

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Governors, Students
Of
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
New York, NY 10012

By
An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
And a visit to the campus on March 17 – 20, 2013

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AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

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I. Context and Nature of the Visit

- Institutional overview: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion is a post-baccalaureate institution training religious leaders and scholars. The College-Institute trains rabbis and cantors who serve in Reform Jewish congregations and other settings; educators; Jewish communal professionals; and scholars enrolled in the School of Graduate Studies. 362 students are currently enrolled across these programs on four campuses in face-to-face and e-learning modalities.
- Scope of institution at the time of the evaluation:
 - Degree levels: Postbaccalaureate certificate; master's, post-master's certificate; doctor's—professional practice; doctor's—research scholarship
 - Branch campuses: none
 - Additional locations: HUC-JIR/Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH; HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel; HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
 - Distance learning: No
 - Consortia: In NY, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York University, Union Theological Seminary, General Theological Seminary, Fordham University, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary; in Cincinnati, Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities; in LA, University of Southern California, American Jewish University.
- Self-study process and report: This self-study reflects a major effort unifying these campuses under a single accrediting agency, and the College-Institute approached the self-study process itself as a means of both reflection on this unification and advancing it. The self-study designed called for a comprehensive report organized by groups of standards. A Self-Study Steering Committee oversaw seven working groups that included members of the faculty and administration. The draft and final reports were circulated to the Board of Governors, faculty, students and alumni.

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

- Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and/or other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the requirements of affiliation in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements

- Based on review of the self-study, certification by the institution, and additional analysis provided by the College-Institute in support of the self-study, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. The team also affirms that it has sought out additional information on the requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and confirms that HUC-JIR is in compliance on all matters.

IV. Evaluation Overview

Through review of the self-study and extensive documentation and over the course of three days of formal interviews and informal conversation, the evaluation team carefully evaluated the 13

standards of excellence that apply to the College-Institute. The evaluation team consistently encountered individuals at all levels of the institution who were interested in engaging in matters under discussion, forthright and transparent in the provision of additional documentation, reflective and, usually, passionate about the institution.

The team arrived at an institution that was battered by the economic downturn of 2008-09, affected especially by endowment losses and significant drops in allocation of monies (MUM) from the Union for Reform Judaism. In the team's assessment, the very survival of the College-Institute was threatened by the severity of the financial crisis it faced. HUC-JIR's existence and general state of well-being in 2013 is to be commended. This somewhat tentative state has been attained through the significant efforts of many committed people working on many fronts. The Board of Governors and national administration worked together to cut costs, monetize assets and raise significant new monies with a goal of a balanced budget by FY 14, a feat accomplished a year ahead of schedule. Faculty and staff have exerted themselves tremendously, accepting pay cuts and taking on additional responsibilities in diminished ranks. The evaluation team was deeply impressed by the faculty and staff's good will and collegiality in such austere conditions.

Financial sustainability has, of necessity, been an extremely high priority in recent years. Even with the newly balanced budget, many challenges remain, including the uncertain prospects regarding the MUM allocation in future years due to changes in Jewish demographics and membership patterns, and the approaching retirement of a president who is loved and trusted as a leader and who has achieved unprecedented fundraising success. Nonetheless, it is the evaluation team's perspective that the College-Institute has reached or is approaching a threshold where viability is no longer a daily question. We see the institution poised to have extensive cross-constituency discussions about the larger Jewish community and Reform movement as well as the educational and leadership role that the College-Institute should play, and to draw on these discussions in robust academic and strategic planning processes.

The evaluation team saw ample evidence that the extended process of self-study was taken very seriously by the College-Institute, and was implemented in a fashion that bolstered communication, collaboration and information-sharing across constituencies and campuses. The possibility of greater integration across the four campuses was at the heart of the College-Institute's decision to seek single accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The self-study itself contributed toward this outcome and also demonstrates it. The evaluation team joins with the Self-Study Steering Committee in strongly recommending that such salutary collaboration and communication be institutionalized and furthered.

A critical element of accreditation is assessment. The College-Institute invested in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment in the midst of austerity and, drawing on previous work, has engaged in vigorous and extensive assessment activity. The institution has made a significant start in seeding a culture of assessment and can build on these efforts in the future.

The Standards of Excellence point to systems and processes, but the evaluation team wanted to acknowledge the people who bring these systems and processes to life. The students we encountered are passionate and articulate. Staff members take on additional responsibilities, both significant and secretarial, to ensure the successful functioning of the College-Institute.

Faculty members balance extensive commitments, including learning e-learning strategies as part of cross-campus collaboration, intensive advising, teaching, scholarship and service, even as their ranks have shrunk. Board members evince deep engagement with and knowledge of the mission and programs. In the people of HUC-JIR, we saw evidence of something more ephemeral than the stuff of the standards, yet deeply positive and sustaining.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Chapter Two: Mission, Goals and Integrity

This Section Covers the Following Standards:

