attention to academic grievance procedures, learning disabilities identification and accommodation (including support for self-advocacy, faculty training, and diverse forms of assistance), and sexual harassment. In each case, the document describes diverse needs and indicates to whom to go for help and what kind of help to expect. Thus, the NSAH documents that the College-Institute has procedures to address the varied spectrum of student academic and other needs, in a manner that is equitable, supportive, and sensitive, through direct service or referral, fulfilling S9\_03 and S9\_04. It also documents reasonable procedures for equitably addressing student complaints or grievances, fulfilling S9\_05. The NSAH is easily accessible on both the registrar's page and the "Policies" page of the College-Institute's website. This prominent location satisfies the requirement for "widely disseminated" student policies and procedures, including those for grievances and complaints (S9\_05). The NSAH identifies that program directors must be consulted before registering for more than 18 credits or taking an independent study course. It also indicates that they may be consulted regarding academic grievances and learning disabilities. The Office of the National Registrar maintains files on student complaints and grievances relating to FERPA policy. Campus deans and program directors have files concerning student complaints and grievances relating to academic matters.

The NSAH has a carefully crafted FERPA statement that describes who has the right to inspect and review student educational records, and how to address records that the student feels are inaccurate or misleading, provide release consent, make appeals concerning records, or file complaints with the US Department of Education. Additionally, it describes precisely the types of "directory information" that the College-Institute makes available to those with "legitimate interests." It also documents the maintenance of student records in the Student Information System and the student's file with its application materials, transcripts, and correspondence concerning the student, while providing program directors access to all but the confidential letters of reference in support of the student's application. Thus the NSAH documents "published and implemented policies for the release of student information" as well as "policies and procedures, developed and implemented, for safe and secure maintenance of student records," fulfilling S9\_06, S9\_07, and S9\_08. The registrar, Director of Financial Aid, Director of Human Resources, and staff from the Office of Institutional Research meet periodically to review compliance deadlines and pending federal and state policies that may impact the College-Institute. Additionally, the registrar, through the Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO) monitors legislation that may impact the institution.

Evidence regarding S9\_09 can be found in the administrative survey, details about which are provided in Chapter 8 on Assessment. Respondents were asked to judge the service they experienced from each major administrative function of the College-Institute. All students from all campuses were invited to participate and about 10% of the entire student body chose to do so (this compares with about 90% of faculty and 30% of staff).

Regarding the administrative function of accounting, the students gave low ratings of accuracy, responsiveness, and understanding of their needs, but provided no comments concerning details. The accounting group has made significant changes in their policies and procedures that are referred to in Chapter 8 on Assessment and described in improvement suggestions.

For eLearning, students expressed some concern with the accuracy of the help. The facilities staff received fewer *Inspiring* ratings than other functions, but were otherwise non-exceptional (this does not seem to be an actionable finding).

The Financial Aid Office received fewer low ratings for accuracy from students than the average administrative function and average ratings elsewhere. This office has made basic repairs of the links on their website, created a screen-shots guide for helping students accept, decline, or change their loan amounts online, and for dealing with missing documents. They are also creating an informative presentation for graduating students on how to handle their loans. Additionally, they have changed their approach to student questions concerning items on the website by not only telling them how to find the information on the website but also giving them the information they asked for at the same time.

The accuracy of Information Systems was rated better than expected by students, but the responsiveness was rated significantly worse. Information Systems also undertook a Tech Survey. A significant frustration mentioned in the Administrative Survey was problems with Outlook, which were primarily frustrations with the small storage allotted to email. This and numerous anecdotal complaints justified the purchase of a new server that resulted in considerably more email space for each user. Grateful remarks from users have been abundant. Other initiatives resulting from the surveys include putting a link on the huc.edu home page to the IS page, listing training opportunities on that link, and exploring new ways to improve support without adding burdensome costs. For all other functions (see Administrative Survey Analysis for the list), student ratings were not exceptional.

Thus, there has been ongoing assessment of student support services and the offices with significant findings have used the results for improvement, fulfilling S9\_09. The response of the Financial Aid Office suggests a way that all offices of the College-Institute could improve their performance regarding this element. Even though their ratings suggested no problematic area, the Office responded with a series of improvements that should lead to even better ratings the next year. The working group recommends that this approach be encouraged for all offices.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

1. The working group recommends that the registrar continue to audit campus policies and procedures to ensure that the institution complies with changes in federal, state, and Middle States regulations, standards, and requirements. The results of this audit should be reflected in annual updates of the NSAH that are available in electronic format with links to institutional policies and procedures that govern all academic programs.
2. The College-Institute also applies assessment tools and procedures to other areas of the College-Institute, including the recruitment and admissions programs, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Office of the Registrar. These offices report directly to the V PAA. The VPAA, in turn, discusses policies and procedures that govern these offices with the President's Cabinet. Such a structure provides capable administrative oversight; but it does not necessarily ensure effective ongoing assessment of these programs as prescribed by the Standards of Excellence. The Administrative Survey has provided useful evidence regarding the overall quality of these functions. However, future data could be more targeted to the evaluation of *policies and procedures*, with evaluations based on evidence that indicates whether the policies and procedures in question further (or fail to further) student learning and achievement. The working group urges that student perspectives be included by the National Assessment Committee that receives and analyzes the data and evidence and recommends steps for improvement.

## Chapter 6. Faculty (*Standard 10*)

### Overview of Charge

The working group charged with Standard 10 conducted its inquiry by consulting relevant documents within the Documents Inventory compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), relevant documents compiled for the working group by the OIRA, written materials describing existing programs, documents generated by the members of the working group or by others at the working group's request, and personal interviews conducted or email inquiries made by the members and/or chair of the working group. In considering the HUC-JIR faculty, three policy documents stand out as being of singular importance: The Faculty Handbook (with updates and revisions as of 1/1/2011) including two of its Appendices: Policies and Procedures Governing Faculty Appointments, Promotion and Tenure for All Schools and Campuses of HUC-JIR (the "Policies and Procedures," revised 7/1/2007) and the Regulations of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (the "Regulations," revised 06/2012). In preparing this report, the working group also consulted the recently circulated (2/2012) Academic Vision and Faculty Plan prepared by the VPAA.

### Standard 10. Faculty

#### Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance

The working group reformulated the four research questions of its charge as stated in the Self-Study Design to fit better with the theme of integrating the four campuses and dealing with the financial impact of the Great Recession.

##### *Research Question 10.1*

*What is the faculty's role in governance and structures through which the faculty acts?*

HUC-JIR's Regulations provide for the joint responsibility of the faculty and VPAA in "all academic areas including academic standards, curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process." The BoG retains "final authority in all matters affecting the College-Institute." As a national faculty with members located on four local campuses, the faculty fulfills the role set out in the Regulations through both national and local bodies. The two national bodies through which the faculty exercises its role are the AAC and the Faculty Council (FC; see the Faculty Handbook). Both Councils have undergone changes in the last five years. Beginning in the mid-1990's the AAC provided the Provost (subsequently VPAA) with a forum consisting of faculty and administrators from all campuses. This forum would discuss policy and share information and problems. Over time, the AAC became quite large, comprising faculty, deans, program directors, and directors of other functions of HUC-JIR, notably the registrar, Director of Libraries, and Director of the American Jewish Archives, for a total of about twenty participants. This large size ensured that the AAC was a representative body and changed its functional emphasis from deliberation to policy ratification. This change enabled a decline in the AAC's meeting frequency and its reconstitution as an as-needed forum to discuss and decide on institution-wide academic policies.

The other major national faculty forum is the FC. The Faculty Handbook had provided for a FC as a representative, national faculty body to discuss institution-wide faculty concerns. Nevertheless, that body did not take a prominent role in academic governance until 2009. In the

midst of the institutional challenges of 2009, the national administration appointed a committee of faculty members chaired by the then-incoming VPAA to advise the administration on the pending challenges. These faculty members strongly advocated that national faculty leadership be faculty-elected, rather than appointed. As a result, the faculty as a whole reconstituted the FC as an elected, representative body, empowered by the faculty to represent its interests to the administration and BoG. The FC consists of twelve elected faculty members, three from each campus. Several years ago, the BoG (September, 2009) put into effect a revision of the Regulations that provided for seating a faculty representative as a voting member of the Board. This representative is approved by the FC and the VPAA.

The FC sees its role as that indicated in the Faculty Handbook: it “unifies, represents, and acts on behalf of the entire Faculty.” The FC is the voice of the tenured and tenure-track faculty, although it also provides a forum for part-time, adjunct, and emeritus faculty. The FC plays an important role as an intermediary between HUC-JIR’s national administration and the faculty, and is a critical partner with the VPAA. The FC also discusses other issues of faculty concern with the national administration, notably matters relating to conditions of employment, salaries and benefits, and issues that impact on the smooth functioning of HUC-JIR. When the FC takes up issues that relate to employment, salaries, and benefits in general, it provides a voice for non-instructional staff as well.

As noted above, the BoG has “final authority” in all matters that affect HUC-JIR. The BoG exercises its oversight of academic and faculty affairs through its Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee. The faculty governor sits on this committee, which thus benefits from the direct participation and perspective of a faculty member. While each local campus also has a Board of Overseers, only the NY Board of Overseers has an Academic Affairs Committee. The NY Overseers who sit on the Academic Affairs Committee are principally interested in staying informed about the academic life of the NY campus so that they can be ambassadors for HUC-JIR to others outside the institution and so that they can contribute to the life of the campus in well-informed and truly meaningful ways. NY faculty and students frequently make presentations to this committee.

While HUC-JIR is moving toward greater integration of its four campuses, there remains much work that each local campus can only do on its own. Consequently, each campus faculty has its own organizational structure. Each local North American faculty has an elected faculty chair (the JR faculty does not, on account of its small size). Each faculty chair sits on the FC and plays an important role in mediating between each local faculty and administration, and in communicating with other campuses. Each local faculty has also organized itself into committees. Committee service is one of HUC-JIR’s expectations of faculty as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. Each local campus’s committee structure is similar yet distinct; the distinctions reflect each local faculty’s unique culture and distinctive approach to fulfilling its mission. In what follows, only committees that deal with issues of particular faculty concern will be mentioned.

All three North American campuses have a Committee on Faculty (whatever its precise name), which oversees hiring, tenure, and promotion in accordance with the Policies and Procedures in the Faculty Handbook. Due to the small number of tenured/tenure-track faculty in JR, there is no permanent, standing Committee on Faculty. The JR dean or a program director convenes such a committee when needed and draws on stateside faculty in appropriate fields. In addition to the Committee on Faculty, the CN faculty organized Committees on Faculty Welfare and the Executive Committee of the Graduate School. They have also recently created an Executive Committee of the Rabbinical School which now subsumes the functions of the former standing committees on Academic Affairs, Religious Affairs, and Extracurricular Activities. It should be

noted that most of the CN faculty is tenured/tenure-track, there are very few adjuncts, and all the faculty of the Graduate School are also faculty in the Rabbinical School.

NY and LA use a larger number of adjunct faculty. They also have a larger number of programs with faculty having fewer shared functions. NY has a Core Curriculum Committee (the Rabbinical School and DFSSM each has its own) and a Library Committee. In LA, the faculty of each program meets regularly to discuss curricular issues, and there is a Curriculum Committee that meets to discuss various curricular and policy issues, notably the introduction of new courses and programs. In both NY and LA, there is regular interaction and consultation among the faculty of all the programs, although there are local differences in how this is done. In NY, the faculty of each program assembles for monthly meetings of the faculty of the Rabbinical School. In LA, this interaction and consultation is accomplished through the overarching Executive Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (ECASA), which oversees academic and student affairs on the whole campus. The members of ECASA are the dean, associate dean, the faculty chair, and the directors of the five programs on the LA campus. The associate dean serves as ECASA's current chair. ECASA is an interesting and unique committee that takes on campus-wide issues and serves as a forum in which issues of campus programming and culture can be discussed in addition to academic matters.

HUC-JIR's articulation of and adherence to its vision of the faculty role in governance in its Regulations, the Faculty Handbook, and the Policies and Procedures demonstrate fulfillment of S10\_06.

### *Research Question 10.2*

*How does the composition of the faculty differ across campuses in the balance of tenure/tenure-track, full-time, and part-time adjunct faculty?*

The VPAA has recently undertaken a careful study of the composition of the HUC-JIR faculty. As a result of this study, he has categorized the people who carry out the instructional task at HUC-JIR as follows: tenured/tenure-track faculty, faculty/administrators, retiring and retired faculty, blended-track faculty, full-time adjunct instructors, full-time administrators who also teach, visiting and special faculty. As he points out, the core of the faculty is the tenured/tenure-track faculty, whose role is governed by the Faculty Handbook. Of the tenured/tenure-track faculty, a number serve as faculty/administrators, notably the president, one vice president, two deans, the director of the American Jewish Archives, the director of the School of Graduate Studies in CN, the director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Jewish Education, the director of the Louchheim School of Judaic Studies, and the director of the Rabbinical School in LA. There is a "blended track," discussed in the Faculty Handbook, which was created as a way to give status to administrators who also have academic credentials. Currently, four faculty members are on the blended track, and two others are retired. There are over ten full-time adjunct instructors, five of whom have or are working on PhD's. There are over twenty-four full-time administrators who teach; seven of whom have or are working on PhD's. There is a small number of visiting and special faculty, a few of whom are funded through the Jim Joseph Foundation Education Initiative. Finally, there are over eighty adjunct faculty members throughout HUC-JIR; some are full-time, and others are part-time.

### *Tenured or Tenure-track Faculty*

The faculty résumés show highly distinguished academic qualifications mainly from among the most acclaimed doctoral institutions in the world, fulfilling S10\_01. The VPAA has found that the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty reached a high of about sixty in 2008-09. Fifteen new faculty members were hired between 1996 and 2008, only five of whom were one-for-one

replacements of retirees, deaths, or other separations. One reason for these hires was the need and desire to replenish and rejuvenate the faculty. Another relevant factor was the transformation of the LA Rabbinical School into an ordaining program; this necessitated a larger faculty both in order to teach the extra curriculum for years 4 and 5 of the program as well as to continue to provide instruction to USC via the Louchheim School. At present, due in part to HUC-JIR's financial challenges, the size of the tenured/tenure-track faculty is being allowed to decrease through attrition, with the goal of settling on a tenured/tenure-track faculty size of forty-seven. The VPAA is working on a Faculty Plan to reach the forty-seven number without reducing the faculty's effectiveness, and has suggested that there be fourteen tenured/tenure-track faculty members on each North American campus and five in Jerusalem. This plan is currently under discussion within the FC and among the local faculties.

Notwithstanding the financial pressures on the institution that have led to the drive to reduce the size of the tenured/tenure-track faculty, HUC-JIR has also recognized the need to continue to renew the faculty (see the recent discussion by the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board). Since 2006, six well-qualified scholars (S10\_01) have been added to the tenure-track<sup>13</sup> (only one of whom was a net addition) and three highly qualified professionals have been added as Faculty/Administration<sup>14</sup> (all of whom were one-for-one replacements). A current search for a tenure-track faculty member replacement is underway in Cincinnati. A three-year contract replacement appointment was made in Los Angeles in 2011<sup>15</sup> and a search for another is currently underway in Cincinnati.

