From the Director

Excitement has been growing since the announcement that the Jim Joseph Foundation has granted HUC-JIR $3.7 million to support scholarships to prepare the next generation of Jewish educators. Faculty and board members have greeted the news with enthusiasm, and Rhea Hirsch Alumni have sprung into action to identify potential students. I am writing to urge you to use the news to redouble your efforts to identify college students and recent graduates who would make excellent Jewish educators. By telling them — and their parents! — about the scholarships, you may be able to persuade someone who is considering many options to choose the path you have chosen: to make a difference in the world and for the Jewish people by becoming a professional Jewish educator.

Several alumni have been in touch with me since the announcement of the new scholarship program with questions they have been asked by potential candidates. A FAQ addressing these questions can be found on the next page. If you have other questions, please be in touch with me directly.

An equally important, but less well-publicized, aspect of the foundation’s support is the expansion of programs in Jewish education. Many new ideas are on the table, and a planning team comprising education faculty and staff along with administrators from throughout the HUC system will be working this year to develop alternate pathways to education degrees as well as several certificate programs. The goal of any new degree program that might emerge from this planning process is to increase the number of well-prepared, highly-qualified Jewish educators. By making an HUC education available to a broader range of people, particularly professionals already working in leadership positions in Jewish education without the benefits of the Jewish studies and professional learning HUC provides, we can meet the foundation’s objectives and address the needs of the field for well-prepared educators. For those who have significant experience in the field but cannot relocate to one of our campuses in order to participate in our flagship residential degree programs, an executive degree program could provide mid-career students opportunities to learn from HUC faculty together with a group of colleagues, to amass a greater wealth of Judaica knowledge and to have a powerful Israel experience as well. This could have a great impact on the field as more and more educators learn to speak the language of Jewish education.

We are also considering offering short-term certificate programs in targeted areas within Jewish education. Among the areas being considered are social justice and service learning leadership, technology and new media in Jewish education, experiential education, adolescent education, and early childhood education. These specialty certificates would be available to people just beginning to work in Jewish education as well as to experienced Jewish professionals seeking to develop particular areas of expertise.

I also want to let you know about an exciting learning opportunity that will be available in the San Francisco Bay Area on January 26th. If you live in the Bay Area or can travel there easily, you may want to consider spending a day with the HUC education faculty and with Ron Berger, author of An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship in Schools, a book which has transformed the way we think about Jewish education in...
congregations, day schools and camps and has even changed how we educate graduate students at HUC.

Finally, I want to thank the RISOE Alumni Association for creating and supporting a new program at the school, the Cutter Colloquium. Every other year, this program will bring an outstanding scholar from general education to HUC to share how his or her work can enrich our work in Jewish education. The inaugural Cutter Colloquium Scholar was Dr. Debby Kerdeman (MAJE, ’81) professor at the University of Washington, and one of Bill’s outstanding students in the early days of the Rhea Hirsch School. Debby taught us about some of her ground-breaking ideas about teacher education and facilitated a stimulating series of conversations about how we, as educators, often confront conflicts between different values we treasure. One enduring understanding that emerged was that when we as educators feel discomfited we may naturally tend to look for technical responses to the situations we confront, but we can unlock new and different responses by “leading with values,” that is, inquiring into how values that we cherish might be coming into conflict with one another as we confront the situation we face.

In future issues of Tikshoret, I look forward to sharing with you news about our unfolding plans for the future as well as letting you know what is happening at the school now. I look forward to your continued partnership as we build a future for the Rhea Hirsch School and for the profession we have all chosen as our life’s work.

All my best wishes for a fulfilling year in your chosen area within the world of Jewish education.

Michael

**FAQ**

**Full Tuition Scholarships Available for Education Students at HUC-JIR**

How is HUC-JIR able to offer full-tuition scholarships?
HUC-JIR has received a generous grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation for scholarships for people preparing for careers as professional Jewish educators.

Who is eligible for the scholarships?
Students who study Jewish education full-time at the College-Institute are eligible for full tuition scholarships.

Do the scholarships cover tuition for all three years of the program?
Students who are accepted to the program and begin their studies in 2010 will receive full tuition scholarships for the entire 3 years of their studies at HUC-JIR.

Do incoming students need to apply separately for the scholarship?
The admissions application is also the scholarship application. No separate scholarship application is required.

