An Institutional Partnership
Doctoral Students Find Teaching Niche

Michael Lyons, a Ph.D. student at HUC-JIR’s Pines School of Graduate Studies, engages with a student in one of two courses he was teaching at MTSO.

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Methodist Theological School in Ohio Professor John Kampen is a loyal alumnus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he earned his doctorate and teaches a course on the Dead Sea Scrolls. HUC-JIR, which has campuses in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York City, is the largest Jewish seminary in North America.

Dr. Kampen’s affinity for both MTSO and HUC-JIR led him to propose a program that benefits each of them.

“I was aware of both the emerging needs of our school to broaden its pool of people available for part-time instruction and the peculiar problems that face a graduate school like Hebrew Union College,” said Dr. Kampen, who holds the Dunn Chair in Biblical Interpretation at MTSO. HUC-JIR has doctoral students who hope to teach in higher education, some in seminaries.

Dr. Kampen spearheaded the formation of a joint Instructional Preparation Program to bring well-qualified HUC-JIR doctoral students to MTSO as teachers in their fields of expertise, with mentoring by MTSO faculty. Dr. Richard Sarason, Director of HUC-JIR’s Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies, said his school sees unique value in the MTSO partnership.

“We are delighted by and seek out opportunities for our graduate students to have not only teaching opportunities in various contexts but, in particular, mentored teaching opportunities,” Dr. Sarason said. “That is what’s so wonderful about the MTSO experience.”

“Give me a Jewish teacher from a Christian seminary,” said MTSO President Jay Rundell. “We’re happy to engage in a partnership that enhances the education we can provide our students and provides HUC-JIR’s doctoral students with a unique opportunity.”

The program concluded its first semester in the fall, during which PSGS Ph.D. student Michael Lyons taught two MTSO courses: Introduction to Hebrew Bible and Basic Texts in the Moses Tradition.

“I’ve had a few students go out of their way to volunteer how well they liked his course,” Dr. Kampen said. “That doesn’t happen that often.”

Following an energetic late-semester Introduction to Hebrew Bible class, several students lined up to pick Mr. Lyons’ brain about elements of his lecture. It’s a response Mr. Lyons relishes.

“It’s fun to see students who think about what we just talked about and bring follow-up questions,” he said. “They want to know, ‘How does this work with this text over here?’ or, ‘How does this work with the New Testament?’

“What I would love to do is teach pastors and help pastors understand the beauty of the Old Testament for the Church today,” Mr. Lyons said. “We live in a time in which the Old Testament is kind of looked at as an archaic document that has nothing to do with our world today, and I would beg to differ.”

Dr. Kampen sees value in bringing a teacher from a Jewish seminary to a Christian seminary: “It’s important for both seminaries with regard to the interchange of ideas and religious traditions. It’s

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Dear Students,
Faculty, Alumni,
and Friends of
the Pines School of Graduate Studies,

The new logo and masthead on this issue of Kol Hadash proudly proclaim our new status as the Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies and reflect all that has been most exciting and generative during this significant year in the history of our School (which, by the way, will be celebrating its 70th anniversary during the 2017-18 academic year!)

Dedication of the Pines School of Graduate Studies

The Graduate School was formally renamed and rededicated during the October meeting here of the College-Institute’s Board of Governors. President Aaron Panken spoke warmly of the significant contribution that Joan Pines has made to sustaining and strengthening the work of the institution, and Dean Jonathan Cohen expressed gratitude specifically for the transformative gift that she and her family have made through the Phillip and Joan Pines Charitable Foundation to the School of Graduate Studies, which now bears the Pines name. Joan’s children also honored her on that occasion with a sculpture that adorns the vestibule of the Hermann Learning Center (the classroom building) on the Cincinnati campus. Joan met with the graduate students at a dessert reception when she was in Cincinnati for Founder’s Day celebrations and for the spring meeting of the HUC-JIR Central Region Board of Overseers, which she chairs.

SBL Alumni Luncheon

Sixty-five people attended this year’s PSGS alumni luncheon at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta. Dean Jonathan Cohen explained to participants the significance of the Pines gift for the strengthening and future growth of the Graduate School and its graduate programs.