### *Adjunct Faculty*

For this report, the term “adjunct faculty” will refer to all those engaged in instructional tasks at HUC-JIR who are not tenured or tenure-track and are not employed full-time as administrators who also teach. Whether full- or part-time, adjunct faculty are critical to the instructional task, providing much-needed practical expertise in professional skills, adding additional sections of Hebrew language instruction, and benefiting the students with the perspective of expert pulpit practitioners—a perspective that many tenured or tenure-track faculty cannot provide. Adjunct faculty even make it possible for certain vital HUC-JIR programs to exist. For example, the expertise of more than twenty part-time faculty who work outside HUC-JIR as cantors or teachers of musicianship and music theory provides vital support to the two tenured faculty members of the DFSSM. The adjuncts teach repertoire workshops, conducting, guitar, and choir. They also act as voice coaches, arrangers, and accompanists for student performances. The Director of the DFSSM points out that “This school could not function without the many non-tenured, adjunct faculty.... This gives the school a vitality and variety not possible if we had to rely solely on full-time tenured faculty.... They do it for the love of the DFSSM.” Given the breadth of music a cantor must master, the DFSSM requires a faculty that can provide the students with a wide variety of repertoire and musical styles.

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<sup>13</sup>Joshua Garroway (PhD, Yale University; early Christianity and Second Commonwealth—LA 2008)

Leah Hochman (PhD, Boston University; Jewish thought—LA 2008)

David Levine (PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Talmud—JR 2006)

Dalia Marx (PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Jewish liturgy—JR 2008)

Tali Zerkowicz (PhD, New York University; Jewish education—LA 2006)

Lynn Kaye (PhD, New York University; Rabbinic Literature—LA 2012)

<sup>14</sup>Rabbi Julie Schwartz, Director of Pastoral Care and Clinical Pastoral Education (MAHL and Rabbinical Ordination, HUC-JIR and Certified CPE Educator—CN 2011)

Evie Rotstein, Director of the New York School of Education (EdD, Jewish Theological Seminary of America—NY 2012)

David Mendelsson, Director of the Year-in-Israel Program (PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem—JR 2012)

<sup>15</sup>Kristine Garroway (PhD, HUC-JIR—Bible and Ancient Near East—LA 2011)

Similarly, adjunct faculty are critical to the SJNM in LA. The director of the SJNM reports that they comprise most of its faculty for two principal reasons: (1) the SJNM needs to provide its students with expert training in certain areas of nonprofit management that the tenured or tenure-track LA faculty cannot provide; and (2) the SJNM summer session is not included within the instructional deployment of the tenured or tenure-track faculty, most of whom spend the summer in research and writing. Aside from the LA faculty members who are specifically designated as SJNM faculty, other LA faculty members who teach in the SJNM during the summer and academic year are hired with adjunct contracts at adjunct salaries, as they typically fulfill their teaching duties during the academic year through teaching in other programs. Adjunct faculty are also important to the Doctor of Ministry and Executive MA in Jewish Education programs.

The Faculty Handbook only governs tenured and tenure-track faculty; consequently, procedures for hiring adjunct instructors and evaluating their performance are in the hands of program directors and deans. As an example, the director of the DFSSM reports that when the need arises to fill such a position, he solicits names from “full-time and experienced people,” after which he vets these recommendations and then pursues an appropriate candidate. The former director of the NYSOE was careful to stress the quality of the faculty she has assembled, who are not tenured or tenure-track. She adds that all such faculty have EdD or PhD degrees. Moreover, all NYSOE and DFSSM faculty, regardless of status, participate equally in faculty meetings, are evaluated similarly, engage in professional development activities, and are expected to be current in their fields. The former director of the NYSOE made it clear that neither she nor the tenured or tenure-track SOE faculty, nor the students, sees a distinction between the instructors with different sorts of faculty status. This is reported to be true of the DFSSM as well. The Jerusalem dean has proposed a promotion system for “adjuncts,” who may be either full-time or half-time teachers. In this system adjunct faculty would be assessed on the basis of teaching (student evaluations and director’s evaluation), academic work, curricular innovation, involvement in HUC-JIR life, and contribution to Israeli society and the Progressive Movement. Given the restriction of the Faculty Handbook to tenured or tenure-track faculty, there would be value in conducting a systematic analysis of adjunct faculty across the institution that would consider the Jerusalem dean’s suggestions and other approaches to adjunct policies.

It should also be noted that, on all campuses, the students evaluate adjunct faculty at semesters’ ends, just as they do tenured/tenure-track faculty. The students’ perceptions of these faculty members’ work is thus regularly brought to the attention of program directors and deans. The director of the DFSSM points out that he assesses the effectiveness of adjunct faculty not only through student evaluations, but also through students’ performances in their “practica” and through exit interviews with graduating seniors (see Chapter 2 for a list of links). Yet it does appear that the experiences of adjunct faculty vary very much by program. One adjunct faculty member on a North American campus points out that in her case, although she regularly sees the students’ evaluations of her courses, no director or dean ever evaluates or assesses her work. It seems that HUC-JIR would benefit overall from implementing an institution-wide written policy governing these faculty members, with due allowance for flexibility in response to local conditions.

HUC-JIR’s care to appoint, promote, and tenure well-qualified tenured/tenure-track faculty, and its concern for the hiring and retention of only well-qualified adjunct faculty, demonstrate its adherence to S10\_01, S10\_07, and S10\_08.



### *Research Question 10.3*

*How are ambiguities in the policies for appointment, reappointment, and promotion of tenured/tenure-track faculty dealt with across the four campuses?*

Appointment, reappointment, and promotion of tenured/tenure-track faculty (whose appointments are made by the BoG) are managed on each North American campus by a standing Committee on Faculty that operates in accordance with the Policies and Procedures. (As noted above, the JR campus does not have a standing Committee on Faculty.) All chairs of the local Committees reported to the working group their diligent adherence to the Policies and Procedures; one current chair even referring to it as a “Bible.”

Common reliance on the Policies and Procedures by distinct local campuses with distinct local cultures has resulted in several noticeable differences in how each applies them. These differences may heuristically be categorized as follows: (1) differences due in part to unforeseen consequences of the Policies and Procedures themselves, (2) differences due in part to differences in campus culture, and (3) differences due in part to reasonable differences of interpretation among the campuses of broad language in the Policies and Procedures.

#### *Unforeseen Consequences of the Policies and Procedures*

Two chairs of Committees on Faculty pointed out the same unforeseen consequence. The Policies and Procedures require that only full professors participate in deliberations of the Committee on Faculty. This poses a problem for the two campuses on which at present there are few faculty members at this level. On both campuses, the chairs have consulted with the VPAA and local deans in order to arrive at a solution to the difficulty. In doing so, the goal has been consistent with maintaining the five-person local committee, with all members being at or above the level of the person being reviewed.

#### *Differences Possibly Attributable to Differences in Campus Culture*

As one current chair of a campus Committee on Faculty has accurately noted, “While we all operate in accordance with the same Policies and Procedures document, each campus’s committee has its own ways, customs, and traditions of interpreting that document.” Indeed, each HUC-JIR campus has its own “ways, customs, and traditions,” which neither the local campuses nor the national administration find it appropriate to efface. Local differences in the interpretation of the Policies and Procedures are not problematic in and of themselves, although more frequent consultation among Committee on Faculty chairs might keep each campus better informed about how and why the others interpret the Policies and Procedures as they do. Only two chairs of the Committees on Faculty—one current and one past—told the working group that they had spoken to each other about their committees’ work.

Differences in local campus cultures may account—at least in part—for different implementations of the Policies and Procedures’ requirement that the pedagogy of a candidate for reappointment, promotion, or tenure be evaluated. The Policies and Procedures mandate that all candidates submit a self-study essay that consists in part of (1) their goals in teaching and the nature and structure of the courses taught, and (2) a description of their work in the development of new courses, together with syllabi of all courses taught during the previous four semesters (as well as any courses currently being taught that differ from those).

Additionally, CN and NY rely on tenured faculty’s observations of the candidate’s teaching and student evaluations. All campuses send out questionnaires to recent alumni who took courses with the candidate and require the candidate to submit either a teaching portfolio or syllabi. LA

has required a teaching portfolio since the 1980's. This portfolio is a sort of pedagogical self-study, calling on the candidate to give special attention to "the most important item in the portfolio... a cover memo that reflects on your strengths and challenges as a teacher, and discusses the ways in which you have worked to improve your teaching since you last came up for review."

### *Differences in Interpretation of the Policies and Procedures*

Some intentionally underdetermined language in the Policies and Procedures has understandably led to local differences in interpretation. Section 9 ("Granting of Tenure") is silent on the subject of whether the candidate must have published or be close to publishing a book in order to receive tenure. Yet Section 10.3.1 ("Promotion to the Rank of Full Professor") reads: "Since a book-length monograph is usually expected from a candidate for Tenure, for promotion to... Full Professor, a candidate is expected to have completed... a substantial portion of a manuscript... of a second book." Sections 9 and 10 together raise the question of the equivalency of other publications to a book. This question sometimes results in differing local interpretations, which could be clarified by mentioning the equivalency issue in the Policies and Procedures without undermining the flexibility inherent in the underdetermined language of Section 9.

Recently, in the course of fulfilling its own role in the decision to reappoint, promote, or award tenure, the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the BoG identified another interpretive issue in the Policies and Procedures (see also above, Chapter 2). The Policies and Procedures refer throughout to "scholarship," "publication," "work in progress," etc., but are silent as to whether co-authored publications, or edited and co-edited volumes "count" as "scholarship" and "publication" for reappointment, promotion, and tenure. Such collaborative work is particularly common in the social sciences and education. The BoG committee appropriately did not decide the issue, but directed the VPAA to instruct the faculty to review the Policies and Procedures. The FC is currently taking up this issue.

A discussion of differences in interpretation of the Policies and Procedures goes hand in hand with a discussion of the role of the Committees on Faculty in mentoring and guiding junior faculty. The working group found that while junior faculty tend to want specific guidance on the amount and types of publication and service required for reappointment, promotion, and tenure, providing overly specific advice would violate the flexibility goals of the process. One chair stressed that his committee strives to avoid dictating too precisely to junior faculty what they must or should do in order to be eligible for promotion or tenure, as long as what they are doing is "academic." While it is important to preserve flexibility, junior faculty would be served by the development of a more comprehensive mentoring process.

In sum, while there are good and reasonable bases for differences of interpretation of aspects of the Policies and Procedures, the faculty should systematically review these differences and reconsider how much variation among the campuses it feels is appropriate, and how other interpretive issues should be resolved.

A more detailed discussion of faculty service and service teaching will be deferred until the next section, "Responsibilities and Expectations of Faculty."

The previous discussion has shown that HUC-JIR's adherence to its Policies and Procedures for reappointment, tenure, and promotion demonstrates its fulfillment of S10\_01, S10\_02 and S10\_10.

#### Research Question 10.4

*What is the full range of HUC-JIR's expectations of its faculty? Are current faculty resources sufficient to satisfy these expectations? What support does HUC-JIR give to faculty to enable them to meet these expectations? What impact do these expectations of faculty have on the appropriateness of the faculty workload, morale, and collegiality?*

As outlined in the Faculty Handbook, HUC-JIR's expectations of faculty are principally instruction, the production of scholarship, committee service, and service to the Reform movement and the broader Jewish community. As part of its inquiry, the working group undertook an investigation of the faculty's fulfillment of these expectations. This inquiry included consideration of: (1) the extent to which there are sufficient faculty resources to meet these expectations, (2) whether HUC-JIR provides sufficient institutional support to faculty to fulfill these expectations, and (3) whether and to what extent these expectations of faculty have changed over the past several years. This report also considers the impact of all this on faculty workload, morale, and collegiality.

#### *Instruction*

Instruction is obviously a key faculty responsibility, and one in which the HUC-JIR faculty takes pride and pleasure. The pedagogical excellence of HUC-JIR faculty members is also recognized outside the institution. In the past five years, two LA faculty members have been nominated for teaching awards at the University of Southern California.

Instruction at HUC-JIR is a multi-faceted task. HUC-JIR faculty members engage not only in classroom instruction (and now cross-campus and hybrid courses), but also instruct students by serving as academic, sermon, recital, and prayer service advisors, and by mentoring student theses, doctoral dissertations, and capstone projects. This report will take these up in turn.

The Faculty Handbook sets the standard course load for faculty at five courses per year. A review of available documentation of courses offered dating back to 2008 (2005 in LA) shows that this standard is largely, although not entirely, observed. Individual variations do occur. One reason is when courses—most likely electives—do not obtain a sufficient registration. In such cases, a faculty member unable to carry the standard load in a given year may take on additional service responsibilities, independent studies, or summer teaching. In one notable recent case, a NY faculty member who found herself without an enrollment in an elective course generously offered that time each week to assist students deficient in writing. This agrees with the Results of the Rabbinical Assessment of 2012SP, which recommends additional work on writing skills. Other recommendations from such program assessment might be used in similar ways to assign faculty time when the course load is not fulfilled. In general, the faculty should examine the phenomenon of insufficient course registration and the resulting non-fulfillment of teaching load. Smaller entering classes across HUC-JIR are a contributing factor. While an increase in student enrollment is the long-range solution, the faculty needs to explore innovations that would ensure equitable contributions to the College-Institute. Part of the exploration should include allowing students and faculty to broaden the definition of "course" or allowing non-course approaches to achieving *Practical* levels of learning outcomes on a consistent basis.

There is a commendable and growing tendency for HUC-JIR faculty to take pedagogical self-assessment very seriously. Pedagogical self-assessment has long been a part of the LA campus culture, where the Education School faculty began holding teaching seminars for faculty in all programs nearly ten years ago. Pedagogical self-assessment is now a feature throughout HUC-JIR. Over the past couple of years in NY, one faculty member has taken the initiative to

organize a faculty seminar on teaching. The CN and JR faculties also dedicate time at faculty meetings and retreats to discussions of pedagogy, including the opportunities and challenges posed by HUC-JIR's increasing focus on eLearning. Biennial all-campus faculty retreats that also dealt with these issues were temporarily suspended in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and should be resumed.

To date, eLearning at HUC-JIR encompasses synchronous cross-campus courses conducted via videoconferencing, and two types of hybrids: online courses with asynchronous activity and live sessions (used in the Executive MA in Education Program, and now beginning in the Cantorial Certificate Program), and live or synchronous cross-campus courses that combine classroom instruction with other educational technologies (e.g., embedded videos and some online activities). The College-Institute is making rapid strides in incorporating eLearning into its institution-wide instruction (see also Chapter 7). Data provided by the National Director of eLearning show that since spring 2008, when distance learning was first used, forty-seven synchronous and twenty-two hybrid courses have been offered. Additionally, five distance learning courses have been offered for graduate students who are off-campus to join on-campus courses. These almost always involve a single remote student.

eLearning has the potential to benefit HUC-JIR and the faculty, although there are also challenges that must not be ignored. In general, HUC-JIR must move forward technologically to remain competitive with other seminaries and institutions of higher learning. Students enter HUC-JIR from institutions where they had access to the most current educational technology and they expect no less from the College-Institute. There are also other intellectual benefits and potential enhancements to the institutional culture from eLearning. Cross-campus courses expose faculty to students on other campuses, and vice versa. Significantly, cross-campus courses enable the sharing of expertise with students (and faculty colleagues) on another campus where it is otherwise unavailable. Recent examples include a NY faculty member who taught Ugaritic to graduate students in CN, and a CN faculty member who taught Christian Scriptures to NY students. Cross-campus courses also enable faculty to help out colleagues when a given area of expertise is temporarily unavailable on a given campus, whether due to retirements, illness, or sabbaticals. A recent example is a NY faculty member who taught rabbinic legal codes to LA students. Such cross-campus courses also save a local campus the expense of hiring a local adjunct. Another benefit of eLearning is that rethinking a classroom course for cross-campus presentation requires a fresh approach to the subject matter, which can be invigorating for both instructor and students. Another major benefit of distance courses is that they offer HUC-JIR the opportunity to expand its student body beyond its four campuses and thereby also to amplify its impact on the North American Jewish community.

