GPATS: 20 years of Advanced Torah Learning Marked with Monumental Enrollment Increase

By Temmi Lattin

This semester, Fall 2020, will mark Yeshiva University’s Graduate Program of Advanced Talmudic Studies’ (GPATS) 21st year since its inauguration in 2000. Currently the only Orthodox program in North America for serious, high-level Torah learning for women that confers a Master’s degree upon graduation, this year’s GPATS incoming class size of 23 students is the first substantial enrollment increase since inception, up from only 11 students last year (see chart).

A major part of GPATS’ current program includes pedagogic and pastoral training. While many graduates pursue Jewish education, students have also had the opportunity to participate in a wide range of Jewish leadership internships, including hospital chaplains and clergy positions in shuls like Lincoln Square Synagogue. Additionally, recent graduates pursue many varied careers after GPATS. Many students study in GPATS for one or two years before going on to graduate schools for medicine, law, history, psychology and many more.

As described by Director Nechama Price, “Being in GPATS is a life-changing experience, where you learn a tremendous amount of Torah, enhance textual and conceptual skills in Torah learning, and are exposed to leading Torah scholars. Students benefit from a faculty with deep expertise in Talmud, Halacha (Jewish Law), and Tanach (Bible) and who embody the attributes of humility, kindness, and commitment.”

President Berman commented on the current enrollment increase with the incoming 2020 class, stating that “supporting and increasing opportunities for women’s learning on all levels is a key priority for YU.”

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GPATS Class of 2019 made a siyum to mark their learning in the two-year Gemara and Halakha program and their awarding of a master’s degree.

YU Announces New LGBTQ Inclusivity Policies, Denies LGBTQ Club Formation

By Skull Fruchter

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on September 3.

Yeshiva University released an official statement on LGBTQ inclusivity and several new university policies on the matter, emailed by Vice Provost of Student Affairs Dr. Chaim Nissel to undergraduate students on Thursday, Sept. 3. The statement also revealed that YU will not approve an LGBTQ club, a decision passed to administrators in February.

The committee’s statement was undersigned by Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Yaakov Neuberger, Azrieli School of Education Dean Dr. Rona Novick, Director of the Counseling Center Dr. Yael Muskat and Azrieli Psychology and Jewish Education Chair Dr. David Pelcovitz, all of whom were assembled by former Senior Vice President Josh Joseph last year to form a committee, at the request of President Ari Berman, to “address matters of inclusion on our undergraduate college campuses, including LGBTQ+.”

The committee explained that, while the Torah is “accepting each individual with love and affirming it’s timeless prescriptions,” the requested LGBTQ club “under the auspices of YU will cloud [the Torah’s] nuanced message.”

“While the YU Pride Alliance is pleased to see the committee release a statement addressing matters present in our mission statement, albeit nearly a year after the statement sent to The Commentator. “We are the bearers of a 3000 year old Torah tradition. Our LGBTQ+ students are our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, family and friends. At the heart of our Jewish values is love - love for God and love for each of His children.”

For the first time in their histories, most issues of The Commentator and the YU Observer — Yeshiva University’s two undergraduate student newspapers — have been digitized and uploaded online. This project was undertaken by Librarian of Electronic Reserves Stephanie Gross, and includes articles dating as far back as 1936, leading up to 2000.

The project is part of the Yeshiva Academic Institutional Repository (YAIR) program, which collects research and scholarship works from YU faculty, staff and students. Currently, all the Commentator issues from 1936-2000 and Observer issues from 1975-2000 have been uploaded. Observer issues from 1958-1975 will be uploaded in the coming weeks. Thereafter, Gross plans to upload the modern issues from 2000-present. She hopes future editors of the newspapers will continuously send her their works to enable an ever-lasting archive of the publications. PDFs of Commentator issues from 2015 to the present are available on The Commentator website.

Many other universities across the country have similarly digitized their student newspaper archives, including the Columbia Spectator, Harvard Crimson and Yale Daily News. YAIR’s project increases accessibility of Yeshiva University’s history through the prism of student publications. “The Commentator and Observer are repositories of YU history,” Gross commented. “There are people who say ‘why have newspapers since they are not really scholarly? I think the benefit of having newspapers is that it’s a cultural document of YU. It helps students get a sense of a breath of the institution.”

During her time with the YU Libraries, Gross has uploaded hundreds of PDFs of student publications such as Gesher, Nahalah, Kol Hamevaser, Chronos, Derech HaTeva, and beginning this past February, The Commentator and the Observer. Gross was able to convert photographs a student took of the archives in the late ’90s into PDF files in a text-searchable format before uploading them to YAIR.

The Commentator’s origins date back to 1936, a time when many Jews were fleeing Europe to escape Nazi Germany. Thereafter, The Commentator covered articles including the horrifying times of the Holocaust, post-Holocaust survivors coming to America, the Israeli War of Independence, McCarthyism, the Korean Wars, and beyond. Gross noted, Continued on Page 5

Student Newspapers’ History Digitized by YU Libraries

By Zachary Greenberg

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Katz School Construction Continues
Campaigning for EVP-COO
Deconstructing Qualified Immunity
A SPAC-tacular Rise
Tuition Hikes Amid a Pandemic are Unacceptable. Nix Them Now.

BY THE COMMENTATOR EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on August 7.

As our nation and the world at-large continue to grapple with what is the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, Yeshiva University’s planned tuition hike for the upcoming academic year is nothing short of unconscionable. The planned, annual four-figure increase in tuition at a time when many families are struggling to put food on the table is out-of-touch and ought to be nixed.

As The Commentator previously reported, tuition and fees at YU have increased by nearly $6,000 over the past four years. For this upcoming year, tuition and fees are slated to increase by more than $1,500 — up to a whopping $46,475. That’s an increase of nearly 15% since the 2016-2017 academic year. Meanwhile, many students have learned over recent weeks that most — if not all — of their courses for the fall semester will be given wholly online, while services and campus life will undoubtedly be diminished in comparison to previous years. It is absurd to demand students and their parents pay more for far less — especially during these trying and tumultuous times.

Indeed, most courses have been moved entirely online for the fall, and notwithstanding the university’s rhetoric of a “robust fall semester,” for the time being, there is little that separates YU from an inexpensive online college with the addition of recorded shrutim.

We understand that YU is hurting financially, as are a countless number of its students and alumni, as well as companies across the globe. COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on all of us, and notwithstanding projected federal aid, the university’s fiscal condition is nothing to brag about.

However, rather than continuing to spend and ask for more from struggling students and their families, the university must take a hard look at its finances, make difficult decisions and slash unnecessary spending. Providing scholarships and launching fundraising campaigns are stopgaps, but they do not get anywhere near the root of the issue: a bloated bureaucracy that grows year after year with reckless spending and fiscal irresponsibility.

A business-as-usual approach that continues to ask for thousands more in tuition each year may have worked in the past, but it is simply untenable under present circumstances, especially with much of the university’s attractive features — from campus life to in-person coursework study — being sidelined due to the pandemic. The student activities fees, which pales in comparison to the overall cost of tuition, is also bewildering given the current pre-COVID-19 context.

This does not mean the end of YU — far from it. Rather, the university must adapt to the changing times and the reality of higher education during and after the pandemic. Asking for more while doing less simply will not work. Cutting costs and trimming excess bureaucratic fat will.

There is ample wasteful spending to trim, and doing so merely requires the university commit to putting its students above politics. Hefty administrator salaries, as evidenced in the university’s recent public tax filing, are a good place to start. While we commend President Berman and other members of the administration for taking voluntary salary reductions, far more must be done to put YU’s house back in order. Beyond that, limiting runaway spending on lobbying Albany, Washington and City Hall, ceasing the hiring of expensive consultants, and cutting costs will be appropriate for the university administration to coordinate with students and their parents.

On the other hand, rather than holding students and their families to the financial burden of this unjustified price hike, the university should use the additional funds, and more, that it saves to start. While we commend President Berman’s recent public tax filing, are a good place to start. While we commend President Berman and other members of the administration for taking voluntary salary reductions, far more must be done to put YU’s house back in order. Beyond that, limiting runaway spending on lobbying Albany, Washington and City Hall, ceasing the hiring of expensive consultants, and cutting costs will be appropriate for the university administration to coordinate with students and their parents.

Student-Administrative Dialogue Ain’t Such a Bad Thing

BY YOSEF LEMEL

In my last editorial, I focused on a major problem affecting the students of Yeshiva University, namely, the miscommunication that students commonly face. The main solution outlined in that editorial was The Commentator; through an established and authoritative vehicle to spur change and work towards the common good.

The Commentator can and should provide students with information and a more intimate relationship with the university’s top administrator.

Students need an established and authoritative vehicle to spur change and work towards the common good... at present, there is no fixed policy-making body within Yeshiva that includes their voices.

However, in addition to this, students need an established and authoritative voice for the university administration to coordinate with students and their parents.

The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 86 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student body, and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva University.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.

Visit us online at www.yucommentator.org.
Commentator Issue no. 86.2
Starting the semester with a second issue of The Commentator without even stepping foot on campus. That’s gotta be a new record.

Meeting the Commie Fam
It’s been an absolute pleasure to personally meet every single one of you ... on Facebook.

The Deans of YU
They’re The Dean Dream Team and they’re fighting for your return to campus this fall. #robust #“It’s not easy being dean”

Mordechai “Mark” Weiss is running for VP of YU
Not sure how this is going to pan out, but you definitely have our attention. (I also really liked your questionable YouTube vlogs)

Sukkot and Simchas Torah Break
Finally some proof that there is diversity at YU!

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches
Sometimes a sandwich is just a sandwich, OR IS IT??? #metaphors

Virtual Library Sessions
You may have taken us out of the Gottesman Library, but you can never take the Gottesman Library out of us. #5thFloorVibes

Fall 2020 Semester Begins
It started with approximately 11 seconds of excitement before the sudden realization hit us all that this semester will be (mostly) on Zoom too.

What are your fall dorming plans
The only question that invokes more stress than “what are you doing after college?”

Asynchronous classes where attendance counts
I’m not sure that word means what you think it means.

Covid Code of Conduct Video
No words, but at least the elevators seem to be working.

Obsolete Student ID Cards
As the green SPRING 2020 sticker slowly fades away, Yeshiva University students yearn for a new, fresh sticker to be haphazardly placed upon the ever-growing sticker pile located on the bottom right of their ID card. Oh, how we miss the little things.

Notification Emails from Canvas
Yes, I know my class was recorded and no, I do not want to watch the rerun.

New Caf Rules
No longer can you wander the caf in circles, opening and closing fridge doors, sniffing the soup, testing out the crispness of the lettuce or checking the expiration dates on the yogurts. #RIPCafPizza
Overwhelming Majority of Undergraduate Classes Online for the Entire Fall Semester

Shoshanah Marcus (SCW '22)

As a pre-med student, I am especially worried I won’t get the proper lab experience while working remotely.

By Shlomit Ebin

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on August 23.

The overwhelming majority of undergraduate classes will continue online when students return to campus after Sukkot break on Oct. 19, according to the MyYU student portal.

All classes will be conducted online and campuses will be closed to undergraduate students until Oct. 19. Following Sukkot break, undergraduate classes will have various instruction formats. By undergraduate college, the breakdown of courses marked online for the entire semester is 71% at Stern College for Women (SCW), 85.3% at Yeshiva College (YC) and 100% at Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). Approximately 28% of SCW courses and 14.5% of YC courses are classified as blended, with less than 1% of face-to-face classes at SCW and none at YC. According to the Registrar, “blended classes” contain “a blend of both face to face and online instruction, whereby online instruction replaces or supplements face to face meeting time. The online portion of the course may be synchronous or asynchronous.”

While on-campus housing applications were due by July 24, students were not notified about their status until a few weeks later. Dean of SSSB Noam Wasserman sent out an email on Aug. 6 stating that for “all Sy Syms courses on both campuses, the core mode of teaching will consist of online instruction that mixes asynchronous teaching and live-online teaching. SCW and YC students also received an email on Aug. 6 from various undergraduate deans, informing them that the “students’ Self-Service” on MyYU will indicate their classes’ mode of instruction.

Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) will continue after the break with 67.75% of its classes and shiurim in person and only 32.25% of online. Within UTS, 63% of the Mazer Yeshiva Program’s shiurim are online and 37% are face-to-face, 40% of the Stone Beit Midrash Program’s shiurim are online and 60% are face-to-face, and Isaac Breuer College and James Striar School each have 100% of their instruction online.

As a pre-med student, I am especially worried I won’t get the proper lab experience while working remotely.

Additionally, YU faculty members were given technological training over the summer break to prepare for online learning. However, I don’t believe that an online lab can truly capture the hands-on experiments that are conducted in person. As a pre-med student, I am especially worried I won’t get the proper lab experience while working remotely.

Faced with another semester of online learning, some professors are working to make their students feel comfortable and succeed academically. “We also recognize that this is an incredibly stressful time for both students and faculty. Our classes will necessarily reflect that,” said Selma Botman on the community call on Aug. 1. “We asked ourselves what’s the best approach for each academic discipline. We came up with a plan to have fully online, blended, and fully face to face instruction.”

