

SENIOR JEWISH EDUCATORS

Senior Jewish Educators (SJE) build educational relationships with at least 180 uninvolved Jewish students every year. They mentor and teach the CEI Interns and meet students through the CEI Interns' social networks and through their own engagement efforts.

The SJE's approach is based on an understanding of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood. As most adults in their late teens and twenties separate from their parents, they confront the key messages and values that they have received from family, community and broader society, and they reconsider which of these values will form the basis for their future choices and dreams.

On campus, most students lack formal mentoring relationships and peer communities through which to explore these commitments. Students usually do not or cannot ask their professors their big life questions. Hillel's Senior Jewish Educators are unique guides for students' journeys, enabling students to explore their

big questions through the lens of Jewish tradition, and helping each student navigate his/her own Jewish journey.

At the University of Texas, Senior Jewish Educator Devora Brustin met on a regular basis with a group of student artists to study Jewish sources related to themes of freedom. The students' study inspired their art and led to a gallery exhibition of their works in spring 2009. More than 35 students, most of whom had never participated in Jewish or Hillel-related activities, were involved.

At New York University, Rabbi Daniel Smokler was invited to the AEPi fraternity for a regular "men's night" where the brothers gathered with the rabbi to talk about key questions in their lives. They used the study of Torah as the lens for conversations about such topics as parental expectations, personal aspirations, money and intimacy.

To hear podcasts from Senior Jewish Educators, visit, www.hillel.org/schmooze

SENIOR JEWISH EDUCATOR: RABBI DAVID KASHER

University of California, Berkeley

As Senior Jewish Educator at the University of California, Berkeley Rabbi David Kasher is responsible for exposing the depth of Jewish heritage to 180 Jewish students every year.

In his first year on campus, Kasher built his network of students gradually. He created a weekly "Philosopher's Club." He taught a Jewish identity class in a fraternity. He participated in a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. He traveled with students to a political convention and explained the Jewish approaches to social justice. He was invited to give credit-bearing courses in the university. Within the year his weekly teaching schedule and his roster of students filled.

His 180th student turned out to be the president of the Jewish Student Union who asked him to add depth to weekly Shabbat dinners. Rabbi Kasher takes pride in reaching 180: "My relationship with her symbolized an achievement not just of the number goal, but of a crossing over into a wider kind of impact: My work with unengaged students on campus was successful enough to actually begin trickling back and having an impact on the cultural consciousness at Hillel itself. Ultimately the work of the Senior Jewish Educator is to create a cultural shift so that the whole Jewish community on campus comes to see that Judaism is an ongoing, profound conversation about the most important questions of Self, and God, and the World - and that everyone is welcome and able to join this conversation."

