

## 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.