TUITION HIKES

continued from Page 2

abandoning expensive advertising practices, stopping the procurement of food and wines for administrators, and taking preventative steps to keep facilities safe and in compliance with code to prevent liability and massive fines are prudent measures as well.

If YU wishes to secure its future financial success, it must cater to the needs of its current students — the donors of tomorrow. The wellbeing of the students should be the prime consideration of the university. Providing students with a quality education is imperative for the long-term success of any academic institution.

Rather than continuing to spend and ask for more from struggling students and their families, the university must take a hard look at its finances, make difficult decisions and slash unnecessary spending.

It is clear that the spend-and-raise-tuition days are over, and more fiscally responsible practices must supersede the reckless spending habits of the past. The university’s future depends on it.

As students, we care deeply about the continued vitality and health of the flagship university of Modern Orthodoxy in America. Over the past century, YU has provided invaluable service to American Jewry. We want nothing more than to see its continued success for years to come. But that requires making the requisite, albeit tough, decisions to ensure YU returns to sound fiscal footing for years and decades to come.

Editor’s Note: For an article to be designated under the byline of ‘The Commentator Editorial Board,’ a minimum of 75% of editorial board members, including the editor-in-chief, are required to give their assent.

and faculty in reestablishing the Senate to represent all undergraduate divisions of Yeshiva. Such a step would be viewed as a symbol of goodwill and would chart a more democratic and enlightened step forward for this institution.

Indeed, the Senate should not have supreme power; tyranny of the majority is a rational fear that accompanies the establishment of any democratic institution. Of course, in any plan drawn up, Rabbi Berman should retain veto power over any resolutions passed. Yet, even if veto power is exercised, a transparent statement of power would be made; students and faculty would know the position of the administration after their voices were given due consideration.

I call on student leaders and members of the faculty to sit down with the administration to construct a plan for the formation of a University Senate. While the exact specifics — including the appointment of senators — could be ironed out, it is clear that the present system is broken. Students are left out of important administrative decisions that directly affect them and some are under the impression that their needs are not fully taken into account.

Rabbi Dr. Samuel Belkin, the second president of Yeshiva, expressed that he accepted the Senate because he trusted Yeshiva students. “I think the Senate is a blessing to the institution,” he said. In a similar vein, I hope that the administration, faculty and students, in this spirit of trust, will be able to discuss constructive methods to grant voices to the underrepresented portions of our institution.

Dialogue Continued from Page 2
committee was formed, we remain disappointed that YU continues to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity,” YU Pride Alliance Vice President Chana Weiss (SCW ’21) said on behalf of the club’s 2020-21 board. “We have delineated that the ultimate course of action to achieve equality. The year prior, then-student leaders reportedly met with President Berman and various administrators to discuss LGBTQ inclusion on campus, and a committee led by Joseph was later formed to focus on the issue.

Since the September march, the unofficial YU Pride Alliance met with student leaders and formally submitted a club application — under the new name “the YU Alliance” — to receive official YU club status. In Feb. of that spring semester, the student council presidents on both campuses abstained from voting on the club’s approval, passing the decision to the administration.

Weeks later, after the YU Pride Alliance alleged that the student council presidents discriminated against the group when they abstained from voting, the Beren Constitutional Council declined to hear the case because of the pending report to the New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR) on the matter. Citing their ongoing investigation of the matter, a NYCCHR spokesperson declined to comment on YU’s announcement.

Berman expressed, “I thank the committee for their detailed work in bringing the full plethora of our values to bear in formulating their initiatives, and I share in their optimism that their ongoing efforts will further enhance our beloved Yeshiva’s undergraduate culture of belonging.”

Editor’s Note: This article was updated to reflect the time and circumstances of the Pride Alliance’s new application for official YU club status.
Update: Administration Issues Apology to Art Students, Construction to Continue

BY SULI FRUCHTER
AND YOSEF LEMEL

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 20.

This article is an update to a piece published by The Commentator on July 12 which can be found here.

Art students at Stern College for Women (SCW) received an apology on July 17 from the Yeshiva University administration for mishandling students’ artwork during renovations to repurpose space from the Art Department to the Katz School of Science and Health’s new cybersecurity master’s program. The statement was signed by Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon and Provost Selma Botman.

Citing the “confusion” from the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent “protracted absence from campus,” Bacon and Botman admitted that, “in hindsight... everything needed to be packed and stored for the possibility of a protracted absence from campus.” The statement continued, “This miscalculation has impacted our graduating seniors in particular, and it is certainly not the way we hoped to celebrate the culmination of their achievements. We are truly sorry this happened.” Construction on the art floor will continue as planned.

On July 13, before the apology was issued, Basya Goldstein (SCW ‘21) and another art student visited the eighth floor of 215 Lexington Ave., where the art floor is located. “What we saw was totally shocking,” said Goldstein. “The students’ artwork from those rooms were dumped and strewn around, treated like garbage. Artwork we’ve spent our years at Stern working on was just left on the floor... and just be respectful of everyone’s stuff,” she expressed. “The one thing the school could have done to make things not as bad was to handle the artwork properly and just be respectful of everyone’s stuff, and they didn’t do either of those things.”

Pincus believed the administration’s apology was “misplaced.” “They put a lot of the blame on the COVID situation,” she said. “How someone takes [the artwork] out shouldn’t be affected by that and they didn’t take responsibility for how it was handled or the fact that stuff was still left inside.”

Current students enrolled in the Stern art program were also disappointed with the situation. “I was really disheartened to find out that they had started renovations without letting anyone know,” said Baily Landa (SCW ‘23). “Like many students, I have a lot of supplies and projects still in the classrooms, and I don’t want anything to happen to them. It kind of seems like they are taking all our hard work and showing it off when it’s convenient for them, and then not giving us the space or resources we need when it’s inconvenient.”

Referring to the apology letter, Landa added, “It seems Dean Bacon and Provost Botman really do care about us art students, and I am hopeful that they will work with Prof. Tullius to set things right and make up for everything that has happened.”

The state of the art floor during renovations

University Reverses Early Drop Date Policy Following Student Backlash

BY YOSEF LEMEL

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on August 13.

The Fall 2020 course drop date without a “W” has been moved from Sept. 22 to Nov. 17, announced Chief Enrollment Management Officer Chad Austein on Aug. 12 Yeshiva University community conference call. The calendar change came on the heels of student backlash to the Sept. 22 date.

Under the new policy, from Nov. 17 until Dec. 7, students will be able to withdraw from classes and receive a “W” notation on their academic transcripts. After Dec. 7, students will be required to complete their respective classes and receive a letter grade. Austein assured that the spring semester will be adjusted to reflect a similar timeline to the fall’s drop dates. Regarding any future policy changes he said, “In the spring we will revisit the policy and we’ll make any changes going forward for the next academic year.” According to Austein, an updated calendar will be published shortly.

“Some time ago we reviewed our withdrawal from course policy and realized it was not consistent with best practices and needed to be reevaluated.”

Dean Karen Bacon

The Sept. 22 date was four weeks into the semester and over 10 weeks before the previous fall semester’s drop without a “W” date on Dec. 2. No official university communication was sent to students regarding the original policy change prior to The Commentator’s publication on the matter.

After student council presidents were originally notified by The Commentator of the then-prospective drop date changes, they jointly sent a letter of complaint to Provost Rocky Pincus (SCW ’20), a recent graduate, related that her artwork was still hanging up, even while the floor was officially under construction. “That was just shocking,” she expressed. “The one thing the school could have done to make things not as bad was to handle the artwork properly and just be respectful of everyone’s stuff, and they didn’t do either of those things.”

Citing the “confusion” from the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent “protracted absence from campus,” Bacon and Botman admitted that, “in hindsight... everything needed to be packed and stored for the possibility of a protracted absence from campus.”
YU Administrators Share Insights Into Fall 2020 Campus Life Via Community Webinar

BY ELISHEVA KOHN

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 23.

The information provided in this article is supplementary to the official YU Fall 2020 Plan, available here, and the official YU FAQ, available here.

University administrators, along with Dr. Robert van Amerongen, YU’s newly-appointed medical director, held two webinars via Zoom on July 21 and 22 to provide students and the broader YU community with updates on the upcoming fall semester.

Both webinars — scheduled at different times to accommodate students in various time zones — were hosted by President Ari Berman, outgoing Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman, five undergraduate university deans, Chief Enrollment Management Officer Chad Austein, Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum, Director of YU International Students and Scholars (OISS) Jennifer Golden and Dr. Van Amerongen.

Health and Safety

According to Dr. Van Amerongen, the university is aiming to have all students, faculty members and staff tested for COVID-19 prior to returning to campus. Students on campus will be required to fill out a daily health survey which will be available on a mobile app. All campus buildings will be equipped with hand sanitizer and students will have their temperature measured regularly.

Students on campus will be required to fill out a daily health survey which will be available on a mobile app. All campus buildings will be equipped with hand sanitizer and students will have their temperature measured regularly. Students Dr. Chaim Nissel; students who apply prior to the July 24 deadline are likely to be accepted. University officials are working to provide transportation to campus for students residing in nearby communities. Students not residing on campus in the fall will “hopefully” be able to apply for housing in the spring, said Nissel.

Both campus cafeterias — operating at reduced capacity — will offer take-home meals on days when classes are in session. Glass partitions will be placed between cashier and students, and foods that are openly exposed to students, such as salad and pizza, will be eliminated to maximize safety. Whether meals will be offered on Friday mornings and Sundays is yet “to be determined,” said Nissel.

According to Randy Apfelbaum, campus elevators have been fixed while students were away, and some are completely new. All campus elevators will operate at reduced capacity. Since all bathrooms in the Wilf dormitories are shared, male students will have to sign up for shower slots in advance.

According to Nissel, students will be able to form “micro communities” with whom they can share campus Shabbat meals with. Guests will not be allowed on campus, including on Shabbat.

Academics

Given the “remarkably low percentage” of students who opted for the recently modified and more flexible P/N policy — 70% of the student body did not opt for the new P/N option — the policy will be inferred for the fall, according to Dr. Noam Wasserman, dean of Sy Syms School of Business. Furthermore, in light of student outrage over the Fall 2020 date to drop a class without a “W” — which was set for nearly three months earlier than prior years — the university is “currently re-evaluating” the date and has “not made a final decision,” said Austein.

All classes will be available online and students will have the opportunity to learn in a more versatile manner; according to Wasserman, the university is planning on offering asynchronous options, online assessments, videos and discussion forums in order to maximize flexibility while maintaining a high “academic standard.” Smaller classes may be offered in-person, and students will be notified of the online/in-person options for their classes by the end of July, according to Dr. Botman. All labs and art studios will be open as well, said Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dr. Karen Bacon. Regular minyanim on the Wilf Campus will be limited to students, faculty and staff, and batei midrash will be open on both campuses. Associate Dean of Torah Studies at Stern College for Women Shoshana Schechter and Dean for Men’s Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Yo- sef Kalinsky assured students that Torah opportunities will be offered in-person, as well as online. “Right now I’m speaking with each rabbi and talking with them in terms of their preferences, in terms of their talmidim’s preferences and matching those up,” Kalinsky said. Various shiurim and chaburos, led by Torah educators from both campuses, have been operating virtually over the summer.

According to President Ari Berman, enrollment for this upcoming semester is “robust.”

International Students

Given the reversal of the recent policy by the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding international students enrolling in online classes, international students taking a full schedule online will be able to maintain their F1 status, said Golden. Nevertheless, Golden said, international students may face other obstacles, such as travel restrictions, and are therefore encouraged to consult authorities in their home countries, as well as the OISS COVID-19 web page. According to Botman, faculty members will accommodate students whose class schedules are affected by time difference.

Refunds

In the event that all dormitories will have to be vacated for health reasons, the university will offer a refund policy that is “expected” from YU students and the broader community, and will “act accordingly,” said Austein.

According to a university spokesman, additional webinars are scheduled to take place in the near future.
Nissel Named Vice Provost, Marketing and Enrollment Depts. Merged as Part of Administrative Restructuring

By Elazar Abrams

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on August 9.

Among various administrative changes, Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel will be promoted to vice provost of student affairs and the Marketing and Communications Department will be merged with the enrollment team, President Ari Berman announced in an Aug. 7 email to university faculty. This restructuring comes in light of Senior Vice President (VP) Josh Joseph’s upcoming departure from YU on September 1 to begin as executive VP and chief operating officer (EVP/COO) at the Orthodox Union. Nissel will now work in the Provost’s Office under Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman. According to Berman’s email, Nissel will be responsible for the areas of “student success, including student life, residential life, counseling and health, athletics, academic advising, support services and career services.”

First arriving at YU in 1998, Nissel served as director of Housing and Psychological Services. In 2001, he was appointed associate dean of students and was promoted to dean of students in 2012. “I am excited to work with Provost Botman and our academic colleagues, along with students and the student affairs team, to further enrich the student experience and foster student success,” Nissel told The Commentator.

