I am delighted to share the news that we were overwhelmed by the response to the announcement of HUC-JIR’s first program to be delivered by a hybrid of on-line and face-to-face educational experiences. We were thrilled that we were able to admit a cohort of 16 incredibly talented Jewish educators to the first new program made possible by the Jim Joseph Foundation Education Initiative, the Executive Masters Program in Jewish Education (the EMA). As we crafted the program for these pioneering students (They call themselves the “Nachshonim”) as well as for future cohorts, we were committed to maintaining four core characteristics of HUC-JIR’s residential education programs: 3 R’s (rigor, reflection, and respect) and 1 V (visionary leadership). We wanted students in the EMA program to experience what makes Jewish education studies at HUC-JIR so powerful.

To ensure rigor, we decided that virtually all of the courses in the EMA program would be taught by the full-time faculty of the College-Institute. This way, each of us could teach the area we know best and we could all make sure that the learning in the EMA program matched the learning in the residential programs. Many of the courses are the same as or very close to the courses in the MAJE program at the RHSOE or the MARE program at the New York School of Education. For example, the EMA program includes courses in teaching, professional learning, curriculum, ideologies of Jewish education, sociology, and leadership, to name a few. We’ve even gone so far as to make sure that most of the key readings students do in the residential programs are included in the EMA program (e.g. Bolman and Deal’s Reframing Organisations). To our delight, the first on-line course, taught by Sam Joseph of Cincinnati and Adrienne Leveen of New York, demonstrated how powerful online learning can be. While some of the classes that follow will be taught online, students will earn most of their units in other ways: 3-day face-to-face intensives, 2-week summer institutes, one-on-one mentoring and advising, and a significant Israel experience.

The capstone project that is required for graduation is a unique combination of rigorous analytic thinking and synthetic creativity. While the project differs from the Curriculum Guide required in the residential MA programs, it draws on both the Deweyan Deliberation that MAJE students do and the “Rav Siach” (colloquium) that DeLeT students lead. During their last semester, EMA students will be asked to examine a values conflict in Jewish educational leadership. They will take a sophisticated look at enduring dilemmas faced by Jewish educators and examine Jewish texts, research literature, and their own experience to provide guidance for managing these dilemmas. They will select enduring dilemmas that cannot be solved with simple action but instead require ongoing managing and monitoring. These are dilemmas where two values compete, yet educators want to maintain both of them. An example in teaching is establishing and monitoring productive group dynamics in the classroom and at the same time meeting the needs of individual students. An example in Jewish educational leadership is negotiating between contemporary American values and Jewish classical values.

We are very aware that rigorous academic coursework is only one dimension of a powerful professional Jewish education program. Reflection has been a hallmark of the College-Institute’s education programs for generations of students. We encourage EMA students to examine each situation they experience to figure out how to do better in the future. More than that, we constantly ask them what they have learned from their experiences, both about the professional practice of Jewish education and about themselves as Jews, human beings and professionals. We continued on page 2
have been vigilant to assure that the mentoring component of the EMA program encourages the students to reflect in the same ways. The EMA students are all experienced Jewish educators with plenty of experience on which they can reflect. (Indeed, five years of Jewish educational leadership is a prerequisite to applying to the program.)

To nurture their development as reflective practitioners, the EMA students are each assigned both a clinical faculty mentor for one-on-one reflective conversations and a group of peers for guided group reflection. To lead this part of the program, we’ve been fortunate to engage four veteran education alumni: Tamara Gropper, Lisa Langer, Kathy Schwartz and Julie Vanek, and have supported them as they reflect on how to mentor experienced colleagues. One of the main tasks we’ve set before them is to help EMA students link their academic learning in the program to their professional practice in their work settings as Jewish educational leaders.

