

JFAS (Jewish Faculty, Administrators, and Staff)

Proposals to Address Antisemitism at Rutgers

December 11, 2023

Introduction: Rutgers JFAS is an informal group founded in 2016 that brings together Jewish employees of Rutgers around issues of shared interest and concern. The group is chaired by Professors Rebecca Cypess (Music), David Greenberg (History and Journalism and Media Studies), and Jenny Mandelbaum (Communication, Emerita) and includes participants from all four chancellor-led units. JFAS is one of several entities that support Jewish life on our campuses.

Since October 7, JFAS activity has increased significantly as a result of the alarming rise in antisemitism that many employees and students at Rutgers have experienced in the workplace, the classroom, and other settings across the university. The group has created this document to guide the university administration in fulfilling its responsibility to understand, address, and mitigate antisemitism at Rutgers.

Category 1: Immediate Steps to Mitigate Antisemitism (start during the week of December 11, 2023)

1. Publicly provide, in plain language, a full accounting of recent antisemitic incidents on our campuses, including each incident as reported, how and by whom it was investigated, the current status of the investigation, and what disciplinary action resulted, if any. In particular:

- Immediately investigate the incident at the Rutgers Business School on November 29, 2023, including the possible role of the Rutgers-New Brunswick Office of Student Affairs in enabling and encouraging the activities of student protestors who entered and remained in the RBS building against university policy and against the wishes of the school administration. The account provided by the New Brunswick Dean of Students to the CEO of Rutgers Hillel should be compared with the accounts of faculty and staff who were present, since there are significant discrepancies. The investigation should also include the role of union leadership in fomenting such incidents.
- Investigate incidents and hostile environments at the Rutgers Law School (October 12, 2023, and ongoing), College Avenue Student Center (November 17, 2023), Mason Gross School of the Arts (ongoing), and the Rutgers Academic Building (the lecture by Bruce Hoffman on November 30, 2023).

2. Clarify and Enforce Codes of Conduct and Ethics.

- Send immediate reminders (by December 12, 2023) to the entire university community about policies regarding on-campus gatherings and use of facilities, as well as consequences for violations of those policies. Clarify that, by definition, engaging in civil disobedience includes accepting penalties, including arrest, for violating rules or laws. Include explicit instructions to faculty and staff—including Student Affairs officials and RUPD—about what to do when a disruption occurs. Include explicit instructions about how to file a bias incident report.
- Effective immediately, require that the investigation of complaints avoids all conflicts of interest. Parties that supervise events or groups should not be evaluating bias incident reports regarding

that event or group, and this is doubly true of university officials reported to be enabling violations of the Code of Conduct.

- Review all policies and procedures regarding violations of the Code of Conduct to ensure transparency and accountability; revise those policies as necessary and enforce them more consistently and rigorously than has been done until now. Complete this process by February 15, 2024.
- Review and strengthen police and security protocols for dealing with disruptions. Ensure that RUPD monitors announcements of upcoming events to ensure that they are preparing appropriately. Allow RUPD to restore a normal working and learning environment when disruptions occur. Complete this process by February 15, 2024.

3. Suspend students or student organizations whose members repeatedly violate the Code of Conduct, as Students for Justice in Palestine has apparently done (e.g., incidents at the Business School, the College Avenue Student Center, and the Bruce Hoffman lecture).

4. Forthrightly condemn egregious instances of antisemitic speech or actions without conflating or juxtaposing the condemnation of antisemitism with other forms of hate. When university offices put out misinformation, as occurred through the biased Instagram posts issued by the Diversity Peer Educators during the week of December 4, 2023, correct it clearly and decisively, giving the correction the same level of prominence that the original misinformation was afforded.

5. Convene a standing, university-wide Committee on Antisemitism and the Jewish Experience (CAJE) in recognition of the fact that antisemitism is an ongoing problem at Rutgers that requires constant vigilance. The committee should begin its work in the first week of the spring 2024 term.