Dr. Nili Fox, the former director of our Graduate School, was presented with a gift of two artistic glass pieces from the Graduate School Alumni Association in gratitude for her five years of devoted service to the School. Dr. John Kampen, the president of the Alumni Association, reported on the successful piloting of the new graduate student mentoring program and invited more alumni to participate as mentors. He also spoke about the importance of alumni giving to the PSGS—the amount of each contribution is less important than the participation rate, which tangibly signals the depth of alumni support for the Graduate School. Dr. Jonathan Greer, who is associate director of the archaeological excavations at Tel Dan this year, spoke about the excavations. Five of our graduate students will be participating in the dig this summer as part of their summer-in-Israel program, which is being planned and supervised by Drs. Nili Fox, Jason Kalman, and David Ilan.
Graduate Student Presentations at Academic Meetings

Ten of our graduate students will have made presentations at academic meetings this year by the time you are reading this. Our students gave papers at the national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Evangelical Theological Society, as well as at regional SBL meetings. The PSGS, together with the Dean’s Office, has given financial support for travel and lodging costs to support this important activity. The Graduate Student Association sponsored a lunchtime forum at which students could present their papers in a “trial run” and get feedback from their peers and professors. The GSA also sponsored a lunchtime workshop at which scholars shared insights about both how to frame, prepare, and make academic presentations and how to publish academic books and articles.

Promoting a Culture of Reflective Teaching

Several initiatives have been taken this year to promote and enrich a culture of articulated thoughtful teaching among faculty and graduate students. The graduate faculty, facilitated by a consultant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion, engaged in a full day of discussion about how best to engage graduate students in the teaching enterprise. The Graduate Faculty Executive Committee will develop programmatic steps to further the goals and strategies agreed upon during this discussion. Through the good offices of Dr. John Kampen, working together with Dean Jonathan Cohen and Dr. Nili Fox, we now have an annual mentored teaching opportunity for one of our graduate students at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO). This year the position was held by Michael Lyons, who received rave reviews from students and MTSO faculty alike. (See the article on page 1.) We have also had graduate students teaching regularly at the University of Dayton, and often at Xavier University, and are looking to provide more opportunities for mentoring in these and other contexts.

Graduate School Admissions and Graduation

The PSGS received 24 applications for admission this year—21 to the Ph.D. program and 3 to the M.A. program. As these lines are being written, offers of admission are being sent out. We will not know the final results until the second half of April. At graduation exercises in late May, we will be awarding one Ph.D. degree, and expect to be awarding two M.A.’s and from four to six M.Phil’s—these latter degrees signify the successful completion of comprehensive exams, leaving only dissertation work to be done. We will also be awarding one D.H.L. at graduation exercises in Los Angeles.

Graduate Alum-in-Residence

The alum-in-residence program allows us annually to bring to campus one of our academically distinguished alums to work with our students on practical professional skills and to make an academic presentation to the community. This spring we were delighted to welcome back our distinguished alumna Dr. Ruth Langer, Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Theology at Boston College and Associate Director of its Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. Dr. Langer made an academic presentation to the HUC-JIR community on “Probing Presumptions about Early Rabbinic Prayer: Interpreting Rabbinic Texts,” and gave two workshops for graduate students, on “Constructing an Effective Syllabus” and “Using Canvas: An Example of Course-Management Software.” She also met informally with students and faculty in a variety of settings.

It has been a genuine pleasure, as well as an honor for me over these past nine months to meet continued on page 8
One of the current buzzwords throughout higher education in recent years, and certainly at my institution, is cultural competency. We are supposed to be educating students for the ability to function at a professional level in a humane and empathetic manner in a variety of cultural and religious settings. These discussions have led me to reflect on how I approach the issue and the extent to which it has been informed by my experience and education at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion.