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Standard 6: Integrity

The institution meets Standard 1.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The self-study provides an extensive review of documents regarding mission, with an appropriate focus on planning documents and policy statements. There is an especially intensive focus on how the mission informs assessment processes, ranging from Board surveys to exit interviews with students.
- HUC-JIR's mission and purpose are clear and widely disseminated to multiple constituencies. The mission has been reviewed regularly by the national administration and Board of Governors.
- There is not a clear articulation of how the mission is translated into measurable goals—that is, a limited number of outcomes that reflect the breadth of the institution. In written statements, the mission is occasionally presented as if it were the same as goals. The purpose statement sometimes fulfills this function, sometimes stands in for programs, and sometimes is not addressed in analysis or documentation. The College-Institute need not conform to MSCHE's language, but must clearly distinguish between *raison d'etre* and measurable goals. The current strategic planning process, which aims to present a document to the Board of Governors for initial consideration in May 2013 and final passage in October 2013, is poised to address this gap in its focus on four primary issues.
- Some evidence and the self-study analysis note an imbalance between mission and its fulfillment. The self-study suggests the College-Institute either make the mission better known or adjust it. The self-study and supporting materials demonstrate that the mission is well-advertised (if not known) to constituencies but provide little concrete evidence that it serves as a guide for decision-making (e.g., exit interviews cover many matters with the College-Institute's mission but without any explicit reference or scaffolding connecting the mission and the programs being described or assessed). Ample evidence demonstrates goals assessment on the program level, accompanied by discussion of how individual programs can

be improved. These excellent and important discussions reveal the College-Institute's commitment to institutional renewal, but they are more granular than larger institution-wide goals that, when measured, would provide an overview of mission fulfillment.

- Conversations with diverse constituencies reveal a keen awareness about the competing tensions inherent in the College-Institute's mission, especially between academic and professional training mandates, and how they should relate to the Reform movement and the broader Jewish community. The strategic and academic planning process should provide forums for engaging in this process of mission review.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- HUC-JIR has made significant commitments to program assessment informed by the mission, especially around student learning.

Recommendations

- In the strategic planning process already underway, articulate in a manner that is consistent with the College-Institute's culture and aspirations and is also discernible to outside readers a discrete number of measurable institutional goals that are distinct from the mission/purpose statements. This effort should inform and support the College-Institute's comprehensive recommendation on systems development in the summative chapter as well as institutional assessment efforts.
- The comprehensive recommendation at the self-study's conclusion to gather together the goals of every educational program and administrative unit should be informed by more global institutional goals. Together, they will significantly drive forward overall institutional assessment of whether and how the College-Institute's mission is being fulfilled.

The institution meets Standard 6.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The analysis reviews the extensive materials that document fundamental compliance with this standard. Written materials are widely disseminated and are bolstered by trainings on such key policies as sexual harassment, ADA, and FERPA to students, faculty and staff. Plans are underway to provide faculty and staff training on the National Student Handbook.
- The small size and attention to relationships create an environment where most problems between students and faculty or staff are resolved before they reach the point of formal grievance. In the past ten years on the three US-based campuses, only one grievance was filed. The appropriate policy was implemented and the situation redressed.
- The National Registrar's Office works with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the National Director of Human Resources to ensure compliance in licensing and varying state requirements.
- Through the National Registrar's Office, the College-Institute is in compliance to ensure that

the provisions for ensuring student identity are consistently applied.

- The student tenure process for at-risk students is thoughtful in policy and seems to be implemented effectively. Work is already underway on further clarification of the policy around non-academic dismissal, which at present focuses on behavioral violations but does not allow for more general “fitness for the rabbinate/cantorate” concerns.
- Communications are vetted through a process of review that is at once rigorous and efficient.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The National Student Academic Handbook is a tremendous accomplishment that significantly aids cross-campus consistency and unification.
- The climate around academic freedom is extremely positive: the Board of Governors recently passed a resolution affirming its commitment and faculty were unanimous in expressing their belief that they possess such freedom.
- The sharing of the self-study report with diverse constituencies has been admirable.

Suggestions

- The evaluation team accepts and endorses the College-Institute suggestions for improvement as outlined on page 21 of the self-study report.
- Add treatment of the College-Institute’s recommendation or formal policy on consensual relationships between students and faculty/staff into the bodies of National Student Academic Handbook, and Faculty and Staff Handbooks in a manner distinct from sexual harassment policy and akin to the academic integrity statement.
- Since there is increasing preference for digital documentation, hyperlink and bookmark complex documents such as handbooks to make them more searchable.
- Define in all appropriate handbooks the role of the Academic Advisory Council and the President’s Cabinet.

Chapter 3: Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal & Institutional Resources

This Section Covers the Following Standard:

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets Standard 2.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The Strategic Planning Committee Report (2006) was followed up by a Strategic Planning Oversight Taskforce. This group met in October 2012 with ongoing work through 2013.

Minutes from their meeting indicate detailed discussion, plans and focused questions that relate directly to compliance with Standard 2. There is more than adequate focus on planning and resources as they relate directly to mission. Discussions with Board members provide evidence of Board involvement in the process and clear understanding and articulation of the institution's mission.

