



# WHAT IS OURS TO DO?

Hebrew College Strategic Plan 2018-2021

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 5, 2020



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” Marcel Proust*

Following her installation as President of Hebrew College in October 2018, Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld engaged in a strategic planning process with a committee of trustees, faculty, staff, and community leaders to define the vision and strategy for the next three to five years of Hebrew College, culminating in the College’s centennial in 2021.

The strategic planning committee’s goals were to identify and articulate Hebrew College’s core mission and distinctive strengths as an institution; to explore opportunities for increased institutional efficiency, integration, and alignment; and to identify opportunities for strategic innovation, strategic investment, and strategic partnerships.

The strategic planning process included surveys and focus groups with students and alumni, meetings with faculty and staff, and conversations with donors and friends.

In May 2019, the strategic planning group made recommendations to the Hebrew College Board of Trustees regarding a new operational and business model to ensure a foundation for future sustainability and growth. These were approved by the Trustees.

The strategic planning process identified Hebrew College distinctive strengths – depth and openness; relational education and engagement; and theory and practice – as well as the challenges and opportunities that Hebrew College faces as an institution. In particular, the group identified opportunities to simplify structure and reduce costs, to build more collaboration and connection between programs, and to deepen synergy, creativity, and communal impact.

The strategic planning group recommended that Hebrew College create a more sustainable financial model by:

- Concentrating on an educational mission with two services lines: a center for **Community Education** with initiatives for youth, adults, and professionals, and a center for **Graduate Leadership Education** with tracks for rabbis, cantors, and educators.
- Strengthening connections between the graduate and community programs to further amplify and enhance Hebrew College’s leadership training and enhance the institution’s impact in the community and the world.
- Strengthening partnerships to enhance communal impact and optimize resources as we search for a new home in a shared campus setting.

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## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, *President, Hebrew College*

Rabbi Daniel Berman `10, *Rabbi, Temple Reyim*

Alan Crane, *Entrepreneur Partner, Polaris Partners*

Elisa Deener-Agus, *Chief of Staff, Jewish Federation of Greater Washington (Washington, D.C.)*

Susan Wolf Ditkoff, *co-head Philanthropy, Bridgespan*

Rabbi Jevin Eagle`19, *Executive Director, Boston University Hillel*

Jack Eiferman, *Director, Goulston & Storrs; Hebrew College Trustee*

David Hoffman, *Hebrew College Trustee*

Rabbi Jane Kanarek, *Associate Professor of Rabbinics, Associate Dean of Academic Development and Advising, Hebrew College*

Professor Sara S. Lee, *Former Director of The Rhea Hirsch School of Education at Hebrew Union College; Hebrew College Trustee*

Andy Offit, *Chair, Hebrew College Board of Trustees*

Guy Sapirstein, *applied clinical psychologist*

Alan Sherman, *Vice President Marketing and Advancement, Hebrew College*

Sarah B. Sonnenfeld, *North American Manager, People and Organization, Boston Consulting Group; Hebrew College Trustee*

## WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Jewish communal life is taking on new and different forms. Denominational affiliation is on the decline and “grassroots” Judaism is on the rise, with a focus on programs that meet the spiritual and educational needs of the unaffiliated public. New offerings are inclusive and community-oriented, often blending study with spiritual, artistic, or social activities.

The demands on Jewish education are also changing. Advanced Jewish education markets are becoming more entrepreneurial, with newer organizations responding nimbly to the market with non-degree and short-term programs that they can run at a leaner cost. Jewish higher education programs must provide financial aid and compete with secular universities.

Hebrew College is at an important inflection point, invigorated by new leadership and financial stability from the campus sale in summer 2018. The College is expanding its board; benefitting from the support of committed donors; and reaching more audiences through its creative marketing efforts.

Hebrew College’s new leadership and the changing Jewish landscape provide opportunities to build new partnerships, operate in more effective ways, and build an even more vibrant future. The College needs a strategic plan to refocus on its core mission, develop a sustainable business model, and enhance its local and national impact.

### Purpose

- Sharpen and articulate our distinct strengths
- Provide a more sustainable business model
- Build trust and excitement to broaden support
- Guide and inform future real estate decisions
- Bring our vision of Jewish life into the world
- Amplify and enhance our impact in the community

### Areas of Exploration

1. **FOCUS:** What is ours to do?
2. **PARTNERSHIPS:** Partnering from strength to strength
3. **BUSINESS MODEL:** Optimizing resources and rebalancing the budget

### Process

- Conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with students, alumni, and faculty of Hebrew College’s graduate and community programs.
- Consider potential partnerships, and articulate criteria for evaluating which partnerships to pursue.
- Identify measures to reduce complexity and administrative overhead costs and rebalance the budget to better focus resources on teaching and learning.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

Founded in 1921, Hebrew College is a vibrant Jewish educational institution dedicated to promoting deep Jewish learning and inspired leadership within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, intellectual rigor, personal engagement, and spiritual creativity. We embrace a mission that connects serious academic study of Judaism with the educational needs and challenges of the community.