The 3rd R is respect. The EMA students bring a wealth of professional and life experience to the program. Each of the instructors and mentors knows that this experience makes them different from most of the students in the residential masters programs. So while we engage them in rigorous academic study and reflective mentoring, we on the academic and clinical faculty are acutely aware of how much the EMA students bring to their studies. The faculty is committed to honoring the students and their prior knowledge while pushing them to become deeper thinkers and more sophisticated practitioners. We have already seen how the students also honor each other for the wisdom of practice that they bring to one another.

And finally, the 1 V: Visionary leadership. As anyone who knows about HUC’s education programs realizes, we orient students’ learning towards imagining what might be and then working to transform current realities into that imagined future. Whether in congregations, day schools or camps, we help students see possibilities, some of which are in existence elsewhere and some of which are only thoughts in someone’s head or topics of conversations. We believe that innovation in Jewish education is at the core of what the Jewish community needs, and that for institutions to succeed they need to make innovation the norm rather than an occasional event. From the first course, Drs. Joseph and Leveen helped students come to understand that as Jewish educators they are not merely administrators. Rather, they have the potential to be transformational leaders. And this stance will characterize all of the classes that follow that first introductory course.

None of this would be possible without the gifted leadership of Lesley Litman, the EMA Coordinator. Lesley is a talented Jewish educator who has experience as a congregational educator, a family educator and a Reform day school educator. She is a veteran of our work in the RHSOE, having served as an educational and organizational consultant on our day school transformational change project, Jewish Day Schools for the 21st Century, and a consultant in the Experiment in Congregational Education. She is currently completing her doctorate in Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary. We are indeed fortunate that she agreed to take the helm of this new program, for she has made sure that the program meets our high standards for rigor, reflection and respect and that visionary leadership is at its core.

And we are equally fortunate that Lesley is guided by Dr. Robert Weinberg working in his capacity as Project Manager of the Jim Joseph Foundation Education Initiative (JJF-EI). Many of you know Rob in his role as Director of the Experiment in Congregational Education which he continues to play. Rob brings his gifted management skills along with his visionary leadership capacities to his work on this — and every other — aspect of JJF-EI and the ECE.

While this column has focused on the EMA, I want to assure you that our focus on the MAJE program has not wavered. In crafting the EMA program we were careful to ensure that it would not compete with our efforts to recruit for the MAJE and joint masters programs. As always, we want to encourage young adults recently graduated from...
college to pursue the full-time residential program, to benefit from the year in Israel, and to have the experience of studying alongside rabbinical and cantorial students. That is why we set the admissions bar high for the EMA, requiring five years of Jewish educational leadership experience, which we defined as supervising teachers and other staff members and having responsibility for crafting learning experiences beyond a single classroom or program.

We still need your help in identifying young adults who have demonstrated a passion and commitment to Jewish education and who you believe could make a contribution to Jewish education. Thanks to the generosity of the Jim Joseph Foundation we will be able to offer full tuition scholarships to full-time students in HUC’s residential masters programs for one more year. Please let me know if any of your teachers or staff members are the kind of people you would be proud to have as colleagues. We will follow up with them and, hopefully, welcome them into the RHSEO.

Best wishes for a wonderful year.

B’chavod,

*Michael*
Knowing For What You Stand: The Mandel Initiative For Visionary Leadership

Professor Sara S. Lee, Project Director, HUC-JIR Mandel Initiative

For decades Mr. Morton L. Mandel and the Mandel Foundation have been engaged in preparing leaders for Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora. In 1992, the Rhea Hirsch School of Education was fortunate to receive a grant of $750,000 from the Mandel Foundation to implement a 10-year Master Plan in recognition of the role of the RHSOE in preparing educational leaders who hopefully would transform the communities and institutions which educate Jews of all ages. That grant supported the creation of experiments such as the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), Jewish Day Schools for the 21st Century (JDS 21), the expansion of our Clinical Education program, and other efforts to enhance the preparation of our MAJE students.