When will applicants be notified of their scholarships?
While applicants are notified of admissions after review of their application file and an in-person interview, matriculation (beginning the program) is dependent on an applicant passing the Hebrew exam. Students will be informed about their scholarships when they are notified about matriculation. (Students who do not pass the Hebrew exam but whose scores are close to passing are invited to a “pre-Ulpan” in Israel and, after a month of study, are given the opportunity to begin the regular program. At the end of the summer, their progress will be evaluated along with the other students in the class. Students who successfully complete this option will be informed of their scholarships at the end of the summer.)
From the Chairperson

Cindy Reich ’84

“The days go slowly, but the years go quickly.”

A member of our congregation, lamenting the departure of his first child for college, captured the way time seems to pass when we look back retrospectively. These words also rang true when we gathered in May at Stephen S. Wise Temple in Los Angeles and at the College to celebrate the graduation of the Class of 2009 of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education Alumni Association. In July, I had the privilege of assuming the chair of our Association. At this time of transition I want to offer my thanks to out-going chair Julia Phillips Berger (’00), for her devotion, hard work, and attention to detail as chair for the last two years. Thanks, also, to everyone who has served on or chaired Alumni Association Working Groups. Thanks to the people who have accepted new responsibilities on Working Groups and on the Association’s Executive Committee. One of the great pleasures of working with the Alumni Association is partnering with our staff members, Debbie Niederman (’93) and Joy Wasserman (’84), consummate professionals who have vision and know how to get things done. And, aharon aharon haviv, it is exciting to work with Michael Zeldin (’77), who inspires and leads us in the work we do for the College and for the profession of Jewish education.

In the months ahead, RHSE Alumni can look forward to opportunities for learning and professional development, support for the College in the areas of recruitment and development, and new ways of linking with each other professionally. We’re looking into ways to improve communication about the Alumni Association, both for ourselves and for the College community. We’re exploring the use of new technologies both for learning and for communication. And, we’re interested in making connections with our colleagues who are graduates of the New York Campus’ School of Education. There’s lots of work to do, and I invite you to get involved.

Mazel tov and derech tselecha to the Class of 2009 and wishes for a healthy, productive and meaningful year in 5770.

Recruitment Corner

Lori B. Sagarin ‘84, Recruitment Working Group Chair

We hope that our colleagues who served at the URJ camps this summer had meaningful experiences and lots of fun! If any of you encountered young adults who expressed an interest in professional Jewish life and finding out more about the HUC graduate programs, we would appreciate if you could forward those names to Debbie Abelson at <dabelson@huc.edu>. You are our most important and critical contacts in identifying potential applicants. Please take a moment to get these names to Debbie at your earliest convenience.
Honorary Doctorate Recipient

We are thrilled to share the news of our colleague Wendy Robinson Schwartz ('84) who received her Honorary Doctorate at the New York campus of HUC-JIR this past spring.

WENDY ROBINSON SCHWARTZ, RJE

Committed educator
Whose service to the Jewish communities in Minnesota and now at Temple Israel in Minneapolis as Adult Learning and Confirmation Coordinator and Program Coordinator has directed the course of her life
Whose personal involvement in life cycle events in her community has encouraged her congregational members to explore their commitment to mitzvot, ritual and Jewish learning
Who, as Wedding Coordinator at Beth Jacob Congregation in Mendota Heights, has the distinct pleasure of coordinating and facilitating the ritual preparations leading up to the Chuppah
Who has successfully created and implemented innovative programming for those interested in converting to Judaism
And who has been an active voice in her communities for the advancement of Jewish education

Mazel tov to our newest alumni of the RHSOE program, who graduated in May of 2009:

Joint Masters
Melissa Bell (MAJE/MAJCS) — Director of Teen Services; Sid Jacobson JCC in East Hills, NY
Matthew Kahn (MAJE/MAJCS) — Director of Religious School Special Programs; Congregation Shir Ha-Ma’alot; Irvine, CA
Luisa Moss (MAJE/MAJCS) — Assistant Director of Religious School; Temple Adat Elohim; Thousand Oaks, CA
Laura Siegel (MAJE/MAJCS) — Executive Educational Officer and Fundraiser; Jewish National Fund South Africa

Emily Walsh (MAJE/MAJCS) — Assistant Director of Education for Youth and Family; Congregation B’nai Jeshurun; New York, NY