How I would characterize what I bring to the table in these discussions is textual competency. I learned something about how to read texts and the work required to engage in that task through a sustained encounter with a body of discrete literature written by or for the Jewish community, or in some manner considered important to that community's history. This ability to engage in what the discipline refers to as a “deep reading” within a specific cultural context permitted me to develop a competency that has provided the basis for my research, as well as my administrative and educational career. The ability to critique texts that have had a negative impact on the Jewish community also was an important part of the educational experience. And all of this occurred within an institution of that same community, a school with its own ethos within the Jewish world with a particular contribution to make. It all happened around the discussion of texts and their significance, for that world and for the remainder of creation. As I progressed through my career, I was sometimes surprised to find the extent to which the manner in which I had learned to read texts served me very well in various institutions and the communities they represented.

It is this opportunity that I want to support for my own seminary students and for the students in other colleges, universities, and seminaries throughout the country, as well as around the world. It remains an important task of the Alumni Association to demonstrate to private donors and granting foundations that we value and believe in the type of education that we received and that is now available through the Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies. With the new opportunity that has been given to the Graduate School through the Pines endowment, it is crucial that the support of its graduates can be demonstrated to all those who have a stake in the future of HUC-JIR. In order to demonstrate this support, it is important that we make a regular annual gift. Occasional gifts in response to a reminder such as this one will not demonstrate the depth of the gratitude we feel for the manner in which we were shaped and nourished in our careers by the Graduate School of HUC-JIR. It also will not provide the necessary basis for the PSGS to take full advantage of this opportune moment. Only a regular ongoing demonstration of our support will convince others of how much we value what we received.

My educational experience at HUC-JIR was a remarkable gift. I was reminded of that today as I listened to Ph.D. students presently enrolled in the PSGS present their papers at a regional Society of Biblical Literature meeting. The intellectual depth of their work and the academic integrity of their analysis were apparent. This depth and integrity were also evident as the discussions proceeded, affirming that we brought a distinctive voice to the discussion that grew out of the totality of our HUC–JIR experience. At one point, one of the students leaned over to me and said, “That’s the difference that an HUC-JIR education makes.” I remembered and was grateful.

Dr. John I. Kampen is holds the Dunn Chair in Biblical Interpretation at Methodist Theological School in Ohio in Delaware, Ohio.
“Art is long, and Time is fleeting,” said Longfellow, a phrase that seems particularly applicable to life as graduate students. Though the first semester of this year has slipped away, and over half of the second, it always seems that more study remains undone than otherwise. Looking back, however, we may note several high points of the past six months that have marked the swiftly passing time.

Two significant developments for the School of Graduate Studies took place at the beginning of the school year. After half a decade of dauntless service as director, Dr. Nili Fox relinquished that role into the capable hands of Dr. Richard Sarason. I feel confident in speaking for my fellow students when I say that we greatly appreciate Dr. Fox’s work on our behalf, and look forward to working with Dr. Sarason during his term as director. Secondly, as I am sure everyone is aware, in October the School was officially renamed the Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies. This naming was in honor of the significant contributions made by Joan Pines and her family that help to strengthen the School in several ways.

Following the tradition of years past, several of our students have participated in academic conferences this year. Jordan Jones, Andrew Higginbotham, and I presented papers at the national Society of Biblical Literature meeting in November, which was held in Atlanta. The proximity of this year’s conference enabled several other students to attend as well. We were able to attend papers presented by several HUC-JIR alumni, and to attend a luncheon that demonstrated the workings of the alumni network. In December, Mark Shaffer, Jared Saltz, and Andrew Higginbotham also presented papers at the Association for Jewish Studies conference in Boston. Andrew Higginbotham, Guy Ridge, Caleb Gilmore, Jared Saltz, Mark Shaffer, Matt Boersma, and Sharon Love have presented papers at regional SBL conferences this semester. The graduate student body also demonstrated its supportive and collegial nature as it held mock presentations to assist fellow students in fine-tuning the papers that were being presented at these conferences.

As has been the case in the past, the Dean’s Office and the Pines School of Graduate Studies have assisted our students presenting papers at these conferences by granting subsidies for travel expenses. Attending conferences and presenting research is not only a valuable experience for young scholars, but it also helps spread awareness of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Pines School of Graduate Studies throughout the academic community. Our students have performed admirably, and demonstrated a capacity to conduct and present presentations on various topics such as biblical literature and Jewish studies. 

