

What Do We Learn about the Field from How We Educate Our Undergraduates?

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The *AJS Perspectives* editorial board invited a number of our colleagues to write about their institutions' Jewish studies major. We asked our colleagues not simply to report to us about what courses their department or program required for an undergraduate degree in Jewish studies, but what the faculty believed constituted competency in Jewish studies for their undergraduate majors. We also queried our authors to comment on any interesting debates among their colleagues as they envisioned and implemented the Jewish studies major.

We selected colleagues to write about their majors from as broad a range of departments as possible given the limitations of the length of *Perspectives*. We invited large and small departments, relatively new ones as well as ones with long-standing traditions, and institutions from a few different regions in the United States to participate. We were disappointed that we lacked the space to include departments from religious colleges or seminaries as well.

We then turned to four colleagues from another set of universities and asked them to respond to the five essays. They were asked to comment

on what we can learn about the field of Jewish studies from the ways we train our undergraduates. Our respondents answered these questions in a variety of ways, from a focus on language requirements to discussions of interdisciplinarity, and the needs and challenges of what in other parts of academic life is called "heritage learners."

We hope that this forum will begin a series of fruitful conversations about the field of Jewish studies. How do

we train our students to be interdisciplinary thinkers and what are the implications for our scholarship? Does our approach to educating students, which frequently offers many paths to the major, suggest ambiguity about our enterprise or bold flexibility? What are the interesting questions to be asking of ourselves and our students about the enterprise of Jewish studies over the next decade?



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