

President's Message

Dear Friends:

Artist Tamar Hirschl's "Deer Watch," illustrating the cover of this *Annual Report*, conveys the urgency of time in applying the Jewish values of *tikkun olam* to our troubled world. Her art expresses the prophetic heritage of Reform Judaism and reminds us that the chain of Jewish memory and the values of our tradition compel us to struggle for the survival of the Jewish people, and for universal freedom, tolerance, justice, and human rights. Her artistic call to action powerfully reflects the mission of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.



Rabbi David Ellenson.

Judaism today stands at a crossroads, where trends of weakened Jewish commitment and attachments compete with pockets of intense Jewish revival and knowledge – and all this takes place across traditional denominational lines and traditional institutional patterns. The task of the College-Institute is to strengthen these pockets of revival and knowledge, which take place both within and beyond traditional Jewish institutional structures.

The future of Judaism in North America, in Israel, and throughout the world depends upon our ability to maintain and revitalize Jewish religious tradition in light of the conditions we all confront in our communities today and into the future. Our students and alumni stand in the vanguard of the continuity of Jewish heritage, faith, and values. They confront and respond to the challenges of assimilation and acculturation in North America, as well as the critical need for religious pluralism – beyond the extremes of fundamentalism and secularism – in the Jewish State of Israel.

At the College-Institute, our students learn how to introduce innovation while preserving tradition, embrace diversity while asserting unity, and approach our sacred texts with faith without sacrificing critical scholarship. They are imbued with the leadership skills, knowledge, creativity, and experience to be activists within the changing Jewish world, through intensive training in:

- Advancing social responsibility;
- Fostering a welcoming culture for unaffiliated or mixed faith families;
- Promoting inclusivity and the full participation of people of every race, gender, and sexual orientation;
- Facilitating worship through the integration of contemporary modes of liturgy and spirituality;
- Developing communities of lifelong learners; and
- Advocating for human rights.

We have accomplished significant advances in fulfilling our mission during the 2006-07 academic year: We continue with the implementation phase of our strategic plan, emphasizing academic excellence and financial sustainability: We have created significant economies to balance our annual budget, and have developed guidelines to streamline our programs, monitor spending, and engage in meaningful fiscal forecasting for the future. Under the auspices of our provost, Dr. Norman Cohen, we have created special task forces to study, evaluate, and transform the administration, teaching, and curriculum of our rabbinical, cantorial, education, communal service, and graduate programs.

In our rabbinical schools, we have taken the bold step of focusing on the teaching of leadership and infusing leadership training throughout our curriculum. We have launched several leadership fellowship programs through the generosity of Mort Mandel, Bonnie and Daniel Tisch, and Lynn Schusterman. We are teaching leadership using three foci that have resonance within the Jewish community – social responsibility, outreach and intermarriage, and education to transform congregations into communities of lifelong learning.

We have renewed our commitment to the integration of our four campuses into one institution. A gift from Burt and Gerry Belzer is enabling the development of electronic classrooms on our Jerusalem, New York, and Los Angeles campuses, to join the existing classroom created on our Cincinnati campus through the generosity of The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati. These classrooms will facilitate faculty coordination, collaboration, and team-teaching and will expand the student learning experience, enhance faculty scholarship, and promote excellence in all of our academic programs (see page 13).

Technology is also transforming recruitment at HUC-JIR as well as service to our students and faculty. The recently installed Student Information System, financed by Governor Nicki Tanner and her husband Harold; Sakai, an "open-source" online Collaborative Learning Environment; and the Judaic Studies Portal, an online resource of six programs, funded by a seed money gift from Governor Kenneth Ruby and his wife Wendy, are helping to enhance learning and scholarship on all campuses (see page 13).

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We have welcomed new members of our administration: Dr. Samuel Greengus as Director of the School of Graduate Studies in Cincinnati; Rabbi Shirley Idelson as Dean of the New York School; Dr. Michael Zeldin as Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education in Los Angeles; Sandie Mills of Cincinnati as Director of Finance and Accounting; Richard Siegel as Interim Director of our School of Jewish Communal Service in Los Angeles; Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder, Ph.D., as Director of the HUC-JIR – CCAR Joint Commission on Sustaining Rabbinic Education; and Michele Prince as Director of the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health in Los Angeles.

