

Institutional Background

The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), founded in 1886 and located in New York City, is the central educational institution of Conservative Judaism. The Seminary educates more than 600 students annually in graduate and undergraduate degree-granting programs. Now in its second century, the Seminary has grown into a Jewish university whose wide range of schools, institutes, research centers and programs extends throughout the world.

JTS schools include The Rabbinical School; the H.L. Miller Cantorial School; The Davidson School of Jewish Education, established in 1996; List College, its undergraduate division and The Graduate School. The graduate and undergraduate divisions are open to all qualified students without regard to race, sex or religion. JTS awards B.A., M.A., M.Sac.M., M.H.L., D.H.L. and Ph.D. degrees in a range of Judaic disciplines.

The Graduate School, with more than 250 full-time students, is the largest of its kind outside the State of Israel. It is the primary professional school for educating Jewish studies faculties in the United States, with over 300 graduates currently engaged in full-time teaching and scholarship at the university level in the United States and throughout the world. A recent JTS Ph.D., for example, was the successful candidate, among hundreds from around the globe, for a position at Oxford University. The Seminary is ranked among the top ten research-doctorate programs in religion, as reported in the recently published study of the National Research Council, *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change*.

The Jewish Theological Seminary actively maintains a network of relationships with leading institutions of higher education. It conducts double-degree programs with Columbia University and Barnard College on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. It has consortial agreements with CUNY; Princeton, Columbia, Fordham and Yale Universities; Teachers College and the Union Theological Seminary that enable graduate students from those institutions to study at the Seminary and affords JTS students access to an exceptional array of extended resources.

The Jewish Theological Seminary is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and is chartered by the Regents of the State of New York. JTS opted not to apply for dual accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Our Vice Chancellor and Chief

Administrative Officer, however, frequently serves ATS in a variety of voluntary consulting capacities, including accreditation team visits and accreditation standards review.

The State of the Seminary in 1996

The current year has been remarkable in many respects. During the past twelve months JTS operated with its first balanced budget in more than a decade, exceeded all previous records in fund raising and was fully reaccredited by the Middle States Association with an outstanding endorsement by the visiting team. These achievements represent exceptional progress brought about by the vision and determination of the current administration and board.

Throughout much of its existence, deficit spending had been a matter of routine for the Seminary. Although the administration began thinking seriously about the importance of the need for a formal budget process and cost controls as early as 1979, it took more than a decade for the institution to recognize the imperative of taking strong measures to balance the budget. During the 1980's, the magnitude of the annual deficit rose to a level that, if continued, would have threatened the viability of the institution. Because the budget gap was systemic, the challenge to close it was even greater. It meant either raising significantly greater amounts of revenue or reducing expenditures by an equally significant sum. Throughout its history, the leadership's faith in its ability to do the former often persuaded it to avoid the more severe alternative of the latter.

Accordingly, in 1989, the Seminary began making significant strides in establishing realistic revenue and expenditure projections and in implementing the difficult process of cutting expenditures. The resulting retrenchment program began to show concrete results in 1992 and culminated in the fully balanced budget of this current fiscal year.

Expenditure control was balanced by an equally forceful effort to reorganize and enhance the Development Department. As is true of most academic institutions, tuition revenue at the Seminary does not begin to meet the needs of annual operating expenses. This gap is intensified at the Seminary because of the many activities supportive of the Conservative Movement conducted in addition to the academic program. The fund raising activities conducted by the Seminary Development Department constitute the heart of the institutional finance engine. The success of the program has contributed significantly to the balanced budget. It was with a note of irony, therefore, that the Middle States 1996

accrediting team report referenced fund raising as both a strength and a weakness. The ability to raise such large sums annually was listed as strength while the need to rely so heavily on fund raising was seen as a weakness.

Other findings of the accrediting team are also noteworthy. The team characterized the faculty and library collection as truly world class. It commended the Seminary for undertaking a strategic planning process as a compliment to the accreditation review.

The visiting team was effusive in its praise for the caliber of the members of the Board of Directors and made special mention of their philanthropic orientation. The high level of individual giving, reflective of all board members, makes them especially effective fund raising volunteers. Their financial generosity is equaled by their commitment of time spent on JTS matters.

The report also noted two areas of concern. Because of the retrenchment, the Seminary administration is lean to the point of being understaffed. None of the top administrators has a second-in-command (please refer to the attached table of organization). Line administrators routinely fill the gaps in staff by undertaking special projects in addition to their primary roles.