Doron Stern, former VP of communications, will lead the newly-merged Marketing and Enrollment Department as vice president. “This shift places the entire marketing, communications, recruitment, and admissions process under one roof to better ensure accountability and results,” Berman explained in his email. Additionally, all enrollment services for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as international student activities and student finance, have been grouped under this department. Stern will be working closely with Chief Enrollment Management Officer Chad Austein.

“Tremendous step towards building and cultivating a strong student leader relationship with the administration which I hope will result in additional positive change going forward,” said Austein.

Austein. Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel Andrew Lauer will now oversee YU’s high schools, Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) and Central, under Heads of School Rabbi Josh Kahn and Bracha Rutner, respectively.

The email also confirmed that YU is searching for a new EVP/COO to replace Joseph. In the interim, the heads of facilities, human resources, information technology and special projects will report to the President’s office.

These changes were not announced to students as of press time.

“While the world will never be the same,” Berman wrote, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic that has the university beginning the academic year online, “knowing that we have the right people in the boat, all rowing in the same direction, gives us great confidence that we will reach new levels of success in the future.”

Former Senior VP Josh Joseph (left), newly-appointed Vice Provost of Student Affairs Dr. Chaim Nissel (middle) and newly-appointed VP of Marketing and Enrollment Doron Stern (right).
President Berman and Senior Administrators Salaries, YU Finances Released

By Yitzchak Carroll and Sruli Fruchter
Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on August 6.

The salaries and compensations of President Ari Berman and various senior executives, along with details of the university’s finances, were disclosed in Yeshiva University’s Form 990 records for the 2018 fiscal year. The Commentator received the public filing on July 31.

Most non-profit organizations are required to file tax returns that reveal financial information—including the salaries of senior executive officials—in a public filing due on May 15. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadline for submission of Form 990 was delayed until July 15.

According to tax records, former President Richard Joel, who currently teaches on a part-time basis in the Sy Syms School of Business, received $665,889 in aggregate compensation in 2018, including a base salary of more than $500,000, and the use of his university-owned residence.

The tax record revealed that Berman made nearly $750,000 in aggregate compensation in 2018. Berman’s salary consisted of a $592,834 base with over $150,000 in additional compensation in 2018. Berman’s salary consisted of a $592,834 base with over $150,000 in additional compensation in 2018. This was in addition to the use of his university-owned residence. During the final years of Joel’s tenure, he was among the highest-paid university presidents in America.

In response to The Commentator’s inquiries on Joel’s pay and other related matters, a YU spokesperson said, “Other than what is required by law to be disclosed in the Form 990, the university does not disclose confidential salary or benefit information of individual employees.”

Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel Andrew Lauer’s total compensation was over $700,000—about $50,000 less than his pay reported in YU’s 2017 filing — ranking him the highest-paid senior staff member after Berman. Jacob Harman, vice president of business affairs, trailed behind Lauer with approximately $655,000 in total pay, making him the third-highest paid employee of the university listed on the filing.

Outgoing Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, who will begin as chief operating officer and executive vice president at the Orthodox Union in September, was paid a base salary of more than $340,000, with over $150,000 in additional compensation. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman’s sum total was over $360,000.

Compared to the 2017 Form 990, former Vice President of Institutional Advancement Alyssa Herman’s 2018 total compensation more than doubled from about $195,000 to over $400,000.

As The Commentator previously reported, for the 2018 payroll year, President Berman is taking a voluntary 20% cut through December, while other senior staff members are voluntarily taking a pay cut between 5 and 10 percent.

The 2018 Form 990 also included key financial information about the YU’s expenditures and fiscal positions. According to the document, the university spent roughly $2.5 million in advertising in 2018—around $1 million more than it spent in 2017. Additionally, more than $3 million was spent on travel costs in 2018, and roughly $5 million was spent on outside consulting costs, including fundraising consultants, third-party legal and lobbying firms as well as outside accounting services. The university spent over $3.75 million on food in 2018, and office expenses exceeded $6 million.

According to the filing, in 2018, over $95 million in grants and assistance went to student financial aid, scholarships and fellowships, including “emergency assistance student grants.” This marked a more than $7 million increase from such assistance disbursed by the university in 2017.

The university spent more than $9.16 million on security services in 2018, the overwhelming majority of which went to a new contract with Securitas, which YU contracts with to provide security personnel for its campuses.

YU Begins Construction to Repurpose Art Department Space for Katz School Amidst Student Protest

By Sruli Fruchter
Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 12.

Yeshiva University Facilities Services officially began renovations to repurpose space on the eighth floor of 215 Lexington Ave.—historically used by the Stern College for Women (SCW) Art Department—for the Katz School of Science and Health’s new cybersecurity master’s program, The Commentator learned.

The last known plan, according to SCW Art Department Chair Prof. Traci Tullius, devoted nearly a third of the art floor—including the multimedia classroom, the video lab and the signage office—to a capital project for a conference room, computer lab, lounge and pantry. Despite undergraduate student protests and a petition of over 1,000 signatures that opposed the removal of Art Department space, the renovations are moving forward and should be “ready of Art Department space, the renovations are moving forward and should be “ready” by the end of the year, according to Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman.

According to the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB), there are no issued work permits for the eighth floor of 215 Lexington Ave as of Sunday, July 12. The DOB project freeze, according to Botman, “is required by law to be disclosed in the Form 990, the university does not disclose confidential salary or benefit information of individual employees.”

Outgoing Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, who will begin as chief operating officer and executive vice president at the Orthodox Union in September, was paid a base salary of more than $340,000, with over $150,000 in additional compensation. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman’s sum total was over $360,000.

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"I've consistently and strongly voiced my opposition to this plan since it was originally proposed, but Covid makes the compression of the art studios absolutely unacceptable."

SCW Art Department Chair, Prof. Traci Tullius

However, if the work is classified as “regular maintenance,” it would not require a DOB work permit, according to a COB spokesman. As of publication, YU Chief Facilities and Administrative Office Randy Apfelbaum did not respond to The Commentator’s inquiries regarding the nature of the active construction.

While President Ari Berman previously declared a freeze on all capital projects in light of the coronavirus pandemic, since the art floor construction was “specifically funded by donors, prior to the coronavirus outbreak,” it is separate from YU’s annual capital project budget and not subject to the capital project freeze, according to Botman.

"I've consistently and strongly voiced my opposition to this plan since it was originally proposed, but Covid makes the compression of the art studios absolutely unacceptable," Tullius said. "In my opinion, it’s outrageous to tackle this in the midst of the pandemic, when the focus should be on health and safety."

On Wednesday, July 1, Tullius was first informed by Facilities Services of their plan to begin construction “right away” over the summer and subsequently notified her art students of the update. Additionally, she said, while they were given a Facilities Services contact for students to schedule a time to collect their work or supplies from the eighth floor, no specific protocol was given to art students; no student has successfully accessed the floor over the summer, according to Tullius.

Botman told The Commentator that the construction will feature various upgrades for the Art Department. In response, Tullius asserted that the listed upgrades are misleading; she explained the “enhanced audio visual capabilities” are a projector in a classroom, the “expanded graphic design lab” would be the maintenance of the current graphic lab’s space and the “new multi-disciplinary studio for media studies, photography and video” are displaced equipment housed in another classroom. Tullius added that there may be added blackout

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YU Athletics Announces Plans for 2020-21 Season

BY CHARLES SCHAECHTER
Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 21.

Director of Athletics and Recreation Joe Bednarsh announced Yeshiva University’s plans for its sports teams for the upcoming 2020-21 season via email on July 9. Following direction from medical experts, coaches and the NCAA’s Skyline Conference, nearly all teams have had their regular season altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Both women’s and men’s soccer teams and the women’s volleyball squad will not partake in the Skyline Conference season, but hope to have some form of “limited competition.” Meanwhile, women’s and men’s cross country and golf teams have been given a full go-ahead and will begin their season following students’ return to campus in Oct. with no known changes. The women’s tennis team’s season was moved to the spring and plans to compete in the league.

Although their seasons begin in the spring, the softball, baseball and men’s tennis teams traditionally start practice in the fall. As such, all off-season practices have been suspended. Men’s volleyball is also a spring sport, but at the moment there are no expected changes to their program.

Bednarsh stated that decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, the main factors being if the sport involved contact or lent itself to social distancing, the necessity of sharing equipment between players and if there is “enough time to complete conference competition after following the appropriate return to play protocols.” These changes have been deemed necessary by many student-athletes, but some are still irritated. “We all know that YU has made the best decision regarding our health. However we still feel very frustrated. We want to play,” shared Men’s Soccer Captain Isaac Bendahan (YC ’21).

Beyond the immediate future, Bednarsh shared in his email that winter sports like basketball and fencing have an “uncertain start date.” This development will undoubtedly leave many fans uneasy following the men’s basketball team’s successful conference championship victory and unprecedented winning-streak at the NCAA D3 tournament in March. The tournament was abruptly cut short due to the coronavirus outbreak, which left the Maccabees hanging their hopes on next season.

“Honestly, I think we are living one day at a time here and waiting to see what happens. Things seem to change constantly,” Head Men’s Basketball Coach Elliot Steinmetz told The Commentator. “It will likely come down to NCAA and conference decisions on how many games are played and when they start. Obviously, we are excited about the team we have coming into this season and are hopeful we will get the opportunity to compete. But at the same time, life is about perspective, and we recognize the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of safety and health for our athletes, coaches and fans.”

“Overall, I do feel that we could have a regular season because overall fencing is a pretty socially distant sport,” shared Adina Passy (SCW ’21), the captain of the women’s fencing team. “It is very rare that you are closer than six feet to someone for longer than a minute. But I am very happy that we are even getting back at all and really look forward to being with my teammates again.”

Bednarsh added, “We will continue to evaluate the most current information and consult with experts in the field as we strive to provide the safest quality athletic experience to our dedicated student-athletes.”

ART FLOOR CONSTRUCTION
Continued from Page 9

screens, but no new equipment.

Art Department faculty members first learned about these then-potential changes to the art floor in Nov. 2019. Among various exchanges between Tullius, her colleague Prof. Mary Creede and Facilities Services members, the Art Department was able to negotiate to reclaim the graphics lab, which was supposed to be allocated for the cyber security program. Between this time, art students and faculty members took action to prevent any space reallocation, covering displayed student artwork to protest the art floor space removal.

Students covered displayed student artwork to protest the art floor space removal. at Stern because of how discouraging the art department will appear to prospective students... I hope everyone comes to their senses and starts showing us that they care about the arts.”

Aside from their initial disappointment with the project’s original announcement, some art students are also concerned about the whereabouts and safety of their artwork. “In previous renovations, they did work on some rooms without telling anyone, and a lot of the artwork and supplies were damaged, thrown out, or went missing completely,” said Rocky Pincus (SCW ’20), a former art student who also led the student protests. “I personally have things on the art floor, and I left my things there thinking we’d come back to school at some point...I heard construction began, and I’m very nervous.”

“It’s also quite disappointing to me that the concerns of students, voiced strongly and eloquently through their activism this spring, is being completely ignored,” Tullius told The Commentator. “They at least deserve the courtesy of a response from the administration, an explanation, or some sign that their opinion and experience matters. I worry that this lack of acknowledgment sends a very troubling message to our students.”

As of publication, Katz School Dean Paul Russo did not respond to The Commentator’s request for comment.
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He expressed that YU is very proud of these students who “chose to spend additional years of learning Torah at GPATS” and concluded that “these students represent the future leaders and educators of our community, and we continue to look for ways to further grow the program.”

The Early Years: 1999-2003

Originally referred to as the “Torah She-Ba’al Peh program,” GPATS was announced in 1999 under the auspices of then-YU president Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm — who passed away in May — and funded with a $1.6 million pledge by the Avi Chai Foundation.

The two-year program with Gemara seder/shiurim in the morning and halakha in the afternoon, started off as a certificate program in advanced Talmudic studies. Students also had the option to simultaneously pursue a Master’s degree in Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration by enrolling in evening courses, tuition-free. Rabbi Ephraim Karanofgel was appointed the director of this new initiative along with an advisory committee: Rabbi Haym Soloveitchik, Dr. Karen Bacon — who was the dean of Stern College for Women (SCW) at the time — and Rabbi Moshe Kahn. For the inaugural class, Rabbi Kahn was hired to teach the morning seder Gemara along with Rabbi Assaf Bednarsch teaching halakha; Rabbi Eitan Mayer joined the program the following year to teach the nachhar/shiur.

Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, this exclusive program which provided an $18,000 stipend (and created slight controversy) offered ideas to ramp up recruiting, including sending out a tremendous amount of Torah, enhance textual and conceptual skills in Torah learning, and be exposed to learning Torah scholars.

Professor Nechama Price

Rabbi Gedalya Berger started teaching the second year halakha shiur, Niddah. Around that time, the question of the grant’s goals for the graduates’ careers came into question: perhaps it was expected for all of them to go on to be Talmud teachers, but Avi Chai insisted that they did not have such an agenda. However, women in the first cohort requested for a twice-a-week Tanakh option and were denied by the foundation, citing Bible options available to them at the Bernard Revel Graduate School.

