



HILLEL

The Star



WASHINGTON AND LEE HILLEL NEWSLETTER

W&L Hillel House, 204 W. Washington St., Lexington, VA 24450-2116

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hillel.wlu.edu

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DECEMBER 2013

TEVET 5774

Sukkot

Zach Dubit '17

The leaves are falling, the temperature is dropping, and at Hillel, we're building. Fall is here and Sukkot is arriving once more. Outside the Hillel House stands the Sukkah. Supported by a rickety foundation of wooden beams and decorated with an exotic variety of gourds, it seems to have simply sprung out of the ground overnight. Alas, this fantastical hut is not the product of supernatural nocturnal beings, but in fact just the collaboration of a tightly-knit community, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

For those with little knowledge of Sukkot, this week-long festival is a time for celebration. Historically, the holiday memorializes the forty days and nights the people of Israel walked through the desert. It is also a harvest festival, promoting a hearty yield of fruits and vegetables so everyone is well nourished throughout the year. Meaning "booths," Sukkot involves building the Sukkah, which is the singular form for "booth." The Sukkah represents



the huts that the people of Israel built while in the desert. It is decorated with gourds, encouraging the prosperous harvest, and has a canopy of branches and leaves. Traditionally, all meals are to be eaten under the Sukkah, and at night it is a common tradition to sleep underneath and watch the stars (except in the case of rain).

On the day before sukkot we began the build. Since Hillel's conception on Washington and Lee's campus, we have been using the same wooden foundations, in respect to the lone wanderers of the desert, who took only what they could find to build their Sukkahs. The wood is warped, much of it is splintered and close to rotting, but it still gets the

job done. Using power drills, we managed to fit the earthy puzzle pieces together and securely created the foundation for our harvest. The latticework was then welded in, creating walls.

There stood a bare Sukkah with a strong base, but no flavor—a fruitless harvest. Long sticks were strewn across

Continued on page 2



Director's Corner

During our Fridays at Five services in November, we had the chance to celebrate Shabbat together outside, a rarity for this time of the year in Lexington. As we enjoyed the last bit of the setting sun, we had the opportunity to answer two of my favorite questions of all time: "What was your favorite part of the week?" and "What are you thankful for?"

Continued on page 2

continued from page 1

We rarely take the time to sit, relax, breath, think about our week and all the good around us, and ponder what we are thankful for.

This year, for the first time since Thanksgiving became a federal holiday, Hanukkah and Thanksgiving overlapped—Thanksgivukkah. This new 'holiday', coined by a nice woman from Boston, gave us the chance not only to give thanks, but also to appreciate the traditions we hold as a Jewish community.

One of the Jewish traditions I am thankful for is the concept of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). We are fortunate to have two very eager students, Maya Epelbaum and Caroline Birdrow, on our student board this year who really want to make a difference in our community.

Each holiday season, our students have the opportunity to buy clothes for students in the elementary school through the Novack Fund, but this year, the students took it a step further. Maya and Caroline learned that there were also high school students in our community who did not have proper clothing for the winter months. They immediately organized a clothing drive for the local high school. The first morning after a donation bin was placed by the door to the Hillel House and flyers were posted, the bin was already full.

Next, Montrose Grandberry, one of the staff members in the university library, volunteered to help out; not only did she put a clothing drive bin in the library, her church donated over four boxes of clothes from their rummage sale!

Teaching, educating, and promoting *tzedek* (righteousness), *gemilut chasidim* (acts of loving kindness) and *tikkun olam* are core values of W&L Hillel. Hillel engages with students and empowers them to grow intellectually and spiritually, and it encourages them to think creatively about social justice while bringing about meaningful social change.

I am excited and looking forward to the continued growth of W&L Hillel's community service programs and expanding our ability to make a difference in our community and the world.

L'Shalom

Brett Schwartz, Hillel Director
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continued from page 1, Sukkot

the top, where we then took mammoth pine branches and heaved them atop the sticks, creating our canopy, which would provide shade and shelter. The seed had been planted. Now it was time to bear fruit. Squashes, pumpkins, and corn, among other gourds, were hung decorously throughout the hut. The Sukkah is now robust with color, ranging from the earthy tones of the antediluvian wood to the verdant shade of the canopy, to the fiery yellows and oranges and reds of the

gourds hanging harmoniously from the walls and ceiling. However, this hut was not yet a home. Two tangles of twine later, we placed our banner on the side of the Sukkah—Washington and Lee Hillel.