Continuing Rabbinical Students
Rachel Ackerman (MAJE)
Jordi Schuster (MAJE)
Jake Singer-Beilin (MAJE)
Rebekah Stern (MAJE)
Julia Weisz (MAJE)

Our Alumni Association is comprised of our executive committee and the chairs of our working groups. We are pleased to announce the chairs of our current working groups:

- Development: Julie Vanek
- Educator and Alum in Residence: Lesley Silverstone and Debra Sagan Massey
- Honorary Doctorates: Audrey Friedman Marcus and Barry Lutz
- Membership Services: Sharon Amster Brown and Estee Pollack Garrett
- Membership Outreach: Jane West Walsh and Beth Young
- Rabbinic Education: Beth Nichols
- Recruitment: Lori Sagarin and Debra Cotzin-Kellner
- Social Media: April Akiva and Melissa Buyer
- Sustaining Alumni Education: Tamara Lustgarten Gropper and Renee Rubin Ross
- Web Design: Michelle Shapiro Abraham
The Cutter Colloquium

September 21-22, 2009

“Values and Values-Tensions: An Exploration for Educational Leaders”

Dr. Deborah Kerdeman, University of Washington

The Inaugural William Cutter Colloquium was held on September 21-22, 2009, and led by our fellow alumna Dr. Debby Kerdeman (’81). Her topic was “Values and Values-Tensions: An Exploration for Educational Leaders.” The Cutter Colloquium was established by the Rhea Hirsch School of Education Alumni Association to honor the school’s founding director, Dr. William Cutter.

The Cutter Colloquium is made possible by generous contributions from alumni of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. The biennial Cutter Colloquium was created to enable educational scholars of note from general education to bring their wisdom to bear on issues affecting Jewish education. Kerdeman, the first Cutter Scholar, was one of William Cutter’s distinguished students in the years in which he was director of the Rhea Hirsch School.

Dr. Kerdeman is Associate Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies and a Member of Jewish Studies Program at the University of Washington. She offered the following overview of her topic:

During my visit, we will be talking about values and value-tensions in education. We will explore how value tensions differ from right-vs.-wrong conflicts, how and why value-tensions arise in educational contexts, and how educators can respond to them. I'm hoping that our sessions will be intellectually stimulating and also will provide opportunities for participants to engage in personal reflection. I'm also hoping that participants will come away from our sessions thinking about education in ways they may not have previously considered.

I developed my work on value-tensions over a 12-year period, when I taught the topic to preservice teachers and experienced educators at the University of Washington.

REFLECTIONS ON THE COLLOQUIUM:

LuAnne Tyzzer, current JM student (‘11): For my RHSOE colleagues and me, this year’s yomim noraim (Days of Awe), were graced by the inaugural William Cutter Colloquium. The two-day retreat featured scholar-in-residence, Dr. Debby Kerdeman, while it also honored the achievements of RHSOE founding director Dr. William Cutter.

Dr. Kerdeman, (’81) brought her expertise to us with her seminar, “Values and Values-Tensions: An Exploration for Educational Leaders.” Her message was poignant and the timing, perfect. All year long, we choose between right and wrong. Especially at this time of year, we review decisions we have made and for what we truly stand. Right versus wrong is a no-brainer. We hope that most of the time our yetzer hatov (good inclination) beats out our yetzer harah (bad inclination).

With texts and personal narratives, Debby introduced us to a new concept, right versus right. This tension occurs when our values come into conflict with one another. If it has not happened already, it will. “Think of your values and write them down,” she charged us with a challenge. “In a few years, I promise that at least two of these values will conflict with one another.” When we experience this, we must strategize to pick the most appropriate course of action. No matter our levels of experience or ages, this new lens moved us all. I am so grateful to know this distinction so early on in my career.

Rachel Margolis (‘07): What biases do we have about the role of schools? Should schools teach students how to get along in the real world? Or should schools be “better” than the real world?

What is our philosophy about setting class or school rules? Should we legislate rules or let students organically choose their own?

How do we expect students to treat each other during school hours? Do we force friendships and joint play, or let the students play as they choose?