- There is engagement of the Board and President's Cabinet in the Strategic Planning process, with input from all constituencies, indicating institutional commitment to renewal.
- There is sufficient evidence of regular tracking of progress as it relates to implementation of the Strategic Plan of 2006 and update of 2012. An ongoing assessment, as reported out as recently as January 2013, provides evidence of monitoring and adjusting strategic plan priorities and recommendations.
- There is assignment of responsibility for improvements and a process in place of regular progress reporting and accountability. There are four main areas of focus, a working group assigned to each and a schedule for completing the work and reporting out.
- There are periodic assessments of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal.
- There is a well-defined budget process that engages the national body, local campuses, Board and administrative leadership. The budget process aligns with the mission and purpose.
- There is evidence over a multi-year period that planning processes are continuous and systematic.
- As part of the strategic planning process and updating of the strategic plan, there is evidence of ongoing evaluation of the economic, political and social climate in which the institution operates. There are initial conversations about the larger context of sustainability for the future and the team encourages those discussions to continue. The Presidential Search process acknowledges and articulates the need for a visionary leader who will deal strategically and creatively with the rapidly changing economic, political and social context.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The unified Student Information System (EMPOWER) demonstrates the implementation of process improvement in response to a gap analysis. The implementation engaged the appropriate stakeholders in a well-defined decision-making process that includes opportunity for ongoing improvement based on regular feedback from users. The system has enabled HUC-JIR to achieve cost savings, improve outcomes and work more effectively on behalf of students, faculty and staff, while strengthening internal management. The implementation process also addressed several fundamental weaknesses identified in private consulting reports and institutional planning processes.
- The New Way Forward (NWF) is evidence of a significant overall plan that responds to a crisis, engaged the community in the process and set revenue generation targets and expenditure reduction targets in line with the strategic plan, overall mission and goals. Moreover, the NWF has been monitored and reported out on a quarterly basis in a clear, concise and transparent manner. Changes have been made in the plan with rationales provided. The plan has involved structural changes, resource allocation changes and priority changes, such as deeper investment in information technology. It is a model for how such deep and significant multi-year institutional change can be implemented, monitored and adjusted. Though not undertaken as a strategic plan, the NWF Plan has emerged from the

crisis of 2008-09 as the governing plan for financial sustainability, complete with benchmarks in periodic NWF Updates.

- A significant and comprehensive fundraising campaign, based upon a planning study, has been very successful and has played a role in achieving a balanced operating budget for FY 2013, overcoming a deficit of \$10M four years ago.

Suggestions

- The team accepts and endorses the HUC-JIR Suggestions for Improvement as outlined on Page 35 of the self-study document.
- Additional efforts are needed to traverse data silos that exist among the student information system, financial system, development and assessment systems.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets Standard 3.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study document, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, students, staff and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- HUC-JIR demonstrates that it has the basic institutional resources necessary to operate an institution with its mission as required by Standard 3. It has also shown deep concern with and focus on the fundamental elements for the standard including an emphasis on the efficient utilization of its resources as it struggles to make sure that it has the wherewithal necessary to function appropriately. This struggle is apparent in several places in the budget:
 - Rate of increase in expenses exceeds operating revenue rate of increase;
 - Increased use of line of credit to meet operating cash needs;
 - Dependence on earnings from asset sales to fund operations;
 - Expenses growing at a faster rate than revenue;
 - A decline in the monies (MUM) received from the Union for Reform Judaism.
- Its four locations and relatively small enrollment in each location strain the resources of the College-Institute in ways that would be less so were there fewer campuses. The self-study speaks to this challenge directly.
- When confronted by the downturn in the stock market and the loss of significant dollars the College-Institute did well to engage an outside firm “to study how the College-Institute could strengthen its balance sheet so as to ensure fiscal sustainability” (p.29). The creation of the NWF Plan together with the creation of a Board oversight committee to monitor it were also decisive actions in exercising firm leadership and careful planning. These two efforts were critical to HUC-JIR’s ability to navigate the challenges of this difficult financial period.
- Staff improvements were made to upgrade the level of oversight of the College-Institute’s financial affairs and business office.
- A committee for financial sustainability was created and meets regularly to explore new business opportunities and models and to plan for the College-Institute’s financial welfare.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College-Institute is to be commended for creating the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. This office has done yeomen’s work without which this self-study could not have been prepared.
- The College-Institute is also to be commended for undertaking the onerous task of auditing all endowment accounts evaluating them against gift agreements.

Suggestions

- Notwithstanding a long history of grappling with the complications and implications of operating on four campuses as well as the recent inability to resolve these issues, HUC-JIR would be well served to keep this topic on its discussion agenda. The team acknowledges the complexity of the issue as well as the fact that such an action is more likely to bring short-term disturbance and negative consequences before it brings positive change. Nonetheless, given that the impact of operating on four campuses is as significant as it is (pointed out within the self-study) and should the College-Institute be faced with significant further reductions of MUM, such an action may well need to be given serious consideration.
- The multi-year capital budget, deferred maintenance budgets, etc., need to be consolidated just as the budget is consolidated and should be synthesized into a “comprehensive infrastructure or facilities master plan and evidence of implementation.”
- At a time when dollars are scarce and great effort is being applied to identify funds and revenue sources, care must be taken not to lose sight of the College-Institute’s mission.
- The team accepts and endorses the suggestions for improvement made by the College–Institute on page 34 of the self-study document that “resource allocation and intuitional renewal need to be tied to the academic vision, etc.,” and “that processes around setting priorities and allocating resources call for greater clarity [, especially...] more integration of financial and academic priorities.” It also accepts and endorses those suggestions on page 35 of the self-study document.