The harvest has come and gone, but was wonderful as always. The Sukkah was available for anyone interested to look inside, eat their meals, or enjoy an evening of roasting marshmallows. Sleeping was always an option, too, if anyone was up for it.

High Holidays at W&L Hillel

Zoe Stein '17

W&L Hillel celebrated the High Holy Days this year under the direction of Rabbi Lisa Vinikoor, a student at Hebrew Union College in New York, and Hillel President Samantha Rosier ('14). Rabbi Lisa and Sammy worked very hard with students and members of the W&L community to create a very meaningful holiday service. Over thirty students and community members participated in services by chanting Torah, blowing shofar, or leading a responsive reading.

This year, the first day of Rosh Hashanah fell on what usually is the first day of classes. The university respectfully accommodated the Jewish community and did not hold classes on Thursday, which we certainly appreciated.

All High Holy Day services and meals were well attended and included students from W&L and VMI, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the Lexington and Rockbridge communities.

The holidays started with an *Erev Rosh Hashanah* dinner followed by a brief service. The dinner was held in Evans dining hall and provided a wonderful opportunity for the first year students to acquaint themselves with the Hillel community. The following morning,

there was a *Rosh Hashanah* service where we sounded the Shofar, as well as a picnic lunch and *Tashlich* service at Woods Creek.

The next week, we observed *Yom Kippur*, beginning with a pre-fast dinner and *Kol Nidre* service. The service featured W&L orchestra violinist Wonhee Lim, whose lovely version of *Kol Nidre* definitely set a beautiful tone for the rest of the holiday. To celebrate *Yom Kippur*, we had a wonderful morning service, *Yizchor* service and *Ne'ilah* in the afternoon, and we followed it up with a break-the-fast that included plenty of bagels and lox to go around!

Along with celebrating the New Year and observing the Day of Atonement, the High Holy Day services and meals gave me, as a first-year student, a great introduction to the W&L Hillel community. I felt very welcome and I was even able to chant a portion of the Torah on *Yom Kippur*. Hillel is here not only to provide the Jewish community with (great) food and a place to worship; it also affords us the opportunity to connect with people who share our traditions, while enabling us to be leaders within our community.



Hillel Donor Roll

Gifts made to the Annual Hillel Fund Immediately contribute to the exceptional religious, cultural, educational, social, leadership development and community service programming at Hillel. The Hillel fund is what keeps Jewish student life viable at W&L. Our diverse quality programs and opportunities depend on the financial support of alumni, parents, community members and friends.

Thank you to all those who made contributions to Hillel!

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With heartfelt thanks to those Hillel supporters who made gifts during the 2012-2013 campaign (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013).

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A Shabbat in Roanoke

Laura Wiseman '15

As we walked in through the doors of Beth Israel Synagogue in Roanoke, we were instantly greeted by the warm hospitality of Rabbi Werbin, his family, and the congregation. Branching out from W&L Hillel's small (but mighty) community is always an exciting and highly-anticipated event for us, but this Shabbat proved to be more than an ambassadorial excursion for our Hillel's reputation. We set out for Beth Israel on November 8th in preparation to gain new connections and have a unique Shabbat experience.

As the ambiance within the Synagogue became warmer and busier, we ushered ourselves into the sanctuary and marveled at the stunning décor, in between conversations with fellow Jewish students from colleges throughout Virginia. Although we expected

the night to be entertaining, we never expected to end up dancing around the sanctuary, singing, clapping, snapping, and cheering. Rabbi Werbin's words and charisma unified us all as Jewish students sharing Shabbat with one another, regardless of where we were from, how confident we were in our Hebrew, or which mascot we cheered for at varsity games. We were no longer estranged from one another but were immediately given a level ground and the perfect icebreaker.

After the energizing and uplifting service, we danced our way into the dining hall where conversation, challah, and good food filled the room. The experience of getting to talk to Jewish students from other schools in



Virginia gave us a pleasant reminder of how strong and unified we are, and how lucky we are to have such a giving and supportive community. I can't wait for next year!

VIP Dinners

Mariel Pearl '15

Hillel hosted two VIP dinners in the months of October and November. VIP stands for Very Interesting Professor and the dinner series allows students to get to know their professors in a setting different from the classroom. The dinners took place at the Sheridan Livery and are at no cost for the students. The dinners generally start with a student introduction of the VIP followed by a quick summation of what the Professor is working on. From there, the discussion takes off, and students have the chance to ask the VIP all sorts of

interesting questions about their work and life outside of teaching.