While it seems that the program in its early years did not have problems attracting applicants, with the required strong Gemara skills. Another change was that many women enrolled in GPATS were not completing the full two-year program, instead choosing to attend for one year only before entering a different graduate program, a departure from the original intended goal to prepare Jewish educators. Overall, the growing interest in the program was seen as a potential sign of increased acceptance from the wider Orthodox community for women’s learning opportunities for undergraduate students on campus. "Being in GPATS is a life-changing experience, where you learn a tremendous amount of Torah, enhance textual and conceptual skills in Torah learning, and are exposed to leading Torah scholars.”

Despite the many challenges faced and often-times uncertainty surrounding GPATS’ future, barring the 2014 “restructuring year,” GPATS enrollment numbers have remained mostly unchanged until this Fall 2020 semester's major increase.

Expanding the Footprint: 2004-2013

2004: With its inception, two of the program’s rabbis, Rabbi Assaf Bednarsch and Rabbi Mayer, made aliya and left the program, and Rabbi Binyamin Talyor grounds, which could have been contributing to the low application rates.

Expansion and Evolvement: 2004-2013

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Features


In 2014, however, no new students enrolled in the program only consisted of second-year fellows, there were worries about GPATS shutting down. In light of YU’s grave financial situation at the time, Rabbi Kahn expressed that he was happy about this exclusive program which provided an $18,000 stipend (and created slight controversy) provided ideas to ramp up recruiting, including sending out a tremendous amount of Torah, enhance textual and conceptual skills in Torah learning, and be exposed to learning Torah scholars.

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Qualified Immunity — A Deconstruction of the Curious Doctrine

By DANIEL MELLOO

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 22.

On May 25, a Black man named George Floyd was arrested in Minneapolis by what the police officer later said was an order to find out if he had counterfeit money. The arrest occurred because Floyd tried to use a counterfeit $20 bill to buy cigarettes in a deli in Minneapolis. After police arrived on the scene, the situation turned violent when the officer, Derek Chauvin, pressed his knee against Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes while the other officers just stood and watched. Chauvin kept his knee pressed against Floyd’s neck despite his pleas that he couldn’t breathe and even after paramedics arrived. Eventually, Floyd lost consciousness and tragically lost his life. Aside from the revisited discussion about race and criminal justice reform, this horrendous incident has reawakened a debate in legal circles regarding the legal doctrine of qualified immunity.

Qualified immunity asserts that a government official cannot be prosecuted for violating a citizen’s constitutional rights unless the official “clearly established” the rule against the conduct. The Supreme Court would further develop the doctrine in Pierson v. Ray, 386 U.S. 547 (1967). The origins of qualified immunity can be traced back to 1970 when the Supreme Court introduced the doctrine in Pierson v. Ray, 386 U.S. 547 (1967). The case involved Black clergymen from Mississippi who, in 1964, were charged with violating the Mississippi Code by attempting to use a waiting room in a bus terminal that was designated for only white people. The clergymen were then convicted in civil court, but the cases against them were dropped after one of them was granted a trial de novo in which the jury decided a verdict in his favor. Subsequently, the clergymen sued for damages in the District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 which states: “Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage of any State...subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States...to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law.” After much deliberation, the jury ruled in favor of the clergymen. Appealing the case in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, the appeals court sided with the officers, ruling: “In this case...the doctrine of official immunity protects the police officers from common-law false-imprisonment liability.”

The Supreme Court, in a decision by Chief Justice Warren, reversed the ruling of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, writing: “The common law has never granted police officers an absolute and unqualified immunity, and the officers in this case do not claim that they are entitled to one. Their claim is rather that they should not be liable if they acted in good faith and with probable cause in making an arrest under a statute that they believed to be valid. Under the prevailing view in this country a peace officer who arrests someone with probable cause is not liable for false arrest simply because the innocence of the suspect is later proved.” Chief Justice Warren’s opinion rejected the idea that the officers were covered by absolute immunity, but accepted that the officers were entitled to what we now know as qualified immunity.

In a country whose pledge of allegiance concludes with the famous words “liberty and justice for all,” how did our legal system devise a doctrine that allows for officers to be above the law? The Supreme Court would further develop the doctrine less than a decade later in Wood v. Strickland, 420 U.S. 308 (1975). In 1974, high school students in Arkansas had been expelled for possession of alcoholic beverages seened their school officials in the District Court for the Western District of Arkansas under 42 U.S. § 1983. The district court ruled in favor of the school officials on the grounds that they [acted with] malicious intent toward the students. On appeal, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the district court and ordered a new trial. The Supreme Court then vacated and remanded the decision, ruling that qualified immunity extends to public school officials so long as they acted within good faith. Writing for the majority, Justice Byron White explained: “we hold that a school official is entitled to qualified immunity for damages under §1983 if he knew or reasonably should have known that the action he took within his sphere of official responsibility would violate the constitutional rights of the student affected, or if he took the action with the malicious intention to cause a deprivation of constitutional rights or other injury to the student.”

As a result of the decisions handed down in Pierson and Wood, the standard for applying qualified immunity rested on whether a government official acted within good faith, believing that his or her conduct was lawful, and that the conduct was objectively reasonable. However, this standard would not last long as the Supreme Court would revise its application less than a decade after the decision in Wood.

In 1982, the Supreme Court created a new standard for qualified immunity in Harlow v. Fitzgerald, 457 U.S. 800 (1982), which coincided with Nixon v. Fitzgerald, 457 U.S. 731 (1982). The development of the cases began in 1970 when E. Robert Fitzgerald was fired from his position in the Department of the Air Force. Fitzgerald then accused President Richard Nixon of terminating his position in retaliation for a testimony he gave before a Congressional Subcommittee in 1968 in which he claimed that there were cost overruns and unexpected technical difficulties concerning the development of a particular airplane. The former president, was entitled to absolute immunity. Regarding the status of the aides, the Court ruled that they were not entitled to absolute immunity like the president, but were entitled to qualified immunity. Writing the majority opinion in both decisions, Justice Lewis Powell criticized the prevailing standard for qualified immunity, writing: “The previously recognized ‘subjective’ aspect of qualified of ‘good faith’ immunity...frequently has proved incompatible with the principle that substantial claims should not go unpunished.” Indeed, a series of recent appeals court rulings confirms Justice Ginsburg’s expectation: “A court should today follow the Ninth Circuit’s lead and extend absolute immunity to the officers in this case.”

The doctrine of qualified immunity has come under particular scrutiny after the recent tragedy involving George Floyd, it has also received criticism from members of the Supreme Court over the preceding years. The calls to revisit the doctrine have come from justices of all judicial philosophies. Some of the Court’s left-leaning justices have shown concern that the doctrine has served as a cover-up for officers that violate the law. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, joined by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, wrote in a dissent in Kisela v. Hughes 584 U.S. (2018) that qualified immunity “tells officers that they can shoot first and think later, and it tells the public that palpably unreasonable conduct will go unpunished.” Indeed, a series of recent appeals court rulings confirms Justice Sotomayor’s discontent. Last year, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a district court decision, and held that an officer who shot a 10-year-old boy who was walking to school was also protected by qualified immunity. The court even acknowledged that the officer violated the boy’s due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment, but could not convict the officer because there was no similar case that existed previously. The Supreme Court’s right-leaning justices have criticized qualified immunity from a more legal perspective. The late Justice Antonin Scalia explained in a dissenting opinion in Crawford-El v. Britton, 523 U.S. 574 (1998) that he felt the doctrine was essentially made up by the Court and not grounded in common-law: “As I have observed earlier, our treatment of qualified immunity under §1983 has not preserved the traditional understanding of qualified immunity that existed when §1983 was enacted, and that the statute presumably intended to subsume... We find ourselves engaged, therefore, in the essentially legislative activity of crafting a sensible scheme of qualified immunities for the statute we have invented — rather than applying the common law embodied in the statute that Congress wrote.” Justice Clarence Thomas, who joined the aforementioned dissent by Justice Scalia, echoed a similar sentiment in a concurring opinion in Ziglar v. Abbasi, 582 U.S. (2017): “I write separately, however, to note my growing concern with our qualified immunity jurisprudence... We will shift the focus of our inquiry whether immunity existed at common law, we will continue to substitute our own policy preferences for the mandates of Congress. In an appropri-ately case, we should not look to qualified immunity.”

The criticism that qualified immunity was created by judicial decree is certainly not unfounded. Chief Justice Warren essentially

Police in Lyon, France amid protesters.
24-Year-Old Alum Launches “Campaign” for YU’s New EVP-COO Post

BY SKULLI FRUCHTER

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on August 18.

Mordechai Weiss, a 2018 graduate of Yeshiva University and an incoming third-year student at the New York University School of Law, tossed his hat into the ring to become YU’s new executive vice president (EVP) and chief operating officer (COO). Weiss launched his “campaign” to gather support for his application on Monday, Aug. 17.

A third-generation YU alumnus, Weiss earned a Bachelor’s degree in accounting from the Syms School of Business (SSSB) and graduated as the valedictorian of YU’s James Striar School (JSS) of Jewish Studies. Weiss is currently working as a summer associate at the Los Angeles-based law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP.

The 24-year-old’s vision for YU centers around five key agendas: strengthening the alumni network, improving the university’s Career Center, connecting Beren and Wilf students, creating a curriculum and services to enhance student experience, and changing the campus culture. Weiss said that he believes these steps will return YU from its 97th-place national college ranking in the U.S News and World Report back to the top 50 schools, a focal point of his mission. Weiss further outlined these keys in his “campaign” video.

“It is time for YU to make a bold decision and choose me as Vice President to bring a youthful, passionate voice into the administration,” Weiss said. “I want the students and administrators to know that I will work tirelessly to bring the University back to its preeminence as a top 50 University.”

For the past several months, the university has been searching for an EVP-COO, a newly created role due to Senior VP Josh Joseph’s departure from YU to begin as EVP/COO at the Orthodox Union on Sept. 1. The job application instructions candidates to submit a resume and cover letter in confidence.

Weiss confirmed with The Commentator that he reached out to YU students, YU alumni and various news outlets — including The Jewish Week and The New York Post — before submitting his job application.

According to its job description, the new EVP-COO will be YU’s “chief business, administrative, and operating officer,” tasked with building a dynamic business model and operational framework and helping to define sustainable, efficient ways to deploy resources, deliver services and identify new sources of revenue and funding. While the qualifications for an ideal candidate stress past managerial and leadership experience, there are no requisite years of experience explicitly cited for applying candidates. The application instructions note that “consideration of candidates will continue until the position is filled.”

“I expect individuals to object to my application due to my age,” Weiss told The Commentator. “I would respond that my age is my biggest asset. YU needs to attract and appeal to the younger generation of students and I will do exactly that. My passion and excitement will be shared with the students because they will experience representation of their voice at the executive level.”

During his time in YU, Weiss was active in student life and played on the men’s basketball team. He also launched LIT, an app that allows users to find “the hottest venues” for nights out with friends. Over the past few months, Weiss also posted several, now-deleted videos to his YouTube channel, including ones on summer fitness, law school and creating a “spiked” hot sauce.

Weiss told The Commentator how he networked with past and current students through “many, many hours of phone calls” to get a better picture of what everyone was struggling with, especially from the women’s campus. As of publication, over 160 people signed Weiss’ endorsement petition for the position, which he created the day he launched his campaign.

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“During the past few months, Mordechai reached out and told me his idea to run for the Vice President [position] of Yeshiva University,” said Cloe Bohlbot (SCW ’19), Weiss’ close friend and Beren’s representative for his “campaign.” “I thought it was an amazing idea. Being a Stern student that was very involved in the social life of both [Beren and Wilf] campuses, I felt I knew the needs and wants of many of the students on the girl’s campus.”

Although the EVP-COO posting does not list any salary details, Weiss added that he “will donate [his] entire first year’s salary to directly fund the five keys of my agenda that will bring YU back to the top 50.” As The Commentator previously reported, for the 2018 fiscal year, Joseph’s salary as senior VP was reported at a base of more than $340,000 with over $150,000 of additional compensation. Additionally, while Weiss did not disclose the costs on his “campaign,” he noted that it was completely self-funded.

Since the EVP-COO will not be taking over all of Joseph’s responsibilities of Joseph’s senior VP position, it is unclear whether the EVP-COO will lead the committee, established by Joseph, to address the concerns of LGBTQ students at YU.

Commenting on Joseph’s committee, Weiss told The Commentator, “At this time, I do not know enough about the work of Rabbi Joseph’s committee in addressing the LGBTQ+ topic on campus. But I can tell you this — with all issues at YU, there will be a continuous and open dialogue between my office and the students.”

Weiss added, “This is something I’m willing to risk everything for because I really think it’s so important.”

A YU spokesperson declined to comment on Weiss’ campaign and application for the position.

The legislative efforts to repeal the doctrine are also not confined to partisan politics. Currently, Representative Justin Amash of Michigan, the lone Libertarian in Congress, has introduced a bill called the “End Qualified Immunity Act,” that has received Republican and Democratic support. This makes it the first tri-partisan effort to end qualified immunity.

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Regardless of where one stands politically, there is ample reason to be skeptical about the doctrine of qualified immunity.
The Art of Reestablishing Yourself

Hi! It’s Deborah again! Still abroad, albeit surrounded by a different set of four walls, with no return ticket booked. Much of this time abroad, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, has bestowed on me many opportunities to learn valuable life lessons.