Chapter Four: Leadership, Governance and Administration

This Section Covers the Following Standards:

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Standard 5: Administration

The institution meets Standard 4.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- Major evidence for this chapter included extensive Board materials, including the regulations of the College-Institute (bylaws), the Board of Governors manual, manuals for all three Boards of Overseers, minutes of Board meetings and various committee minutes.
- The analysis clarifies the roles and relationships between the Board of Governors and the Boards of Overseers. The Board of Governors has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the College-Institute and is guided by appropriate policies and practices, including a recently updated conflict of interest policy and clear nominating procedures.
- The Board surveys itself on regular basis and reflects on the results.
- The Board chair provides annual performance reviews of the president and holds an executive session at every Board meeting.
- The President’s Cabinet, augmented relatively recently with the campus deans, plays a critical role in uniting the four campuses into one institution.
- An inclusive Presidential Search Committee has been established.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The Board of Governors acted vigorously in the face of an economic downturn that threatened the College-Institute’s viability. The NWF plan demonstrated the Board and administration’s capacity to change course in a mission-driven fashion in response both to external factors and input from stakeholding communities. The strategies it proposed—cost-cutting, monetizing assets, and fundraising—and the transparent reporting on implementation have been models of assuring that the College-Institute will have the means to fulfill mission.
- Governance has been a major focus of the institution through the work of Governance Task Force, an *ad hoc* committee that was recently made permanent and has issued several recommendations. The recommendations emerge out of a review of best practices and include a new Board orientation and education program.
- Under the current Board chair, the Board has been disciplined in its oversight role and on insisting that the College-Institute administration take full responsibility for financial and administrative matters.

Suggestions

- The team accepts and endorses the College-Institute suggestion for improvement as outlined on page 45 of the self-study document.
- The President’s Cabinet should take a lead in transition planning during the presidential transition to address such matters as symbolic and practical issues and communications.
- In manuals and other materials for the Boards of Overseers, clarify what is expected by “aid and support” for these volunteer organizations.
- In any reflections on how to create a smaller, more nimble board, make certain to clarify the roles between a national board, an executive board, and the boards of overseers.

Recommendations

- Institutionalize the presidential assessment process that is already taking place and document its implementation following the appointment of the new president.
- The faculty governor should report the report to the Board at every meeting.

- In collaboration with the president, vice president for academic affairs and faculty and with the leadership of the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee, the Board should move forward on academic planning and its implementation.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution meets Standard 5.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The College-Institute, in keeping with the fundamental elements for this standard, has the appropriate senior officers, middle managers and rank-and-file staff. The self-study demonstrates adequately that the “Administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institutions organization and governance.” As a result of the organization’s desire to come under a single accreditor, it reorganized its national administrative structure and, to a lesser extent, its campus staffing so as to better fulfill this standards. The administration has created a number of committees and administrative partnerships with which to manage and coordinate the business of the College-Institute. This structure is supplemented by a schedule of regularized meetings and dialogues between and with members of the administration. The result seems to be a good job in presiding over the business of the College-Institute.
- The reorganization referenced above occurred during the economic down turn of 2007-2009 and as a result more positions were cut than might have been best for the school to function at full strength. While some of those positions have been restored, others have not, creating a particularly difficult situation especially in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In the self-study the College-Institute acknowledges the significance of this matter, noting that “The College-Institute must consider next steps in relation to the administrative hiring or reorganization.” The College-Institute is attentive to this situation and committed to resolving it in the best possible way in the very near term.
- The administrative structure of the school has undergone numerous changes over the past few years. These changes seem to have been made thoughtfully and appropriately even when driven by financial concerns.
- The administration and Board of Governors devoted attention to building the appropriate infrastructure to manage properly the financial/business affairs of the College-Institute and have made significant strides.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College-Institute is to be commended for establishing the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. This office has done yeoman’s work without which this self-study could not have been accomplished. It is most unfortunate that the director of this office, significantly responsible for helping the institution reach this point, left at this critical time.

Suggestions

- Every effort should be made to enable all members of the administration to express their views on all matters pertaining directly to their work and that those views are given serious consideration by the national administration and Board of Governors.
- A systematic effort should be made to integrate the different data systems. The team believes that the result, no matter how rudimentary, will be better than the data silos that now exist.

Recommendations

- The functions of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment must be fulfilled in vigorous ways through commitments of the national administration and faculty. This position is typically filled by a director.

**Chapter Five:
Student Admissions, Retention and Support Services**

This Section Covers the Following Standards:

Standard 8: Admissions and Retention
Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to these standards:

- The HUC-JIR goal of achieving “one institution, multiple campuses” while retaining the particular characteristics of distinctive programs is being facilitated by having a National Director of Recruitment and Admissions, a National Registrar’s Office, a National Financial Aid Officer, greater standardization of admission and financial aid policies, and support, based on demonstrated need for entering as well as transfer students.
- Websites, handbooks and brochures are comprehensive and accurately reflect the programs and services offered by the College-Institute.
- Ongoing, evidence-based assessment practices and retention strategies are in place to assure that admitted students are able to attain their educational goals.
- Alumni surveys are regularly administered and provide feedback about student satisfaction.
- The self-study reveals thoughtful consideration of questions regarding the awarding of merit-based financial aid as a means to attract highly qualified students, the impact of the shift to a two-year Hebrew language admissions requirement, and the use of psychological evaluations in the admission process. In interviews, it was acknowledged that these questions will require further study by successor campus committees.