In October, the featured guest was Professor George Bent of the Washington and Lee University Art and Art History department, where he currently serves as chair of the department. Sophomore Kendall Knoll has been a student of Professor Bent's for the past two years and gave a heartfelt introduction about her time in his class. Professor Bent discussed some of the work he has done in his career, specifically with Medieval and Renaissance art. With some art students present at the dinner, the discussion turned towards Professor Bent's work in Italy. The

group discussed studying abroad and the importance of learning foreign language for art history. As usual, it did not take long before the discussion became lively, and the topic of conversation changed frequently. Both the students and VIP had a great time, thanks in large part to Professor Bent, and everyone enjoyed the delicious dinner!

The week before Thanksgiving break, Hillel hosted Professor Holly Pickett as our VIP at the Sheridan Livery. Professor Pickett is an Associate Professor of English at W&L and specializes in the intersection between Renaissance drama and religion. At Washington and Lee, Professor Pickett teaches courses in Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, and the history of drama, and I was lucky enough to take her Hamlet course this past spring term. Currently, Professor Pickett is working on her second book, which analyzes religious debates in early modern English culture. After a short introduction, the discussion quickly turned to her work in England and the opportunities available for students to take advantage of study abroad. Interestingly, the bulk of the conversation at the dinner turned to culture at W&L, and students were able to gain insight from a professor's perspective. There are far and few opportunities to become acquainted with a professor outside of the classroom, so I know that all the students enjoyed our evening with VIP Professor Pickett!



Birthright Israel

Sam Raphael '15

Here I am—all by myself in LaGuardia airport awaiting the start to Birthright, the trip of my life. Am I scared to be by myself? Absolutely not. Am I excited to make great new friends and discover Israel from a unique viewpoint? Absolutely yes. As I approached my group in LaGuardia, I began meeting my new Birthright buddies, and they seemed like typical college kids. However, as the trip progressed, all forty of us quickly developed an unbreakable bond. Sure, this is cliché for all Birthright trips, but it really did happen. It didn't matter if some of us had been practicing Judaism our whole life, the past few years, or were just

starting to experience Jewish religion and culture. We hiked Masada, explored the Golan Heights, wandered Jerusalem and many other places; our Birthright group soon realized there was something that went deeper than anything we had ever experienced before. This “something,” of course, was our beliefs. Judaism had linked us together. The heritage, the traditions, and the country spiritually connected us as if we were one. We knew it was happening and embraced this new, remarkable feeling. At the surface, Birthright is free trip to Israel, but at its core lies the true value of the trip: the Jewish connection.

Not only did Birthright show how connected we as American Jews are, but it also opened my mind to the rest of

the world. Three days into our trip we welcomed five Israeli soldiers into our group. They would go on to stay with us for five days. To our surprise, we again had this spiritual connection that enabled us to bond in the tightest of ways. We soon learned our connection had no boundaries, as we became best friends with these strangers in a matter of days. As I write this, it is very hard to put into words what occurred spiritually during the ten days I was with Birthright. But I do know that I have made some lifelong friends that I otherwise would never have met. I would definitely advise everyone to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity!

Israel, Summer 2013

Jack Powers '15

I had never been to the Middle East, so it was quite the experience going to the one non-Islamic nation in the region. Seventeen Muslim nations, surrounding one Jewish nation. This was cool.

Anyway, my adventure to the center of Judaism started and finished in none other than Jerusalem. Home to some of the oldest and most historic religious monuments in the world: there is no debating it. Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all claim to be founded in the same spot.

It wasn't hard to get in touch with my ancient Jewish roots in Jerusalem—

Hasids practicing Tefilin, praying at the Wailing Wall, and constantly eating kosher meals. However, these activities were all to be expected. What I gained most from the trip was discovering, first hand, the dynamic relationship between Jewish Israel and Muslim Israel, or Palestine.

Israelis are prohibited from entering the West Bank. My brother and I, being Americans, had pretty much no trouble getting in. It was a bit sketchy, however, because we are both Jewish. Once inside the heavily Islamic territory, we discovered that the only buffer for conflict between Jews and Muslims was the Israeli Army. Even though we were halfway around the world (in what felt like a set from Zero Dark

Thirty), in reality, we couldn't have been safer. This is when I realized that security is the crown jewel of Israel. Emphasis on military and clandestine activity has allowed the nation to survive through some difficult times in the Middle East.