In the past eight months, I have lived in two countries, three cities and five housing situations. I started off 2020 in the Brookdale dorms watching a movie with friends. Then I spent a few weeks at home before moving to the Hebrew University dorms. The next stop was Givat Shmuel for the summer, and now I am back in Jerusalem as a part-time madricha in Midreshet Lindenbaum. One of the things this pandemic brought out in me is the perseverance and grit in dealing with last-minute changes and cancellations.

I am not spontaneous—I thrive on consistency and planning. A break from the norm is manageable, but not enjoyable. During the Spring 2020 semester, I was supposed to have an in-person semester abroad, return to America in June, work in Camp Moshava and then start my senior year on the Beren Campus. Literally, none of this happened. I’ve learned that I can plan all I want, but I must accept that there will always be certain things out of my control. While I might not understand the master plan that God has in place, I need to trust that everything will work out.

Dr. Joel B. Wolowelsky of the Yeshivah of Flatbush once expressed that chaos in itself is an order. I’ve come to realize that the idea of change fits within his observation, as change, whether predictable or not, is natural. Therefore, change is a requisite for life—it is bound to happen. By learning to adapt more easily, I still struggled, but I survived knowing that chaos is normal. I also learned to build a new community for myself. It is terrifying to put down new roots in a foreign place, but the only way to begin to feel comfortable and make the new place feel like home is by putting yourself out there to meet people. I am lucky to have met so many wonderful, diverse people on my journey. Over these past few months, I have definitely ventured outside my comfort zone and my life has become more enhanced as a result.

I’ve become good friends with people I never would have met had I stayed in Stern for Spring 2020. I met Constance, a young, Irish-Catholic woman, who was full of good advice and funny stories to share. Our friendship resulted in us interning together at The Museum of the Jewish People at Beit HaYotsot, in Tel Aviv. I also became friends with David, a Muslim from San Diego, and we discuss the theological intricacies of Islam and Judaism. These wholesome conversations would never have happened had I not been willing to meet new people and hear different perspectives. The best part was that all I needed to do to make that connection was smile and say a friendly word.

It is important to acknowledge the people who are willing to open the door when you’re knocking on the other side and hopefully one day be that person. When I moved to Givat Shmuel, I came in knowing essentially nobody. A friend from Stern connected me with Tal, a person I went to camp with years ago, but hadn’t seen since. Tal was so friendly and welcoming and invited me on multiple occasions to hang out with her friends in order to meet new people. She even shared a Shabbat meal together. I was able to warmly welcome them because I knew what it was like to be in their shoes and also what it was like to extend a coronavirus-free hand.

I’ve learned to appreciate the journey rather than the final result. I did not have the semester I envisioned nor the travel I expected, but I am lucky to realize that in spite of that, so much good still took place. Those moments of playing Just Dance at 1 a.m., taking a day trip to the beach or just spending hours on the porch are the times I began to look out for and focus on. I was able to spend the summer reconnecting with a childhood friend of mine, interning at an incredible museum doing substantial work on their upcoming exhibit, and learning again in the Beit Midrash that had the most profound impact on my adult life. There was—and still is—so much I cannot control. Why not focus on the moments that I can create, the relationships I can foster? By focusing my attention on the aspects that were in my control, and accepting that there is so much I cannot, I’ve been calmer and happier.

It is still not so easy being abroad, especially during times like these. Thankfully, I’ve learned so many important lessons that made reestablishing myself so much easier, more meaningful and more worthwhile.

Deborah, a YU student, has been abroad since January and through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why People Don't Wear Masks: The Masked Culprit and Behavioral Economics

By Yaakov Metz

Every day, we are plagued with decisions. And, as an increasing body of psychological research shows, our ability to make good decisions deteriorates as we make more choices. In other words, our ability to decide is a depletable resource. In psychology, this concept is known as “decision fatigue” and is one of the main reasons why, when offered a simple solution to a complex problem, we often opt for the path of least resistance. In the present pandemic, we are overrun with one complex solution after another. Whether it be strict quarantine measures imposed by government officials, travel limitations effectively making the world a much smaller place, or a vaccine that had the most nine months ago, or an elusive vaccine that is yet to exist but is expected to be discovered in record time, chances are, the fatigue has already set in by the time you reached the end of this sentence.

There is, however, one decision that Goldman Sachs claims—if adhered to properly—would prevent a 5% or $1 trillion GDP loss through preventing future lockdowns. That same choice could save 66,000 Americans, about the same number of people that fly through Newark International Airport every day, from dying of the Coronavirus by December, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). Both metrics refer to the simple choice to dawn a small piece of fabric over one’s mouth and nose. Participation in mask-wearing is an essential prosocial behavior, yet many people choose not to do so. Some detest encroachment of their personal liberties, whereas others simply doubt the effectiveness of mask-wearing. As we reluctantly trudge into the better part of a year with the global pandemic, it is time to ask—free of criticism and with sheer curiosity—why don’t people wear masks? And, is there anything that can be done to change that behavior?

One of the cornerstones of economics is the assumption of rational behavior, or that individuals consistently make choices that offer the greatest level of personal utility. However, a recently renewed field of study known as “behavioral economics,” which examines the crossroads of economics and psychology, notes the exception to the rule of rational behavior. One of the most studied experiments in behavioral economics is known as the “Ultimatum Game,” where two players are tasked with sharing a specific set of money. Player one is given all the money and is asked to divide the money with the other player. If player two accepts the money, it is distributed per player one’s offer (say 50/50); however, if player two rejects player one’s offer, neither receive any portion of the money. According to classical economics, it is within player two’s best interest to accept any offer from player one that is greater than zero. The assumption is player two will act rationally, after all, $1 is better than nothing. However, less equal offers (say 80/20) are often rejected by player two, and this demonstrates a direct deviation of one of the most basic rules in classical economics: presumption of rationality. Behavioral economics studies this phenomenon by considering additional factors of decision, such as fairness, injustice and revenge.

By understanding this principle, behavioral economists have helped solve real-life issues such as drunk driving with the use of free nachos, saving for retirement by reframing what it means to invest, and even urinal backlash with the use of carton flies. All the aforementioned examples were accomplished with the use of what behavioral economists like to call “nudge theory,” or positive reinforcement through subtle suggestions that influence decision-making without changing the available choices. A 2018 study sought to study a remedy to childhood obesity by encouraging school cafeteria patrons to purchase healthier options. By placing the healthy food at students’ eye level, there was a significant increase in the food that was purchased, recognizing that I was a little lost and was one of the ones who are truly kind inside and out, recognized that I was a little lost and was rather than the final result. I did not have the semester I envisioned nor the travel I expected, but I am lucky to realize that in spite of that, so much good still took place. Those moments of playing Just Dance at 1 a.m., taking a day trip to the beach or just spending hours on the porch are the times I began to look out for and focus on. I was able to spend the summer reconnecting with a childhood friend of mine, interning at an incredible museum doing substantial work on their upcoming exhibit, and learning again in the Beit Midrash that had the most profound impact on my adult life. There was—and still is—so much I cannot control. Why not focus on the moments that I can create, the relationships I can foster? By focusing my attention on the aspects that were in my control, and accepting that there is so much I cannot, I’ve been calmer and happier.

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Psychologists and behavioral economists have argued that the widespread acceptance of masks is managed by nudging. Behavioral economics studies this phenomenon by considering additional factors of decision, such as fairness, injustice and revenge.

By understanding this principle, behavioral economists have helped solve real-life issues such as drunk driving with the use of free nachos, saving for retirement by reframing what it means to invest, and even urinal backlash with the use of carton flies. All the aforementioned examples were accomplished with the use of what behavioral economists like to call “nudge theory,” or positive reinforcement through subtle suggestions that influence decision-making without changing the available choices. A 2018 study sought to study a remedy to childhood obesity by encouraging school cafeteria patrons to purchase healthier options. By placing the healthy food at students’ eye level, there was a significant increase in the food that was purchased, recognizing that I was a little lost and was rather than the final result. I did not have the semester I envisioned nor the travel I expected, but I am lucky to realize that in spite of that, so much good still took place. Those moments of playing Just Dance at 1 a.m., taking a day trip to the beach or just spending hours on the porch are the times I began to look out for and focus on. I was able to spend the summer reconnecting with a childhood friend of mine, interning at an incredible museum doing substantial work on their upcoming exhibit, and learning again in the Beit Midrash that had the most profound impact on my adult life. There was—and still is—so much I cannot control. Why not focus on the moments that I can create, the relationships I can foster? By focusing my attention on the aspects that were in my control, and accepting that there is so much I cannot, I’ve been calmer and happier.

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Continued on Page 16
In an ill world, behavior is often the best medicine

Learning in the Beren Beit Midrash before undergraduate students return to campus.

When asked what she attributes the growth of the program to, Professor Price identified a number of factors. First, she described that more women are recognizing “the impact” that learning Torah has on their lives. Notting to the varied student make-up, she asserted that this impact holds up whether these women are treating GPATS as a gap program prior to graduate school, or as a preparation for a lifetime as an educator. She also pointed to the noticeable impact GPATS alumni left after 20 years of the program’s existence. Professor Price detailed the deliberate recruitment efforts, as was requested by GPATS fellows in 2018, including outreach to seminary students as well as in various SCW education classes. She finished off by expressing how thrilled she was to witness GPATS double in size and in programming, commenting that “this reflects a growing excitement amongst women for learning Torah and dedicating years to studying it.”

Dean Schechter also conveyed that she is very much looking forward to GPATS continued growth. “Yeshiva University should be on the forefront of high level learning for women and GPATS is an integral part of that vision,” she said.
We Asked, Y(O)U Answered: Zooming Through the Summer

By Deborah CooperSmith

Editor's Note: The Commentator's “We Asked, Y(O)U Answered” column provides students with a forum to express their opinions and experiences regarding various aspects of student life.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Yeshiva University students saw their summer plans significantly altered. The Commentator reached out to various students via email and social media to ask them about their summer experiences. The responses of eight students are provided below.

Zahava Fertig (SCW ’21)
Political Science

“My original summer plans fell through in the middle of February. Then, when COVID-19 hit, my plans to make plans were put on hold. After seeing an email from Dean Wasserman about a potential internship program, I jumped on the opportunity and applied. I was accepted at YU’s Consulting Force Summer Internship Program. I was paired with a grassroots Jewish non-profit called Project Proactive where I worked with two other YU students in creating social media content and facilitating a two week Virtual Leadership Development program for 17 teens.

"Except for a few rare exceptions, most of my social life took place on my laptop, through Zoom and WhatsApp. I made sure to reach out to at least one friend per day, and I was part of a virtual Zoom library with a bunch of people who were also working/studying from home this summer. This was a great way to be productive without being alone and I had a chance to meet and get to know some people I had never met before (say hello!). Plus, my friend Deborah, started a book club that met once a week, which was a great way to motivate me to read something new and get to talk about it with a great group of people.

"While this was definitely not the summer I expected or intended, having the flexibility to ‘be’ in multiple places at a time enabled me to participate in a fellowship program, an internship, take a summer class and still have time to relax and spend with my family.

Michael Stark (SSSB ’22)
Business Management

"I originally did not have an internship. Over the summer, I kept sending out my resume and was eventually asked to interview for a real estate company called GRI Properties. I got the chance to learn more about real estate through my internship as well as have fun going surfing at the beach and enjoying the nice weather.

"COVID definitely halted my social life. I was not able to see many of my friends and it became a lot harder to stay in touch. As each day passed, I didn’t feel like a new day started. Everything became monotonous and it was like one long day that never ended.

"I worked part-time for a personal protective equipment company where I helped them get started on social media platforms. I also worked part time at a restaurant as a chef where I would make panini sandwiches and they were honestly really good. I did all this in order to support myself when moving to the YU dorms. It was not easy but was doable.

Yoseph Talasazan (Katz ’24)
Business Management

"Quarantine definitely ruined my expectations of summer, where I couldn’t really hang out with friends or go out to my favorite places such as the beach or synagogue. However, I had time to do things I’ve always wanted to do such as have a scheduled workout routine, call up friends from across the country, and learn more Torah throughout the week.

"While this was definitely not the summer I expected or intended, having the flexibility to ‘be’ in multiple places at a time enabled me to participate in a fellowship program, an internship, take a summer class and still have time to relax and spend with my family.

Zahava Fertig (SCW ’21)

Michael Stark (SSSB ’22)

"If I got to be quite frank, it was not fun. Being around my family was fun but being at home all day, everyday, certainly was not. There is only so much you can do at home for a long period of time. However, being at home helped me because I was forced to brainstorm and think of ways to be productive. Without this quarantine, I may have not been able to progress and become a more scheduled and disciplined person.

"I am confident that I did have a productive summer. I feel closer to Hashem through prayer and Torah learning than ever before. I feel more disciplined when it comes to getting work done throughout my day. Although I wish I could spend my summer outside with friends and family, being inside was needed for me in order to progress and refine how I schedule my day.