- On each campus, a Dean has oversight of student support services that are reflective of the institutional mission and consistent with students' learning expectations. These administrative services are supplemented by the supportive responsiveness of academic and clinical pastoral program directors and faculty advisors.
- Health insurance is required of all students; on each campus, resource and referral information is available to facilitate access to affordable medical and associated services.
- To assure coherence and consistency, a National Student Academic Handbook addresses all matters related to the student experience and codifies immunization, learning disabilities, sexual harassment, sexual assault and drug-free schools/workplace policies. A Year-In-Israel (YII) Academic Handbook and an extensive website address the needs of students who embark on the required cross-cultural learning experience in their first year.
- Financial literacy workshops facilitate student financial decision-making.
- Mentoring programs and experiential learning activities are available to complement the academic program and to prepare students for leadership in their chosen professions.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The National Student Academic Handbook is a comprehensive, excellent resource for students as well as faculty advisors.
- The Registrar's Office has centralized federal reporting for special populations.

Suggestions

- The YII experience is viewed as an invaluable bonding experience for entering cohorts of students. Despite significant cost, extend opportunities for students who were together in YII to experience time together again, possibly on the model of the Mandel Initiative.
- To the extent feasible, reduce "data silos" and redundancies by improving the functionality and interactivity of student information systems.
- Professionalize Admissions and Recruitment operations and strategy; nurture alumni as potential nominators and recruiters of future students.
- Encourage a school-wide convocation of student representatives to facilitate further integration of multi-campus community.

Recommendations

- Develop a standardized psychological evaluation form to be used during the Admission process, and hold regularly scheduled meetings between the evaluating psychologists on the different campuses to assure uniformity in the psychological assessment process. Also, clarify in published documents (for students and faculty advisors) the purposes of the evaluation and the confidentiality of the results.
- To assure that student opinions are received and valued, increase the number of student respondents to Administrative Surveys and other assessment instruments. This may require special incentives.
- Where feasible and appropriate, add student representatives to faculty and administrative committees.

- Assign all students official advisors before they arrive on Stateside campuses.

Chapter Six: Faculty

This Section Covers the Following Standard:

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The faculty of the College-Institute are very dedicated and hardworking teacher-scholars. They are at the heart of the institution's implementation of its mission. These intertwined and synergistic faculty roles both enrich one another and add to the very substantial demands and complexity of the institution's expectations for its faculty.
- The tenured/tenure-track faculty includes 28 men and 17 women across its four campuses. A number of the women hold positions in areas traditionally dominated in the academy by male scholars. The procedures by which the ranked faculty are appointed, promoted, and evaluated for tenure are articulated in the Faculty Handbook. The institution should continue standardizing the implementation of the stated procedures, while mindful of the situational variations on each campus, as part of its overall goal to create one unified faculty. The majority of tenure-track faculty are awarded tenure. The institution provides support in such forms as mentoring for tenure-track faculty, sabbatical leaves for one semester at full-pay after every fourth year, and travel and research grants.
- The College-Institute rightfully takes pride in having an exemplary faculty in Jewish Studies. Given the importance of scholarly research and publications for the ranked faculty, it is especially important that academic support as well as adequate library resources are developed and maintained with adequate funding. The maintenance of the institution of tenure, discussed in the documents "Academic Vision" and "Faculty Plan," is essential in the retention of an excellent faculty of teacher-scholars.
- The Faculty Handbook is clear in articulating the institution's commitment to academic freedom. It also articulates procedures for disciplinary actions and for addressing grievances concerning promotion and tenure.
- Service on committees is a critical and time-consuming way in which the faculty participates in the governance of the institution. These include committees at local campuses and the cross-campus Faculty Council. There is a faculty representative on the Board of Governors. The faculty designs, revises, and approves the academic curriculum.
- In addition to teaching and scholarship, the faculty has a very broad and demanding range of advising responsibilities and of service requirements not only to their students and the institution, in the immediate sense, but also to the larger Reform Movement and Jewish community. Additionally, they are engaged in co-curricular work with students.

- Most of the information on the faculty, presented in the self-study and institutional documents, concern the ranked faculty. However, the faculty is diverse in its structure; it includes blended faculty who both teach and have administrative roles. While they do not have the security of tenure, they share with the ranked faculty, although at lesser levels, the opportunity for sabbaticals and travel and research grants, and, for some, multi-year contracts. Additionally, the institution employs approximately 80 adjunct faculty members, with the numbers varying significantly among the institution's various programs and schools. The adjunct faculty are vital for meeting the institution's educational needs and for the very existence of some essential programs.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The faculty should be very highly commended for their dedication to their students and to the institution, and for their collegiality within and among the campuses, amidst a resource-tight environment with its increasing demands on faculty workloads.
- The College-Institute has made significant progress in creating one unified faculty through its ongoing processes of standardizing faculty policies and developing practices and structures for increased communication and collaboration among the faculty across the campuses.
- The increased importance of the Faculty Council has been key in enabling the faculty to better advocate for its concerns and develop policies across the campuses.

Suggestions

- The College-Institute should make clear to all of its constituencies that the academic model of a faculty of teacher-scholars, with all of the entailing commitments including issues of faculty size and support, is not a luxury, but, rather, is fundamental and essential to the character of the institution and its ability to carry out its mission. This mission cannot be maintained without a substantial number of tenured and full-time faculty with long-term contracts on each campus.
- The team accepts and endorses all of the College-Institute's suggestions for improvement as outlined on pages 74-75 of the self-study document, with special attention to #8 which reads in part, "The goal of the increased communication ['between the academic and financial arms' of the institution'] is to ensure that that financial considerations alone do not drive changes in the role and/or size of faculty."
- The College-Institute should explore ways in which it can provide opportunities for professional development and growth to ongoing adjunct faculty members who teach a significant number of courses.
- Faculty should be provided with basic administrative support.
- The Faculty Handbook should be updated regularly.
- The institution is encouraged to continue also to establish vehicles for faculty communication across the campuses on matters vital to its roles in teaching and scholarship.
- It is important for the institution to continue to review issues of workload to ensure that they are equitably distributed and reasonable in expectation.
- The College-Institute should continue standardizing the policies and practices of hiring and evaluating adjunct faculty across its campuses and of providing them with feedback.