Rooted in the Hebraist-Zionist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, courses at Hebrew College were originally taught only in Hebrew and Hebrew language instruction remains an essential element of the curriculum for graduate degree programs and an accessible option for community learners.

Hebrew College maintains a deep commitment to the importance of Hebrew language as a conveyor of Jewish culture and as a link between diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel. Hebrew College's legacy also bequeaths a strong commitment to pluralism, an openness to all forms of Jewish expression, commitment and practice.

As Hebrew College approaches its centennial in 2021, the College remains committed to excellence in Jewish learning and leadership within an environment of open inquiry, intellectual rigor, personal engagement, and spiritual creativity, and looks forward to a period of growth and transformation as it plans a move from its current campus in Newton Centre.

## State of the College: 2018-2019

Nearly 2,000 students are enrolled in Hebrew College's graduate and professional schools, adult and youth education classes, and non-degree and professional development programs.

**The Rabbinical School** has a growing reputation and a strong and enthusiastic student body. There is increased interest in Hebrew College's rabbinical and rav-hazzan programs.

**The School of Jewish Music** offers a first-of-its-kind accelerated three-year cantor-educator program that prepares students to be confident and creative prayer leaders.

**The Schoolman School of Jewish Education** programs reach across the country through online accessibility and flexible options.

**The Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership** has a growing reputation for its scholarship, professional development workshops, interfaith fellowships, interreligious partnerships, and academic *Journal of Interreligious Studies*.

Hebrew College offers **professional development programs** and **community education programs** for all ages and stages within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, depth, creativity, and compassion.

## Hebrew College Mission

Hebrew College promotes excellence in Jewish learning and leadership within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, intellectual rigor, personal engagement and spiritual creativity. We empower and inspire individuals to contribute their voices and vision to the Jewish community and to bring Jewish values to bear on the critical issues of our time. Dedicated to building bridges between the academy and the community, we offer diverse educational and cultural programs for youths, adults and Jewish professionals, and seek to invigorate Jewish life through the following core values:

### **AHAVAT TORAH: A LOVE OF LEARNING**

At the heart of Hebrew College is our vibrant learning community. We share the conviction that education is the key to Jewish vitality, and we are devoted to rigorous study of the full breadth of Jewish religion and culture. Together, we foster lifelong Jewish learning that engages the whole person, challenging the mind and nourishing the soul.

### **AREIVUT: EMBRACING COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Jewish leaders in the 21st century must assume responsibility for both the Jewish future and the future of our planet. Hebrew College promotes learning in a context of communal commitment and concern — for our own local community, for Israel and Jewish communities around the world, and for all

inhabitants of the Earth. Through education, activism, service and interfaith cooperation, we seek to bring healing to a world in need of repair.

### **ELU V'ELU: ENGAGING DIVERSITY**

As a pluralistic institution, we recognize and value human diversity. Within our own *k'lal Yisrael* community and in dialogue with people from other faith traditions, we actively engage a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives in an environment of mutual respect. The encounter with different points of view prompts us to ask honest and searching questions of ourselves and of one another, and to see this process as a source of wisdom and strength.

### **YETZIRA: FOSTERING JEWISH CREATIVITY**

Judaism, at its best, is a creative, intellectual and spiritual encounter among the individual, the community and the received tradition. Hebrew College encourages and empowers learners to see themselves as both inheritors and innovators — active participants in the unfolding story of the Jewish people. We embrace music, literature, and the visual and performing arts as sources of inspiration and as vital modes of Jewish discovery and expression.

The Hebrew College mission continues to be as relevant as ever: To encourage and empower learners to see themselves as both inheritors and innovators — active participants in the unfolding story of the Jewish People.

## OUR KEY FINDINGS

### Distinctive Strengths

#### DEPTH AND OPENNESS

*Our commitment to deep literacy and rich creativity, deep spiritual search and freedom of religious expression, deep Jewish rootedness and universal human concern.*

#### RELATIONAL EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

*Our commitment to relational education and engagement, cohort-based immersive experiences, the conviction that Jewish learning, at its core, is about both content and community, that study and friendship go hand-in-hand around the tables of the Beit Midrash and wherever people come together to study Torah.*

#### THEORY AND PRACTICE

*Our commitment to academic rigor and service to the community, to reflective practice, to being an incubator for innovation, to leadership rooted in a life of learning and to learning animated by a sense of responsibility to the world.*

### Challenges and Opportunities

- Streamlining structural complexity and building synergy between programs, helping to reduce costs and strengthen operations.
- Strengthening shared vision and culture, assuring quality across all of our programs, and connecting programs to one other and to the College mission, helping to bolster recruitment and enrollment and increase brand awareness and fundraising.
- Building a more sustainable financial model for the future in light of the recent campus sale, strengthening partnerships and enhancing communal impact as we search for a new home.