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Yoseph Talasazan (Katz ’24)
Business Management

"I work for the Providence Eruv Corporation. Fortunately for me, Jews still like having a kosher eruv every Shabbos, even during a pandemic. I also did some work this summer with shemirat hamet (guarding the deceased).

"I tried unsuccessfully to run a boys baseball camp, but only one of the factors behind why it didn’t work out was due to the fear of getting together during the pandemic. I turned 21 over vacation, but I anyways wouldn’t have celebrated with too many friends because they were away for the summer or live in a different part of the country; one close childhood friend came over to my house, and we shared a drink and hung out.

"I like being at home. I’m way more productive, and I get to see my parents every day! I hate New York with a passion (I’ve lived there for the last seven years). I published my fourth book! I’m also juggling five editorial positions between three different YU publications, so I wrote and edited a ton of articles for those jobs. Additionally, my songwriting has been booming the last few months, and I’ve been rehearsing for my four upcoming concerts at YU.

Megan Herskovitz (SCW ’21)
Education

"I worked at a day camp this summer. It was my original plan, but camp was only five weeks instead of the usual eight. COVID-19 had a big effect on my social life. I didn’t get to hang out with most of my friends in person as I would have liked. I did hang out with some of my friends who don’t live so close to me online, something I probably wouldn’t have done if Zoom hadn’t become such a big thing this year.

"I love my family, but I spent a little too much time with them. I miss my roommates and can’t wait to move into the dorms in October. I feel like I did more than others this past summer, however, I also feel like I missed out on a lot due to COVID-19.

Shifra Lindenberg (Sy Syms ’21)
Marketing

"I was planning on searching for a summer job or internship, but after Covid hit I didn’t try very hard as I was told it was near impossible to find one.

"I don’t have a lot of close friends in South Jersey so I didn’t really hang out with anyone in person. In five months, I only hung out in person with two friends who drove to see me. It was hard leaving all of my friends in New York because I’m a social person and it was tough not to see them. I stayed in touch with a couple of my close friends online but it wasn’t the same.

"Last year I had a turbulent summer so this summer wasn’t as bad. It wasn’t easy not doing anything with friends, but I was still able to go to the beach with my family and walk correctly. This summer, I taught myself how to make cocktails like slushie mimosas and a chocolate chip cookie cocktail. I’ve also put together an apartment in New York that I will be fortunately moving into for the fall.

Dovid Morris (YC ’23)

"I did not have an internship this summer. I was actually looking for a job as a phlebotomist (in training) at a local hospital. Unfortunately, I did not receive the job because of time constraints. Ultimately, I ended up working as a cashier at the local kosher store during July.

"My social life was not actually impacted all that much this summer, as I worked as a cashier in the one Jewish grocery store in Michigan. Bodybuilding gyms were open in Michigan and I had plenty of social interactions this summer.

"I was learning in Yeshivas Yishrei Lev (of Telz Stone, IL) last year. I returned, about 2 weeks before Pesach, and quarantined in my room for those 2 weeks. Afterwards, I generally stayed in the house. So my summer was actually quite liberating, I do feel that my summer was productive to a certain degree. Although, if I had received the phlebotomy position, it would have been exponentially more so.

Editor’s Note: There were many responses that were not included in the column. Many students mentioned that these past few months were challenging and a bit lone some. While some enjoyed being at home for a certain amount of time, many are ready for a change of scenery. Surprisingly, many people felt that they had a productive summer and were able to catch up on a lot of hobbies and activities they usually don’t have time for. There were a number of others who did not feel productive at home.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey!

ALEXANDRA KOCH

Many summer internships went online
Katztating Stern

By Basya Goldstein

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 14.

Throughout the pandemic, President Berman’s messages have focused on Yeshiva University’s “abiding love” for its students and concern for their welfare, health and security. The emptiness of these messages has been demonstrated by the YU administration’s decision to proceed immediately with plans to take away much of Stern’s art floor and devote that space instead to the Katz cybersecurity graduate program.

This seemingly arbitrary decision does not take into account that a large amount of space is vital for the Stern College Art Department to properly function. Even without COVID-19 restrictions, the space on the Art Department’s floor is insufficient to hold classes. Until now the Art Department has been constrained for a lack of space; even the common area has been utilized as classroom space. Thus the reduction of space will further exacerbate this long-standing issue.

The administration has not provided any plans or explanations for how the Art Department is supposed to operate with such limited space. With only three months until the in-person fall semester begins the Department is supposed to operate with such limited space. Thus the reduction of space will further exacerbate this long-standing issue.

Even more disturbing are the potential health implications of the proposed plan. By increasing traffic to the eighth floor while decreasing available space, those responsible for the Art Department renovations are almost guaranteeing that the art students will not be able to socially distance properly, therefore risking the safety of the student body.

Many women at Stern see their college as a single-gender safe space imbued with Torah values — an alternative to secular coed campus life. In contrast to Stern, the Katz graduate program is both secular and coed in nature. The introduction of this program on the Beren campus would make many of us uncomfortable. Art students tend to work in the art studios alone until midnight; therefore the introduction of a secular coed environment can at the very least cause concern of yichud and have other unsettling consequences for female students.

Because of the detrimental consequences of the plan, it has been made very clear to the YU administration from the outset that the students, faculty and alumnae are vehemently opposed to it. We have stated our case and made our opposition very clear with a petition that garnered over a thousand signatures, multiple letters of protest, a formal complaint, op-eds and demonstrations. And yet, throughout it all the administration has “responded” by ignoring the respectful pleas of the student body. Provost Selma Botman merely sent an email that served up platitudes, and the other members of the administration would not even bother to reply. They did not have the courtesy to acknowledge our concerns, or to enlighten us in their decision-making process. Students and faculty deserve a rationale for making a decision that will severely compromise a thriving department, something more than just “a decision has been made.” How can President Berman say that YU prioritizes the students when the actions of the administration so clearly prove the contrary?

Yesterday I experienced the consequences of this callous attitude towards students first hand. After two months of entreating the school to let us retrieve our work, a fellow student and I were finally allowed in. What we saw was totally shocking ... The students’ artwork from those rooms were dumped and strewn around, treated like garbage. Artwork we’ve spent our years at Stern creating had wires and equipment stacked between them, thereby bending and damaging them. It was a total slap to the face, and really brought it home how little the students or the art department seem to matter to the YU administration.

The seizure of the art floor space is yet another example of YU administration’s recurring trend of dealing with serious issues by barely acknowledging them and then failing to initiate meaningful change in response. Now the administration is ignoring the well-founded and reasoned objections of students, faculty and alumnae to a plan that will cripple a thriving art department and place Stern students’ health and welfare at risk. As YU raises Stern’s tuition yet again, it is a good time for Stern women to stop complaining and act. Let’s stand united and reevaluate how the administration’s priorities compromise their education, and whether it is worth it to pay top dollar to a university that puts the students of Stern last.

The artwork and equipment on the art floor were left in disarray.
A Genocide in the Making: China’s Uighurs Need Us

BY SKULL FLUCHTER

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on July 20.

I’ve always lambasted the bystanders of history. Whether it was the world’s si- lence during the Holocaust or the Rwandan Genocide, I was perplexed at their indifferent- ence to injustice. Now, as a Uighur Muslim genocide is materializing in China, I’m question- ing if I’m becoming a bystander myself.

Since 2017, in Xinjiang, China, the Chinese Communist Party has forcibly de- tained over one million Uighur Muslims in internment camps. The crimes they commit- ted? Well, those include myriad egregious offenses, such as wearing headscarves or face veils, growing out beards, fasting during Ramadan, attending mosque services or even referencing Quran verses. In other words, Muslim identity is deemed threatening to the Han Chinese majority. Like the best of history’s authoritarian leaders, Chinese President Xi Jinping is working to eliminate that threat.

Lured by a police state, the 11 million Uighurs in Xinjiang have their online activity tracked, assign government officials who report on their home life and mandated spyware on their mobile devices. Their every breath is monitored and recorded. This is the privileged life afforded to those outside the estimated 143 internment camps, as the inside accounts tell a more harrowing story. While the camps’ primary objective is political indoctrination and expunging Muslim identity, countless leaked docu- ments and first-hand testimonies reveal that detained Uighurs are often subject to psychological and physical abuse, rape, and torture. The personal accounts are horrify- ing, each worse than the next. Leaked videos have shown Chinese authorities boarding shackled and blind- folded Uighurs onto trains like dogs in a pound; we can all bear witness to China’s atrocities. Our history as Jews has shown us what this leads to, and that truth is becoming more evident by the day: This is a genocide in the making.

According to some experts, recent reports about China’s widely enforced sterilization and abortions of Uighur women already meet the United Nations’ criteria for geno- cide, which includes “imposing measures intended to prevent births” of an ethnic or religious group. Yet, the international response has been painfully slow, if not completely absent. While President Trump recently signed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, which authorizes U.S. sanctions against Chinese officials persecut- ing the Muslim minority, moves like this should have been initiated months, if not years, ago. In Oct. 2019, over nine months ago, more than 20 countries at the United Nations condemned China’s detention of Uighurs, but the consequences since have been futile or nonexistent. How grave must China’s brutality become before our world leaders are forced to act? History suggests that effective action may never come, so long and Zaidy’s terrors in the Holocaust, it’s that silence is injustice’s best friend.

If I’ve learned anything from my Bobi and Zaidy’s terrors in the Holocaust, it’s that silence is injustice’s best friend.

A Solution to the F-35 Problem

BY NATALIE SHAVELSON

On August 13, President Donald Trump announced a historic peace agreement be- tween Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Known as the Abraham Accord, it provides for fully normalized relations be- tween the wealthy Gulf nation and the Jewish state, the third such agreement between Israel and an Arab country. Concurrently, Israel would officially suspend plans to apply sovereignty over parts of Judea and Samaria, formalizing what was already the newfound peace partners were still viewing as a secret clause allowing the UAE to purchase the accord, newspapers began reporting against Iran.

It seemed like everybody won: the US administration snagged a major diplomatic achievement to bolster its legacy (and elec- tion prospects), Israel got a reliable Sunni ally will stay a step ahead of those who aim to harm it. Understandably, Israelis were upset by this secret deal, which seemed to undermine the core tenet of that understand- ing. But Emiratis were also angry that their most advanced stealth fighter in the world. This was troubling for a few reasons: firstly, Israel’s Defense Minister Benny Gantz was seemingly left in the dark about this aspect of the deal. More importantly, though, until this agreement came to light, Israel was the only country in the Middle East to maintain a fleet of the fearsome aircraft. This was a manifestation of what has been known for years in Washington as Qualitative Military Edge (QME).

Essentially, U.S. law requires America to uphold the Israeli military’s technological and tactical advantages over regional threats to allow it to deter numerically superior ad- versaries. By carefully tailoring Middle East arms sales and by providing a steady stream of military aid to Israel, the U.S. has tried to ensure that its most important regional ally will stay a step ahead of those who aim to harm it. Understandably, Israelis were upset by this secret deal, which seemed to undermine the core tenet of that understand- ing. But Emiratis were also angry that their newfound peace partners were still viewing them as potential enemies when it came to military hardware. This issue puts all three players, the U.S., Israel, and the UAE, in a tough spot, and, if left unchecked, could lead to a diplomatic freeze between these countries mere weeks after the start of their relations. It’s a problem alright, but I’d like to pro- pose a solution.

For years, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) has been covertly developing a new stealth bomber to shore up its long-distance strike capacity. While fighters like the F-35 are cheaper and more versatile, they run into range issues and have trouble carrying the weights of some of today’s larger bombs. That’s where bombers come in: they can fly many times farther than fighters while car- rying a payload many times larger.

America’s current bomber fleet consists mostly of B-52 Stratofortresses with no stealth capacity. While these are still formidable aircraft with initial unit costs of an eye-watering $2.1 Billion. These are the gifts Hashem entrusted us with, and it would be callous to discount them. Silence is perhaps the greatest injusti- ce of all; being a bystander is not an option. We must act in whatever way we can. As Elie Weisel taught, “What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander.”

Editor’s Note: To learn more about the Uighurs’ human rights crisis, see here and here.

A Xinjiang internment camp from 2017

WIKIPEDIA
Opinions

Monday, September 7, 2020

Why Might it be Bad to Rush Through YU in Three Years?

By Dr. Noam Wasserman

Editor's Note: This year, the Commentator will feature regular columns from university administrators tackling timeless "Why?" questions about Yeshiva University. Please submit your question suggestions to lemel@mail.yu.edu.

When I came to Yeshiva University, I had to make several adjustments. Many were hugely positive, like my having to adjust to YU's amazing faculty-to-student ratio within each of its classes. I was used to teaching courses that I capped at 65 students so they wouldn’t get too big. At YU, a large class is 30 students. As a result, students develop much deeper relationships with faculty, and consequently get better recommendation letters for graduate school, get individualized faculty attention when trying to figure out their career steps, and even send their former professors invitations to their weddings.

At YU, you even get to chat with the dean. For one of the adjustments, though, I have seen negative effects that match research results about how short-term decisions can harm longer-term career outcomes. That adjustment involves the intense focus that many students have on rushing through YU in three years, leading to underemployment.