In 2006 the Mandel Foundation provided a renewable grant of $850,000 a year for HUC-JIR to support the development of a program to enhance the leadership potential of future rabbis to guide 21st century Reform institutions toward visions of compelling community, infused by Jewish values, enriched by Jewish learning, and capable of inspiring growth of individual Jews in their Jewish identity and commitment to the Jewish People. Starting in 2007 a cohort of eight HUC-JIR Mandel Fellows was selected annually from among third year rabbinical students electing to pursue degrees in Jewish education in the intensive one year programs in the RHSOE and the New York School of Education.

The HUC-JIR Mandel Fellowship program brought together the insights gained in the students’ education studies with learning in three intensive off-site seminars during the year focusing on four themes — vision, community, education as growth and Jewish Peoplehood. The seminars included an introductory seminar in California at the start of the year, a five-day seminar in Boston during winter break, and a month long seminar in Israel in June. These seminars provided encounters with individual leaders and institutions that were exciting examples of vision-guided leadership and communities. Following the Fellowship year, the fellows are brought together for alumni seminars that continue their learning and leadership development. To date 30 fellows have participated.

The underlying premise of the Fellowship is that visionary leadership is necessary for the creation of compelling communities and promising future for the Jewish People. Visionary leadership presumes that leaders have a strong personal stance that embodies informed commitments to core values and ideas that are at the heart of Judaism and Jewish life, and are discoverable in and demand attention to Jewish historical experience, our cultural and religious practices, and our textual tradition. Developing this stance is understood as an ongoing process in the education and development of leaders and is at the core of the HUC-JIR Mandel Initiative.

The success of the Fellowship led to the belief that the Mandel Initiative should impact broader groups of future leaders of Jewish life preparing for their careers at HUC-JIR. Consequently it was decided to suspend the Fellowship program after the 2010-2011 Cohort and develop a new phase of the Mandel Initiative. In 2010-2011 a pilot program for all first year students in the Year in Israel program was introduced. At the heart of this new phase, now called the HUC-JIR Initiative for Visionary Leadership, is the embedding of structured opportunities in the curriculum of all students to integrate their academic and clinical learning in a more meaningful way and to build on that integration in shaping their personal Jewish identities and their personal stance that will inform their vision for Jewish life and their future work. In the first year, the focus is on Israel and Jewish Peoplehood; reflecting the centrality of those ideas and ideals in the learning and experiences of students spending their first HUC-JIR year in Israel. The plan for second year students is to focus on Torah and classical texts that constitute the core of their studies and to consider the relationship of those texts to their lives, their professional aspirations and to contemporary Jewish life.

As we make this transition from the Fellowship to the new phase of the initiative we remain committed to the belief that leadership is about passion and commitment that comes from a deep set of beliefs that are the product of informed reflection about what is important and significant in Jewish life. Leadership requires people who are both sensitive to and willing to challenge current realities and push forward to a better future while remaining grounded in Jewish ideas, values and experiences. We are excited as we expand the scope of the HUC-JIR Mandel work.

This article is based on and draws heavily on an article written with my colleague Dr. Lisa Grant of the New York School of Education, my partner in this HUC-JIR Mandel work, for a forthcoming issue of the HUC-JIR Chronicle Magazine.
Faculty Bookshelf: For Your Continuing Professional Learning

This “bookshelf” has been initiated by the Continuing Alumni Education Working Group in their efforts to provide for your continuing professional growth. For this issue of Tikshoret, we approached Dr. Tali Zelkowicz (’00), Assistant Professor of Jewish Education in the RHSOE, for her recommendations:

First, I’d like to underscore one of the books that my colleague Bob Tornberg included on his shelf, in the last issue of Tikshoret: HUC/NY’s Jonathan Krasner’s The Benderly Boys is a tour de force overview of no less than “how we all got here;” that is, to this juncture in Jewish education in the United States. Krasner writes so well, and his historical analysis so exquisite, you are sure to gain new perspective on our current state of the union through his historical account of the hope, courage and ultimate faltering, of previous generations’ attempt to do exactly what we do every day: figure out how to be Jewish in America.