Faculty members who are already active in eLearning are very excited about its pedagogical potential, especially the potential of hybrid courses to expand and deepen in-person instruction through embedded videos, threaded discussions, and shared documents. One faculty member, a pioneer in eLearning, has taught a very successful hybrid required course ("History of the Cantorate") for the past three years. The students attend class in person one day per week and then engage in some form of eLearning on the other day. One of the two faculty members who designed HUC-JIR's first online course in the Executive MA in Jewish Education program (XED-500: Leadership in Jewish Educational Settings) commented that it is "gratifying to be able to teach a course with national reach," and that the course "surprised its students who found the online resources to be engaging, creative and an opportunity to gain competence in the digital age."

Yet eLearning also poses challenges that HUC-JIR needs to recognize and address. Pedagogical challenges include first of all, the difficulty of picking up on physical, visual, or aural

cues when the instructor is in one location and the class in another. The NY faculty member who recently taught rabbinic codes to LA students has commented that it is difficult “to take the temperature” of the class from a distance. Second, forming personal bonds with students at a distance can also be difficult, and the weakness of these bonds may adversely impact the students’ learning. This latter challenge may be alleviated somewhat by sending the faculty member to spend time in person with the class. Indeed, students have remarked in their evaluations of distance-learning courses that in-person campus visits by distance-learning instructors were very well received. On the other hand, travel is expensive and time-consuming, and there is a limit to how much time a faculty member can spend on another campus. A third challenge is that, logistically, aligning the schedules of instructors and students on campuses across the continent is difficult. Finally, faculty members may not have time to undertake the extra development that distance learning requires.

The current staff of eLearning technologists provide technical, pedagogical, and technological support to faculty, including: (1) training faculty in using specific technologies for online courses (e.g., Google Docs), (2) helping Rabbinical School directors and faculty identify courses that might work well as cross-campus courses, (3) arranging room and equipment configuration and scheduling for these courses, (4) training faculty in “best practices” for cross-campus courses, and (5) training faculty in the use of SMARTBoard, PowerPoint, video, audio, etc., as well as in the conversion of texts, recordings, and images into appropriate digital formats.

Technologists also take on the time-consuming duty of sitting in on some cross-campus classes to ensure that everything runs smoothly. There is also no doubt that the number of educational technologists will need to increase as HUC-JIR offers more cross-campus, online, and hybrid courses. This increase in numbers will be expensive; in addition, HUC-JIR will also need to continue to spend money to upgrade the hardware and software necessary to make all these courses successful. Faculty members have already reported that insufficient bandwidth has surfaced as a concern in online courses. The need for HUC-JIR to spend more money on eLearning is inevitable, yet these increased expenditures undermine one of the early rationales the BoG and national administration proffered for venturing into this field: saving money by sharing faculty members across the four campuses. There is a danger in assuming that the impact of eLearning is equivalent to that of other forms of learning. It is important that this rationale for adjusting resources not be separated from student learning outcomes but be carried forward in a way that accounts for the differences in such outcomes from more traditional educational approaches.

The faculty members who taught the pioneering online course XED-500 note that they needed to work very hard to learn a new pedagogical and technological language in order to “translate” the course from an in-person to an online setting, and that there is virtually no specific expertise within HUC-JIR at present to train faculty in doing this. Both XED-500 faculty members emphasize the many hours they devoted to the course each week. One of them points out that “[i]t is very time-consuming. . . . it involves a great deal of immediate and intensive feedback to students who submit written answers and mini-essays each week.” Part of the reason the course has been so time-consuming for the instructors is undoubtedly the large number of students registered (twenty-four in the first year and twenty-nine in the second year), which is larger than the typical HUC-JIR course populated by students in residence.

Since the Faculty Handbook does not yet address eLearning as part of the instructional task, the additional time that must be invested in creating and teaching cross-campus and online courses is not yet (in the words of the Director of eLearning) “a meaningful aspect of Tenure and Promotion. . . [eLearning] lacks the institutional and collegial rewards and recognition needed to help embed it in the faculty culture.” The “faculty culture” does indeed include voices

that remain skeptical about eLearning on the grounds that in-classroom instruction will always be best, the time faculty members need to invest in eLearning is excessive, and the loss of direct interaction between instructors and students is too high a price to pay for what they see as an uncertain benefit.

Nevertheless, there are examples of faculty skeptics who were “converted” to greater interest in eLearning after teaching in an e-modality. In any case, the Director of eLearning is correct to observe that the Faculty Handbook (and the Policies and Procedures) must be updated to reflect the growing presence of eLearning at HUC-JIR.

Beyond classroom teaching, many faculty members devote time and energy to advising students, both formally, as academic advisors, and informally, as intellectual and religious mentors. Thesis and dissertation advising is another time-consuming activity of faculty. In CN, where at any given time there are dozens of students writing rabbinic theses or doctoral dissertations, faculty members often work with three to five students at once. Faculty members also serve as advisors for students’ fourth-year sermons, and in NY, as advisors to students in designing and leading prayer in a given week.

Another facet of the instructional task is faculty involvement in co-curricular programs for students. For example, faculty members

1. collaborate with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality to develop both the curricular and co-curricular components of the New York School Spirituality Initiative (NY)
2. serve on the local “Worship Working Group” (NY)
3. help organize or administer
  - a. the Gerech Family Institute for Outreach and Conversion (training students about the possibilities and challenges of intermarried families and conversion),
  - b. the Bonnie and Daniel Tisch Rabbinic Fellows Program (a competitive fellowship program only in NY designed to provide superior training in leadership to a select group of students),
  - c. the Mandel Initiative for Visionary Leadership (reflection groups that integrate student learning into developing a personal vision of Jewish religious leadership), and
  - d. the extensive service learning program based on the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Service Learning Grant.

This report will detail faculty involvement in these co-curricular programs below, under the heading “Faculty Involvement in Academic Program Development, Assessment, and Improvement.”

### *Production of Scholarship*

In its mission statement, HUC-JIR defines itself as a “religious and scholarly learning community dedicated to....advancing the critical study of Jewish culture and related disciplines in accordance with the highest standards of modern academic scholarship.” The Faculty Handbook recognizes that scholarly production “is a primary task of the College-Institute’s full-time Faculty,” and that commitment to scholarship “has been one of the defining activities of the Faculty of the College-Institute.” Moreover, it provides that faculty “must be on the cutting edge of scholarly developments,” and consequently faculty are “encouraged and . . . expected to participate in the work of professional societies and research groups. . . .” The BoG has resolved that HUC-JIR is “the academic arm of Reform Judaism dedicated to the study of Jewish and related disciplines in the spirit of free inquiry..... [HUC-JIR] stand[s] for freedom of research, publication, and instruction.”

The Table of Faculty Publication Activity provides evidence that the faculty fulfills its obligations in this area. Taking into consideration the faculty's involvement in learned societies, editorial boards, and publications, the faculty's record should be a tremendous source of pride to HUC-JIR. Indeed, the President and VPAA frequently express pride in, and appreciation for, the scholarship of individual faculty members and of the faculty as a whole.

Faculty are encouraged to publicize their scholarship via online news digests published by the Department of Public Relations. The deans, VPAA, and president periodically gather evidence of faculty scholarship for dissemination to key HUC-JIR stakeholders. Faculty members also publicize their scholarship through their own webpages that may include hyperlinks to their CV's and scholarship available online. HUC-JIR also provides tangible support for scholarship in the form of a travel and research fund, the administration of which is governed by a written policy. The fund is available to tenured/tenure-track faculty and emeriti, blended-track faculty, and faculty members who work as full-time administrators, prioritized in that order. Non-tenured/tenure-track faculty are not mentioned in the policy and may be presumed to be ineligible for the fund, although the policy does state that "[e]ligibility and faculty rank" are under the VPAA's direction. Although ineligible for the fund, adjunct faculty members are also productive scholars. One such NY faculty member is a leader in the Academy of Homiletics. HUC-JIR has also moved within the last decade to allow for one-semester sabbaticals every four years, rather than every seven.

Notwithstanding these tangible and other expressions of support for scholarship, there is a pervasive sense among many faculty members that HUC-JIR does not do enough to ensure that faculty have the quiet time they need to produce quality scholarship. A number of faculty members have pointed to a growing number of demands placed on their time to participate in various committees, attend various meetings, or participate in co-curricular activities. Moreover, as noted, faculty are required to be of service to the institutions of the Reform movement (as per the Faculty Handbook), and while faculty serve the movement energetically and with a sense of mission, there is no doubt that all these combined responsibilities take time away from study, research, thinking, and writing.

These faculty concerns are amplified by the sense documented in the VPAA's Academic Vision 2012 that some key stakeholders are not sufficiently aware of the importance of scholarship. Thus,

...around us, other institutions are promoting models of professional education which rely far less on an academic faculty model and far more on alternative approaches. Many of our key stakeholders are asking the question, motivated either by concern over our fiscal viability or uncertainty about our relevance and quality. Our deliberations come at a time when many of our assumptions about economic stability, denominational relevance, Jewish peoplehood, the future of liberalism, and much else are being profoundly challenged.

This is true notwithstanding these stakeholders' undoubted commitment to HUC-JIR and its faculty and students. It is of particular concern given that HUC-JIR's drive to balance budgets has led to cost-cutting decisions that impose additional service and administrative responsibilities on faculty in the absence of clear evidence of the decisions' impact on scholarship and instruction.

There is a sense among many faculty that the academic and financial arms of HUC-JIR do not communicate with each other sufficiently or effectively. Changes to the faculty role must only be made with the full involvement of faculty, with financial considerations informed and balanced by a robust embrace of a clear academic vision.

It is appropriate in this context to call attention to the VPAA's recently-circulated draft Academic Vision. He acknowledges in that document the need for HUC-JIR to demonstrate better to its stakeholders the linkage between scholarship and the work of its graduates. His point is well-taken, and the faculty has laid excellent groundwork in demonstrating the linkages between its scholarly work, its students, and the larger Jewish and American religious context in which it operates. To summarize: first, the faculty puts its scholarship to work in producing publications that serve the larger Jewish community, as demonstrated above. Second, the faculty teaches at numerous congregations, as well as at functions of relevant Reform Jewish organizations (URJ, CCAR, WUPJ, and NATE). It also takes leadership positions in these organizations especially to oversee clergy and educator mentoring. Faculty also take part in interfaith work; for example, a NY faculty member made a presentation at the Museum of Biblical Art on *Jerusalem: Sacred City of Three Faiths* (2012), a CN faculty member is a founding member of two institutes for Christian-Jewish relations, among other interfaith work, and an LA Faculty member is a leader in Muslim-Jewish engagement. Third, a survey of course offerings from 2008-11 shows that faculty members are mindful of the need to link their scholarship to their students' growth as clergy, educators, and Jewish communal workers. A sampling of such courses includes: Women and Torah, Personal Status, Capital Punishment, Teaching Talmud, Teaching Bible to Adult Learners, Reel Theology, and God: A Biography. The faculty is mindful of the need for linkage, and more must be done to make these linkages clear to HUC-JIR stakeholders.

#### *Service to the Reform Movement and Broader Jewish Community*

Working and studying in a Jewish institutional context, HUC-JIR's faculty and students are called upon to serve the Reform movement and the broader Jewish community. The faculty has obligated itself to perform such service in the Faculty Handbook, and faculty members do so energetically and with a sense of mission.

More than half the faculty list special services to the Reform community, including numerous presentations at functions of its rabbinical association, regional and national conventions, as well as many committees and editorial boards.

It is therefore clear that HUC-JIR faculty are fully engaged with scholarship, teaching (and with scholarship about teaching), service to the Reform movement and the wider Jewish community, and academic governance of HUC-JIR.

The faculty's dedication to self-assessment in pedagogy demonstrates HUC-JIR's adherence to S10\_03. HUC-JIR's support for faculty scholarship demonstrates adherence to S10\_04. The faculty's concern with linkages between scholarship, research, student learning, and service, described above, demonstrates adherence to S10\_05. The existence of a written policy governing the Travel & Research Fund shows adherence to S10\_06. Finally, HUC-JIR's encouragement of, and pride in, the wide-ranging scholarly projects of its faculty demonstrate its commitment to S10\_09. As noted, this commitment has also been clearly affirmed in a BoG resolution.

#### *Research Question 10.5*

*How are faculty involved in academic program development, assessment, and improvement?*

As noted at the outset of this chapter, HUC-JIR's Regulations provide for the shared responsibility of the faculty and VPAA in academic governance. The evidence shows that the faculty is fully involved in developing, assessing, and improving HUC-JIR's academic programs, fulfilling S10\_02. It has already been noted that each campus has a standing faculty committee



(however named) that deals with academic and curricular issues. This section will discuss faculty members' involvement in developing and assessing some major academic initiatives.

Within the past five years, NY faculty have undertaken major curricular revisions. The rabbinic faculty in NY thoroughly revised the rabbinic program's entire curriculum. Recently, the DFSSM Faculty in NY has formulated a new core curriculum that was implemented in 2009-10. These revisions are described in more detail here. More recently, the New York faculty have developed the New York School Spirituality Initiative to help students cultivate their religious lives by learning about and experiencing a variety of Jewish spiritual practices. Through coursework, spiritual direction, and extra-curricular learning opportunities, students are developing vocabulary and skills related to living a religious life that will sustain them at present and in their future careers. In addition, a large cohort of New York faculty are participating in a seminar on the spiritual formation of clergy.

In JR at present, the faculty is discussing two major curricular initiatives: doubling the number of semester hours devoted to rabbinic text instruction and combining classroom instruction with supervised student self-study; and re-examining the Hebrew language curriculum. Furthering the latter initiative, the JR faculty engaged in face-to-face discussions with North American colleagues in Jerusalem in June 2012.

The CN campus has recently been awarded a multimillion-dollar grant to advance service-learning that will help to integrate the academic with the practical aspects of the rabbinical program. This initiative was consistent with the findings of the Learning Outcomes Network assessment described in Chapter 8. Students will work with Jewish service agencies in the Cincinnati community while the faculty will be involved in the overall curriculum development as well as implementation and evaluation of the work of individual students.

HUC-JIR also has co-curricular programs that have academic components. Space considerations preclude a lengthy discussion of these, especially of the extensive programs funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation. This report will focus on several such programs, two of which apply to students on all North American campuses. The first is the Gerech Family Institute for Outreach and Conversion. The Gerech Family Institute is an endowed program that provides respected graduate and post-graduate training for HUC-JIR students and alumni in the areas of outreach and conversion. A NY faculty member directs the Institute, working with the directors of the rabbinical program on all stateside campuses, student interns, and colleagues from the URJ and elsewhere. The curriculum includes text study on the history and legal background of conversion within the many strands of Judaism, analysis of the psychological forces at work within people studying for conversion and their families, best practices for clergy, and the development of resources suitable to their particular occupational setting, among other areas.

The Mandel Initiative for Visionary Leadership began as a selective, cohort-based program of students in the Rabbinical School who were also adding a sixth year to complete the education degree. It has since become a co-curricular program in which all rabbinic, cantorial, and education students now participate, in the first three years of their program. Initiated in the Schools of Education by a senior LA faculty member working with a NY faculty member, it now involves several faculty members per campus selected by them, after consultation with the directors of the Rabbinical School.

There are other co-curricular programs with either voluntary or selective participation. One example of a selective co-curricular program intended for academically-talented students in NY is the Bonnie and Daniel Tisch Rabbinic Fellows Program in NY. The Tisch Fellowship program

was designed and is administered by a senior tenured faculty member as well as by an adjunct faculty member.