The Underemployment Problem

It is understandable that many students (and parents) focus on finishing college quickly. This is particularly true given the costs of private-college tuition and the desire many Orthodox students have to start a family earlier than other college students. What this approach misses is the negative effects of underemployment. Underemployment is when a college graduate takes a job that is worse than s/he could have gotten if s/he were better prepared for the job market.

Data from the Federal Reserve show that underemployed college graduates have lower-paying jobs and are more likely to have part-time jobs, after having a hard time finding positions. Research published recently in a top labor-economics journal shows that when underemployed college graduates try to find another job, they have callback rates 30% lower than adequately-employed job candidates, suggesting that employers view underemployment very negatively.

The effects of underemployment last for years, both financially and regarding employment satisfaction. Americans who take short-cuts in their career in a less than optimal way can have permanent effects.

Explore and Strengthen

What are the ways in which the rush through YU can cause underemployment? Two of the factors are under-exploration and weaker qualifications.

Under-exploration. College has long played a key role in helping students find the best fit for their talents. By exploring a range of subjects before deciding on their majors, college students are able to find and build their strengths. When we shortchange that exploration process, we latch onto majors that don’t fit us as well and build toward careers that won’t play to our strengths. In the extreme, I have seen students who after graduation realized that they had mis-chosen their majors. They were now faced with a choice between going back to school to shift into “what I should have majored in to begin with” or continuing to pursue a suboptimal career fit. Either route has significant costs financially and personally.

Weaker qualifications. In today’s job market, college internships are key to making you a stronger candidate for great post-graduation jobs. (That’s one reason why we focused so intensely this past summer on creating new Summer Initiatives for YU students.) When a YU student first arrives on campus as a “sophomore” (i.e., has just three years left at the university) and s/he searches for a summer internship, s/he is competing against sophomores from other universities who have three times as much college knowledge (having completed three semesters of college compared to one semester). That leads to either not getting a summer internship or getting a worse one. The following summer, the student is competing against juniors from other colleges who not only have more college knowledge (five semesters compared to three) but also had better internships the prior summer. The following year, when they are competing for full-time job offers, students who rushed through college have weaker qualifications and thus have a higher chance of being underemployed.

Countering Underemployment

What can YU students do to avoid the long-term problems of underemployment that are caused by the short-term rush through college?

• Take time to explore more. Don’t come into college saying, “I know I want to major in X” while not seeking possibilities that might be better than “X.” I was fortunate to be pushed to explore other areas to complement my initial focus on engineering. I took the time to try out business studies, among other possibilities, and found a second pillar on which I’ve been able to build my career (see next bullet below). Without my business studies, I might not have gotten my first job, which required both managerial and programming knowledge. I likely would not have gotten into the MBA program I attended, and would not have been able to put in place each subsequent step that resulted in my being able to come to YU. Decades later, my exploration in college is still paying off.

• Find more than one pillar on which to build. Even if you know your core major, find a complementary subject that will enable you to be a stronger candidate for jobs, will open up new employment options for you, and will make it possible for you to have a more-rewarding career. It’s for that reason that at Sy Syms we have been encouraging more students to “do duals”: majoring in two areas within Syms, or majoring and minoring within Syms, or majoring in Syms and minoring within Stern or YC.

• Build degree depth. We have also been building better pathways between YU’s undergraduate schools and its graduate schools. This makes it a lot easier for YU’s undergraduate students to graduate with a YU graduate degree in the same amount of time as their non-YU peers would only be earning an undergraduate degree. This form of “dualing” makes YU students even stronger candidates on the job market because they bring deeper “undergrad+grad” knowledge of their area than students who are just coming out of undergrad. These actions increase the chances that you will have to spend more than three post-Israel years at YU. It’s tempting to pay one less year of tuition now and to get to the paycheck-earning stage of life one year sooner. However, the actions above can bring significant long-term gains that outweigh the short-term tuition costs and the costs of underemployment. They can also bring greater job satisfaction and heighten the impact you’ll be able to have on the world.

By slowing down a little now, you could have major gains over your next decades of life.

Dr. Noam Wasserman is the dean of the Sy Syms School of Business. He previously taught at Harvard Business School and was founding director of a center at the University of Southern California. He received a BS from the Wharton School, a BSE from Penn Engineering and an MBA and PhD from Harvard. He is the author of two bestselling books, “The Founder’s Dilemmas” and “Life Is a Startup”, the author of the “Zemer of the Week” Benchmarks, and the father of three YU graduates so far.

Dean Noam Wasserman speaking at the 2019 Sym Dinner

F-35 PROBLEM

Continued from Page 19

America’s selling of its stealth bombers would be unprecedented, but we live in an age of a presidential administration that both loves breaking rules and has a deep commitment to bettering the welfare of the Jewish State. If there’s anyone who will recognize the opportunity this deal provides and be crazy enough to carry it out, it’s the 45th president of the United States. By opening the F-35 program to Israel, the U.S. gains access to advanced Israeli tech that will doubtless make the new aircraft even better (as happened with the F-35). America also gets an ally to do its Middle-Eastern dirty work, since Israel’s regional goals so closely reflect America’s, and since Israel has a history of actually implementing them. Finally, America achieves a painless solution to its laws ensnaring Israel’s QME.

Israel gets a cutting-edge stealth bomber to ensure its regional supremacy for years to come. The UAE gets the fighter jets it wanted. And at the end of the day, the historic Abraham Accord is strengthened, allowing two fledgling allies to work even more closely together to ensure the stability and prosperity of the world’s most volatile region.

Everybody wins. That’s how it was always supposed to go, right?
Smoke the Paper and Start Again

By Joshi Leichter

Somehow about six months have gone by since the closure of campus and now, somehow fall is upon us. As the new “Lost Generation” of the Roaring ’20s, we found our summers as drastically changed as the remainder of our spring semester. Maybe some of us were supposed to have internships or jobs that never panned out. Perhaps we all too earnestly believed the uncertain promises of the performance this past spring gave us, though at least that was excusable given the haphazard nature of everything.

Perhaps for the rest of fall and into winter, we’ll be gifted with some sort of reprieve from the disappointments of the past two seasons. Until then, however, it’s yet another sordidly (a)synchronous semester and the most will have to be made of the present situation once again, for better or worse. For all of our sakes may it be the former, which has long since faded away and because the memories of the latter are all too fresh.

Welcome back to YU.

Three TV Shows to Get you Through Quarantine

By Elazar Abrahams

After spending your whole day in class on Zoom, aimlessly staring at your laptop screen, it makes sense that the last thing you’d want to do is spend your free time watching TV. But for those of us who can’t seem to quit our streaming service addictions, here are some TV shows recommendations for the new semester. Consider these “hidden gems” — all three of these series are superb but criminally underseen. If you’ve already burned through the classics and find yourself spending more time browsing the homepage of your favorite streaming service than you do actually watching a show, try out one of these instead of binging “The Office” for the fifth time.

1) Ramy (Hulu, 2019 - Present, TV-MA)

“Ramy” is an incredible Hulu series about, well, Ramy, a young Muslim man in New Jersey and his complicated spiritual journey. The show is so specific in its detailing of the American Muslim experience, as yet I found it quite relatable. Think Modern Orthodox but Islam. Give it a chance and you’ll immediately recognize so many similarities to your own life. Sometimes they’re the little things, like the way the characters throw “inshahallah” (the Arabic equivalent of “in yerter Hashem”) at the end of random sentences. But there are some major themes that your beliefs are obsolete.

The show is also a masterclass in blending comedy and drama. While being bitingly funny, the episodes still carry real stakes and that isn’t the case. And in the leadup to the performance this past spring gave us, two weeks have shown, this is just an encore

2) Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt (Netflix, 2015 - 2019, TV-14)

Kidnapping-victim Kimmy Schmidt is rescued from an underground bunker after 15 years in a cult. Sounds like the plot of a gritty crime drama, but it’s actually the premise of Netflix’s best original comedy. The basic shtick is that Kimmy is perpetually stuck with the brain of a cheerful and optimistic middle schooler, despite being a grown woman. After being saved she moves to New York City and tries to make her way through the modern world.

The joke per minute ratio here is insane. Creator Tina Fey packs every frame with so many gags and one-liners that you can’t possibly catch them all on first viewing. The cast is amazing, especially Ellie Kemper as the titular character. I could heap praise on this show forever. The writing and performances are just so clever that even when an episode or story arc among the four seasons doesn’t land perfectly, it’s still laugh out loud funny.

3) Homecoming (Amazon Prime, 2018 - 2020, TV-MA)

The two shows above are primarily comedies, so I figured I should include a drama. “Homecoming” is a phenomenal mind-bending thriller that actually shares one thing in common with Ramy and Kimmy Schmidt: despite its intensity, it too contains its episodes to a half hour runtime at most. In the age of stretched out HBO epics, it’s refreshing to have a show get right down to business and not waste any time.

“Homecoming” stars Julia Roberts as Heidi, a woman who used to work at a government facility treating soldiers with PTSD. One problem: why can’t she remember anything about her time there? If you’ve seen any of “Mr. Robot,” this show shares the same creative team, including showrunner Sam Esmail, and Homecoming shares that same sinister vibe. After just the premiere, you get hooked on the mystery and the payoff is well worth the investment. If you’re a fan of the spy or conspiracy genre, this one’s for you.

Ramy’s journey is heartfelt. For example, after an eye opening visit to Egypt (where his parents are from) in the first season finale, the second season finds Ramy “bopped out.” This is of course mined for laughs, but it also explores important questions about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and respecting the needs of others.

Two seasons of “Ramy” have already dropped with a third on the way. Catch up!

If you’ve already burned through the classics and find yourself spending more time browsing the homepage of your favorite streaming service than you do actually watching a show, try out one of these instead of binging “The Office” for the fifth time.

The first two seasons of Ramy are now streaming on Hulu.

one of these instead of binging “The Office” for the fifth time.
A Defense for Tradition: Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich Methodology

By Jared Scharf

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on September 3.

In his controversial article “Peanut-Butter and Jelly Sandwich Making Methodology,” Doniel Weinreich (YC ’20) proposes a new method for making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, one which deviates from the modus operandi.

I found the article problematic for numerous reasons. Although the article was published well over a year ago, I felt that a response was necessary, especially since there have been no prior responses to such a contentious piece.

Before examining the fundamental issues of the article, there are a few smaller, but no less significant, issues to address:

One is the lack of sensitivity expressed towards those who are gluten-free, have a peanut allergy or any other type of dietary differences. Additionally, aside from the excessive gobbledygook evident throughout the paper, one cannot help but notice the unnecessarily grotesque and strange language, as can be seen, inter alia, with the word “leakage” and the term “finger fellating.”

This, however, is nowhere near the issue of the author’s sexist tone in writing that the old method of peanut butter and jelly “would never suffice for a grown man’s luncheon,” a comment engendering gender inequality and endorsing a male hierarchy.

Notwithstanding all of the issues listed above, I was most appalled by the thesis of the article. The author begins by boldly claiming he has invented a newfound method, termed “the alternative method,” to making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

However, the author, in fact, did not discover this method, as I found it online here, here, and here, among many, many other sites.

Weinreich first describes what he deems “the more conventional and traditional method,” in which peanut butter is applied to one slice of bread, jelly is applied to the other and the two are then put together. He then presents “his” method of making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in which peanut butter is applied to both slices of bread, and jelly is subsequently applied to rendering its slice of bread soggy. “This claim is simply unfounded. Perhaps the soggy bread Weinreich encounters when using the traditional method could be a result of his own subpar bread or incorrect definition of sogginess. Additionally, toasted bread would not become soggy, and using cold jelly (a.k.a. jelly) would prevent the bread from becoming soggy. Thus the claim that the conventional method yields soggy bread is ill-founded and controvertible.

Change is not always necessary, and sometimes “alternative methods” can be harmful, deviating from the standard de rigueur and confusing the masses; this is especially true when one haughtily believes that his or her opinion should be regarded as better than the experts.

The second reason Weinreich states in support of the alternative method is that it “results in a more optimal peanut butter to jelly ratio.” The author does men-

Letter To the Editor

Digital Archives at Long Last

To the Editor,

I would like to thank the archivists of the Yeshiva University Libraries for their very important work this past summer uploading the vast majority of old Commentator and Observer issues for the public to access and enjoy.

As a Yeshiva College student, I spent countless evenings behind the Gottesman Library’s reference desk poring over binders of old student newspapers dating back to 1935. Beyond satisfying my own interest in Yeshiva University history, these investigative escapades contributed substantially to many of the articles that I published during my tenure as editor of this newspaper, as well as to my senior thesis. I was so enamored by the relatively unknown gold mine that was these archives such that, in my inaugural blueprint editorial, I decided that my first stated goal would be the objective of initializing and completing a full digitization project of The Commentator and The Observer archives by the time that I would graduate.

Despite early support for my wide-eyed enthusiasm from YU’s librarians, the project proved to spawn various complications. As my graduation neared and the project had yet to take wing, I wrote another editorial calling on Yeshiva University to actively support the digitization project. Shortly thereafter I graduated, handing off the newspaper to new leadership and resigning myself to the reality that the archives would likely remain accessible only to a privileged small set of undergraduate student journalists.