Overall, the trip was a blast. We were able to hang out on the beaches of Tel Aviv, swim in the Dead Sea, and hike the winding path to Masada, along with many other culturally stimulating activities. None of these activities would have been possible, however, if Israel did not continue to maintain its defense capabilities and ensure the peace and security of its citizens, which I witnessed, up front, in the West Bank.

Modern Hebrew Lunch Series

Haley Archer-McClellan '15

In my three years at Washington and Lee, I've attended Shabbat services at various synagogues and enjoyed holiday services at Hillel. Because I wasn't raised Jewish, I never learned Hebrew as a kid, but my admiration for Judaism and love of languages inspired me to attend the Learn Modern Hebrew series at Hillel this term.

Under the guidance of Rabbi Fabian Werbin of Roanoke's Beth Israel Synagogue,

my fellow language enthusiasts and I met in the conference room once a week to work on our writing and verb conjugations, read news articles in Hebrew, and practice our speaking. While I'm far from being able to read a Hebrew newspaper, in just a matter of weeks I've learned to string sentences together and I'm finally getting a handle on Hebrew verbs.

Rabbi Werbin's excitement for the class only served to improve the experience, and his enthusiasm for the language is infectious. I'll certainly be continuing to work on my Hebrew and would definitely recommend others to attend when the Modern Hebrew series returns.

Parents and Family Weekend

Madeleine Boireau '17

For my family and many others, the Hillel House proved to be Washington and Lee's prime location to celebrate Parents Weekend. My mom's first of many visits to Hillel began Thursday afternoon when she rolled into Lexington and met my friends and me for an afternoon coffee. Even this simple rendezvous was a showcase of what Hillel has to offer: a comforting atmosphere in which to enjoy the company of friends, and in this case, family as well. But this was only the beginning.

Perhaps the weekend's headlining event was the Shabbat dinner, a Friday tradition in Hillel to celebrate the Jewish day of rest. Parents and students from all over the country gathered in the multi-purpose room for the Shabbat service led by Sammy Rosier and Emily Danzig. Following the service students transformed the room into a dining hall. They carried in tables and arranged the chairs so everyone could enjoy a fabulous meal. The students accomplished this feat with lightning speed and in less than two minutes, seven tables were armed with tablecloths, challah and wine. But perhaps the most memorable part of the meal came at its conclusion: following a sudden rain, a beautiful rainbow appeared above Hillel. Friday night was a memorable night of tradition that we had the pleasure of sharing with friends and family at Hillel.

The festivities continued on Sunday morning with another tradition: the annual Parents Weekend bagel brunch. The joyous occasion was dampened only by the realization that this was the last activity for many parents and students for the weekend.

Sharing Hillel with my mom made my first Parents Weekend truly special. I spend more time in Hillel than the average student, but not only because it happens to be my work-study assignment. Although Hillel has terrific iced coffee and the best bagels that Lexington has to offer, it provides far more than that: it is a warm and inviting place to relax amidst the hustle and bustle of a busy college student's life. The Hillel community on campus is a great commodity that people are hard-pressed to find elsewhere. I am truly grateful to have spent much of my Parents weekend in one of the true gems of this campus.



Hillel Student Board Visits NYC

Before the school year started, our Hillel Director, Brett Schwartz, led a three-day retreat in New York City for a group of students on the Hillel Board. Having never been on this Hillel Retreat before, or any form of retreat for that matter, I had no idea what to expect except for a few trust exercises and some bonding activities.

While there was an intimidating trust building exercise involving mousetraps, there were many more activities that not only strengthened the Hillel Board, but also provided insight on how to become more productive. This retreat not only brought the whole board together, but allowed us to learn realistic ways to achieve and set goals that will be beneficial to the future of our Hillel at Washington and Lee. We did a lot of event planning, developed our vision, and talked a lot about hospitality.

Being from New York, I went into the retreat thinking that we were going to go through standard tourist protocol, like running around Times Square and visiting the Bethesda Fountain. Though the retreat did expose everyone to the hustle and bustle of the fast-paced New York

lifestyle, we were also fortunate enough to experience Jewish culture in the city on a more intimate level. We were given tours at Congregation Shaare Zedek and Young Israel, both located on the Upper West Side. What I found to be even more meaningful was visiting the Tenement Museum and walking through a building where *many* immigrants lived and operated their own private businesses.

The retreat was not only a vital way to develop our board, but it helped to enhance the overall Hillel program.