The next three works I have on my shelf right now are all readings I newly require or refer to, in my Sociology of Jewish Education course.


In addition to the intriguing cover image related to tensions surrounding Jewish identity formation (a chanukiah made of Mah Jong tiles), Cheng’s fourth chapter is called, “The Inauthentic Jew: Jewishness and Its Discontents,” and addresses “the anxiety about losing cultural authenticity, subjectivity, and distinctiveness.” Indeed, the whole book is about anxiety over loss of some putative pure, “real” original, as it wanders through hot spots of the politics of identity in America (e.g. “inventing Irishness,” “international adoption and identity, “Asian identity” and what that even means, etc.). I’ve decided this is required reading for graduate students preparing to become Jewish educators for the same reason Cheng wrote the book: anyone engaged in the transmission of Jewish life and culture is, consciously or not, immersed in the politics of authenticity. They — we — are all constantly working hard to navigate and negotiate boundaries of tradition, what counts as Jewish, who gets to authorize copyrights of “Jewishness,” and why.


This is not a book about Jews, but if we substituted Jewish in the sub-title, it is a powerful commentary on contemporary debates about Jewish school choice, particularly among liberal Jews. So the book is called, Race, School and Hope: African Americans and School Choice after Brown, but I’m suggesting you imagine something like, “Jewish Identity, School and Hope: Jewish Americans and School Choice after the Second World War.” Stulberg’s controversial thesis — particularly in light of recent documentaries like “Waiting for Superman” and “Race to Nowhere” — argues that Charter Schools for African Americans (African American kids being taught by African American teachers) represents the next chapter of the civil rights movement; particularly the radical wing, such as the Black Panthers. Stulberg shows how internal debates among African American communities weigh integrationism (i.e. the triumph of Brown vs. Board of Education) against nationalism (the right to preserve and protect one’s social group as separate and distinct from the larger entity that is America. America’s democracy and public school system continues to fail when it comes to African Americans (and others), so some activists are pushing for Charter Schools so there is a viable school choice. This book is important in its own right, but it is also fascinating to consider it as an analogy to internal debates among American Jews regarding how best to be Jewish in America: Congregational Schools? Day schools? Camping? To what extent do we integrate vs. nationalize?


Lastly, one of my new favorite articles is a revisit of one of my old favorite articles, by our very own Isa Aron. Printed last year in the Journal for Jewish Education, Isa revisited Stuart Schoenfeld’s article from 1987 (Schoenfeld, Stuart (1987) “Folk Judaism, Elite Judaism and the Role of Bar Mitzvah in the Development of the Synagogue and Jewish School in America.” Contemporary Jewry, Vol. 9, Number 1. Fall/Winter, pp. 67-86.), which exposed the most important Faustian bargain that goes on in American Jewish liberal life today. To put it crassly: the Jewish professional “elite” sold their Bar Mitzvah ceremony soul to the “folk” — the congregants’ right to determine what counts as Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In other words, at least since the Second World War, (but predating it as well), congregational religious school requirements (days of week and years of schooling) are what Jewish educators “won” for the simple, low hanging fruit of warm bodies and synagogue membership. (But both Shabbat prayer services and religious school curriculum were inadvertently sacrificed and hijacked in the process). Isa revisits this great article and takes it even further, suggesting many concrete implications and tantalizes us with alternative visions to this unhappy arrangement.
Every day there seems to be a news story publicizing a failure of leadership at a major organization. Be the failure legal or moral, the story often leads to finger pointing, denials, excuses, and occasionally apologies. It is in this context that Harry Kraemer shares From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership. According to Kraemer, “Leadership, simply put, is the ability to influence others.” Values-based leaders take this ability to the next level. “By word, action, and example, values-based leaders seek to inspire and motivate, using their influence to pursue what matters most.”

