

Federation Grants

Further HUC-JIR's Mission

The College-Institute is grateful for its partnerships with many Federations throughout the country, including the Federations in Cincinnati and Los Angeles, whose regular support significantly advances HUC-JIR's educational objectives. Within the past year, HUC-JIR's partnership with UJA-Federation of New York has been particularly fruitful, as this Federation's Commissions have proactively reached out to HUC-JIR to partner on three innovative projects. "We are grateful for these landmark grants, which will engender transformative impact on the Reform Movement and *klal yisrael*," says Rabbi Ellenson.

A \$1.8 million grant has established the **Leadership Institute for Congregational School Principals**, a historic, transdenominational program jointly sponsored by HUC-JIR and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Initiated by a planning grant from UJA-Federation of New York's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (CoJIR), the Leadership Institute addresses the need for professional growth in Jewish educational leadership for Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox congregational and communal schools in New York, Long Island, Westchester, and the greater metropolitan area extending to New Jersey and Pennsylvania—an area that serves nearly 35,000 students. Forty

congregational leaders will be selected to participate in the two-year program, taught by faculty drawn from the scholars and educators at HUC-JIR and JTS. The mission of the Leadership Institute is to ensure that congregational school principals master critical competencies in the core areas of leadership, pedagogy, and Judaica, and develop the attitudes and skills for further professional development.

The **Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE)**, an innovative project of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education with over 10 years of pioneering experience in synagogue transformation, guides congregations to revitalize themselves by bringing Jewish learning to every aspect of congregational life. A grant of \$1,050,000 from UJA-Federation of New

York for **ECE—Re-Imagine** supports a 24-month project to engage synagogues of all denominations in the New York area in a systemic process of re-imagining their congregational education, focusing specifically on the religious school through a combination of Internet-based distance education and management tools with print materials and direct consultation. The goal is to develop and test a scalable model to reach more congregations of various sizes across denominations.

Community service has long been a required part of the Year-In-Israel Program curriculum for all first-year rabbinical, cantorial, and education students. Courses, special seminars, and field study programs stress the concepts of *achdut* and *areivut* – Jewish solidarity and mutual responsibility, which are core values for individuals preparing for positions of Jewish leadership. The implementation of an integrative core curriculum for the five-year rabbinical program that takes a new look at how students learn and develop their personal vision for Jewish life led to the reshaping of the Jerusalem community service activities after American models for service-learning programs, which do not commonly exist in Israel. A \$50,000 grant from UJA-Federation of New York's Solelim Venture Philanthropy Group supports the implementation of this innovative program. The grant has enabled HUC-JIR to have a coordinator, Elaine Matlow Tal-El, who through personal interviews with students and intensive outreach to the wider community, has been able to place 69 Year-In-Israel students in a variety of social welfare agencies and non-profits that serve poor, elderly, and immigrant Israelis from all walks of life – ranging from organizing the Ethiopian community and working with prisoners and parolees to assisting a restaurant that feeds the homeless. With travel funds, this program has been able to broaden its geographical outreach, going as far south as Kibbutz Lotan, where students work on ecological projects. Students meet for Wednesday seminars on topics including "Social Gaps in Israel" and "Problems in Israel as a Welfare State," as well as in small groups facilitated by faculty to share their experiences and discuss problems and issues that arise.

HUC-JIR's mission of higher Jewish education, leadership training, and community outreach is meaningfully fulfilled through these three initiatives, whose impact will be felt by communities far and wide for years to come.



Year-In-Israel rabbinical students (from left) Katie Bauman, Rachel Isaacson, and David Reiner celebrate Hanukkah with Ethiopian families as part of their community service.