

The College-Institute has launched a strategic planning process that will strengthen its ability to fulfill its mission as the spiritual, intellectual, and professional leadership development center for the Reform Movement and the modern Jewish community. Co-chaired by Gregory N. Brown, HUC-JIR Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, and Barbara Friedman, Vice Chair, HUC-JIR Board of Governors, the goals of the process are to focus priorities for the College-Institute's programs and resources, address concerns of the accrediting bodies, create and establish a vision of the future for the College-Institute, and clarify fund raising priorities.

"When Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise articulated HUC-JIR's founding mission," states Rabbi Ellenson, "he was determined that the graduates of his institution be equipped to serve both the Jewish community and the broader world. Wise recognized that the content of the initial curriculum he framed as well as the specific schools and programs he established would require constant review and modification if the demands and needs of the Jewish people for leadership were to be served in a world marked by evolution as well as continuity."

"As we now embark on our own strategic planning process at the outset of a new century," adds Rabbi Ellenson, "I regard the concerns and frameworks Rabbi Wise identified as relevant today as when he first stated them. The vectors of modern Jewish life, however, move in a different direction today than they did a century ago or more. Nevertheless, the fundamental task of the College-Institute remains the instruction and formation of religious-intellectual leadership for the modern Jewish community. The vision of our founder is an enduring one that should guide us as we go forth to meet the demands of our own era."

Pointing to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey, Rabbi Ellenson indicates that the overwhelming majority of Jews in North America are highly acculturated and not halakhic. The religious movement that is most likely to address them is the Reform

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: HUC-JIR LAUNCHES A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Movement, which consequently is growing faster than all the other movements in American Judaism today. Today's high rate of intermarriage, where individuals and their progeny may not be brought into the ambit of Judaism, makes the role of Jewish leadership ever more crucial.

"If we do not educate leaders who can speak to these people in synagogues and beyond, they are not going to be addressed," stresses Rabbi Ellenson. "While the synagogue is the central institution in Jewish life, the place where Jewish values and learning are conveyed, HUC-JIR cannot conceive its mission properly without addressing those who at best identify only as Jews and are not affiliated. This process stands as a vital opportunity to serve the Jewish people in an optimal manner."

"Furthermore," Rabbi Ellenson notes, "we stand at a crossroads, where the mission of the College-Institute extends beyond its principal focus in North America and is called upon to educate persons from Argentina, Australia, and the Former Soviet Union. We also have a burgeoning Israeli rabbinical program that is building the future of liberal

Judaism in Israel and other parts of the world."

The strategic planning committee is comprised of members of HUC-JIR's Board of Governors, senior administration, and faculty. Sub-committees have been established to study the key components of the College-Institute: academic programs, co-curricular programs and resources, partnerships, faculty and student life, facilities, technology, compensation and benefits, and resources.

"We have a fiduciary responsibility to the institution and our constituents to be sure that the way we discharge our mission is not only responsible from the programmatic standpoint, but from a financial standpoint, as well," says Burton Lehman, Chair of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors. "Strategic planning is only useful if it is followed, and the next challenge for us is to see that the plan is implemented to guide decisions and operations in the years to come and thus ensure success."

"New initiatives and programs, in addition to ongoing initiatives, will be part of the conversation, so that we are not just planning for the *status quo*, but planning for a dream of what HUC-JIR's future is going to look like," notes Gregory Brown. "Instead of looking at the College-Institute as a quilt, however, the committee will look at it as a tapestry. The task will be to weave all of its components into a whole as they link into a long range plan, which must be supported by a financial plan that ensures a balanced, responsible, and sustainable budget."

In describing the strategic planning committee's expansive process and its outreach to the stakeholders in HUC-JIR's future, Barbara Friedman explains, "The committee will be talking to students, lay leadership, alumni, people in the Reform Movement, unaffiliated Jews, those involved in other institutions, and others to determine what they need from the College-Institute. We invite you to visit our website at www.huc.edu/strategicplanning for periodic postings, which we hope will give you a greater understanding of the purpose and direction of this process."