

“Rabbi-to-Rabbi” Support for the Next Generation of Colleagues

A year ago, Joy Wasserman, National Director for Alumni Affairs, had an epiphany. “It was clear to me that our alumni were ready to help the institution that prepared them for their life’s work,” she recalls. “Our challenge was to create a project close to their hearts and to find a personal way to ask.” Armed with an enthusiastic and able volunteer Chair, Rabbi Irwin Zeplovitz, C ’84, and inspired by his motto of “rabbi-to-rabbi,” the Rabbinic Invest-in-a-Student Scholarship Campaign was born.

Asking members of each ordination year dating back to 1960 to join together as a class to create a new scholarship for an incoming student seemed just the right match. Zeplovitz mobilized a team of captains to reach out to their own classmates to turn this dream of class scholarships into a reality. The goal was for each ordination class to ‘adopt’ a rabbinical student and fund most of their tuition for the five-year program by raising \$15,000 annually.

The gift from each alumnus/a as part of their ordination cohort, above and beyond their individual annual donations to HUC-JIR, would average approximately \$400. Collectively, it was estimated that the rabbinical alumni could raise as much as \$3 million for scholarships during this five-year period.

The campaign had a straightforward process: A *minyan* of ‘five-year captains’ identified individual year class captains, each class captain first made his/her own gift, and then reached out to his/her ordination class. Their pitch went straight to the heart.

Alumni were updated on the transformed ways in which HUC-JIR teaches rabbis and other Jewish professionals today with the addition of new faculty committed to mentorship, sweeping technological advances, and ongoing outreach to alumni. Furthermore, they were informed about the debt with which many newly ordained rabbis begin their careers – estimated at as much as \$100,000 in loans to repay – and the opportunity to lift this burden from the shoulders of their newest colleagues.

The results thus far have been impressive. Notwithstanding the difficult economic climate this past year, 439 rabbinical alumni have responded to date, raising nearly \$700,000. 55% of them have given a larger gift than ever before. With aspirations of engaging the participation of 100% of the rabbinical alumni, Wasserman’s goal of an additional \$1 million is hopefully in reach.

“We are enormously grateful to the dozens of ‘class captains’ who have taken on this important work,” says Rabbi Ellenson. “A strong base of support by rabbis and other alumni of HUC-JIR shows our donors that there is widespread support of the



The *minyan* of ‘five-year captains’ includes:

1960-1964:

Rabbi Martin S. Weiner

1965-1969:

Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl

1970-1974:

Rabbi Bennett F. Miller

1975-1979:

Rabbi Steven S. Mason

1980-1984:

Rabbi Scott L. Shpeen

1985-1989:

Rabbi Jeffrey J. Sirkman

1990-1994:

Rabbi Nancy A. Kasten

1995-1999:

Rabbi Daniel B. Gropper

2000-2004:

TBD

2005-2009:

Rabbi Alissa M. Forrest

Rabbinical students (from left) Josh Whinston, L ’09 and Noam Katz, L ’10, leading the Torah service in the Mercaz at HUC-JIR/ Los Angeles.



Students commemorate the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht with the dedication of the Yanov Torah, rescued out of the ashes of the Holocaust and donated to HUC-JIR/Los Angeles by Rabbi Erwin Herman, z"l, C '49, and his wife Agnes (second from right).

College- Institute by those who were trained here. Some of our alumni are able to give more, others are challenged by these difficult times and can give less. While the amount raised is important, the percentage of alumni who give makes a difference. Our alumni gifts truly matter.”

The success of the “Rabbinic Invest-in-a-Student Campaign” demonstrates the capacity for success when individuals galvanize their resources and join together for a shared goal, and it is a source of inspiration

for alumni from other program, as well. Cantorial alumni are poised to launch a School of Sacred Music Alumni Association Invest-in-a-Student Campaign, and the School of Jewish Communal Service alumni have begun a campaign to raise \$50,000 to close the gap in available scholarship support (see sidebar).

“It is an honor for me and my rabbinical colleagues to give back to the College-Institute, which shaped our professional lives and empowered us to serve as leaders of the Jewish people,” says Rabbi Zeplovitz. “The Rabbinic Alumni Invest-in-a-Student Campaign enables us to express our gratitude to our *alma mater*, to support the education of the next generation of our colleagues, and to ensure that the chain of tradition – *Shalshelet haKabbalah* – will endure and thrive.”

Alumni Scholarships for Jewish Communal Service Students

“The new strategic plan for the School of Jewish Communal Service (SJCS) projects an enhanced and expanded student body,” says Richard Siegel, the newly appointed SJCS Director. “To achieve this goal, it is estimated that an additional \$150,000 in designated scholarship support is needed to ensure that students will be able to afford the tuition costs.” Tuition is approximately \$40,000 per year for dual-degree HUC-JIR/University of Southern California (USC) students who pursue the M.A. in Jewish Communal Service at HUC-JIR while simultaneously pursuing the M.A. degree at USC’s School of Social Work, School of Policy, Planning, and Development, Annenberg School of Communication, or Marshall School of Business.

The SJCS alumni have risen to the challenge. Under the leadership of SJCS Alumni Association Co-Chairs Lori Lander Goodman and Esther Cohen, the SJCS alumni have launched an ambitious campaign to raise at least \$50,000 annually for scholarship support as a critical component of the larger goal. The SJCS Alumni Scholarship Campaign Committee members, including Marla Abraham, Dr. Ron A. Astor, David Bubis, Howard E. Charish, Edward L. Cushman, Mark Gurvis, Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, Richard H. Meyer, Andrea Milens, Laurance A. Nathan, and Lee R. Wunsch, are working with graduation class captains to secure multi-year commitments to help ensure the future growth and excellence of the SJCS.