Kraemer emphasizes the need to remember where one came from and to appreciate the value of every person. In the discussion of true self-confidence, Kraemer explains that this is “the attribute that allows you to see and accept yourself exactly as you are.” This parallels the teaching of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev that a person should have two sayings in his or her pockets, one reading “I am dust and ashes” and the other “the whole world was created for me.”

From Values to Action next offers guidance as to how a values-based leader can transform an organization. The first step is to embody one’s values. The next is to make people a priority, ensuring that the right people are on the team and are given honest feedback. Having accomplished this step, an organization can establish a clear direction, allowing employees to feel that they are connected to something bigger than themselves. Effective communication, conveying information in an open way so that the message is understood by others, is now possible. The next steps are motivation and execution. Kraemer underscores the need to be simultaneously a visionary leader and a manager who gets things done. There are four processes that will allow for execution and require constant attention. These are the strategic process (vision of where the organization is going), the people process (developing the professional potential of team members), the operations process (making things happen now), and the measurement process (using clear and quantifiable benchmarks or goals).

Perhaps more importantly, though, is the book’s balance on personal growth and professional implementation. Kraemer walks the reader through the self-discovery that is possible by embracing these four principles. But that is only half the book. Kraemer goes on to provide step-by-step instruction to use the principles to transform a corporate environment. The book is both focused on the individual and the whole.

In discussing clear direction, Kraemer states that the setting of this direction must come from the top. He argues that there is a model of organizational leadership that should be considered whereby one is not solely focused on the responsibilities contained in a job description. Instead the team member spends 50% of his or her time focused on a broader view of the organization. In this way the executive leader is both looking vertically on a department and globally at the entire corporation. For educators, this is a helpful instruction as it is necessary to focus on the individual student’s experience as well as the greater context in which education occurs. This is only one of the ways Jewish education can be elevated through the teaching of a healthcare CEO!
Updates from the Work of the Alumni Association

By Deborah Niederman (’93)

Albert Einstein said: “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.”

With the New Year underway, I am in awe of all the new we will celebrate and try in our Alumni Association. We welcome a new chairperson, Ellen Lefkowitz (’99) and will celebrate her installation at our kallah, February 10th-12th at Brandeis-Bardin Institute in Malibu. The kallah will feature Dr. Leah Hochman of HUC/LA, and we will learn together, grow together and celebrate important milestones in our Alumni Association. We welcome Beth Nichols (’05) to the executive committee, who along with Rachel Margolis (’07) will represent our Alumni Association at the HUC-JIR Council of Alumni Associations.

Our Continuing Alumni Education Working Group is experimenting with a new learning program, Professional Learning Groups. These small groups will promote learning and community building while acknowledging the limited time we all have for additional activities in our busy lives. (Read more about the professional learning groups below.)

We are creating a new working group, Building Community, that will support many initiatives that welcome students to our association and reach out to fellow alumni. We are exploring a way to recognize alumni as they begin the process of retirement and help our colleagues to create a legacy that will enrich us all. This effort is being led by Jane West Walsh (’85).

Each of our working groups is working to develop new initiatives. We welcome your ideas and creativity and we need your input and hard work to make these new events come to fruition.

Our current working groups include:
- Educator-in-Residence and Alumni-in-Residence
- Honorary Doctorates Advisory Committee
- Student Recruitment
- Continuing Alumni Education
- Kallah
- Communications
- Outreach to Students
- Building Community
- Development

For more information on any of the working groups, or to get involved, please contact Ellen Lefkowitz, Chair of the Alumni Association (ellen_lefkowitz@yahoo.com) or Debbie Niederman, Coordinator of Alumni Engagement (dniederman@huc.edu)

HUC-JIR Council of Alumni Associations

Rachel Margolis (’07)

It is my honor to represent the RHSEO Alumni Association on the HUC-JIR Council of Alumni Associations. Alumni from each of the College-Institute’s programs sit on the council, which meets monthly over the phone, and annually in person. The Council’s mission is to foster a supportive and collaborative relationship between HUC-JIR and its alumni.