Recommendation

- The Faculty Handbook should be revised to include procedures for grievances in addition to those which are articulated in “Policies and Procedures.”

Chapter 7: Educational Offerings and Related Activities

This Section Covers the Following Standards:

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets Standard 11.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- As part of the recent changes in structure, HUC-JIR has given thought to its programs on all campuses, their learning goals, and their integration.
- Its programs are coherent and rigorous, and reflect the goals of the institution.
- The College-Institute is becoming aware of the importance of integrating learning goals and evaluating student learning outcomes into the curriculum.
- The plans for period self-examination are excellent, although it is too soon to know how they will be implemented or how effective they are.
- Although this differs by campus, the library and IT resources, in conjunction with material available through consortial agreements, are sufficient to support the educational offerings.
- The small number of non-traditional courses is comparable to regular, traditional courses.
- The transfer credit policy is reasonable and well-articulated, but may leave too much discretion to the individual Program Director.
- No accelerated programs are discussed in the College-Institute material.
- The policies of the institution treat the students as adults, as is appropriate.
- Many of the sampled course syllabi contained learning outcomes.
- The College-Institute is just beginning to think in terms of goals in its various programs and throughout the curriculum, and it is too early to evaluate the integration of student learning at the course, program, campus, and college-wide levels.
- The graduate faculty are properly credentialed and often distinguished in their fields and have developed coherent and thoughtful graduate programs that include assessment of student learning.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College-Institute is making strides toward understanding and implementing learning goals at all levels.

- The College-Institute has made a good beginning in thinking about how to better integrate its programs at better locations.
- The practice of surveying graduates about how their education has served them in the field is very commendable.
- The number of courses in programs that deal with pedagogy (e.g. Teaching the Biblical Text to Adult Jewish Learners) is very commendable.
- The College-Institute website contains information and resources that will help students as they pursue their educational goals.
- The common year in Israel (YII) is well constructed, and helps to build a good educational background for most students, and is especially helpful in creating a student community.
- The insistence on two years of Hebrew, despite the difficulties it creates, is educationally sound, and should be retained.
- Course syllabi were typically clear, up to date, and well-constructed.
- The programs have developed a sound, coherent system for course rotation, and many programs include capstone experiences.

Suggestions

- The team accepts and endorses the HUC-JIR suggestions for improvement as outlined on pages 84-85 of the self-study document, especially as they apply to creating more unity between the campuses.
- Give greater emphasis to the mentoring of Ph.D. students and their socialization into the world of academia, and clarify the Handbook section on “Teaching Assistantships.”
- All courses should have syllabi in electronic form with useful links for students.
- Give more thought concerning “coherence” and “integration” of various types beyond having capstone experiences in most areas.
- Involve students more, at early stages, in curricular and educational decisions and policies.
- Continue to improve distance-learning experiences.
- Focus Ph.D. programs around faculty expertise, special resources at HUC-JIR, and the contemporary need for Ph.D.s in particular areas; increase number of paying MA students. Facilitate ways of faculty on all campuses to work with Ph.D. students in Cincinnati.
- Consideration should be given to mandating an outside reader of Ph.D. dissertations.
- Better accommodate students with advanced Hebrew in YII.
- Renew all-faculty retreat; it is very useful educationally, and helps break down silos.
- Offer more training of faculty concerning how different types of learners may be accommodated in all programs.

Recommendations

- List clear requirements on the website for each graduate program.
- Whenever relevant, courses enrolling students across programs should list different learning goals, assignments, and means for assessment (e.g. Rabbinical vs. Ph.D.).
- Further develop student writing and oral skills throughout the curriculum.
- Faculty at different campuses should routinely share syllabi.
- Revise rabbinical school and other schools’ core curriculum.

- The various on-line and print documents for all programs should be reviewed, and doctoral programs that are no longer viable should be removed.
- The institution must ensure that all syllabi, at all campuses, have explicit, properly articulated learning goals and state methods of assessment that are clearly connected to these goals.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets Standard 13.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and Board members, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- The only undergraduate study is offered through the consortium arrangement with USC. The College-Institute does provide relevant courses and support services for students who are under-prepared in Hebrew and for students who need assistance with writing skills. Certificate programs offered are subjected to the same academic rigor as degree programs.
- Non-credit offerings are in alignment with institutional mission and goals, are designed with clearly articulated program goals and objectives, have sufficient academic oversight.
- Policies and procedures for transfer credit, credit for experiential learning, credit from unaccredited institutions and advanced standing are covered in the National Student Academic Handbook.
- Offerings at additional locations, including the Jerusalem campus, meet comparable standards for quality of instruction, academic rigor and educational effectiveness. Additional locations are linked robustly especially through the use of videoconferencing technology and the cross-location visits by faculty and staff. Additionally, students from across the locations experience their first year in Jerusalem as a cohort, further linking them together and unifying their academic experience.
- eLearning meets the basic fundamental elements of distance education; more can be done to address broader fundamental and optional elements, some of which were raised as concerns by HUC-JIR itself in the eLearning Strategic Planning report (see “Suggestions” below).
- Satisfactory evidence exists of the institution’s appropriate oversight of participation in several consortial arrangements with other academic institutions for joint academic programs and selected student services. These meet the fundamental elements of Standard 13 and comport with the institution’s mission, goals and academic integrity.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The Mandel Initiative, which addresses leadership capacity of rabbinical students, provides a model for how non-credit programs are to be aligned with mission, detail learning goals and document assessment and analyze effectiveness results.
- The eLearning Strategic Plan is exemplary in both content and process. It is clear, concise and addresses the major issues that impact most institutions engaged in distance education. The Plan lays out a framework for moving forward that links the campuses and national