There is a consensus that co-curricular programs such as these (and others) enrich the students, as well as the faculty members who work in them. And as is appropriate and required, these programs are designed and administered by faculty. Yet there is a sense among many faculty members that the faculty as a whole has had insufficient input into the initial introduction of these programs into HUC-JIR, and that insufficient consideration has been given institution-wide to how these programs fit into or alongside the formal curriculum. One of the initiatives of the National Assessment Committee is to determine the extent to which such co-curricular programs support or compete with the formal curriculum. Chapter 7 includes a suggestion that the College-Institute consider outcomes transcripts. Such transcripts blur the lines between curricular and co-curricular; they also imply diverse innovations in educational structures. Such innovations would certainly affect faculty time in ways that need to be carefully assessed. The ultimate resolution for students is the sustained acquisition of the learning outcomes. Thus, the Learning Outcomes Network may ultimately help to resolve the questions of support or competition for students' time. It will be important to develop similarly powerful devices to account for faculty time.

The HUC-JIR faculty's work on developing, assessing, and improving academic programs demonstrates HUC-JIR's adherence to S10\_02.

## Suggestions for Improvement

1. The faculty should update the Policies and Procedures for Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure in the context of the decreasing numbers of full professors in order to maintain the five-person local Committee on Faculty with all members at or above the level of the person being reviewed.
2. Chairs of Committees on Faculty should share information with each other about how the local Committees interpret and apply the Policies and Procedures.
3. The faculty should review the Policies and Procedures to clarify the publication equivalencies implied in making promotion and tenure decisions, such as what types and aggregation of articles are equivalent to a scholarly book.
4. The faculty should formalize a comprehensive mentoring process for junior faculty.
5. The faculty should monitor variations from the standard 3-2 course load and explore innovations that would ensure equitable contributions to the College-Institute. Part of the exploration could include allowing students and faculty to broaden the definition of "course" or allowing non-course approaches to achieving *Practical* levels of learning outcomes on a consistent basis.
6. Assessment of eLearning must become a part of faculty deliberations on curriculum. The Faculty Handbook and Policies and Procedures must also be updated to take account of eLearning.
7. The tenured/tenure-track faculty in concert with the VPAA should implement better cross-campus integration of the criteria for hiring, evaluating, and retaining adjunct instructors, with due allowance for flexibility in response to local conditions.
8. **Of great importance:** There must be much more communication between the academic and financial arms of HUC-JIR. The faculty must determine whether responsibility for this communication should principally rest with the FC or AAC. The goal of the increased communication is to ensure that financial considerations alone do not drive changes in the role and/or size of faculty. It is important that any adjustment of resources not be separated from student learning outcomes.

9. Consideration should be given to establishing some body charged with the oversight of faculty workload. This oversight should include consideration of the time faculty members spend on endowed co-curricular projects, internal service activities, and any non-course learning activities being considered for an outcomes transcript.
10. Campuses without formal faculty involvement with their Boards of Overseers should consider ways to further this involvement while recognizing the functions of the faculty and Board of Governors.

## **Chapter 7. Educational Offerings & Related Educational Activities (Standards 11 and 13)**

### **Overview of Charge**

Cross-campus integration is the theme of the College-Institute's first self-study after its merger of accreditation from three regional agencies to one. The group's choices of research questions underscore this dual commitment to evidence and integration. Toward this goal of improving integration, related educational activities were discussed as the issue arose rather than separated as primary and secondary activities. Therefore, the fundamental elements from Standard 13 are inserted where the activity is discussed. As in earlier chapters, if none of the research questions addressed an element, that element is discussed in separate sections on *Additional Findings*.

### **Standards 11 & 13. Educational Offerings & Related Educational Activities**

#### **Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance**

##### *Research Question 11-13.1*

*To what extent do the statements of expected student learning outcomes reflect the academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to the mission of the College-Institute? And how well are they communicated?*

The group divided this crucial issue into the three areas of content, rigor, and coherence, since each of these elements is measured in different ways.

##### *Content*

One key source of information regarding this question is the course descriptions mentioned in a 2012 study that analyzed course descriptions from syllabi in relation to the mission of the College-Institute. Expected student learning outcomes are incorporated into the syllabi (fulfilling S11\_12). Analysis of them makes it evident that faculty frame the student learning outcomes using different terminology. Some of these statements are couched in traditional academic terms, while others are focused on what students will be able to do with what is being taught. The working group's analysis suggests that the great majority of syllabi and course descriptions include explicit reference to learning outcomes which are consistent with the content, rigor, and coherence embodied in the College-Institute's various curricular documents.

The level of integration among students in different programs and on different campuses is growing as more students enroll for more than one program (Rabbi-Educators is a prime example), and with a steady rise in the number of courses being offered simultaneously on more than one campus using distance-learning technology. This change is accentuating the need for a common language of learning outcomes, to help communicate to the College-Institute's students what various courses are intended to achieve. The overwhelming sense is that the courses on offer are serious, challenging, and relevant. Rather, the issue to be addressed is the broad variance in the manner in which the learning outcomes of the courses are expressed. The first suggestion at the end of the chapter follows from these considerations.

Perusal of the course descriptions indicates beyond any serious doubt that the educational offerings of the school are fully consistent with the academic standards appropriate to the College-Institute's mission. It is clear that what is perhaps the largest faculty of Jewish studies to be found outside the State of Israel is providing a range and depth of teaching which bears favorable comparison with any Jewish Studies program in the world.

### *Rigor*

Rigor is perhaps harder to gauge. Typically the syllabi include a section on expectations, but it may be worthwhile launching a research project to see how much time and effort these requirements do in fact demand of students. The College-Institute's manageable program assessments have the basic data to do such a study. The number of courses in which a particular *Practical* level outcome is addressed, the length of time to move from the *Easy* to the *Practical* level, and the endurance of the *Practical* level (e.g., lack of regression back to *Easy* in later courses) are indications of rigor. A course in which many students move to a higher level is a "high-impact" course if faculty teaching subsequent courses also indicate the higher level of performance. Rigor can also be assessed by comparing the preparation of students. A "rigorous" change might be one that needs extensive preparation before it becomes sustained.

The issue of rigor might also be gauged from three perspectives: whether the College-Institute's faculty believes the courses are structured and studied in a way they consider to be rigorous, whether the congregations and institutions out in the field feel that HUC-JIR students have received an appropriately rigorous education, and whether the students perceive that the program has led to sufficient growth. Faculty address this issue through the program assessment detailed in Chapter 8. Alumni perceptions were gathered through the recent survey reported in Chapter 2 (Alumni Survey Graphs, Alumni Survey Summary 2011). Responses from the Year-in-Israel Survey Results (2009-11) showed that the students reported more growth in *Israel studies* and *Hebrew knowledge* compared to *personal and spiritual growth*, *facility with texts*, and *professional growth*. That students routinely report major growth in the area of Hebrew is noteworthy, since the area of Hebrew skills continues to be the source of significant debate within the faculty of the College-Institute. Indeed, a faculty consultation in Hebrew occurred in June 2012 in Jerusalem to discuss possible improvements in Hebrew instruction at the College-Institute. The relative importance of modern Israeli Hebrew and classic textual Hebrew for the remaining years of the stateside curriculum was a key issue.

Compliance with the rigor aspects of this Research Question and with S11\_01 and S11\_02 is assured in numerous ways, including especially the manageable program assessment that was based on the creation of Learning Outcomes Networks (LONs, described in Chapter 8) for every program, matching these to mission statements and courses, matching course descriptions across campuses for courses leading to rabbinical ordination (the only all-campus program), alumni employment analysis, monitoring Federal Financial Aid Loan Repayment, and studying alumni careers. In addition, the current mission statement for the Rabbinical School (all campuses) was drafted from the *Practical* level of the LON for the program. Using rubrics based on interviews of all full-time faculty that match to the elements of the program mission statement approved by the entire faculty should facilitate faculty connecting course objectives to the program mission. Mission statements of the School of Graduate Studies, School of Jewish Nonprofit Management and the DeLeT certification program in education have been matched to their rubrics. The mission-drafting process now needs to be extended to the other programs. Thus, at this point the College-Institute is in partial fulfillment of S11\_03 and needs to make the improvements identified in the first suggestion at the end of the chapter.

As indicated in Chapter 8, the assessment process in the Rabbinical School was expanded in spring 2012 to capture the fifth-year capstone projects. At this time<sup>16</sup> the College-Institute can already show that, a year before graduation, Cincinnati rabbinical students are performing at the *Practical* level (the target program level) nearly 75% of the time for eight of eleven dimensions. Ratings of two of the remaining dimensions (*Critique, Research & Write* and *Scholarship & Use of Sources*) will likely change substantially when more capstone projects are rated, and as the impact of the newly-introduced (fall 2012) Writing Center begins to figure into assessment results. The dimension with the third lowest ratings at the *Practical* level was teaching. This may reflect the lack of a School of Education on the Cincinnati campus and is likely to change substantially as the Service Learning Grant is implemented. Further documentation of HUC-JIR's fulfillment S11\_04 is found in Chapter 8.

Another sign of adequate rigor is the College-Institute's federal loan default rate, which has hovered between 0 and 1% for recent years. A significant factor in keeping these rates low involves monitoring the careers of graduates, as was done in a recent career-path study of types of organizations served by men and women alumni over the decades after ordination.

Data gleaned in 2005 during a strategic planning process gives a sense of how alumni and lay leaders polled at that time gauged the impact of HUC-JIR on the preparation of its graduates in a wide array of areas. This survey addressed in a quite thorough way the issue of emphasis, which is related to, but not equivalent to, rigor. The survey found for example that alumni considered "people skills" to be the most valuable of 15 areas for effectiveness and success "on the job" but the second lowest area of contribution of the College-Institute, while the programs emphasized *Jewish learning and text skills* and *Hebrew language skills*, which alumni claimed were of lesser usefulness, in direct contradiction to the College-Institute's enduring purpose and aspirations for its alumni. *Teaching skills* was an area that was high on both lists. Since that survey, there has been an increase in emphasis on *clinical pastoral education* and on *leadership skills*. These findings bring up two considerations for the future that added to the suggestions listed at the end of the chapter.

### *Coherence*

The term "coherence" needs some explanation. Assuming that what is meant by this term is a combination of relevance and integration, the new study of course descriptions does indicate that, at least at the declaratory level, expected student learning outcomes are characterized by a high degree of coherence (S11\_02). Again the manageable program assessments provide a significant opportunity to enrich "coherence." Thus, they enable the possibility of a transcript of all the assessment ratings supplemented by narrative assessments by previous instructors. This transcript could be provided to each faculty member at the beginning of the student's next term and used by the faculty to help the student focus on areas found to be problematic in previous courses.

There is a major and inherent tension between the academic and professional aspects of teaching in most of College-Institute programs (much less in the School of Graduate Studies than in the other programs). The Learning Outcomes Network shows that the conceptual dimensions move together while the professional dimensions and Hebrew language skills develop independently of each other. This tension is recognized by students and faculty alike and, on occasion, it becomes understood as a competition for curricular priority and allocation of time. A number of attempts have been made to address this perceived clash of interests. A

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<sup>16</sup>The Cincinnati program assessment process using MODEL rubrics was begun in Fall 2009, which was five terms before it was rolled out to all programs and campuses.

major grant recently announced will make it possible for the Rabbinical Program on the Cincinnati campus to engage for the next five years at least in the creation of models of service-learning, designed to integrate academic study with communal engagement wherever the faculty deems this appropriate. On each of the other campuses, attempts have also been made to integrate the so-called “academic” with the “professional” dimensions of the curriculum. In Los Angeles, for example, the School of Jewish Nonprofit Management and the DeLeT program have developed a strong mentoring program, while in New York the Jewish Spirituality Initiative has generated much excitement and interest.

All these initiatives are examples of attempts being made to enhance the coherence of the educational offerings. Coherence does not imply coalescence. There will continue to be distinct kinds of requirements in, for example, the academic and professional spheres. On the other hand, the range of learning outcomes may produce confusion in the minds of students. It is important to ensure that the aims of each program are clearly communicated, and that the way in which each course furthers these aims is stated concisely and explicitly.

Our conclusion is that the statements of learning outcomes reflect to a very significant extent the academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to the College-Institute’s mission. To the extent that these expected learning outcomes are stated clearly in each course, and each program makes efforts to communicate the appropriate outcomes at the program level, the working group believes they are well communicated. There is, however, more work to be done, and the group’s suggestions on the topic are listed at the end of the chapter.

#### *Research Question 11-13.2*

*How pervasive and effective are opportunities for students to reflect on learning outcomes and synthesize what they have learned?*

In a recent alumni survey students from each program and different eras were asked a direct question relating to opportunities for reflection. The question was framed thus:

*Looking back on your time at HUC-JIR, do you feel you had opportunities to reflect on and synthesize the material you were learning?*

The 476 replies closely approximated a normal distribution, as shown in Figure 7.1.

4.2% said they had no opportunity for reflection, while 1.7% complained of having too many opportunities for reflection. Everyone else was ranged between these two extreme positions, with 40% considering the number of opportunities for reflection to be just right, 29% slightly too much and 24% slightly too little.

Over the last few years a considerable amount of attention has been given to reflection and integration in most College-Institute programs. With the possible exception of the School of Graduate Studies, the academic programs all comprise a blend of academic, professional, and spiritual dimensions. Emphasis has always been placed on the academic dimension of this triad, but it is not considered axiomatic that one aspect has to come at the expense of the others.

The survey of alumni (Alumni Survey Summary) also showed that in the perception of many alumni there has been a shift over time both in the relative emphasis given to the three dimensions (academic, professional, and spiritual) at HUC-JIR, and indeed in the relative importance attached to them by the alumni themselves. While the evidence shows interesting variance of nuance among the three stateside campuses, the overall trend is clear: while the academic emphasis as perceived by alumni stays high, its relative dominance has been eroded,

and the professional dimension of the education offered at the College-Institute is gaining. This is true both of the way in which the College-Institute's alumni perceive the curricular emphasis of the school and also of the level of meaningfulness they themselves attribute to these aspects of the learning process. It is also striking that students of the College-Institute in recent years ascribe a much greater significance to the spiritual dimension of their education, although they are less convinced that their preference is reflected in the curricular priorities of the College-Institute.

Although this particular research separates out three distinct strands of the learning experience, the question at hand is: how does the College-Institute create opportunities for students to reflect and synthesize? When are students encouraged to step back from the particular requirements of one course or another in order to ponder the "big picture"?

The Rabbinical School Exit Interviews (LA, CN, NY) prominently address matters of academic-professional-spiritual integration. As the five-year program comes to its close, the Rabbinical School faculty is interested in the extent to which the program's various strands have come together.

One major forward step in this area is known as the Mandel Initiative. In January 2011 representatives from all four campuses met to discuss ways in which the aspect of visionary leadership might be accentuated. The program of that gathering combined with the follow-up plans for the inquiry groups illustrate the extent to which integration remains high on the agenda.

Our Schools of Education have consistently demonstrated a marked emphasis on both reflection and integration. Many aspects of the education curriculum explicitly privilege this dimension of the learning process. One example of this emphasis is the Day School Internship program for rabbinical, cantorial, and education students, co-sponsored by HUC- JIR, the URJ, and the Progressive Association of Reform Jewish Day Schools (PARDES). The goal of the program is to encourage participants to become advocates for day school education within the Reform movement and, in particular, in their congregations and their professional organizations. The program is open to all students from all campuses and all programs by application, which includes two reflective essays.

The core of the program is a week-long visit to a Reform day school (a different school each year). Most days begin with reflection with faculty and then move to observation and practice, then back to reflection. In the fall following the school visit, students plan and present a program on their respective campuses to introduce their colleagues to day school education as a viable option for children from Reform Jewish families.