I had read all this before I joined the Council, but had anyone asked, I still could not have begun to explain the work that the Council does, or why it is so important. As alumni, we are one of the strongest assets that HUC-JIR has. We have become a fundraising force; as many of you know, RHSEO alumni raised over $1.5 million for the Sara S Lee chair in Jewish Education. We are strong advocates for the College-Institute and its important role in American Jewish life. We are the best recruiters for our school (so don’t forget to speak to your most inspired teachers about a career in Jewish Education!) Alumni are a driving force at the College-Institute, and the Council of Alumni Associations gives alumni a voice both within the College-Institute administration, and on the HUC-JIR Board of Governors.

In the last year, the Council met with Jane Karlin, the VP of Institutional Advancement, to discuss how alumni can further support the work of the College-Institute. We began work on communities of practice — where alumni from different schools can learn from each other. The Council has secured a seat for an alum at all HUC-JIR graduation ceremonies. Beyond all the work we do together for HUC-JIR, there is a real sense of teamwork as we reflect on successes and lessons learned from our separate alumni associations. We share best practices and worthy ideas. We each learn from one another, making the College-Institute and our individual alumni associations stronger in the long-run.

More that 70 RHSEO Alumni Involved in Professional Learning Group

Joy Wasserman, National Director of Alumni Engagement and Brad Cohen (‘10), Chair, RHSEO Alumni Association Professional Learning Groups

Building upon our experience from last year’s Alumni Virtual Book Group our Alumni Association Continuing Education Working Group has refined...
Michael Churgel ('99) and Shara Newman, along with sisters Daphne and Zoe, are thrilled to announce the birth of their son/brother, Jason Eden on June 16, 2011.

Rivka Dori ('76) and Rueben (grandparents) are happy to announce that Zoe Harper Wells has arrived. Zoe was born on July 13, 2011 at 6:04pm. She weighed 8lbs 4oz and was 21 inches long.

Dr. Madelyn Katz ('84) upon her appointment as Associate Dean of the Jack H. Skirball Campus of HUC-JIR in Los Angeles.

Dan Moskovitz ('98) and his wife Sharon Mishler had a baby girl on Tuesday September 20, 2011. Her name is Hannah Mishler Moskovitz (weight 7.9lbs; length 19.5 inches) and she is healthy, happy and a blessing in their lives. Her older brothers Judah (5) and Levi (3) are still trying to figure all this out but seem very happy to have her part of the family.


Rabbi Michael Shire ('96) has been appointed as Dean of the Shoolman School of Jewish Education at Hebrew College, Boston and is relocating from London with his wife Rabbi Marcia Plumb (NY '98) and two children Anya and Micah.

Julia Witkow ('07) married Adam Levine on August 7 in Westlake Village, CA.

Michael Zeldin ('77) happily announces the marriage of his son, Oren Kroll-Zeldin, to Noga Firstenberg on August 28, 2011 in Malibu.

Micol Zimmerman ('08) and Rabbi Danny Burkeman (LA '09) moved from London in July to Port Washington, NY, where he is the new Associate Rabbi at The Community Synagogue. She just started a new job as the Communal Education Networker in The New Center for Collaborative Leadership and Teen Engagement at The Jewish Education Project.

Frances S. Lander, mother of Adele Lander Burke ('78), died July 26, 2011. May her memory be a blessing.

Michael Ingram, grandfather of Tami Weisman ('10), died September 13, 2011.

We offer our deepest condolences to rabbinical student Jessy Gross ('10) upon the death of her grandmother, Rose Gross, who died on October 6, 2011 at age 94.

Have you moved? We want to make sure you are still receiving our publications; if you have moved, please send Debbie dniederman@huc.edu or Joy jwasserman@huc.edu your updated information and we will make sure you don’t miss a thing!

RHSOE Executive Committee 2011-2013

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