

Like many other vocations, the rabbinate has changed and rabbinical education needs to change as well. The HUC-JIR/Cincinnati campus is being transformed by a visionary service learning project funded by the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati. During this academic year, 33 HUC-JIR/Cincinnati rabbinical students are devoting 8,000 hours to enrich and enhance the lives of the approximately 25,000 Jews who live in Cincinnati.

The Jewish Foundation (TJF) of Cincinnati Fellows are integrating their classroom learning with real-life experience in the educational Jewish institutions of the larger community. Second-year rabbinical students are serving as teachers in Reform and Conservative congregations, a pluralist Jewish day school, and the Miami University Hillel. Simultaneously, they are enrolled in a year-long education course so they can translate their learning into their teaching.

Innovation Meets Tradition: The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Fellows Program

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Third-year rabbinical students devoted the past summer to Jewish community agencies, with a focus on human relations that prepared them for a course by the same name – once again reinforcing the link between experience and education. Fourth-year students are apprenticed to leaders in the Jewish community while they take a course in leadership so that they have living case studies upon which they can reflect and integrate into their own rabbinical careers. Fifth-year students choose to focus on an area of concentration to match their interest and deepen their understanding while they take a course designed to connect the dots in the matrix of the Jewish community system.

All of the students receive stipends, which mean that the synagogues and agencies where students are serving have added human and financial resources to achieve their sacred missions. The students receive direct supervision, often by the executive director or senior

leader of the organization. The supervisors meet regularly as a cohort and, in addition, they can opt to receive individual executive coaching in order to hone their leadership skills. The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati is acting as a centripetal force, a catalyst for Jewish community collaboration, and HUC-JIR students are the beneficiaries as well as the leaders of this symbiosis. These rabbinical students are the College-Institute's best ambassadors. They are changing minds, hearts, and souls as they themselves are in formation as rabbis.

Alumni of the TJF Fellows project testify that their experiences in the field of practice in combination with their academic studies have helped them reshape their understanding of the rabbinate. Perhaps this realization should not be a shock. In 1910, Abraham Flexner, a Jew and an educator, but not a Jewish educator, published a report that was highly critical of higher education, especially in medicine. As a direct result of his research, Johns Hopkins inaugurated what has become standard practice – internships coincident with academic learning. Indeed, in some medical schools today students are in hospital settings in their first year. John Dewey published *Experience and Education* in 1938, arguing passionately to take experience into every learning setting. HUC-JIR is in auspicious company, as the Cincinnati campus becomes the first rabbinical seminary in which every one of its rabbinical students will be gaining supervised experiential practice in a rabbinate that is increasingly diverse and dynamic. ■

The Jewish Foundation Fellows meeting with Cincinnati communal leaders.