organization and sets modest goals for the HUC-JIR, in alignment with mission and considering both the NWF and contemporary demands for eLearning.

Suggestions

- The team concurs with the Suggestions for Improvement in the HUC-JIR self-study report pages 84-85, but underscores the importance of faculty training in distance education, which includes an emphasis on pedagogy and course design and is not limited to technical tool proficiency. HUC-JIR might consider making such training mandatory for any faculty who are going to teach online courses, in light of the lack of experience and resistance to such modality that is cited in the eLearning Strategic Plan report of September 2011.
- HUC-JIR has adopted a thoughtful and cautious approach to further expansion of fully online courses and the eLearning Strategic Plan highlights some areas to be addressed, such as uptime, bandwidth and support. Most of the institution's eLearning efforts currently utilize synchronous videoconferencing. There is modest interest in pursuing some asynchronous online learning. Should HUC-JIR further pursue this option, it is suggested that an ASP (application service provider) be pursued rather than pursue internal expansion of the use of Sakai. HUC-JIR does not seem to have the internal capacity to address additional accreditation guidelines for fully online courses/programs. For example, online students should be supported with 24x7 technical support and access to a robust and reliable system. Faculty must be well trained by qualified training staff. Sakai is a proven collaborative tool, enhancing face to face instruction, but is not well-suited for deployment as a learning management system for fully online students at remote locations. Selection of an ASP can provide a better learning platform for fully online, 24x7 tech support for students and faculty, guarantee of quality through an SLA (service level agreement) that specifies reliability and uptime performance measures. Furthermore, such an arrangement is typically a pay as you go model scaled to meet the needs of additional tuition-paying students.

Chapter 8: Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) and Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning)

This Section Covers the Following Standards:

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets these standards.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

- Key individuals among the administration and faculty of the College-Institute have continued the task of building a framework for institutional and student learning assessment described in the Progress Letter submitted to the Commission in 2009. At that time, a National

Committee on Assessment was formed and given responsibility for student learning outcomes, analysis of campus surveys and making budgetary recommendations with regard to assessment needs. Work to date reflects a decided focus on trying to develop the means to measure student learning outcomes, while institutional assessment mechanisms have yet to be fully realized and put in practice.

- Multiple methods of assessment have been used in the past to enrich the College-Institute's strategic planning process. In the same way, multiple approaches to conducting institutional and student learning assessment are described in the self-study, although in pockets of activity. The need for unity of effort dictated by well-defined goals within a strong assessment plan is implicit.
- Assessment activities around student learning outcomes have increased since 2008, as illustrated by the College-Institute's development and use of a Rabbinical Matrix to describe measurable learning dimensions, although the practice is still nascent. Another move has been to use Guidelines for Assessment for evaluating individual students at the LA location.
- An assessment officer hired in 2009 began to lay the foundation for building a stronger assessment function within HUC-JIR. Work is underway to enhance "authentic assessment" approaches first reported in the HUC-JIR Progress Letter to the Commission that year. Use of a narrative assessment program has created healthier dialogue and resulted in launching fresh pedagogical techniques and introducing new topics into teaching. However, the self-study indicates that adjustments are needed in the narrative assessment program. Lack of a common vocabulary and sets of objectives makes it difficult to translate/aggregate evidence into cogent conclusions about program success and thereby make recommendations for positive change.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress or exemplary/innovative practices

- The collaborative exchange that has taken place among HUC-JIR's diverse campuses to build a framework for assessment in recent years is encouraging. As a result, a more cohesive approach to assessment has begun and there appears to be a growing sense of assessment requirements.
- The *Administrative Assessment Results 2012* document illustrates the kind of Institutional Assessment activity initiated by HUC-JIR to obtain useful data to inform decision-making about operations. Suggestions made in the document include ways to strengthen the financial aid website, the budgeting process and technology. Suggestions that are consonant with institutional goals can be transformed into actions that bolster and improve the College-Institute and its distinctive service to a diverse community of students and staff.
- The technological infrastructure necessary to support an expanding electronic exchange of assessment material is growing and the skill to enhance it as assessment functions on campus increase appears to be in place.
- A mix of direct assessment tools for measuring student learning at HUC – JIR has been developed and put into use in some areas recently and holds promise for future assessment practice. MODEL rubrics help to guide thinking about skill development in students by encouraging sharing of a common language of evaluation. Another approach being used now in the rabbinical program is to combine results from a trio of measures – a traditional scale-item instrument, narrative assessments and evaluations based on MODEL rubrics. This collection of tools for assessment and the data they generate may make it possible in the

future to aggregate findings and analyze them in a global fashion that can lead to more effective evaluation of programs and sites.