Natania Greenspan '16

The Washington and Lee Hillel board retreat to New York City was a great experience because not only did I get to see one of America's greatest cities, but I was able to do so with a really spectacular group of people. Those benefits were also a by-product of the purpose of our trip to New York, which was to have 2013-2014 board member bonding and to learn together. I had a wonderful time finding out more about my fellow board members and what Hillel has meant to their college experiences.

As the Inter-Faith officer, I am not Jewish. To be accepted as another valuable member of the board made me feel great. It also reminded me of how much I enjoy this community, which is why I continue to come to Hillel after the first few times when I was just coming with friends.

During our time in New York the board visited the Tenement Museum on the Lower East side. The museum, which is a conserved tenement building, showed what life was like at the turn of the 20th century when many Jewish family members would have taken jobs in the garment industry.

One evening we went to Katz' Delicatessen for a huge dinner of latkes, matzo ball soup, corned beef sandwiches, and lots of pickles. My favorite part of the trip was the scavenger hunt in Times Square in which we split into groups and searched for the JVC globe, I ♥ NY merchandise, a police officer, a tourist family from another country, and a street performer, among many other things.

Overall the trip was a huge success and I am really glad that I was able to participate!

Victoria Cervantes '14



Six Word Stories

"A bountiful source of enduring friendship."
—Sacha Gafinowitz '17

"An always welcoming and inviting atmosphere."
—Tani Greenspan '16

"Delicious food reminds me of home."
—Daniel Pesin '16

"Representing my faith in our community."
—Drew Teitelbaum '16

"Holiday celebrations with other Jewish students."
—Lucy Smith '15

"Inclusive celebration of our Jewish culture."
—Marissa Gubler '15

"Great food, great people, great times."
—Brenden Strauss '15

"Keeping the tradition, replenishing the soul."
—Josh Josephson '14

"A place I feel at home."
—Lauren Michnick '14

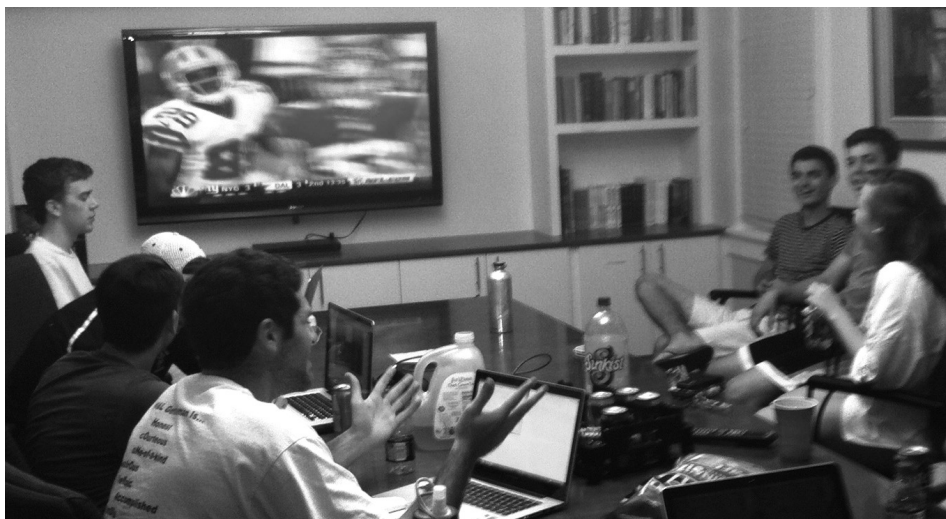
"Shalom y'all—a home in Lex."
—Sammy Rosier '14

"An enriching place that I love."
—Jacob Seymour VMI

Sunday Night Football

Ben Brams '15

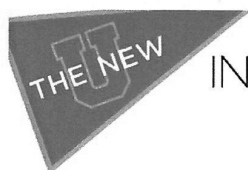
Every Sunday night at 8:30, cheers can be heard ringing from the upstairs conference room at the Hillel House. No, it's not the sounds of celebrating a new school week—it's Sunday Night Football at Hillel. Students are invited to watch the game, relax, enjoy some pizza (generously provided by Hillel), and cheer on their favorite team! In addition, students who attend can try their hand at guessing the winning team and final score of the game. If the student's prediction is correct (for both team and score), he or she wins a small reward. First-year Zack Dubit says he really enjoys trying to predict the score of the game: "It's fun because I don't know that much about football, but I'm learning!" It's



not just a guys-only event either. "In fact," says junior Sam Raphael, "Megan (another frequent SNF attendee) knows more about football than any of us!" No matter the

score or the team, W&L students certainly go crazy for football, and it's always nice to end a hectic week watching some pigskin with friends."