There is an unprecedented level of co-curricular offerings in most of the College-Institute's various programs today. Students are invited to participate in a range of seminars, retreats, lectures, weekend experiences, conferences, and the like. Many of them encourage taking a broad view and considering the meta-implications of the program of study. Among the activities which can be included in this category are the Schusterman retreat for issues of outreach to interfaith couples and families in the congregational setting as well as to special groups including singles, couples, gays and lesbians; the Gerecht Institute for issues of conversion and outreach; a range of activities sponsored by the Davidson fund for social action and community involvement; as well as programs offered by organizations such as The National Center for Jewish Learning and Leadership (CLAL) in New York and the Shalom Hartman Institute in Israel.



It is worth noting that, beyond the small number of alumni who complain of far too much reflection, some concern has been expressed by faculty members and some current students about the risk of moving too extremely in the direction of hyper-reflection. Some faculty members believe that the centrality of academic study should be championed at all costs. They argue that the business of reflecting and constructing overarching meaning should not be "spoon-fed". Rather, it should emerge more organically.

Similarly, significant concerns have been expressed about the plethora of co-curricular offerings, sometimes described as a "shadow curriculum" (cf. also Chapters 3 and 6). These issues have been raised by the Faculty Council, and in 2011 the National Assessment Committee began to consider how the relative benefits and costs of such an emphasis on co-curricular offerings might be assessed.

At present, these voices are audible, but they do not overwhelm the calls for a greater emphasis on reflection and integration. More and more of the capstone projects being required in courses call for a significant degree of integration. Plans currently being developed for a service-learning model in Cincinnati, while still in the early stages, also suggest that significant efforts will be made to emphasize the integration of academic with other dimensions of the learning experience.

Rather than come down on one side or other of this debate, the working group notes that the number of opportunities for reflection and integration is greater than ever before and that the College-Institute certainly fulfills S11\_02.

#### *Research Question 11-13.3*

*What is the level of coherence among the activities and offerings in the rabbinical programs on the College-Institute's different sites?*

In 2011 the Director of the LA Rabbinical School completed a major study of Rabbinical School Coherence among Campuses\_(focusing on the three stateside campuses, which all deliver the second through fifth years of the program). This study provides clear evidence that the three stateside campuses deliver the same rabbinic core curriculum, each playing to its particular strengths and traditions. This finding also has been supported by keyword studies of the relation of assessment rubrics to mission to courses, conducted in 2009 and 2012. The 2012 study of course descriptions in 107 syllabi used in the 2011-12 academic year calculated the similarity of keywords in course descriptions to those in the MODEL rubrics. A course was considered to "emphasize" the two dimensions that had the most similar keywords. Interestingly, the number of courses emphasizing each dimension was nearly identical from campus to campus. Thus, both kinds of studies show that HUC-JIR fulfills the location aspect of S11\_08 and, for that program, satisfies S13\_17 and S13\_18. S13\_19 is addressed in Chapter 5, while S13\_20 informs major portions of Chapters 3 and 6.

#### *Research Question 11-13.4*

*What evidence exists that students in distance learning courses achieve learning goals comparable to the goals achieved by students in face-to-face courses? What criteria are used to assess the achievement of learning outcomes in the College-Institute's distance learning offerings?*

The working group considered two kinds of evidence: the comments of students who have participated in distance courses, and the reflections of faculty members who have been engaged in this kind of teaching.

The eLearning Student Evaluations Analysis is based on a number of student assessments of eLearning classes. The answers to the surveys yield some interesting data. For example, the replies to the question: “Would you take a cross-campus course again?” were 9% “No way” (bottom of 5 choices); 5% “2” (of 5); 33% “Maybe” (the median score); 19% “4” (out of 5); and 35% “Absolutely!”

Clearly, these responses do not of themselves prove that students in these courses achieve learning goals comparable to those achieved by students in face-to-face courses. Indeed, the comments embedded in these assessment forms offer much to think about – the challenge of minimizing technical glitches, the skills required of teachers in giving appropriate attention to all students and in learning to feel comfortable with the technology.

Another important source of evidence has been the faculty reflections on eLearning by those engaged in this kind of teaching. So far, the evidence available relating to the relative quality and efficacy of this kind of instruction is largely anecdotal. Considering the reflections of teachers and students is clearly most helpful in identifying challenges and trends. Thus, the College-Institute fulfills at a basic level S13\_21.

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 11**

As described in Chapter 1, the College-Institute has world-renowned library and archival resources staffed by highly qualified professionals who support the College-Institute’s educational program. The Cincinnati Klau Library has the second largest Judaica collection in the world and a half-million volumes, underscoring the depth of the College-Institute’s learning resources supporting its doctoral and professional programs (and also supporting S11\_05). Documentation of the high quality of library services at the College-Institute’s main library in Cincinnati was obtained in a 2009 Survey, which should be followed up with a repeat to determine the extent to which the findings have been implemented. Besides the print collection (including another quarter million volumes on the other three campuses), the College-Institute provides and maintains the Jewish Studies Portal. This portal provides extensive electronic databases and other Jewish Studies resources and is licensed for password-protected use by students, faculty, and staff only. The technology survey revealed that some students supported more use of resources like SMARTBoard and SAKAI, and several of these found that faculty had not received adequate support or training. This suggests that there needs to be more software support available.

The 2009 library survey (pp. 67-77) and the existence of the resources in the Jewish Studies Portal showed clearly that extensive collaboration exists among faculty, staff, and administration in fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum (supporting S11\_06). The library survey showed that, compared to students in courses, students doing theses or dissertations use a greater variety of resources, including the rare book room, books printed before 1900, microforms, and special collections. Nevertheless, their frequency of use of this variety of holdings clearly fulfills S11\_07.

Transfer and accelerated degree policies have recently been updated within the new National Student Academic Handbook and were written to conform to the requirements of S11\_09 and S11\_10. Adult learners are not a major focus of the College-Institute, but when there has been a call for such programs, the response has been to create certificates and executive degrees that serve their needs.

Examination of the *Practical* level (expected of new graduates) of the MODEL rubrics for each of the programs accessed from [wiki.huc.edu](http://wiki.huc.edu) demonstrates extensive compliance with S11\_14. The credentials of the College-Institute’s renowned faculty are addressed in Chapter 6 and fulfill

S11\_15. Finally, fulfillment of S11\_16 on the assessment of student learning and program outcomes is detailed in Chapter 8.

### **Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 13**

For *Basic skills*, the first and third fundamental elements do not apply to post-baccalaureate programs, so were not included or numbered in the listing on wiki.huc.edu under Standard 13. Related Educational Activities. This leaves the second element as number S13\_01. Even that element only applies to the single area in which a student admitted to HUC-JIR might be under-prepared, namely, Hebrew language skills. Discussion of the remediation programs that fulfill S13\_01 for such students is found under “Additional Findings Related to Compliance with Standard 8” in Chapter 5. As indicated by the mission statements described above, the certificate programs for DeLeT, Jewish Nonprofit Management, and the new Cantorial Certificate are designed, approved, and administered using the same rigorous standards as degree programs, as required by S13\_02 and S13\_03.

*Certificate programs* have the same type of rigorous MODEL rubrics, which use the *Practical* level as the program outcomes, fulfilling the evaluation component of S13\_02 and S13\_04. Student support services for the very small certificate cohorts of the Jewish Nonprofit Management program are identical to those described in Chapter 5. The support services for the DeLeT certificate are documented under Learning and Mentor Teachers at DeLeT Overview and those for the Cantorial Certificate at Cantorial Certificate Support. These fulfill S13\_05.

*Experiential learning* policies including procedures for granting credit for experiences outside of accredited institutions are addressed in the National Student Academic Handbook in the section on “Advanced Standing.” These procedures fulfill the rare circumstances that might relate to S13\_07 and S13\_12.

*Non-credit offerings* include several institutes and internships. The Mandel Initiative Documentation describes how the initiative aims to enhance the leadership capacity of HUC-JIR rabbinical students in order to enable them, once they are practicing rabbis, to shape vision-guided communities of Reform Jews. Creating Jewish professional leaders is the first element of the College-Institute mission statement. The Schusterman and Gerecht Institute Outreach programs relate to the mission/purpose line on the growth of the Reform movement. The Davidson initiative on social action and community involvement is clearly aimed at “repairing the world” (*Tikkun Ha-olam* in the mission/purpose statement). The New York Spirituality Initiative directly addresses the religious/spiritual dimension included in the HUC-JIR mission. During the year in Israel, students visit the former Soviet Union during Passover to facilitate educational programming and prayer experiences in Progressive communities. Some students also serve in activities involving social responsibility, including American Jewish World Service internships and a wide variety of other agencies. These connections show clearly that the noncredit offerings are consistent with the HUC-JIR mission, as required by S13\_13. These program descriptions also identify the learning goals, objectives, and expectations, as prescribed by S13\_14. Documentation of assessment is most complete in the Mandel Initiative materials and mentioned in the other program descriptions without an analysis of results, indicating a basic compliance with the evaluation aspect of S13\_14 and with S13\_16. The National Assessment Committee Minutes document a start on a project to assess the impact of all such short-term programs on other aspects of the relevant programs, but this effort got deferred by the successful effort to create an institution-wide Rabbinical Mission Statement. Regarding S13\_15, none of the College-Institute’s non-credit offerings are transferable to other programs.

The College-Institute's few eLearning courses are nearly always synchronous (combining face-to-face and video-supported) making S13\_24 and S13\_25 resolved in the preceding discussion of rigor under *Research Question 11-13.1*. The rationale for eLearning is carefully spelled out in the eLearning Strategic Plan and in the Strategic Report detailed in Chapter 3, fulfilling S13\_22. The first legal issue to be dealt with was compliance with the requirement to assure that students taking courses online are clearly identified. The key policies that the working group has addressed to fulfill S13\_23 related to student verification and state authorization. As documented in the National Student Academic Handbook and the Year-in-Israel Student Services Portal Documentation, all students are issued usernames and passwords for email and for access to SAKAI, satisfying the USDE policy regarding student identification. New regulations regarding the enforcement of state authorization for distance learning are too much in flux to address with firm policies at this time. The working group recommends that this be monitored by the National Director of eLearning for changes.

The College-Institute does not make use of consortial partners or contractors for distance learning. Thus, S13\_26 and S13\_27 have not been relevant to the present time. The Jewish Studies Portal shows extensive online support available to all students in all programs, satisfying S13\_28. Facilities available are described on page 5 of the eLearning Strategic Plan and the staffing projections on page 21, showing compliance with S13\_30. The plan, combined with the Information Technology Assessment Response to the Administrative Survey Results, demonstrates compliance with S13\_31.

## Suggestions for Improvement

1. HUC-JIR should create an institution-wide convention for the composition of the College-Institute's syllabi and course descriptions. Each program needs to specify the relation of their mission to their program learning outcomes and these to their assessment rubrics. These specifications should also be made public. The MODEL rubrics provide clear and rigorous statements of outcomes. As noted in the National Assessment Committee Minutes, the *Practical* level provides a good starting point for program outcome statements. As illustrated by the process used to finalize the Rabbinical Mission Statement, these can be improved by the deep group process that the College-Institute habitually uses. A process of consultation among faculty colleagues across the institution should be initiated with the aim of furthering a common language in which the expected learning outcomes should be couched. By this the working group does not intend to limit the academic freedom of any of HUC-JIR instructors, but rather to frame the learning outcomes of each individual course in terms of the wider program, and indeed of the institution as a whole. The working group proposes that course descriptions and syllabi be compared each semester according to fixed parameters, so that this process of increased integration of the College-Institute's message can be gauged.
2. Survey questions of students in each of HUC-JIR's programs should contain at least some questions which are common to all programs. This should give the College-Institute a tool to assess how students perceive the extent to which learning outcomes are clearly communicated and furthered. This would be facilitated by actions to improve the language of the rubrics.
3. Various attempts currently underway to allow the various dimensions of the learning experience to cohere should be tracked and the experience of different campuses and programs should be shared across the institution.
4. A version of the alumni survey described in the 2006 strategic plan should be directed to those students who have graduated since that time to see if there is any significant change

in attitudes, especially as they relate to the valuation of Jewish learning and text skills. A faculty-alumni group should also be convened to consider the meaning of “people skills” and how the development of these skills could be more thoroughly and broadly infused throughout the program. Part of the charge to such a group would be to develop new ways to help alumni value their Jewish learning and textual skills.

5. The experiments being undertaken on each campus should be recorded and shared with campuses across the institution. Periodically, the faculty should review the impact of attempts being made to integrate the academic and professional dimensions of learning taking place in the College-Institute.
6. A faculty group should be organized to consider the advisability of, and methods for, creating Outcomes/Narratives Transcripts and selectively disseminating them to faculty at the beginning of courses.
7. While the number of opportunities for reflection and integration is greater than ever before, research should be undertaken to consider whether this new emphasis is having a positive impact on the students and standard of education of the College-Institute.
8. There is clear evidence that the three stateside campuses deliver the same rabbinic core curriculum, each playing to its particular strengths and traditions. While respecting the distinct culture of each campus, the College-Institute strives for an even higher degree of coherence among the campuses. The working group recommends an emphasis on an intelligible “vocabulary” that allows for local emphases within the framework of curricular coherence. The working group recommends that every three years the degree of curricular integration be the subject of an internal review process. Part of this process would involve having a committee look at the language in the rubrics over dozens of assessed projects to make sure that all members could agree on all levels at least 80% of the time.
9. The National Assessment Committee should work with program faculty (including representatives of Cincinnati’s new Service-Learning Program) to formulate a way to evaluate student learning outcomes in non-course curricular requirements and relate them to evidence of expectations of congregations and other institutions served by HUC-JIR students. The OIRA should be charged with analyzing faculty ratings to trace student development over multiple years to see how they contribute to student learning overall and specifically to their learning in other courses. Faculty should define a rubric for evaluating such required activities.
10. Although the evidence available thus far relating to the relative quality and efficacy of distance learning is largely anecdotal, it suggests that those engaged in it are in the main satisfied that the benefits of this addition to HUC-JIR offerings are real, and that they outweigh the challenges associated with it. After the ratings of the manageable program assessments have been completed for a few years on all campuses, their evidence should be correlated with this anecdotal data to see if any discernible variance in the achievement of learning outcomes between students in face-to-face and distance settings can be identified.
11. An emphasis should be placed on the training of faculty in the use of distance-learning technology combined with timely support so that the quality of teaching using this technology is high.
12. The National Director of eLearning should monitor for changes the new regulations regarding enforcement of state authorization for distance learning and propose policies accordingly.

## **Chapter 8. Institutional and Academic Assessment (Standards 7 and 14)**

### **Overview of Charge**

The working group charged with Standards 7 and 14 sought evidence in nearly 200 documents and web links including especially the administrative survey, analysis and results, reports to regional accreditors of the CN and NY campuses, IPEDS Reports and Institutional Profiles, all the assessment surveys identified on wiki.huc.edu, Learning Outcomes Network reports to institutional departments, student placement results, student loan repayment records, and other documents available at wiki.huc.edu, especially the assessment methodology postings.

### **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

#### *Research Question 7.1*

*Does the assessment of institutional effectiveness incorporate results from student learning outcomes assessments as well as assessment of results in other areas, as noted in the standards? Are these related to areas of emphasis in the institution's plan(s) and the established priorities for resource allocation and budgeting?*

### **Discussion of Research Question and Compliance**

#### *2006 Strategic Plan*

A comprehensive strategic plan was adopted by the Board of Governors in February 2006. As noted above in Chapter 3, the Strategic Planning Committee had been constituted in 2004 and consisted of eleven Board members (a majority of the Committee), seven key administrators, and a faculty member from each stateside campus. The report made use of the mission statement, site visit observations, a retreat, SWOT analyses of each program and library, national statistics from the Reform movement, and accreditation reports. It contained sections on creating accountability structures, achieving excellence, financial sustainability, the future, and recommendations. By far the largest section involved achieving excellence with subsections on students, faculty, leadership development, professional schools, academic support, partnerships, and "one institution with multiple campuses and multiple programs."

