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JJF Awards Major Grant to Renew and Expand Education and Jewish Studies Concentration
Stanford University Receives \$12 million to Establish New Concentration and Professorship

Stanford, CA – Committed to the creation of a new generation of scholars in Jewish education, the Jim Joseph Foundation (JJF) has announced a \$12 million grant, awarded to Stanford University's School of Education (SUSE) to create a doctoral Concentration in Education and Jewish Studies. A key component of the new concentration is the establishment of an endowed Jim Joseph Professorship in Education and Jewish Studies. The gift is the largest in the history of Stanford's School of Education.

Stanford previously offered a concentration in Jewish education from 1992 – 2002, establishing a track record for preparing scholars of Jewish education at the doctoral level. By using the JJF grant to renew its concentration, Stanford now joins NYU as one of only two research universities in the country offering this type of doctoral degree. It will admit two students per year for the first three years of the program and then will ramp up by one additional student per year afterwards to reach a total of seven. Graduates will go on to positions at some of the nation's leading universities, as well as in Jewish communal institutions that provide leadership to the field.

“Through this generous gift, Jim Joseph Foundation is helping to pioneer a new paradigm for thinking about the intersection of religion and education,” says Sam Wineburg, the Margaret Jacks Professor of Education and of History, who led Stanford's effort. “We're putting our energy into the intersection of education and Jewish studies because Stanford has a record of success in this field and because there's a need to produce more scholars with this background. The impact of this significant JJF gift will be broadly felt. More children across the globe are educated in religious institutions than secular ones. However, we don't yet know, and have not yet begun to properly study, what ramifications this may have for future generations.”

Faculty in Stanford's School of Education will collaborate with scholars in Stanford's Taube Center of Jewish Studies to create the curriculum for this new concentration.

“We truly are embarking on a new era of research and understanding about how religion and education intersect,” said Professor Vered Karti Shemtov, co-director of the Taube Center for Jewish Studies. “Our center is looking forward to contributing to this new concentration and working with its scholars and students. We have long participated in educating the next generations of leaders in the study of Jewish history, religion and literatures. Thanks to the Jim Joseph Foundation, the new concentration will allow us to train scholars who will influence not only the academic world, but also K-12 education.”

SUSE will initiate a national search for the new Jim Joseph Professor, someone who will lead the doctoral concentration and guide the development of a nascent area of research that spans the social sciences, humanities, and education. Along with the endowed chair, the JJF gift will provide fellowships for doctoral students in the new concentration, will fund participating and visiting faculty members, and will fund seminars and conferences on topics related to Jewish education and questions of religion, education, and civic life.

“What makes this renewed concentration unique is its broad, all-encompassing approach to education,” said Dr. Jonathan Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University. “SUSE and the Jim Joseph Foundation understand that Jewish education encompasses issues of nationality, peoplehood and culture, as well as religion; that Judaism is a broad civilization embracing both secular and Jewish elements.”

This understanding, along with the idea that the meeting of religion and education can contribute to a broad array of fields, will establish Stanford as a national and international center for research in this new field.

“Our commitment is to Jewish education, and the SUSE grant will have an immediate and significant impact towards this cause,” says foundation President Al Levitt. “With the new Jim Joseph Chair and funding for student fellowships, visiting faculty and various seminars, Stanford is on the cutting edge of new and unique scholarly work and discoveries. People that care about developing top Jewish educators and further examining the intersection of religion and education will see great results from this grant.”

Dr. Deborah Stipek, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, commented, “This extraordinary gift from the Jim Joseph Foundation allows Stanford to lead the country in the study of the nexus of culture, religion, and education. Scholarship in this area is critical to understanding the central role of religion in education, and its broad implications for humanity. We are deeply grateful to the Foundation for this opportunity.”

SUSE was approached by the Jim Joseph Foundation in January 2008 to explore the possibility of creating the new concentration. Dr. Wendy Rosov, the Principal of Rosov Consulting and a 2001 graduate of the original concentration, collaborated with Wineburg in a planning grant that examined the feasibility of renewing and expanding the concentration.

“Our team realized that Stanford was in the unique position to attract the best faculty and students to propel this field and make it more relevant than ever before,” added Rosov. “Education and Jewish Studies has long been an area of practice, leadership, and policy, but there are questions out there that need to be examined in a scholarly manner. Thanks to JJF, we will now be able to examine at the highest academic levels such questions as the role of religious education in identity formation, the connection between religious

instruction and moral behavior, and a myriad of other questions that explore the intersection of religion and education.”

The Shimon Ben Joseph Foundation, commonly known as the Jim Joseph Foundation, is committed to the legacy of its founder, Jim Joseph, z”l, devoted exclusively to supporting education of Jewish youth in the United States. Jim Joseph was a dedicated Jewish philanthropist who cared passionately about the education of Jewish children, youth, and young adults. He believed that focusing on young people was the best way to preserve a strong Jewish faith and proud heritage, thereby ensuring success of the Jewish people for the future.

After completing his master’s degree at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Jim Joseph began a highly successful career acquiring and developing commercial and residential property for his company, Interland Corporation. As he built his business, Joseph donated generously to a wide variety of Jewish institutions and organizations and formed the Jim Joseph Foundation in 1987. Jim Joseph passed away December 19, 2003 and was buried by his family in the Jewish tradition in Israel.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors and its foundation professionals are building on the philanthropic mission that Jim Joseph pursued – to foster compelling, effective learning experiences for young Jews in the United States. In accordance with Jim Joseph’s view, the Foundation recognizes that Jewish learning takes place in a multitude of settings, including but not limited to day schools, camps, youth groups, congregations, college campuses, service learning experiences, community centers, and the like.

The Jim Joseph Foundation also funds dual degree NYU masters and doctoral students in Jewish Studies and Education, part of the Foundation's deliberate approach to fund Jewish education scholars at premier universities – one on each coast – who will populate the field as a next generation of educational leaders.

“Stanford is a great institution, and we are certain it will attract extraordinary talent,” adds JJJ Executive Director Chip Edelsberg. “The Jim Joseph Foundation is fully confident that SUSE will take advantage of this opportunity to produce scholars who will help to build and lead the field. The promise of this initiative is that it will accelerate the examination of new and important subject matters, strengthen students’ educational experience, and ultimately enable us to infuse the field with talented educators whose collective good work will positively impact the world of Jewish education.”

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