We have renewed our faculty with individuals of great talent who will strengthen the teaching and mentorship on our campuses: Debbie Friedman, world-renowned folk songwriter and performer has been appointed as Instructor in Music at the School of Sacred Music in New York, and Rabbi Tali E. Hyman is the newly named Instructor in Jewish Education in Los Angeles (see page 10). Choreographer Liz Lerman held the Sally J. Priesand Visiting Professorship in Jewish Women's Studies and used the tools of the dance world to explore text through movement with students of the New York campus.

Through funds raised in honor of Burton Lehman, former Chair of the Board of Governors, we have created an endowment for HUC-JIR's Faculty Retreat, ensuring that every two years our entire faculty will be able to meet and engage in important discussions to enhance teaching and academic programs.

We have broken ground in Cincinnati for the \$12 million Klau Library Renovation and Expansion Project and will construct a new "Library Pavilion" to house library collections, administrative and library offices, and exhibition space for treasures from the rare book collection.

We have admitted 79 students (38 stateside rabbinical, 4 Israeli rabbinical, 5 cantorial, 21 education, 7 communal service, and 4 DeLeT certificate program students) and are proud to have 49 first-year students at our Jerusalem campus, where they are studying side-by-side with 25 Israeli rabbinical students.

We have ordained 61 new stateside rabbis and 5 Israeli rabbis, invested 10 cantors, graduated 13 communal service professionals and 18 Jewish educators, and bestowed 134 Master's and Doctoral degrees on students in our graduate and professional programs.

We have continued to raise funds for scholarships to attract the best and the brightest and have been delighted by the many congregations who have chosen to honor their rabbis by creating scholarships in their names.

In Israel we have developed a Masters program in Jewish Pluralistic Education, in conjunction with the Melton Center for Jewish Education at Hebrew University, to train educators who are working in Israeli public schools, with gifts from the Chais Family Foundation and the Scheuer Family.

Through our Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling in Jerusalem, our students have been at the forefront of aiding the victims of violence and terrorism, in the aftermath of the war with Lebanon and missile attacks on Israel's northern and southern borders.

We have renewed our commitment to day school education by assuring the continued funding of DeLeT—Day School Education through Leadership and Training—with a substantial grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation, and by creating a Masters in Teaching funded by the Avi Chai Foundation.

We have mounted extraordinary exhibitions at the HUC-JIR Museum in New York, including works from the collection donated to the College by Sigmund Balka (see page 8), and the exhibit on Jewish identity by the renowned artist Judy Chicago, among many others. In Los Angeles, through a grant from the Los Angeles Community Foundation, we welcomed Overseer Peachy Levy as artist-in-residence, who worked with students to interpret sacred texts through her exhibit "Threads of Judaism."

We have accomplished all of this through remarkable gains in our development effort. This year we completed our first-ever capital campaign, which raised over \$140 million, surpassing its goal of \$135 million. This campaign enabled the College-Institute to more than double its endowment from \$48 million to \$115 million; to improve the physical facilities on our campuses, in particular in Cincinnati; and to provide millions of dollars for annual operational needs, new centers, faculty chairs, scholarships and fellowships, and new academic programs.

This year we raised over \$25 million – \$20 million in cash and an additional \$5 million in pledges – to ensure the vibrancy of our programs and our ongoing commitment to excellence in preparing Jewish leaders.

Throughout Jewish history, no Jewish community has ever thrived without a strong house of study, and in our generation the obligation of the College-Institute is to be such a *Beit Midrash*. With your generous help, I am confident that HUC-JIR can and will fulfill this mandate.

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, let us remember the sacrifice and commitment that have allowed us to reach this milestone, and let us rededicate ourselves to ensuring the Jewish future for our children and grandchildren. With warm thanks for your partnership in this sacred task,

Rabbi David Ellenson, *President*
May 2008 / Iyar 5768