*“The key recommendations that emerged from our work together focused on working toward greater internal integration, synergy, and creative collaboration – both within and between our graduate and community programs.”*  
– Hebrew College President Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To focus on our single mission and two services lines: a center for Community Education and a center for Graduate Leadership Education. Together, these two areas of activity are at the heart of who we are: a pluralistic educational institution that stands at the nexus of the academy and the community – devoted to Jewish learning, leadership, and innovation.

1. Create an integrated vision for graduate programs, with tracks preparing rabbis, cantors, and educators.
2. Create an integrated vision for community education programs, with initiatives serving youth, adults, and professionals.
3. Create meaningful constructs for synergy between the graduate and community programs to support the development of our graduate students as Jewish leaders and support the community of Jewish learners throughout Greater Boston.
4. Search for shared campus and pursue opportunities for partnerships to amplify and enhance communal impact.
5. Develop a new business model and rebalance budget to better focus resources on teaching, learning, and communal impact.

## Approval and Implementation

The Hebrew College Board of Trustees approved the Strategic Plan on May 13, 2019. Implementation began in June 2019 with the establishment of the following four Strategic Plan implementation groups:

1. ***Economic subgroup:*** Identifying ongoing opportunities to reduce costs, optimize resources, and focus on revenue generation.
2. ***MJED Working Group:*** Redesigning our Masters of Jewish Education program as part of an integrated approach to leadership training.
3. ***Music & Tefillah Working Group:*** Creating a new vision for music and prayer leadership.
4. ***Strategic Plan Implementation Committee:*** Building graduate and community synergy and assisting with strategic plan implementation.

*“We urged that the College create an integrated and synergistic model for graduate and community education, to more effectively bring our vision for Jewish life into the world, amplify and enhance our impact in the community, draw on our distinctive strengths, provide a sustainable business model, broaden philanthropic support, and inform our search for a new home.” – Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld*



# 1. CREATE INTEGRATED VISION FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Develop a vision for graduate programs in accordance with our key strengths, including in-person cohort-based, immersive educational experiences
- Develop new organizational relationships to reflect and support an integrated approach to graduate leadership education



## KEY ACTIONS:

- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Create a plan to integrate rabbinical and cantorial programs administratively and educationally. Hire director of placement and professional development to support students in both programs
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Create Music & *Tefillah* Working Group to reimagine hazzan and rav-hazzan tracks to reflect a vision of spiritual leadership that is more fully aligned with the values we identified through the strategic planning process
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Pause Masters of Jewish Education (MJEd) enrollment for Fall 2020. Create MJEd Faculty/Board Working Group to redesign MJEd with a focus on strengthening quality and enhancing integration and alignment with our distinctive values and strengths
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Launch new Balevav Year-in-Israel Program for Rabbinical students, funded by the Germanacos Foundation
- ➔ **SPRING 2020:** Integrate MJEd, Jewish Studies, rabbinical and cantorial programs into single graduate school, with single Dean of Graduate Leadership Programs

## 2. CREATE INTEGRATED VISION FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Develop organizational relationships to reflect and support an integrated approach to community education
- Strengthen connection of community programs to Hebrew College and identify new initiatives, drawing on our distinctive strengths
- Reimagine Prozdor/Youth programs, drawing on our distinctive strengths
- Expand professional development for our rabbis, cantors, and educators, both in Greater Boston area and beyond
- Collaborate with CJP in creating a renewed vision for community education in Greater Boston

### KEY ACTIONS:

- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Hire new Vice President of Community Learning who will join Senior Leadership Team and new Director of Youth Initiatives to develop renewed vision for teen learning
- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Move community programs to same floor to increase collaboration and communication
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Move Ulpan out of Graduate School of Jewish Education and into Adult Learning
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Integrate community learning programs within College-wide marketing and development strategies, as well as centralized registration
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Launch new Community Education newsletter and course catalog, distributed for fall, winter/spring, and summer semesters
- ➔ **WINTER 2020:** Establish/reinvigorate partnerships with Teen Beit Midrash and the Reali School in Haifa
- ➔ **FALL 2020:** Combine youth, adult, professional development, and interfaith programs under new VP of Community Learning; begin regular unit meetings