Follow-up documentation of the strategic plan has been weak. A campus cliché has it that the financial crisis of 2008-09 (precipitated by the "Great Recession" that began in December, 2007), which saw a 40% drop in endowment returns, derailed all aspects of the strategic plan except for financial sustainability. Follow-up of that section of the report has certainly been extensive through the New Way Forward plan and its annual updates. Nevertheless, clichés often overlook the facts. Numerous other initiatives arising from the plan have been implemented and documented, as noted in the Strategic Planning Update.

Major steps forward for "creating accountability structures" were taken with strategic recent hires in Human Resources, Registrar, and, at the peak of the financial crisis in 2009, an entirely new Office of Institutional Research and Assessment with a director nationally known in assessment research plus a full-time assistant. The work of these offices to advance excellence in students and in faculty and support services has been thoroughly documented and will be summarized

below. Major innovations in advancing leadership and professional excellence have occurred in the LA Education, the CN Rabbinical, and the NY Cantorial and Rabbinical programs.

Achieving “one institution with multiple campuses and multiple programs” is an important issue not only for academic excellence but also for financial sustainability. The Board of Governors charged the VPAA to undertake a model, evidence-based approach for merging the accreditation processes of the College-Institute, as documented in Chapter 1. The first of twelve major findings mentioned in the Complex Substantive Change Proposal submitted to MSCHE in March, 2011 and accepted the following June was that “single accreditation would bring an enormous benefit to the College-Institute by increasing the amount of collaboration of local faculty and administrators with each other to interpret and carry out the College-Institute’s mission.” Acceptance of this proposal shows that the strategic plan’s emphasis on advancing a single institution has been a major focus in the ensuing years. In short, the 2006 strategic plan, supplemented by the New Way Forward and several other initiatives documented in this chapter, served to inaugurate a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process as required by several parts of element S7\_01.

Another event that exposed weaknesses in the 2004-06 strategic planning process was the “Mandated Focused Visit” letter of March, 2009 to the College-Institute from the NCAHLC. This letter required evidence of progress in meeting the NCAHLC standards relating to finances, assessment, and governance. The Mandated Focused Visit revealed that the strategic plan was not sufficiently grounded in student learning outcomes. In retrospect, the NCAHLC action as well as responses to the 2008-09 financial crisis also revealed that the planning structure was too restricted to the Board of Governors and high-level administrators with not enough input from faculty, staff, and local communities. As one commentator put it, the plan was designed as “surgery rather than therapy.” To follow the analogy into MSCHE’s Characteristics of Excellence, an excellent plan would have provided a sustainable exercise regime that would promote the health of the institution. Thus, the third weakness, governance, became clear from the ensuing lapse in updating and revising the plan: it was neither designed nor sustained as an adaptive guiding process. These weaknesses resulted at various points in some recommendations, such as closing a campus, that, although conscientiously proposed, were met with overwhelming resistance both within and without the College-Institute.

### *Strengthening Assessment*

One of the recommendations from the 2006 plan that was implemented was to “strengthen HUC-JIR’s commitment to excellence by accelerating the development and implementation of student assessment tools in the Rabbinic Core Curriculum and extending them, where appropriate, to the other professional degree granting programs.” The College-Institute had undertaken two assessment initiatives prior to March, 2009. One was the completion in 2008, by an all-campus committee, of the Rabbinical Matrix: descriptions of 45 dimensions of rabbinical expertise, each with three levels of development. These dimensions were accompanied by Guidelines for Assessment. The implementation of these guidelines led to extensive individualized assessment of rabbinical students in Los Angeles.

The second assessment initiative was the New York campus’s commitment to use what could generically be described as an “authentic assessment” approach both to advance student learning and to discover needs for program changes (in response to the 2002 MSCHE visiting evaluation team’s demand for follow-up reports on learning outcomes assessment<sup>17</sup>). Thus the 2009 progress letter accepted by MSCHE indicated:

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<sup>17</sup>NY Campus Progress Letter 2009 and the 2007 Periodic Review Report.

Performance on examinations, research papers and projects, practica and theses confirms that students meet the high standards that the faculty establishes.... Faculty meet throughout the year with the Directors of the Rabbinical Program, the DFSSM and the NYSOE to review assessment results for each student and to gauge each student's progress. The faculty and Directors ascertain if individual students are meeting learning expectations and goals, prescribe remedial measures for students who are not, or conversely, create individualized learning opportunities for advanced students. Faculty then determine if student assessments require changes in course content and requirements, course schedule, instructional assignments, or the course of study itself.

At that time, the campus initiated a narrative assessment program that had been proposed in the campus's 2007 Periodic Review Report. That program, as well as the 45-dimension rabbinical matrix, provides detailed formative feedback for students. Both forms of assessment, while helpful in facilitating student-instructor dialogue, suffer from being difficult to aggregate into programmatic conclusions because the terminology varies so much from instructor to instructor, especially as the number of assessments is expanded to all four campuses. See the section on *Narrative Assessments* in Standard 14, below, for information on how narrative assessments were integrated with an innovative, sustained, comprehensive, and systematic institution-wide approach. As the New York Progress Letter indicates, narrative assessments of student learning contributed to establishing new approaches (e.g., interdisciplinary, team-taught, and multi-campus courses) and topics (more integration with professional skills). The narratives were supplemented with a multidimensional rating scale where levels for all dimensions were the same Likert-type scale<sup>18</sup> with five-points plus N/A. Such ratings are like grades, which are based on comparisons relative to class level rather than external standards, and thus are not accepted by accrediting agencies as valid assessment information for programs

In Cincinnati, the NCAHLC rejected the Rabbinical Matrix as a plan rather than an implemented assessment program because no results had been obtained using it on that campus. (In LA it was combined with guidelines for faculty-student interaction concerning learning outcomes that were applied, but those guidelines did not include aggregating the results into a form useful for program and administrative changes.)

These experiences show that manageable program assessment:

1. Relates to, but is more general than, faculty evaluation of students for teaching goals.
2. Begins with a clearly articulated program mission.
3. Includes statements of program learning outcomes that are:
  - a. related to the mission,
  - b. general enough to comprise a memorable set (roughly 7-15 statements),
  - c. defined clearly enough so that individual faculty members can reliably agree on whether a particular student effort is an instance of achieving the outcome,
  - d. defined so that every course addresses at least one program learning outcome,
4. Assesses every student in every course in the program by indicating whether or not the student work has demonstrated each outcome relevant to the course,
5. Is aggregated so that:
  - a. each student can see the number of times he or she has achieved an outcome,
  - b. each instructor can see what percentage of students in each course achieved the outcomes relevant to the course,
  - c. each advisor can determine what electives will help a student achieve more enduring mastery of each outcome,

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<sup>18</sup>See Bartoshak, Fast and Snyder (2005) for a methodological analysis of Likert-scale research.



- d. each program curriculum designer can identify innovations that lead to more enduring mastery.

New assessment processes were brought to the College-Institute by the new Director of Institutional Research and Assessment in summer, 2009. Learning Outcomes Networks (LONs) are a type of manageable program assessment that uses developmental interviews of experts to create multidimensional rubrics (see the four-decade history of these at LON References, and a fuller account of the process below at Standard 14). HUC-JIR refers to the “new professional” level of performance as the *Practical* level and expects students to function at this level by graduation.

#### *Survey of Administrative Functions*

An all-campus, systematic assessment of administrative functions was developed recently using a model similar to that for student learning. To create a systematic and sustainable annual survey of administrative functions, developmental interviews were conducted of key people in each function. The focus was on three questions, mnemonically condensed into College-Institute’s “3-R’s” of administrative functions: reliability (accuracy), responsiveness (speed), and respect (understanding of the role as well as the needs of those being served). The results of these interviews were used to define both levels of performance for each function and key challenges faced by each function. In total, 120 respondents filled out Survey Monkey forms. Respondents were divided evenly between students, faculty, and staff (equivalent to 10% of the students, 90% of the full-time faculty, and 30% of the full-time staff). The Administrative Survey Analysis shared with the National Assessment Committee (NAC) in April 2012 revealed that some functions (e.g., Accounting and Budgeting) needed more attention than others (e.g., the Library). The NAC decided that the best approach would be to have the OIRA summarize the main comments and have the VPAA meet with the directors of the functions to propose innovations that would improve the community’s responses. This has led to the proposal of numerous improvements, some of which have already been implemented. Thus, this tool enabled the College-Institute to fulfill S7\_02 and the remaining parts of S7\_01.

#### *Board Surveys*

Board Surveys were conducted in 2009 and 2012. The earlier survey was initiated in response to the NCAHLC mandated focused visit. A Governance Task Force of the Board was created at that time and recently added to the Regulations as a standing Committee on Governance. This committee initiated the 2012 survey. In both surveys, questions were phrased so that positive answers reflected compliance with best practices. The 2012 survey showed significantly more positive responses from Board members than just three years earlier. Still, they indicated that the Board needs more attention to MSCHE standards and the use of assessment to make decisions.

#### *Compliance*

The Administrative Survey is an organized and documented process for evaluating and improving the total range of programs and services of the College-Institute. Its deep connections with the mission/purpose statement were demonstrated using a method similar to that employed in the Cincinnati Campus’s 2009 Focused Visit study to show connections of course descriptions to the mission.<sup>19</sup> Table 8.1 shows the percentage of *Inspiring* administrative

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<sup>19</sup>The 2009 study showed that courses clearly related to the MODEL rubrics and the rubrics clearly related to the mission/purpose statement. Since the mission/purpose statements were very broad, an expert rater found each course to be an example of many elements of the statement. Since the MODEL rubrics were more specific, each

descriptions that related to the *Practical* or *Inspiring* levels of the rabbinical assessment rubrics. Clearly, administrative services are related more to the professional aspects of the rabbinical assessment rubrics (the top six dimensions) than to the scholarly ones (the bottom six dimensions). But in the professional areas, there is a strong connection. Also, all functions were related to some dimensions of the rubrics. Thus, there is much overlap between the learning life of rabbinical students (in this instance) and that of HUC-JIR administrative functions. While it is understandable that most administrators would not attend as well to the educational dimensions as faculty, the goal of helping students learn should be captured in the conception of *Inspiring* performance by every function in the College-Institute. The survey needs to be sustained annually. Future surveys would benefit by a clearer reminder of the educational dimensions in all College-Institute activities, by rephrasing the third interview question to be: "What do you do to support student learning outcomes?"

The Administrative Survey is supplemented in some areas by other forms of assessment. The Library and Archives keep detailed records of the main types of usage of their materials and services. Accounting and Budgeting work closely with the auditors to continually improve records. As recommended in the 2006 Strategic Plan, review of resources other than restricted funds has resulted in some programs (SJNM, SGS, and the DMin program) being required to be self-sustaining. Beyond the logical comparison with mission, the impact of this decision on learning outcomes needs to be assessed. Additional assessment information is provided by Financial Aid's reports to the US Department of Education and the OIRA's work with the Registrar's and Alumni Offices to generate accurate data for IPEDS, MSCHE, the US Immigration and Naturalization Services, the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Strong support for the extensive collaboration of faculty with administrative assessment is underscored by the fact that 90% of full-time faculty members filled out the administrative survey and provided comments that helped to guide the leaders of the functions toward effective conclusions. The annual timetable for the administrative assessment survey combined with the term-by-term assessments of learning outcomes supports a sustainable process as does collecting the data through a survey easily accessed through the internet.

The improvement suggestions identified in response to the administrative survey by each function testify to the sharing of results with them and their use in planning, resource allocation, and renewal. This entire Self-Study Report not only serves as an update of the strategic plan, but it also provides a model for moving the planning process forward (and, indeed, is being used in the work of the Strategic Planning Oversight Task Force; see Strategic Planning Update Report). It has been comprehensive, deeply engaging of every role in the community, based on extensive evidence that has been subjected to high-quality analysis, and put to use with documented responses.

The institution uses results of learning assessments to allocate resources. Systematic data analysis has been conducted on the Cincinnati campus longer than on other campuses. The working group expects that systematic analysis of the NY narrative assessments combined with use of both Likert-type and MODEL-rubrics ratings will produce more detailed understandings of how resource allocation can contribute to student learning. The strategic plan from 2006 considered assessment results as required by S7\_03. An updating of this plan is currently in progress, as indicated in Chapters 2 and 3.

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course fit fewer categories. The connection of the MODEL rubrics to the mission made it possible to use the former as a proxy for the latter. Similarly, Administrative Survey statements were coded to *Practical* or *Inspiring* levels of the MODEL rubrics for the Rabbinical School as proxies for the mission/purpose statement.

## Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

### Research Question 14.1

*How effectively do all academic and support programs document that the curriculum or program helps students achieve each key learning outcome? How effectively does the institution provide students with clear information on how they are expected to achieve each key learning outcome (i.e., what assignments and learning experiences will help them achieve it)?*

### Research Question 14.2

*Are assessments of student learning of adequate quality? Do they yield direct evidence that is clear, tangible, convincing, and purposefully relates to the program's key learning outcomes, having results that are sufficiently accurate and truthful that they are used with confidence to make appropriate decisions?*

## Discussion of Research Questions and Compliance

MSCHE Standard 14 requires that each program's "assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have the knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals." Such assessment begins with the clear definition by each program of the learning outcomes standards that their students must achieve. Beginning in 2009 HUC-JIR has used a quick way to create initial compliance with this requirement, called Learning Outcomes Networks (LONs, described in the following paragraph). Such manageable program assessments need to be developed and refined over time to be most effective and enduring. Regardless of the individual method used, every program needs to be clearly aware that Middle States requires them (1) to develop program mission statements that relate to the College-Institute mission, (2) to specify learning standards in the form of observable learning outcomes, (3) to produce publicly defensible assessment methods that show each graduate has achieved the learning outcomes, (4) to aggregate the assessment results to show program performance, and (5) to use the aggregated results to improve their programs. Thus, there are several optional methods besides the use of the *Practical* levels of LONs to specify program standards, but programs do not have a choice about specifying learning outcomes—accreditation requires that they do so. Beginning in 2010, the National Assessment Committee initiated this work across all campuses by extending the Learning Outcome Networks approach to all programs and subsequently drafting the Rabbinical School mission statement.

### *The Learning Outcomes Network*

MODEL (Matrices Organized Developmentally through Expertise and Labeling) Rubrics were created on one campus for two programs in 2009: the Rabbinical School and the School of Graduate Studies. Every full-time faculty member was involved in one-to-two hour interviews that generated more than 130 dimensions of the development of their expertise, describing student behavior of beginners, learners, new professionals, and contributors to the field of expertise. Work in 2007 by the Cohen Committee (named after the previous Provost who chaired it), had generated 45 dimensions of rabbinical development. These were combined with dimensions from the interviews. They were first grouped into master dimensions and then abstracts and labels were provided for each of the four levels within each dimension, generating multidimensional rubrics that outline the development of the expertise (see the links with

“descriptions” in the title in section 6 of wiki.huc.edu). The master set of MODEL rubrics for the Rabbinical School had eleven dimensions.<sup>20</sup> The retiring and incoming program directors of the School of Graduate Studies eliminated five of the dimensions as professionally oriented, leaving the six scholarly dimensions.

These rubrics were used to rate the work of every student in every course in Cincinnati in the fall of 2009. That became the first term in the creation of HUC-JIR’s Learning Outcomes Network. A Learning Outcomes Network is an HUC-JIR innovation that requires ratings for every student in every course for as long as a student is in the program (see the links with “Rating Form” in section 6 of wiki.huc.edu). Since the same rating form is used for all courses in a program and contains 8-12 multiple choice items, faculty learn to complete it in a minute or two per student. The LON is used to identify program mission statements, calculate overall growth both within and between students, assess the impact of courses or requirements, get an overall view of the relationships between areas of development, discover learning links, track progress of particular students, and even test differences between different assessment methods.