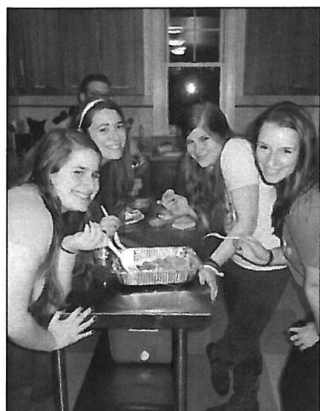




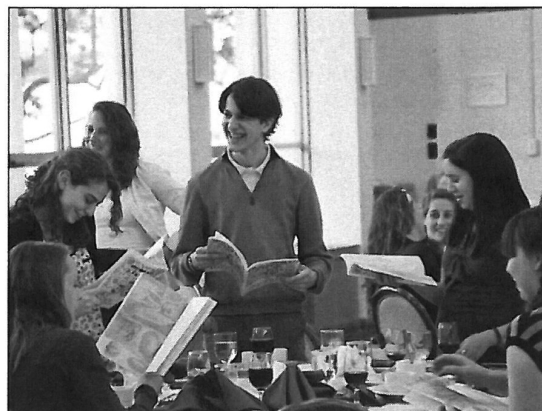
INSIDER'S GUIDE TO COLLEGE LIFE ADMISSIONS

Admissions 103

Top 20 Small & Mighty Campuses of Excellence*



FRANKLIN & MARSHALL COLLEGE
HILLEL STUDENTS
TASTE TEST A NEW
RECIPE WHILE
BAKING FOR THEIR
WEEKLY CAFÉ.



ALLEGHENY
COLLEGE
HILLEL SEDER.

		Jewish Population (Undergrad)	% of Student Population	Jewish Studies Courses	Jewish Studies Major
1	Allegheny College (Meadville, PA: Private)	85	4%	10	No
2	Colgate University (Hamilton, NY: Private)	400	15%	10	Yes
3	College of Charleston (Charleston, SC: Public)	700	7%	10	No
4	Dickinson College (Carlisle, PA: Private)	250	10%	15	Yes
5	Elon University (Elon, NC: Private)	400	7%	32	No
6	Franklin & Marshall College (Lancaster, PA: Private)	370	15%	15	Yes
7	Hobart and William Smith Colleges (Geneva, NY: Private)	175	10%	10	Yes
8	Kenyon College (Gambier, OH: Private)	275	17%	5	No
9	Lehigh University (Bethlehem, PA: Private)	800	17%	29	No
10	Lewis & Clark College (Portland, OR: Private)	100	5%	2	No
11	Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA: Private)	250	5%	10	Yes
12	Middlebury College (Middlebury, VT: Private)	350	15%	12	No
13	Trinity College (Hartford, CT: Private)	300	15%	10	Yes
14	Union College (Schenectady, NY: Private)	350	16%	20	No
15	University of Guelph (Guelph, ON: Public)	800	5%	0	No
16	Ursinus College (Collegeville, PA: Private)	150	9%	2	No
17	Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond, VA: Public)	1000	3%	5	No
18	Washington and Lee University (Lexington, VA: Private)	80	4%	5	No
19	Wellesley College (Wellesley, MA: Private)	235	10%	3	Yes
20	Williams College (Williamstown, MA: Private)	200	10%	10	No

*Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life has selected these 20 campuses with smaller Jewish populations (listed here in alphabetical order) as "mighty" based on these criteria: innovative Jewish programming, a growing Jewish population, a dedicated professional leader, demonstrated university support, and a commitment to serve Jews of all backgrounds. In addition, many actively recruit to attract Jewish students. For more information: hillel.org/guide

GO DEEPER WITH HILLEL'S COLLEGE GUIDE

The college years are life-changing, and choosing a campus community that reflects Jewish values can play a major role in your future direction.

Here and on pages 36-37 you'll find information about the top schools by Jewish population, by percentage of Jewish enrollment, and by small and mighty criteria. This is a starting place—now go

deeper to research the right campus for you.

To help you, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life has launched its improved College Guide. At Hillel.org/guide you'll:

- Discover Jewish life at each college in text, photos, and videos
- Learn about student engagement and social action initiatives, Israel study abroad programs,

Jewish Agency Israel Fellows to Hillel, religious services and kosher dining options

► Compare/contrast Jewish life at up to three schools simultaneously

► Connect to social media and event calendars

► Access every local Hillel and directly connect with staff and students there—the key to knowing what a school is really like.

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