Suggestions

- Commit to creating a robust process for documenting Strategic Plan elements that align in purpose and intent with assessment of the institution (Standard 7) and student learning outcomes (Standard 14). Create metrics from data in College-Institute units and programs that can be tracked over time from a given baseline year throughout the Strategic Plan.
- Use publicly available data sources, e.g. IPEDS, to track changes in institutional characteristics longitudinally; engage in a process of data collection, dialogue and reflection to create a list of comparison group institutions that can be used for ongoing assessment, relative to other “like” institutions, of progress on key College characteristics, i.e. enrollment, finances, financial aid, programs offered, etc.
- On a periodic basis, administer valid and reliable satisfaction surveys to collect sufficient data from students, staff and alumni in order to obtain institutional and, when possible, comparison group data.
- Consider alternatives that are available for building a management information system that strengthens electronic communication among campuses and makes possible the creation of a platform for exchange of College-Institute data and available reports on institutional research and student learning assessments.
- Condense rubrics and matrices that are used to describe desired dimensions of expertise within programs into fewer, streamlined constructs that are easier to document.
- The team concurs with the self-study suggestion regarding Standard 7 that the institution continue to improve integration of learning outcomes with existing data and new survey results from the diverse administrative functions.
- Create a long-range calendar of institutional research activity, for example, alumni surveys, focus group research or Board assessment, which will make it possible to anticipate future personnel and budgetary needs around assessment.

Recommendations

- Show evidence of a culture of assessment of student learning outcomes that emanates from faculty initiatives and accountability and satisfies Commission expectations.
- Develop a systematic, on-going institutional assessment plan tied to the institution’s mission and goals that guides institutional and student learning assessment activity at once in a unified manner.
- With faculty involvement, create a comprehensive academic assessment plan with clearly articulated mission and goals that incorporates a balance of direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes and provides a guide for enacting change and improvement in College-Institute programs based on assessment findings.
- Establish the mechanisms and accountability for gathering a broader selection of evidence of student learning outcomes and using them for assessment. Learning Outcomes Networks (LONs) provide the framework for conducting assessment, but how assessment results are used in practical ways thereafter for changing and improving student performance are unclear and need to be strengthened in relation to Commission standards on assessment.

VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

Recommendations

- In the strategic planning process already underway, articulate in a manner that is consistent with the College-Institute's culture and aspirations and is also discernible to outside readers a discrete number of measurable institutional goals that are distinct from the mission/purpose statements. This effort should inform and support the College-Institute's comprehensive recommendation on systems development in the summative chapter as well as institutional assessment efforts.
- The comprehensive recommendation at the self-study's conclusion to gather together the goals of every educational program and administrative unit should be informed by more global institutional goals. Together, they will significantly drive forward overall institutional assessment of whether and how the College-Institute's mission is being fulfilled.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

Recommendations

- Institutionalize the presidential assessment process that is already taking place and document its implementation following the appointment of the new president.
- The faculty governor should report the report to the Board at every meeting.
- In collaboration with the president, vice president for academic affairs and faculty and with the leadership of the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee, the Board should move forward on academic planning and its implementation.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

Recommendation

- The functions of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment must be fulfilled in vigorous ways through commitments of the national administration and faculty. This position is typically filled by a director.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

Recommendations

- Develop a standardized psychological evaluation form to be used during the Admission process, and hold regularly scheduled meetings between the evaluating psychologists on the different campuses to assure uniformity in the psychological assessment process. Also, clarify in published documents (for students and faculty advisors) the purposes of the evaluation and the confidentiality of the results.
- To assure that student opinions are received and valued, increase the number of student respondents to Administrative Surveys and other assessment instruments. This may require special incentives.
- Where feasible and appropriate, add student representatives to faculty and administrative committees.
- Assign all students official advisors before they arrive on Stateside campuses.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

Recommendation

- The Faculty Handbook should be revised to include procedures for grievances in addition to those which are articulated in "Policies and Procedures."

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

Recommendations

- List clear requirements on the website for each graduate program.
- Whenever relevant, courses enrolling students across programs should list different learning goals, assignments, and means for assessment (e.g. Rabbinical vs. Ph.D.).
- Further develop student writing and oral skills throughout the curriculum.
- Faculty at different campuses should routinely share syllabi.
- Revise rabbinical school and other schools' core curriculum.
- The various on-line and print documents for all programs should be reviewed, and doctoral programs that are no longer viable should be removed.
- The institution must ensure that all syllabi, at all campuses, have explicit, properly articulated learning goals and state methods of assessment that are clearly connected to these goals.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Recommendations

- Show evidence of a culture of assessment of student learning outcomes that emanates from faculty initiatives and accountability and satisfies Commission expectations.
- Develop a systematic, on-going institutional assessment plan tied to the institution's mission and goals that guides institutional and student learning assessment activity at once in a unified manner.
- With faculty involvement, create a comprehensive academic assessment plan with clearly articulated mission and goals that incorporates a balance of direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes and provides a guide for enacting change and improvement in College-Institute programs based on assessment findings.
- Establish the mechanisms and accountability for gathering a broader selection of evidence of student learning outcomes and using them for assessment. Learning Outcomes Networks (LONs) provide the framework for conducting assessment, but how assessment results are used in practical ways thereafter for changing and improving student performance are unclear and need to be strengthened in relation to Commission standards on assessment.