These are just some of the dichotomies that were discussed at the Cutter Colloquium on Monday, September 21 at the Steve Breuer Conference Center at Camp Hess Kramer. Debby Kerdeman led a lively discussion based around Vivian Paley’s You Can’t Say You Can’t Play book — where participants evaluated Paley’s experiences in compelling her students to allow anyone to play with them during school. Paley struggled with her students as they nursed wounded feelings — both at being left out, and at feeling forced to play with people they didn’t want to.

As we talked about the challenges in balancing two seemingly opposing values that we both hold dear, we were ultimately challenged by the idea that it is hard to measure our success as Jewish educators. Should our schools be focused on providing young students with a firm foundation of Judaism and Jewish identity? Or should our schools focus on providing students a creative, open, and fun learning environment, based more on community building than content knowledge?

What would ultimately lead us to a stronger Jewish community? And how do we define and measure that future community? Are we successful by the percentage of our students who marry another Jew? Who raise Jewish kids? Who live by Jewish values?

Clearly, it is difficult for us to answer these questions. So much of what we do hangs in the balance of these value tensions. Isa teaches us about using binary opposites in the Teaching Intensive. She says that thinking about the binary opposites helps us to plan lesson and teach concepts to students. Although I certainly left the Cutter Colloquium with many questions about my personal value tensions, and the ultimate question of how these tensions weigh into the “success” of our schools, I was comforted by the idea that by naming these tensions, by thinking about these binary opposites, we are at least on the right track. It is important for us to face these issues — not just internally, but to discuss them with our faculty, our colleagues, and our lay leaders. By doing so we might not come to “the answers” (if any exist), but we can certainly muddle in the middle together.
BOOK REVIEW

An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students

By Ron Berger (Heinemann, Portsmouth NH, 2003)

Reviewed by Lynn D. Flanzbaum, '05

It would be tempting to summarize this book by stating that Ron Berger is an advocate of project-based learning. The projects his public elementary school students undertook were often cross-disciplinary, with multiple steps and several preliminary drafts submitted for peer critique before a presentation to the school or to the larger community. At the presentations, students display their interim work as well as their final version, and respond to questions. All are rewarded with good grades, if grades are required; poor work is redone until its quality is good enough for the student and his/her classmates to be proud of it.

While true, such a summary does the author an injustice. In the introduction to his book, author Ron Berger writes that his passion is for “beautiful student work” (p. 8) and that he hopes that the book will help other educators create conditions in which this work can flourish. He offers three toolboxes, each the focus of a chapter in the book.

The First Toolbox: A School Culture of Excellence

“Particular strategies for improving student work and thinking are almost useless until they’re embedded in a community that encourages and supports excellence.” (p. 10) Berger describes some of the responsibilities placed on students at his school and the expectations that the students will meet those responsibilities. Positive peer pressure helps newcomers adapt to the norms of the school, where it is assumed that everyone will try hard and keep trying until satisfied with the results.

The Second Toolbox: Work of Excellence

Among the components of this toolbox are the preparation of multiple drafts of anything that will be submitted, the peer critique of each draft, and a public presentation of the finished project. Berger recommends keeping copies and/or photographs of student work, both to demonstrate the progress of an individual learner over the course of a project, and to model excellent work to new students in subsequent years.

RHISOE students are familiar with these practices as they prepare their Curriculum Guides. Multiple drafts are written and re-written. Students meet in small groups for peer review of each draft with a faculty coach. The language used by Michael Zeldin and Tali Zelkowicz as they prepare students to deliver and receive criticism was modeled on Ron Berger’s norms: Be Kind. Be Specific. Be Helpful. Start with Something Positive.

Finally, RHISOE students share summaries of their Curriculum Guides at a Showcase event for the campus community in the spring, where they each give a short oral presentation and then offer “artifacts” for all to review. The Guides themselves are then available to all through the Tartak Learning Center. (Contact me at <tartak@huc.edu> for more information.)

The Third Toolbox: The Teaching of Excellence

In this chapter, Berger describes the challenges of recruiting, preparing, compensating, and retaining qualified and inspirational teachers. He describes some ways to find new sources of inspiration to keep one’s teaching fresh and exciting.