### 3. CREATE MEANINGFUL CONSTRUCTS FOR SYNERGY BETWEEN GRADUATE AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- Draw on our graduate students and alumni as a talent pool for innovative projects that can have an impact on the community in Greater Boston and beyond
- Develop deeper structures for mentorship and reflective practice for our graduate students
- Develop mentorship and training program for seekers



#### KEY ACTIONS:

- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Centralize marketing, registration, and student services into Office of Student Services
- ➔ **SUMMER/FALL 2019:** Hire Director of Innovation Lab and recruit first cohort of students
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Form working group on integration of graduate and community education
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Establish graduate interns within community education programs to offer mentorship and training opportunities and prioritize, when appropriate, the hiring of Hebrew College faculty, students, and alumni for youth and adult education programs, more than doubling the number of graduate students and alumni teaching in community education programs
- ➔ **FALL 2019:** Increase visibility of community programs in Hebrew College newsletter and launch new Community Learning newsletter with information about youth and adult programs
- ➔ **WINTER 2020:** Pilot new Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership January interreligious seminar for *Mekorot*, first year, and second year ordination students

## 4. PRIORITIZE SEARCH FOR NEW HOME AND PURSUE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Identify a new home for Hebrew College, potentially with one or more partner organizations
- Identify funding partners and explore strategic partnerships that can amplify our impact in greater Boston and beyond
- Solidify our alumni and donor base through an alumni relations and development plan to improve donor stewardship and retention
- Cultivate relationships with foundations and potential grant makers around the country



### KEY ACTIONS:

- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Establish Real Estate Committee to identify a new home and focus on opportunities for strategic partnerships to increase organizational effectiveness and enhance community impact
- ➔ **SUMMER/ FALL 2019:** Hire Donor Engagement Officer to cultivate relationships and develop local and national fundraising strategy, including a capital campaign for a new home/shared campus, culminating in a centennial celebration in spring 2022
- ➔ **SPRING 2020:** Explore a shared campus that could strengthen and expand the vision of the College with an ethos of community engagement and service, and opportunities for mentorship and training
- ➔ **SUMMER 2020:** Assume fiscal sponsorship of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis in alignment with our strategic focus on professional development for educators and clergy in the Greater Boston area
- ➔ **SUMMER 2020:** Secure new shared campus home and partners, hire architect, secure pro bono legal services, and begin permitting approval process with City of Newton; launch Capital Campaign for a new home/shared campus

## 5. DEVELOP NEW BUSINESS MODEL TO REFOCUS RESOURCES ON TEACHING, LEARNING, AND COMMUNAL IMPACT

- Reduce administrative complexity and costs, maintaining or improving quality of service, and optimizing resources for teaching and learning
- Identify cost-saving efficiencies, as well as technologies that will allow us to cut costs
- Identify opportunities to increase enrollment and revenue



### KEY ACTIONS:

- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Clarify roles and identify opportunities to build efficacies, institutional integration, and alignment
- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Centralize Office of Student Services and introduce Campus Cafe system and streamlined policies and procedures
- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Centralize Marketing Department, with focus on three strategic priorities: Hebrew College brand; enrollment growth; and support for development initiatives
- ➔ **SUMMER 2019:** Hire Donor Engagement Officer and relaunch Board Development Committee
- ➔ **2019-2020:** Work with Operational/Economic Subgroup formed during the Strategic Planning process to identify further opportunities to reduce and right-size costs, balance the budget, increase tuition revenue, and broaden philanthropic support
- ➔ **FALL 2020:** Reduce College senior leadership from 6 to 4 members — President, VP of Community Education, Dean of Graduate Leadership Programs, and VP of Finance and Administration — to create a more integrated, cost-effective, and mission-aligned leadership team

## HEBREW COLLEGE LEADERSHIP 2020-2021

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, *President*

Dr. Susie Tanchel, *Vice President of Community Education*

Rabbi Dan Judson, *Dean of Graduate Leadership Programs*

Keith Dropkin, *Vice President of Finance & Administration*

## HEBREW COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Andy Offit, *Chair*

Rabbi Van Lanckton, *Vice Chair*

Jack A. Eiferman, *Secretary*

Myra Musicant, *Treasurer*

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, *Hebrew College President*

Harvey Chasen

Carl Chudnofsky

Rabbi Jevin Eagle

Deborah Feinstein

David Hoffman

Lydia Kukoff

Professor Sara Lee

Tara Mohr

Susan Shevitz

Ross Silverstein

Myra L. Snyder

Sarah Sonnenfeld

Steven D. Targum

Diane Troderman

Betty Brudnick, *Emerita Trustee*

Mickey Cail, *Emeritus Trustee*

Theodore Teplow, *Emeritus Trustee*