



## INSIDER'S GUIDE TO COLLEGE LIFE ADMISSIONS

### Admissions 100: The College Search—On Your Own Terms

**H**ave you thought about what you want from your Jewish experience in college?

If you're engaged in the college search, one of the most important things you can do is have a clear vision of a meaningful Jewish college experience—for YOU. Taking time to consider this will (1) ease your college search, and (2) make your overall college experience more fulfilling.

Here's what you need to do:

- ▶ **Be honest with yourself** about who you are and what you want. These are four years of your life; you want to make the most of them academically, spiritually, and Jewishly.

- ▶ **Ask yourself questions:** What kind of Jewish life do I have now? What do I want in college? Will I feel comfortable on a campus where there's anti-Israel sentiment? Is a strong pro-Israel community on campus important? Will I want the option to go to Reform Shabbat services on campus or to a Reform congregation nearby? How important is it to be at a campus where there's a large percentage or large number of Jewish students, or one with many different kinds of Jews? What about a school's willingness to apply credits if I decide to study in Israel? How about the presence of Jewish fraternities and sororities? What about the availability of kosher food? Might I want to take Jewish Studies classes? What else might be important?

- ▶ **Don't substitute someone else's preferences for your own.** Close friends, family, casual acquaintances, and your rabbi may all have a different take on what a Jewish campus experience should be like. Hear



what they have to say, but don't lose sight of your own priorities.

- ▶ **Use this guide:** Begin by reviewing "The Top 60 Schools Jews Choose" chart in the centerfold to help you identify which campuses have what you're looking for. The percentage of Jews on campus can tell you how likely you are to "bump into" other Jewish students. Still, numbers and percentages don't tell you everything about Jewish life on campus. For example, a school with a large Jewish population may lack an active Reform community (to find out, see the last four columns of the chart).

- ▶ **Check out Hillel's Guide to Jewish Life on Campus ([www.hillel.org](http://www.hillel.org)).**

#### Stress Less!

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tend to view difficult situations as temporary and limited in scope rather than as permanent and pervasive.

**6. Seek out sources of inspiration for you**, whether they're personal stories, songs, poems, or prayers, such as Naomi Levy's from *Talking to God: Personal Prayers for Times of Joy, Sadness, Struggle, and Celebration* (Knopf: New York, 2002):

You'll find profiles about Jewish life (though not specifically Reform Jewish life) on almost any North American campus as well as contact information for its Jewish professionals.

- ▶ **Contact the campus:** Better than any guide is having personal conversations with administrators and students, preferably while you visit. Ask: Do Jewish students socialize together? How do Jewish groups on campus work with other campus clubs?

Does the wider Jewish community (congregations, faculty) connect with students?

- ▶ **Go to the URJ Congregational Directory (<http://data.urj.org/conglist/>).** With contact information for every Reform congregation in North America, you can make your own connections with the wider Jewish community off-campus—and check out religious school or youth group job opportunities too!

You're now better prepared to find your Jewish home away from home for the next four years.

—Dan Steiner, Program Associate, the URJ College Department

*When I panic, God, teach me patience.  
When I fear, teach me faith.  
When I doubt myself, teach me confidence.  
When I despair, teach me hope.  
When I lose perspective, show me the way—  
Back to love, back to life, back to You.  
Amen*

—Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher, associate director, URJ Department of Jewish Family Concerns and a licensed clinical social worker