Afterword: Measures of Excellence

Berger’s final paragraph expresses the “return on his investment” better than any summary I can offer:

I think of my life in my small town. The policeman for my town is a former student. I trust him to protect my life; I trust him to work kindly and carefully with the young students in my school, which he does often and does tenderly. The nurse at my medical clinic is my former student. I trust her with my health. The excavator who measured and dug the foundation hole for my house, who built my driveway and septic system, is a former student; I built my home on his work. The lifeguard at the town lake is my former student; she watches my grandsons as they swim. There may not be numbers to measure these things, but there is a reason I feel so free and thankful trusting my life to these people: They take pride in doing their best. They have an ethic of excellence.
Leadership may be tough to define, or so it would seem given all of the books which explore it and all of the occasions that it is mentioned — urged — in the Rhea Hirsch School. But one recognizes it when one does it: I see classic leadership aspects in my most recent project as a chaplain in a private, prestigious middle school with a sizable Jewish minority of students. With determination and focus, I led my non-Jewish, multi-faith institution to seriously consider becoming part of our Jewish Federation’s Twin School Program. This terrific program enables a school in Los Angeles to be matched with a school in Tel Aviv, and to create together a mutually satisfying educational exchange.

The purposes and benefits of such an exchange would be obvious to any Rhea Hirsch Grad: to strengthen an appreciation of each community’s shared bonds and unique identities, and to explore what the term “Am Yisrael” means today when some of that “Am” sits in Israel and some in West Los Angeles. The program is well run, providing a network of supportive colleagues to help each school create its own, unique curricuim. And, the program welcomed my school’s diversity. My task these last 12 months was to try to persuade our school’s leadership that this project represents a significant global education opportunity, and that it can serve our entire community, not just our Jewish minority. I also needed and to persuade our Federation that my school setting is worthy of their investment (it is) and that we will create a program that will meet their Jewish interests, while we still serve our entire student body. I wanted to take this on, and looked forward to spending the next 12 months helping my faculty become vested in the program, and designing significant educational programs for the visiting Israeli teens. I had a plan in place to actively recruit families — hopefully from every ethnic persuasion — both to host an Israeli teen for two weeks, and to send their eighth-grader to Israel as part of our school’s delegation. I am in my mid-fifties, and that means that I have had occasions to say to myself, “this might be easier to do if I were a younger person.” I must say, that this project has drawn on every ounce of experience I had in prior positions: To advocate in the face of naysayers with a smile and the poise of surety; to continually communicate with many constituencies who do not share a common vocabulary; to recognize the importance of symbols in crafting the project; to know that ultimately, for the project to succeed I need to practice tsimtsum: to recruit a team of colleagues willing to work on this project, and then to bring them forward, so that the project is a shared one and not just “the rabbi’s idea.” All these and many more skills I learned or honed in prior positions, when I operated in more familiar settings like synagogues or Jewish summer camps.

So, what happened? In the end, my success was only partial. Significant concerns about this endeavor were raised. While my heart yearned to keep attempting to persuade and sell, I recognized that at this point, their concerns do place reasonable limits to my own vision. I found the place in my heart to truly and deeply respect the people who raised these concerns, and so was enabled to move from what I most wanted, to what was possible at this time.

Leadership is complicated. Being deeply imbued with a vision is important as is having the skills to pursue and advocate for that vision. Recognizing one’s limitations, and the importance of others’ point of view is an essential part of being part of a dedicated team. I am grateful to be in an institution that allows me both to pursue my vision, and to grow as a professional in the process.
Mazel Tov!

Michael Churgel ('99) and Shara Newman, along with big sister Daphne Rose are pleased to welcome Zoe Lianna into their family. Zoe was born on October 6, 2009 at 2:22 pm measuring in at 7 lbs 1 oz and 19 in.

Debra Ann Cohn ('86) graduated in June 2009 from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto with a Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology and certificates in Creative Expression and Clinical Studies.

Aron Hirt-Manheimer ('76) and his wife Juday on the birth of their granddaughter Zoe Hannah who was born on Friday, October 30, 2009 to Noah and Susi Manheimer.

Rachel Margolis ('07) and Ari Margolis ('08) are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Laila Millie born November 23, 2009.

Scott Sperling ('74) has been appointed to serve as Executive Director of ARZA through June 2010.

Perspectives on Excellence in Jewish Education

with HUC-JIR Education Faculty and Special Guest,
Ron Berger, Author, An Ethic of Excellence

Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 11:30 am-3:30 pm
CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL JUDEA
625 Brotherhood Way, San Francisco, CA 94132
RSVP to: dabelson@huc.edu

RHSOE Executive Committee 2009-2010/5770

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