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PSGS alumna Dr. Ruth Langer, Professor of Jewish Studies and Associate Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, presents a workshop to PSGS students and faculty.
present research on par with students from any other school represented.

The Graduate Executive Committee has reviewed application materials for students hoping to join the Pines School of Graduate Studies in the fall of 2016. A good number of applications were received, and we look forward to welcoming those who have been accepted as our new colleagues at the end of the summer.

In the second week of March, we enjoyed a visit from this year’s Alumna in Residence, Dr. Ruth Langer from Boston College. In addition to a presentation on early rabbinic prayer—an area of her own research—she offered forums on the construction of effective syllabi and the use of course management software.

These annual visits from HUC-JIR alumni are not only a valuable source of insight and information for us as future educators, but they also offer an excellent forum to become acquainted with individuals established in academia around the country.

Under the leadership of Drs. Jason Kalman and Nili Fox, planning has also begun for the biennial archaeology program in Israel this summer. This year, the students will have the opportunity to participate at the dig site at Tel Dan after a few weeks of educational tours in and around Jerusalem and several other locations. Excitement is high among those participating in the program this year, and it promises to be a great experience.
... and Births!

Scott Ashmon, ed. 

Hélène Dallaire

Lee M. Fields

Edmon L. Gallagher

Seymour (Sy) Gitin and Shmuel Ahituv

Kyle Greenwood

Richard Hess


W. David Nelson and Pamela Barmash, eds. 

Benjamin J. Noonan


Vadim Putzu

Andrew J. Riley

**Promotions**

Scott Ashmon
Named Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education at Concordia University in Irvine, California.

Michael D. Matlock
Promoted to full professor, effective July 1, 2016, at Asbury Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky, where he teaches Biblical Studies, the Old Testament, and Early Judaism.

Sung Jin Park
Promoted to Dean of Asian Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Births**

Kurt and Karen Backlund announce the birth of their son, Finn Fisher Backlund, on January 5, 2016.
also important in terms of forming educational alliances with different faith traditions.”

HUC-JIR’s Dr. Sarason said this cooperation between schools of Jewish and Christian traditions is “a huge value, first of all because both our rabbinical program and our graduate program promote interfaith understanding. We have a required course in the rabbinical program on Christian scriptures.”

HUC-JIR Ph.D. student Guy Ridge will be teaching at MTSO during the next academic year, offering one course each semester. His selection was vetted at HUC-JIR by Dr. Sarason and at MTSO by Dr. Kampen, who made the recommendation to MTSO Dean Lisa Withrow. Meanwhile, Mr. Lyons departed with gratitude for his time at MTSO.

“I’ve never had the opportunity to teach in a Christian seminary setting, which is really what I’d like to do in the long term, so this has been a fantastic opportunity,” he said. “This is a great environment: students who really want to ask hard questions and think seriously about the Bible in new ways.”

with so many of you, our alumni, at professional meetings. A large number of our applicants to the PSGS this year have indicated that they were inspired to apply to our school on account of their contact with you—in your classrooms, in your offices, and through your publications. Keep up the good work, and let’s keep our partnership strong!

Support Needed

We need your support! Alumni support is vital for funding student fellowships. Our spendable annual endowment income does not fully cover the aggregate cost of tuition (which is rising) that the Pines School of Graduate Studies pays to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion each year. Additionally, student stipends are funded entirely out of annual fundraising and contributions. Our goal is to accept more qualified students to the PSGS, but without generous alumni support the number of students that we can fund remains limited. As you know, we no longer ask you for annual dues. Please consider a gift specifically designated to the PSGS Scholarship Fund. Help us to invest in our current and future students, just as we have invested in each one of you. Every dollar that you contribute goes directly to student financial support. You can donate by mail or online.

If you have questions or want more information, contact Shelly Goldfarb, PSGS Administrative Assistant, at 513.487.3230 or sgoldfarb@huc.edu.