The team also noted that the Seminary does not generate information about itself through institutional research. The lack of an institutional research function hinders our ability to perform outcome assessments and to conduct effective strategic planning. Despite the strong need, the Seminary is not able to inaugurate institutional research under the budgets projected for the next several years. We look to the Teagle Foundation to assist us with a grant of \$45,000 in each of two years to initiate this important function. We are committed to continuing it with our own resources thereafter.

Institutional Research

Institutional research helps an academic institution understand itself by providing critical short and long range data and validating or refuting impressions and observations. The data and reports generated through institutional research provide invaluable information about trends related to enrollment, placement, length of time to graduation, alumni participation, completion rates, fiscal analyses and fund raising progress. It consolidates all data gathering and analysis and facilitates external reporting as well as planning.

Institutional research is a standard function in all universities. Most theological schools, however, do not maintain institutional research officers because the function is centralized through data gathering conducted by the Association of Theological Schools. The Seminary, which is not an ATS member, is not represented in national data about theological education. We view inauguration of the function as an opportunity to develop our own model. We will also reach out to ATS to link our data with theirs in order to enrich the dialogue about theological education in the United States.

The new position, Director of Institutional Research, will report directly to Dr. Michael B. Greenbaum, Vice Chancellor and Chief Administrative Officer. Dr. Greenbaum will work closely with this new staff person to ensure that the new function has the support and resources of all operations within the Seminary. The Seminary will equip the Institutional Research Office with the computer hardware and software necessary to begin, and will supplement it as specific needs become clear.

The first six months will be devoted to developing a plan for the office. We will inventory all areas within the institution to determine what information already exists. In some cases, data will be in data-base form, in others information elements will need to be reorganized into a data-base. Data on current students, budget and fund raising exists, albeit on systems that are not integrated. Historical information exists almost exclusively in raw form.

A critical planning function will be to evaluate data-base products for suitability and compatibility with existing systems. Initially, all institutional research activities will be based on a personal computer, but will be designed to facilitate integration with the mainframe. Two products that will be considered are Microsoft ACCESS and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Within the first six months, the Director of Institutional Research will survey all decision makers in the institution.

Questions will include the following:

- What information do you consider essential to the performance of your function?
- In what format would this information be most useful?
- Which elements of this information are routinely available?
- Where are there gaps?
- What have been the consequences of gaps in this information?
- What additional information would be helpful?

- What reports are you required to prepare routinely?
- What questions do you have about JTS's strategic position for the future?

Such a survey is especially timely because the Seminary is launching its first strategic planning initiative. Although planning will begin in early 1997, it will generate data needs well into the future. The survey will give us a sense of the information we already have in hand as well as the priorities for the collection of new data elements. It will serve to guide us from what is known to what is unknown about the institution.

After the results of the survey have been analyzed, the Institutional Research officer, with the guidance of the Vice Chancellor and the Chancellor's Cabinet, will develop a priority listing of reports to be generated during the first year to eighteen months. They will fall into the policy areas that are at the heart of any academic institution, including faculty, students, alumni, finances and facilities.

- We anticipate that some of the basic reports will include the following:
- Faculty demographics, including seniority, age, sex, highest degree, rank, tenure status, previous institutional affiliations and whether or not they are ordained. Subsequent reports would include an individual faculty profile data base listing discipline, publications and sponsored research.
- Student demographics, including feeder schools, graduation rates, degrees awarded and activities after graduation.
- Enrollment trends.
- Budget trends, including short and mid-range income and expense projection and fund raising.
- Physical plant inventory.
- Outcomes assessment, which would focus on qualitative issues through surveys of current students and alumni. The Seminary has not developed a strong alumni program, and this survey could be extremely valuable in solidifying our alumni base and providing data useful in reviewing academic and campus life issues.
- Equilibrium analysis essential for strategic planning.

About the final item, we have already had preliminary conversations with ATS about assisting with this type of study and linking our data to their Strategic Information Project. Their representative was most encouraging and enthusiastic about our plans and the contribution the data will make to the knowledge base about theological education.

At the conclusion of a two-year grant period, we anticipate that this function will be fully institutionalized and will have significantly advanced us in the areas of planning and policy analysis. A grant of \$45,000 in each of two years from the Teagle Foundation will allow us to recruit an institutional research officer and will cover salary and benefits. The Seminary will provide all the other equipment and materials necessary to developing this function.