Three lines of evidence indicate that the LON approach is sustainable by being of “sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions.” First, it has been adopted by an increasing number of other institutions of higher learning.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the results have been used to implement broad-based changes in the program where they began. One change involved several faculty members teaching their students to use the MODEL rubrics to evaluate their own work and define areas where commitment to advance would be useful. Another involved getting support for a multimillion-dollar proposal to fund integration of service-learning with the Cincinnati rabbinical curriculum. The dimension of student learning with the third lowest percent of ratings at the *Practical* level was teaching. This likely reflected the lack of a School of Education on the Cincinnati campus and is likely to change substantially as the Service Learning Grant is implemented. The third line of evidence emerged from comparing the narrative and rating scale assessments of students, described in the next section, with the LON. The impact of this line of evidence is described in the section on analysis of results.

### *Narrative Assessments*

As noted above, narrative assessments were identified in the 2007 Periodic Review Report (PRR) to MSCHE as one of two critical areas for furthering the goal of formative assessment. The approach showed the New York faculty's commitment to personalized learning and their belief that narrative evaluations, though time-consuming for faculty, are “one of the best ways to maximize student growth” (as noted in the 2007 PRR). By 2009, deliberation had contributed to a tool to combine narratives with multidimensional Likert-type ratings (see note 19 above), which was implemented in the spring of 2009. Since then, approximately three narrative assessments per term have been done for each student resulting in a database exceeding 1000 narratives. These are valuable tools for student assessment, but are difficult to aggregate for program assessment.

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<sup>20</sup>There are currently twelve dimensions listed for the Rabbinical School listed in the Rabbinical Rating Form (see note 23 below). Detailed descriptions of these dimensions can be found here and here.

<sup>21</sup>Savannah Technical College (GA), Savannah College of Art and Design (GA), Gainesville State College (GA), Wilmington College (OH), Texas Christian University (TX), Regis University (CO), Kapi’olani Community College (HI), Front Range Community College (CO). As a typical example, two workshops were provided to Wilmington College to help them with their Writing-Across-the-Curriculum assessment. They were able to implement a round-robin interviewing approach that helped all faculty in the program better understand the writing needs in other disciplines. To date they have now assessed nearly 400 student writing samples using the rubrics generated from these interviews.

The LON system for program assessment was extended to all stateside campuses in fall 2011 for spring 2012 ratings. Acknowledging the time-consuming nature of narrative assessment and of adding one more step to the several steps involved in the process for recording them, a streamlined single rating form was created through a collaboration of a NY faculty member, the NY Associate Dean, and the OIRA. Conveniently, streamlining also made it possible to study the more complex and longer-term problem of relating student assessment to program assessment in keeping with the MSCHE standards that specifies maximizing the use of currently collected data as much as possible for program assessment (cf., S14\_01).

The streamlined data collection created opportunities for ongoing assessment and improvement of program assessment as well, due to the synergy between MODEL rubrics and narratives. Narratives provide faculty with opportunities to go outside of the collective developmental framework created by the rubrics. The combined form alleviated separate storing of narratives and rubrics analysis that used (1) keywords in the rubrics definitions to organize the narratives, and (2) narratives to reveal what is missing from the rubrics.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, the new form provides a potential starting point for each program's faculty to create their program mission statements (as the new Rabbinical Mission Statement has shown) and refine their statements of program learning outcomes related to those missions.

#### *Analysis of Early Results and Rolling out Program Assessments to All Four Campuses*

The first step in analysis was to identify progress in each dimension separately. This was done on the first campus that used them in the report Learning Outcomes Network Aggregated Results. With the success of the initial results, the decision was made to roll out LONs for all the other programs in order to have a systematic data-gathering effort that would tie all assessments together yet still allow individual program differences. An expanded form with definitions based on interviews of all Rabbinical School faculty members was disseminated in spring 2012.<sup>23</sup> The program learning outcomes are still the *Practical* levels (that characterize "new professionals") identified on this form, but work by a faculty committee should be undertaken to refine them for clarity and reliability of use. That refinement process should be a key component of assessing the assessment processes currently in place (discussed two paragraphs below).

The first results from all campuses were obtained in the spring of 2012 and are documented in Results of Rabbinical Ratings. That document provides clear data that the collective Rabbinical School faculty were able to discriminate the MODEL rubrics from Likert-type ratings. The LON created the opportunity to discover "learning links"—acquisitions in two dimensions that occur together. Prior work over four terms on one campus ratings using MODEL rubrics (see Learning Outcomes Network CN Rabbinical Development (2009-12)) revealed that some acquisitions are much more linked than others. Identifying learning links helps programs to test new ways to organize offerings by learning impacts. Some dimensions move together developmentally while

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<sup>22</sup>In addition, the NY campus's comprehensive rating form also provided the opportunity to compare Likert-scale with MODEL-rubrics ratings. Uniquely defining levels within each dimension should improve discrimination between linked and unlinked learning, but this has never been tested. It would be expected that each dimension of Likert-type ratings should reveal student problems that might occur broadly in many of their courses. Program assessment, however, has the different goal of learning how each course contributes uniquely to a student's achievement of program learning outcomes. For that, showing what part of the curriculum is being addressed in each course means that many program assessment dimensions should not be relevant to each single course.

<sup>23</sup>Interviews were conducted on all campuses, enlarging the pool of dimensions from 170 in the 2009 Focused Visit Report to over 300. These were reorganized into 12 dimensions and new 100-word abstracts were written. A second round of abstracting produced 25-word, multiple-choice selections suitable for a survey tool.

others do not. One faculty member on the National Assessment Committee had experimented with expanding the amount of text work in the original Hebrew in a class at the expense of translated primary sources and secondary readings that deal with historical context. He used the analysis of developmental movement along with course evaluation information provided by students to decide among (1) continuing the experiment to emphasis Hebrew language sources, (2) returning to the original emphasis on the historical and cultural contexts, or (3) identifying a new approach.

As regards assessing the assessment processes themselves, term-by-term assessment completion reports show that for a sizable minority of faculty respondents, compliance requires persuasion, which some attribute to a generalized skepticism that occurs regardless of the type of assessment (e.g., narratives or generalized rubrics) or whether the assessment was organized by a faculty committee or the OIRA. Ultimately federal and accreditation agencies require full commitment by the faculty to the processes involved in program assessment. To accomplish this, faculty need to meaningfully and reliably participate in assessments of student work, as well as propose innovations to improve the assessment processes and the curriculum based on their results. Concurrently, the OIRA staff should travel to the other stateside campuses on at least an annual basis to meet with program faculty to get their suggestions for improving assessment, work on ratings definitions, explore alternative program assessment methods, and discuss the prior year's program-level learning results. In addition, the Office needs to continue to monitor faculty participation, demonstrate the helpfulness of the data, and, most important, enable the faculty to propose concrete and worthy steps for improvement in the fulfillment of the College-Institute's mission.

### *Compliance*

The MODEL rubrics provide clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes at all levels and for all programs that aim to foster student learning and development (fulfilling S14\_01a). As one member of the NAC described their effect:

Having descriptions of the *Easy* and *Practical* approach across the dimensions of my course certainly makes my job easier. Some students think improvement is enough. But the program and not just me expects *Practical* performance in the dimensions I teach. I can now tell the students at the beginning of the course what is expected of them and agree with them at the end on whether they have just shown some progress or actually met the expectation.

The MODEL rubrics created in each program allow integration to be tested through the network (see Emergent Outcomes from LONs). Thus, the data revealed that Hebrew language was integrated at the *Easy* level, but less so at the *Practical* level. The meaning of this is just beginning to be explored by the faculty, but certainly will be part of innovations being considered for the Rabbinical School.

There are not huge national databases beyond HUC-JIR for results of educating rabbis, cantors, and students in other Jewish professional programs. Consequently, innovative approaches are needed to determine whether their assessment is "consonant with the standards of higher education and of the relevant disciplines." One approach to ensuring consonance with higher education standards (S14\_01c) that the OIRA has taken is to publicize the methods widely, engaging assessment specialists throughout the nation. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment initiated a "Methodology" Community of Practice on the website of the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE), which the Association's executive director has reported is the most "lurked" section on the site. He has

also presented numerous publications and conference presentations, and is a frequent contributor to the 1150 member ASSESS Listserv. The AALHE postings have also been posted for the HUC-JIR community on [wiki.huc.edu](http://wiki.huc.edu) Assessment Methodology Postings.

The LON exemplifies systematic, sustained, and thorough use of a method that is simultaneously qualitative and quantitative (S14\_02a). By integrating the dimensions from the Cohen Committee with those of the developmental interviews and combining the LON results with those from the NY campus's narrative assessment form, the assessment maximizes the use of existing data (S14\_02a1). A project enabled by completing the sixth term of data collection in the Rabbinical and PhD Programs is to compare performance in the various dimensions of the LON with the type of placement that new graduates obtain. That the rubrics have been used for development of the all-campus Rabbinical School mission statement attests to their relationship to the institutional mission as required by S14\_01b and S14\_02a2.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the detailed analysis of Cincinnati course descriptions (for the 2009 Focused Visit study mentioned above) included a text analysis of the relationship between the mission/purpose and the Rabbinical School assessment rubrics. That there was only one line in the purpose statement not mentioned in the rubrics or courses shows both the rich relationship between the assessment and mission, but also the ability of the MODEL rubrics to reveal potential curricular issues. The unmentioned line was "contributing to the real-life decisions and growth of the Reform Jewish community worldwide" (see the discussion of *Research Question 1.1* in Chapter 2). It was concluded that the next time the Mission and Purpose Statement is addressed, the interrelation of this particular line with the curriculum should be re-examined, possibly resulting in changes in one, the other, or both. How the College-Institute advances and assesses education about outreach to a generation that is increasingly reluctant to affiliate with denominational institutions should be part of this discussion. Such a re-examination in face is proving to be part of the deliberations in the strategic planning update process noted in Chapter 3.

The preceding discussion showed various ways that the LON results have been used with confidence to inform decisions (S14\_02 a3). They also include direct evidence of student learning (S14\_02 a4), because each faculty member evaluates a capstone project for each student in each course. Because they are based on interviews of every faculty member, the LON results are strongly collaborative (S14\_02 b). There still are faculty members who resist assessment and the LON approach. The Cincinnati campus piloted the approach and therefore, has had more opportunity to use the results to improve teaching and learning. They recently added assessments of non-course student products such as dissertations, rabbinical theses, and capstone projects. They also introduced curricular innovations like student self-rating using MODEL rubrics, and will be piloting an integrated service-learning curriculum beginning during the academic year 2012-13, with the phase-in to be completed as the ensuing annual cohorts matriculate. As the LON approach becomes combined with the assessment procedures previously developed on the other campuses, such as narrative assessment, an increase in the number and variety of innovations to improve learning outcomes is expected.

The College-Institute has been able to progressively clarify and simplify the guidelines of the end-of-semester LON ratings because of unanticipated emergent results (S14\_02 c).<sup>25</sup> It is no longer necessary to ask faculty to post particular student products for some later reliability study, because the evaluations by later faculty can be used to determine whether the earlier ratings increases have been sustained. The rating forms now include text boxes for faculty to supplement or criticize definitions within the rating forms. This should enable program faculty to

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<sup>24</sup>See History of the HUC-JIR All Campuses Rabbinical Mission Statement Proposal.

<sup>25</sup>Emergent Outcomes from LONs

continuously improve the form's effectiveness. The OIRA also combined the rating forms of the NY Narrative Assessment with the LON to create a process that greatly simplifies demands on faculty time. Data from the LON will also determine whether there is a continued need to use both Likert-type and MODEL rubrics ratings or whether results can be obtained through just one type of rating.

The LONs obtain simplicity and practicality through repeated use (S14\_02 d). They obtain ownership through initial interviews, attending to documented comments, and disseminating aggregated results for use in classrooms. They achieve detail through the enormous potential number of learning links<sup>26</sup>. The overwhelming richness is being simplified, like a Google search, through network analysis, which is being continually improved.<sup>27</sup>

Periodic evaluation (S14\_02 e) of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of learning assessment occurs through five mechanisms: direct feedback, emergent effects of the LON, the co-analysis of the narratives with the LON, the comments within the LON rating forms, and the comments on the OIRA portion of the Administrative Survey. These have already generated numerous improvements in assessment as has adding optional comments to forms; dropping the need to upload student work; and including theses, capstone projects, and dissertations.

The value-added LON data<sup>28</sup> from the aggregated results provides convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes (S14\_03). This should be combined with the College-Institute's sterling record of student placement. Typically, every student in the core programs is placed in such high-paying jobs that the College Institute has a near perfect record of Federal loan repayment.

The reports footnoted in this document have been shared with faculty and led to important innovations, such as teaching the MODEL rubrics to students in order to help them clarify needed learning commitments (S14\_04). The new analyses now being used by some pioneering faculty members are likely to become more widespread as people get used to the opportunities that the data provide.

As indicated in the section on *Strengthening Assessment* in Standard 7, the use of student learning data for institutional assessment is in the early stages of its development. The VPAA has been closely involved with all aspects of the development, analysis, and dissemination of this data. This should help ensure ongoing compliance with S14\_05.

HUC-JIR's compliance with the fundamental elements of Standard 14 has been met through the use of Learning Outcomes Networks. As indicated in the section relating to Standard 7 on *Strengthening Assessment*, there other forms of manageable program assessment that might serve the College-Institute well and be somewhat simpler. Thus, a system would work that eliminates definitions of *Easy* and *Inspiring* levels and relies solely on faculty defining approximately a dozen learning outcomes for their program and then rating whether each student has shown evidence of reaching one or more of the outcomes in each course. Advancing such a system as disciplines and educational needs change over time would

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<sup>26</sup>Because each level is uniquely defined, 12 dimensions with 4 levels per dimension generates more than 4 million links.

<sup>27</sup>The OIRA examined links by weighting them based on the number of times both were coded together for the same student in the same course. New network analyses will help to refine knowledge of how prerequisites impact later courses and which courses are critical to the success of the program. Exploring directed links and network measures like robustness and centrality may look like a violation of the MSCHE simplicity requirement, but that is mainly because it is a relatively new approach. Network analysis has boomed from its use by Google and other internet analysts in the last two decades to the point that it is rapidly becoming as necessary for data-mining as basic statistics.

<sup>28</sup>LON\_Aggregated\_Results.pdf



primarily depend on faculty revising definitions of program learning outcomes. The ease of engagement afforded by simplifying discussions to just the program outcomes might help to improve faculty ownership and use of their program assessments. In addition, it would help to use software support such as eLumen, which would work with a variety of manageable program assessment methods including LON's and other approaches.

### *Conclusions*

All programs have in place innovative, solid, and convincing approaches to documenting their learning outcomes. Integrating the Learning Outcomes Networks with additional data-mining of syllabi and narrative assessments is likely to uncover highly targeted opportunities to further student learning. The ratings at the *Practical* or *Inspiring* level from all programs suggest that the College-Institute engages with students in an educational dialogue of considerable depth.