- The committee should be charged with creating an active strategy, rather than merely reacting to problems as they arise. Its establishment would ensure strong support and a consistent approach across presidential administrations. The committee chair would report to the president.
- The committee would develop strategy and policy to ensure transparency in receiving complaints (including anonymous ones) and overseeing investigations.
- The committee should include representatives of all campus stakeholders, including JFAS.
- The committee should consider adopting guidelines to identify antisemitism when it arises across the university, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) or Nexus guidelines.
- The committee can work with the relevant university officers in implementing other recommendations in this memo.

Category 2: Improvement of University Operations (to be implemented by March 31, 2024)

6. Prohibit academic departments, programs, and other administrative units from taking a stance on controversial political issues. Statements espousing such stances give the impression of representing

an institutional position to which all faculty, students, and staff members subscribe and impinge on the academic freedom of faculty who do not share the adopted position (see Appendices 1a and 1b).

- Ensure that faculty are adhering to standards of professional ethics that stipulate that they not engage in political advocacy in their classes at the expense of the course subject matter.

7. Require that university policies and materials that prohibit other forms of identity-based hate also explicitly prohibit antisemitism.

8. Require that Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE) and other structures at the university designed to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) include combating antisemitism (including those forms dealing with animus toward Israel) in their mandate, incorporate combating antisemitism into their written materials such as mission statements and policies, and understand how to report and act on antisemitic incidents when they occur. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Hillel International, and Academic Engagement Network (AEN) can provide resources to work with DICE and other DEI staff on these steps.

- Require all DEI officers, Student Affairs officers, residence life staff, and advisors to receive regular training in antisemitism from the ADL, Hillel International, or AEN. Require senior leadership in DICE and Student Affairs to receive more extensive training through at least one of the same organizations. After receiving such training, any of these staff members who profess antisemitic views or encourage antisemitic activities, even unwittingly, or fail to denounce them when they occur, should be disciplined.
- Include antisemitism in required annual anti-discrimination training for all faculty and staff, as well as in undergraduate New Student Orientation and orientation activities for graduate students.

9. Distinguish between faculty rights and faculty privileges and deny privileges to individuals or units who abuse their position.

- Faculty members who espouse antisemitic views should be held accountable for their discriminatory behavior and not be allowed to hold positions of power or leadership. This is especially important in programs designed to support diversity, such as the STRIDE (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence) training program.
- Research centers that promote antisemitic views, such as the Center for Security, Race, and Rights, should be carefully reviewed for alignment with the university's mission.

10. Renew and enhance the commitment to collaboration with Tel Aviv University to build a mutually beneficial relationship. Increasing and enhancing exchange programs for students, post-docs, or faculty beyond the field of Jewish Studies would help to humanize Israeli academics in the eyes of community members with prejudiced understandings of Israel and provide them with opportunities for professional development. TAU faculty could provide relevant programming to Rutgers that would enhance our own campus climate.

- Reaffirm Rutgers's opposition to the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement, which runs counter to principles of academic freedom and would undermine numerous departments and disciplines at our university.

Appendix 1a: Cary Nelson, “Is Academic Freedom a Casualty of the Gaza War?” (June 2, 2021), <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/06/03/statements-departments-about-gaza-war-have-implications-academic-freedom-opinion>.

Appendix 1b: Draft language prohibiting departments from issuing collective statements on controversial topics, which can create a hostile environment for employees and students:

The university/college prohibits academic departments, programs, and other administrative units from issuing collective statements on contested political topics. Of special concern are issues about which not only the country but also many college campuses are deeply divided. This policy is designed to protect the right of individual faculty members and voluntary faculty groups to issue such statements without the coercive effect produced by formal department endorsement of one political perspective. The right of individual faculty and voluntary faculty groups to express political opinions is guaranteed by academic freedom. Faculty should continue to fulfill their important role of advising both legislatures and the general public about matters of public policy related to their academic missions. However, administrative units do not possess the same freedom to address contested topics in their official capacity. This policy also guards against the possibility that members of the public will conclude that administrative unit statements on contested political topics represent the view of the institution as a whole. Disclaimers included with such political statements will prevent neither of these consequences.