The spread of aggregated assessments of student learning throughout every program and every course is resulting in a database that is creating opportunities for insight with every new annual analysis. Integrating narrative and syllabus data with rubrics ratings through statistical and network-theory analyses is a pioneering approach to mining educational data in order to improve student learning. The AALHE response to this work showed that its assessment methodology is spreading well beyond the College-Institute. The College-Institute's plan is for the next Periodic Review Report to show refinements of the methods and results. Although the Director of the OIRA has very recently left the employ of HUC-JIR, the College-Institute is committed to the work of the Office and will make staffing arrangements going forward to ensure that its work on assessment is maintained at the same comprehensive level of rigor and, indeed, improved.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

### *Standard 7: Institutional Assessment*

1. The OIRA needs to continue to improve integration of learning outcomes with existing data and new survey results from the diverse administrative functions.
2. Future administrative surveys should be created using a clearer reminder of the educational dimensions in all of College-Institute activities, by rephrasing the third interview question to be: "What do you do to support student learning outcomes?"
3. The impact of requiring some programs to be financially self-sustaining needs to be a special focus of analysis of the learning outcomes assessed below.
4. The administrative survey process of redesign, data collection, analysis, reporting, and follow-up innovations needs to be sustained annually.
5. Board surveys need to be sustained on a regular, but not necessarily annual, basis.

### *Standard 14: Learning Outcomes Assessment*

1. The ultimate responsibility for further promoting the culture of program assessment throughout the College-Institute should lie with the VPAA, deans and program directors, while making deep use of faculty expertise and communicating the value of the program learning outcomes to them and their students.
2. The director of the OIRA should meet annually with program faculty to discuss the prior year's program-level learning results, get their suggestions for improving assessment, and explore alternative program assessment methods.
3. The responsibility for overseeing term-by-term data collection in a timely, conscientious, and consistent manner should reside with each program director (and the Rabbinical School

directors collectively) and ultimately the deans and VPAA, based on reports of participation provided by the OIRA.

4. Each program director (and the Rabbinical School directors collectively) should convene a faculty committee to meet monthly to create over the next one or two academic years and run for three years between now and the PRR their own version of manageable program assessment with assistance from the OIRA, by (a) refining the definition of their program mission, (b) specifying the learning outcomes in simpler and more broadly acceptable terms than used by the *Practical* level of the LON's, (c) testing the definitions for reliable use by instructors, and (d) deciding whether to enrich the program standards by also defining the learning outcomes that show preliminary steps to achieving the standard and developments expected to occur later in the students' careers (as the *Easy* and *Inspiring* levels of the LONs do).
5. Each program should grow the use of their manageable program assessments to facilitate educational dialogue by (a) continuing to aggregate results, (b) showing their relationship with prior assessment approaches, such as narrative assessments and LON ratings, (c) integrating the manageable program assessments with additional data-mining of syllabi, and (d) use data analysis to identify potential ways to improve programs.
6. The OIRA should develop new types of data analysis to help identify courses that have the most impact as prerequisites or are critical to the success of the program.
7. The OIRA, the Director of Service Learning, and his working group should plan how ratings from the College-Institute's manageable program assessments will relate to the service-learning assessment by the field supervisors.
8. The OIRA needs to develop methods for assessing the long-term impact of the manageable program assessments on student careers.
9. Include manageable program assessments data as significant input to the strategic planning process.
10. Explore software tools for tracking learning outcomes, such as eLumen (see eLumen PowerPoint Presentation).

## Chapter 9. Conclusions

The 2012 self-study of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion was designed with ten ambitious intended outcomes. Before the community could address these, it first conducted a gap analysis to determine which of the Middle States fundamental elements for accreditation needed work before the College-Institute could assure compliance. Once this was accomplished, the entire community engaged in an extensive and deep collaboration to achieve the goals of the study. Seven individual working groups with broad representation from across the complex College-Institute organization examined 300 documents listed in the Documents Inventory. Those referenced most often included CN Focused Visit Report; the Strategic Planning Report and Appendices; the National Student Academic Handbook; and various regulations, manuals, and surveys. From their analysis of these and hundreds of other documents, the groups produced fifty-five suggestions for improvement. Many of the suggestions from one group overlapped considerably with those of other groups. This chapter aligns these working group suggestions under the intended outcomes.

One over-arching conclusion from the self-study process and findings is that the merger of the College-Institute's accreditation under the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has been a tremendous boon to HUC-JIR's vision, integration, planning, assessment, discovery, and system development. The guidance of MSCHE's concise, well-organized and state-of-the-art standards and fundamental elements for excellence in higher education has made possible institutional strides over a short period of time that are truly remarkable. As indicated in Chapter 1, the intervening chapters contain most of the original working group suggestions (others have already been implemented during the course of the self-study process). These are summarized and integrated in this final chapter followed by five comprehensive recommendations that HUC-JIR proposes to implement for its 2018 Periodic Review Report. The College-Institute can look forward to further improvements by following the five recommendations that these elements and processes have inspired.

### Common Vision

The first intended outcome of this self-study was to create a common vision of the institution's future direction. There were suggestions regarding vision in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6. A critically important aspect of this intended outcome was accomplished after the Self-Study Design was approved: a new Academic Vision statement was developed by the VPAA and disseminated to the community. It is currently under discussion. A suggestion from the working group on governance was also accomplished when the Governance Task Force of the Board was made into a standing Committee on Governance by a change in the HUC-JIR Regulations. These left the five-part suggestion below for strengthening the College-Institute's common vision.

1. *Suggestion on Vision:* (a) find further ways to enhance interaction and involvement between faculty, overseers, and governors; (b) Involve faculty deeply in institutional planning, especially in articulating their highest aspirations for the College-Institute; (c) identify new means of enhancing the "financial literacy" of governors, overseers, faculty, and staff; (d) complete and align handbooks for all four Boards of Overseers; and (e) offer more education for alumni and lay leaders, as mentioned in the statement of mission and purpose; and (f) make the Regulations and this Self-Study Report accessible on the HUC-JIR website with links to them in the faculty, employee, and student handbooks.

## Integration across the Four Locations of HUC-JIR

Integration of programs, resources, and opportunities across the four campuses was a primary goal of the accreditation merger mentioned above and of the ensuing self-study. Chapters 2, 5, 6, and 7 produced twelve different suggestions on the topic. Most of these have to do with student policies and have already been resolved through a year-long project that resulted in the completion of the National Student Academic Handbook. The issues included (but were not limited to) transfer, academic hour definition, grading, plagiarism, cross-listed courses, credit by examination or extra-institutional learning, student complaints and grievances policies, student advisement, the posting of the handbook on the website, and ultimately an annual audit and revision of the handbook. Another important aspect of integration involved the development of common assessment tools, understandings, and review procedures, which will be addressed in the next section. This left the following suggestion on the integration of faculty hiring and intellectual-property policies.

2. *Suggestion on All-Campuses Integration of Faculty Policies:* Tenured/tenure-track faculty in concert with the VPAA with due allowance for flexibility in response to local conditions, should (a) integrate across locations the policies and procedures for hiring, evaluating, and retaining adjunct instructors and for deciding publication equivalencies implied in making promotion and tenure decisions (such as what types of articles in aggregation are equivalent to a scholarly book); (b) create policies for protecting intellectual property rights; (c) share information with each other about how local Committees on Faculty interpret and apply the policies and procedures; (d) make policies and protocols more easily accessible online, incorporating the Faculty Handbooks into the HR page; and (e) review and update handbooks regularly.

## Strategic Planning

Appropriately, suggestions regarding planning appear in Chapters 2 and 3, involving Standards 1, 2, 3, and 6. These first two working groups called for a return to, and enhancement of, the broad strategic planning processes of 2006. Steps in broadening the New Way Forward and this self-study into strategic planning have already been taken by the Board of Governors' new standing Committee on Governance and its Strategic Planning Update Task Force. The suggestions help to focus the process now in place.

3. *Suggestion on the Involvement of Faculty, Administration, and Governors in Planning:* (a) renew and enhance strategic planning and improvement processes to be timelier (with annual updates); (b) provide for broader community participation in both conception and application; (c) reconstitute a strategic planning implementation committee of Board members, administrators, faculty, and professionals that includes a visions subcommittee as well as the finance subcommittee; (d) ensure that the self-study findings are integrated into the updated strategic plan; (e) ensure that the updated strategic plan addresses objectives, costs, and assessment of specific educational initiatives, such as asynchronous distance learning, improving Hebrew language competency, and the sixty-year curriculum; and (f) implement justification of budget proposals at all levels by reference to the mission.

## Assessment

The Middle States handbook, *Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report* introduces a special section on assessment with the observation that "every accreditation standard now includes an assessment component" (p. 60). It is, therefore, evidence of their diligence that

every working group provided at least one suggestion on assessment. The intended outcomes divided the topic into academic, administrative, and eLearning. Because of the richness of the 20 suggestions, this division will be preserved. In addition, because the suggestions addressed different points in the assessment cycle for each sub-topic, the cycle itself provides a good sequencing device. Assessment begins when a program or service articulates a goal such as a mission, purpose, or intended outcome. A design appropriate to the goal includes data-gathering tools and procedures. Using the design, data is collected from participants. It is then professionally analyzed and reported. Finally, the results are used to improve programs and services. The suggestions are divided not only by type and sequence of assessment but also by role (faculty, OIRA Director, eLearning Director, and student).

4. *Suggestion on VPAA's, deans', and program directors' responsibility to program assessment:* (a) further promote a common culture of program assessment throughout the College-Institute by making deep use of faculty expertise and communicating the value of the program learning outcomes to them and their students; and (b) oversee term-by-term data collection in a timely, conscientious, and consistent manner, based on reports of instructor participation provided by the OIRA.
5. *Suggestion on faculty contributions to academic assessment:* (a) update their program's mission statement so that it provides simpler and more broadly acceptable terms that comply with both the *Practical* level of their rubrics and with S14\_01; (b) create an internal committee to review the language in their program learning outcomes and rubrics definitions<sup>29</sup> to ensure that members can use them reliably;<sup>30</sup> (c) meaningfully and reliably participate in assessments of student work, as well as propose innovations to improve the assessment processes and the curriculum based on their results; and (d) plan how the ratings related to manageable program assessments will relate to the service-learning assessment by the field supervisors.
6. *Suggestion on National Assessment Committee contributions to program assessment:* work with program faculty and external institutions served by HUC-JIR students to formulate a way to rate non-course curricular requirements.
7. *Suggestion on OIRA contributions to academic assessment:* (a) develop a tool to assess how students and alumni perceive the extent to which learning outcomes are clearly communicated, furthered, and essential to career success; (b) develop methods for assessing the long-term impact of manageable program assessments on student careers; (c) analyze the ratings of specially funded co-curricular activities to trace student development over multiple years to see how they contribute to student learning overall and specifically to course learning; (d) meet with program faculty on each stateside campus on at least an annual basis to discuss the prior year's program-level learning results, how to improve their program assessment (including the exploration of possible alternative forms), work on ratings definitions, and facilitate dialogue with students about manageable program assessment; (e) continue to monitor faculty participation, demonstrate the helpfulness of the data, and develop tools to facilitate faculty proposals for improving the fulfillment of the College-Institute mission; (f) continue to integrate text analyses of syllabi and narrative assessments with data from manageable program assessments, especially to help identify courses that have the most impact as prerequisites or are critical to the success of the program; and (g) research whether the new emphasis on reflection and integration is having a positive impact on the students and the standard of education of the College-Institute.

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<sup>29</sup>The *Practical* level of rubrics are the learning outcomes and the optional other levels of rubrics are the preparatory *Easy* and career *Inspiring* levels.

<sup>30</sup>Independent pairs of raters should agree on levels of performance over dozens of assessed projects at least 75% of the time.

8. *Suggestion on administrative assessment:* (a) conduct the administrative survey annually; and (b) revise the survey to be a clearer reminder of the educational dimensions in all of College-Institute's activities, by rephrasing the third interview question to be: "What do you do to support student learning outcomes?"
9. *Suggestion on governance assessment:* Conduct the Board Survey on a regular, though not necessarily annual, basis.
10. *Suggestion on faculty contribution to eLearning assessment:* (a) Include assessment of eLearning as a part of faculty deliberations on curriculum; (b) update the Faculty Handbook and Policies and Procedures for Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure to take account of eLearning; (c) have the eLearning Director make available research reviews of the relative costs and benefits of synchronous and various hybrid methods; and (d) expand training of faculty in the use of distance-learning technology combined with timely support so that the quality of teaching using this technology is high.
11. *Suggestion on OIRA contribution to eLearning assessment:* After the ratings of the manageable program assessments have been completed for a few years on all campuses, their evidence should be correlated with the anecdotal data to see if any discernible variance in the achievement of learning outcomes between students in face-to-face and distance settings can be identified.
12. *Suggestion on student involvement in assessment:* Include student perspectives by having a representative on the National Assessment Committee that receives and analyzes the data and evidence and recommends steps for improvement.

## Discovery

Two suggestions relate to involving faculty, administration, and governors in discovering new ways of promoting academic excellence and high-quality mentoring of College-Institute students without diminishing standards and quality of delivery. The academic suggestions come from Chapters 2, 6, 7 and 8, while the administrative ones come from Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 8.

13. *Suggestion on academic discovery:* (a) the VPAA should follow through on his plan to revise the protocols for faculty promotion in line with the suggestions from faculty and relevant committees; (b) the faculty should formalize a comprehensive mentoring process for junior faculty; and (c) the faculty should monitor variations from the standard 3-2 course load and explore innovations that would ensure equitable contributions to the College-Institute (part of the exploration could include allowing students and faculty to broaden the definition of "course" or allowing non-course approaches to achieving *Practical* levels of learning outcomes on a consistent basis); (d) establish a committee to oversee faculty workload including time spent on endowed co-curricular projects, internal service activities, any non-course learning activities being considered for an outcomes transcript; and e) the impact of requiring some programs to be financially self-sustaining needs to be a special focus of analysis of learning outcomes assessment.
14. *Suggestion on financial discovery:* (a) improve communication between the academic and financial arms of HUC-JIR to ensure that financial considerations alone do not drive changes in the role or size of the faculty, and that any adjustment of resources not be separated from student learning outcomes; (b) revise the materials and events for Board orientation to include more information on academic programs and related activities; (c) enhance the role of the Faculty and Academic Affairs Committees of the Board in communicating with faculty bodies around budget development to ensure that processes are clear and that budget development reflects HUC-JIR's academic mission; and (d) develop next steps for administrative hiring or organization, especially to consider a long-term

strategy that prioritizes the strengthening of the VPAA's office while relieving it of as much non-academic responsibility as possible.

## **System Development**

The suggestion on system development comes from Chapter 3 on planning and resources. It was included in the summary section on strategic planning, but it is appropriate not only to be considered here but also to be the only suggestion included twice. This document is its own message: a concise, constructive, and valuable tool for institutional planning, assessment, change, and growth. The broad base of contributors, their diligence and objectivity effectively guided by the MSCHE standards and fundamental elements, and their commitment to HUC-JIR's prosperity exemplify a process that, even more than the report they have produced, should long serve to benefit the College-Institute.

15. *Suggestion on System Development:* Ensure that the self-study findings are integrated into the updated strategic plan and that the Governance Committee clarifies roles of committees of the Board as they pertain to setting institutional priorities and allocating resources.

## **Comprehensive Recommendations**

A synthetic review of all the suggestions for improvement listed above resulted in five comprehensive recommendations listed below in priority order. It is these recommendations that College-Institute commits to implement and report on in its 2018 Periodic Review Report.

1. *Assessment:* Show evidence that each program has updated its program learning outcomes and continues to implement a system of assessment based on them.
2. *System Development:* Each administrative unit and educational program will create brief annual reports that articulate goals, include innovations introduced in the prior year, assessment of recent performance, and propose innovations related to assessment results.
3. *Common Vision:* Show evidence of regularizing the periodic review, updating, and reporting to the President's Cabinet concerning the College-Institute handbooks including those for the Board of Governors, Boards of Overseers, faculty (including the policies and procedures for hiring, promotion, and tenure), personnel, and students.
4. *Discovery:* Develop and implement tools to assess the efficacy of our financial aid policies.
5. *Integration:* Make policies and protocols more easily accessible on line.