But something happened then that I did not expect. In the most unlikely time imaginable — in the throes of an unforeseen global pandemic that reshaped society — I noticed a trickle of intriguing uploads materializing on YU’s online academic repository. I aired my cautiously excited suspicions to two of YU’s librarians, both of whom confirmed that an uploading initiative was underway. As of the publication of this letter to the editor, the YU Libraries have uploaded Commentator archives through the year 2000, and Observer archives through the year 1976.

As it stands, this uploading project is not perfect. Per my understanding, the YU Libraries do not currently possess digital scans of archives past the year 2000; given the typically slow pace at which scanning projects move, this will leave 20 years of archives inaccessible to the public for the time being. Additionally, though most of the scans are quite readable, a more advanced project would host the files as fully-searchable PDFs with optical character recognition (OCR) (for reference, see such platforms hosted by The Daily Pennsylvanian and The Daily Cornell Sun).

Still, the ongoing newspaper archiving project is very good, and the hard work that has gone into this project ought to be commended. To this end, I would like to thank YU’s librarians; specifically, Shuli Berger, Dena Schwimmer, Sara Saiger, Stephanie Gross and Paul Glassman. Yashar koch achem! May your hard work be enjoyed by the extended Yeshiva community for many years to come.

Benjamin Koslowe (YC ’19)
When Academia Falls Short of its Ideals

BY AHARON NINSEL

There’s no denying that the world of academia gets a bad rap. It is accused of being irrelevant, too focused on insignificant details and too technical. The typological academy is criticized for being too removed from the world and for being too homogenous in its demographic make up. A “publish or perish” attitude can lead to plagiarized or subpar works. Above all, the academic is accused of being elitist. These are all, to some extent, valid criticisms, each deserving of its own analysis, but here I will focus specifically on the use of citations.

How to format citations. Chicago style uses them up. These style guides dictate various aspects of a paper, most notable in how to format citations. Chicago style uses footnotes, while MLA uses parenthetical in-text citations. While indeed, having a single standardized format for formatting and citations might be convenient, the style guides are generally overly complicated. They dictate trivial details, such as at what point a quotation is long enough to constitute a separate block quote or if an author’s name should be [First Last] or [Last, First] in a citation. For the academic, these issues may be taken care of by external citation tools and journal copy-editors, but for students they are just time consuming. Students get caught up with the formatting and citations, when they should be focusing more on the ideas within the paper.

Further, the style guides serve as gatekeepers to keep out those who are not already part of the system. They may become second nature to those who have experience with academic writing, but anyone who has not gone through the university system will not know how the style guides work, and their publications will be seen as lesser because of it.Voices are left out of academic discourse for such trivial reasons as non adherence to a set of rules. This is the findings of academics remain largely inaccessible to readers, and the entire field remains exclusionary in its proceedings.

Take for example the case of style guides, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago style, and the American Psychological Association (APA). As a student, you’ve likely encountered these, and have likely lost points on a paper for messing them up. These style guides dictate various technical aspects of a paper, most notable in how to format citations. Chicago style uses

footnotes, while MLA uses parenthetical in-text citations.

After all, if more people can contribute to a conversation, a more informed conclusion can be reached. And yet, the striking result is that the findings of academics remain largely inaccessible to readers, and the entire field remains exclusionary in its proceedings.

Commentator article about administrative restructuring we are told that “President Ari Berman announced in an Aug. 7 email to university faculty” and no other sort of citation is given. In some instances in online journalism it is even easy simply to link to a source.

Setting aside the issue of whether the content of academic articles are even relevant or significant at all (in general, yes, but sometimes no), the language of the articles tends to be inaccessible to the average reader. Of course each discipline has its own jargon and specific terminology that would be intuitive to the common reader, but academics love using the most obscure vocabulary words they can find and writing in the most convoluted way possible. Articles are riddled with sentences and so many subordinate clauses, they ought to be split into multiple sentences. Why do academics feel so compelled to write in ways that are so unnecessarily complex. Are they trying to prove themselves to be smarter than other academics? Are they trying to reach a quota of SAT words per article? Is there a competition to the most convoluted formulation of the simplest idea? Are they trying to make their otherwise trivial research seem sophisticated? Whatever the reason, the result is that as much as the world of academia claims to promote learning and broadened knowledge, its own conventions and formalities at times negate this cause. Rather than spreading knowledge and increasing perspectives to reach a more informed conclusion, information stays in the hands of the few, and those not familiar with academia are left without. Of course, much of academia is simply so irrelevant to the average person that they don’t mind this at all, but that’s already the much larger issue of the fact that most academic research simply does nothing for the world.

The unfortunate picture that emerges from all this, is that as much as the world of academia claims to promote learning and broadened knowledge, its own conventions and formalities at times negate this cause. Rather than spreading knowledge and increasing perspectives to reach a more informed conclusion, information stays in the hands of the few, and those not familiar with academia are left without. Of course, much of academia is simply so irrelevant to the average person that they don’t mind this at all, but that’s already the much larger issue of the fact that most academic research simply does nothing for the world.

In 2017 the average cost of a scholarly book in the humanities was $72.67.

PB & J
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Another method could be to place peanut butter on one of the sandwiches and jelly only in the middle of the other; this will even be helpful for the ratio. Or one could carefully spread the jelly on the sandwich through the standard method, while being cautious of not overflowing the edges.

The main issue with the article is Weinreich’s claim of the method being less messy. However, with the new method, instead of putting peanut butter and jelly together, one could put peanut butter on top of the jelly jar. This could be dangerous for one allergic to peanut butter trying to access the jelly and in general will be much messier, as this ineffective prevention will lead to a disgusting contamination within the jar of jelly. Additionally, when cutting the bread, the same messiness of peanut butter and jelly occurs; the new method the author proposes does not sufficiently address the issues the author raises.

Another issue with the method is that the jelly does not stick well on top of the peanut butter, adding to the issue of messiness. “It kind of slides off the peanut butter, which is very emotionally unsettling to me,” commented Elisheva Kohn (SCW ’21), a student at the Weinreich Institute.

In the book, nor is it written for them in the hands of the few, and those not familiar with academia are left without. Of course, much of academia is simply so irrelevant to the average person that they don’t mind this at all, but that’s already the much larger issue of the fact that most academic research simply does nothing for the world.

Making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a trivial task and should not be treated otherwise. The author tries to intellectualize the process, and in the process, leaves room for confusion and error.
A SPAC-tacular Rise

BY MAX ASH

Whether you’re a seasoned investor or you’re a newly-minted Robinhood day trader, a certain four-letter acronym has been increasingly popping up on your screen: SPAC. So-called as a Special Purpose Acquisition Company, these so-called “blank check companies” have increased in popularity as an alternative to a traditional IPO or reverse merger.

Those investing in the SPAC actually receive returns even before the SPAC has acquired its target company—the cash raised in the SPAC’s IPO goes into a trust and earns interest until the intended transaction is completed. So, worst-case scenario, if a transaction isn’t completed within the two-year time timeline, the investors have still made some return on their money and question still stands: why would a company want to “go public” through one, as opposed to the traditional method of an IPO? Here are some reasons:

One: If a company were to pursue a traditional IPO, like WeWork, the negotiations could be drawn-out, leading to investors questioning and critiquing the company’s business model. This leads to disputes, and, in some cases, the IPO crumbling. When you go public through a SPAC, the cash is already there and negotiations are swift.

Two: COVID-19 has basically erased IPO roadshows (due to the need for traveling), which were essential in the capital raise for a traditional IPO. Merging with a SPAC, completely bypasses the roadshow step, since the cash has already been raised.

Three: Going public through a traditional IPO introduces the possibility of an IPO “pop” and the stock is vulnerable to full market risk, while a SPAC affords the comfort of price certainty much earlier in the process while limiting the risk from the volatility of the market.

Even with the advantages of a SPAC, some companies are still going the way of a traditional IPO. Airbnb recently rebuffed an offer to merge from Bill Ackman’s record $4 billion SPAC, choosing an IPO instead. That said, its popularity is increasing by the day and has the potential to become a household name, especially among young Robinhood day traders. But what remains to be seen is, if the SPAC craze is a fad, or if it’s here to stay.

Otherwise known as a Special Purpose Acquisition Company, these so-called “blank check companies” have increased in popularity as an alternative to a traditional IPO or reverse merger.

By ALEXANDER WILDES

NBA players’ salaries are frequently a topic of discussion amongst fans; for such a relatively non-critical job in our society, NBA players get paid like they matter the most. The best players in the league can get paid upwards of 35 million dollars a year, and that number seems to be increasing every season. In 2016, Memphis Grizzlies star point guard Mike Conley received the richest contract in NBA history, worth $153 million over five years, and since then, there have been at least ten contracts worth more than $20 million. Today, the NBA season has twenty players earning over $30 million, and another twenty securing at least $26 million. Although the boom in the NBA’s revenue has earned the players more money than ever before, this coming year may look a lot lower than before.

To understand why this is the case, we need to take a look at exactly how the NBA players’ salaries are determined.

Each year, based on the previous season’s league revenue, the NBA determines the coming season’s “salary cap,” the maximum amount an NBA team can spend on salaries that season. As a result of a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in 2016, NBA players and their owners have a 51-49 split, respectively, in basketball-related income (BRI). BRI is the amount of money NBA teams earn from events relating to basketball, including ticket sales, brand deals and merchandising. The players’ 51% in any particular season, divided by the total number of teams, becomes the following season’s spending limit per team. To illustrate: if the league makes $3 billion in BRI in a particular season, the next season the players get 51% of that amount, which is $1.53 billion. When dividing this by thirty, each team’s salary cap would be $51 million. On the other end, 49% of BRI is given to each owner.

Now that we have this background knowledge, why is the salary cap going to decrease? There are several reasons for this. At the beginning of the NBA season, in response to China’s stifling of protests in Hong Kong, Daryl Morey, the general manager of the Houston Rockets, tweeted in support of Hong Kong. China, enraged by the perceived disrespect, terminated all partnerships between themselves and the team’s salary cap. To better understand this, if the league makes $6 billion in BRI this season, then each team’s salary cap next season will be $102 million, $7 million less than this year and $14 million less than what was projected at the start of the season.

This large loss in BRI will have multiple effects on the players’ final salaries. Firstly, according to the CBA, players must pay 10% of their contracts into the NBA’s escrow account in case the NBA’s projected BRI is not met. This rule was made to ensure the 51-49 split remains constant between players and owners. Based on how close the NBA’s end-of-season BRI was to projections, the players are given back a certain percentage of that money (usually just about all of it). Since this year’s issues with China and the global pandemic were not predicted, the NBA will most probably fall short of their projected BRI and players will likely not receive any of that money back. In some cases, they may even owe money this coming season.

Moreover, with the salary cap projected to fall, free agents (players whose contracts expired, and are free to sign with any team) will

COVID 19’s Impact on NBA Salaries

NBA, which led to a loss of $100-400 million. Furthermore, the NBA may lose close to $500-700 million in ticket revenue due to the coronavirus, another large chunk of their BRI and players will likely not receive any of that money back. In some cases, they may even owe money this coming season.

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YU's Summer Internship Innovation

BY ARIEL SCHNEIDER

We watched internships, camps and summer programs get canceled left and right. We watched as 64% of internships that canceled this summer did not offer online or hybrid alternatives. We watched more than thirty million people file for unemployment. It seemed like there was little hope this summer. Despite all of the challenges, however, YU students never stopped hustling to find innovative ways of staying productive. Many students utilized the new Yeshiva University Consulting Force to shape their summer. This initiative, pioneered by Dr. Noam Wasserman, dean of the Sy Syms School of Business, was created in response to the inevitable loss of internships and jobs due to the pandemic. The leadership course was designed for students seeking summer consulting experience while involving professors and outside organizations.

Samuel Lekowsky (SSSB ’21), Sy Syms student council treasurer, decided to give this new program a go. As part of the Consulting Force program, Lekowsky and several other participants took part in a three-week training course consisting of presentations detailing various topics like client management, professionalism and non-profits from professionals in Deloitte, BCG, Accenture and the OU. Students ended the training with a simulator case competition that gave participants a feel of what it is like to work on consulting projects.

In addition to preparatory consulting programming, Lekowsky was doing research for the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) through the YU Consulting Force. His role consisted of meeting with JCRC executives to conduct needs assessments in order to address strategic issues. He also personally contacted companies for their customer relationship management systems, which helps manage and analyze interactions with potential customers.

This new initiative, created by Dean Wasserman, was a response to the inevitable loss of internships and jobs due to the pandemic. Students were not without guidance throughout the program as Avi Gilioni, associate dean of Sy Syms School of Business, Tamar Avnet, chair of the marketing department and Tom Kennon, professor of marketing, played an important role in advising Lekowsky and many other Consulting Force team members. Each advisor dedicated their summers to meet daily with students participating in the Consulting Force to provide stronger general business skills going into the workplace. “The advisors [professors] have been extremely helpful in shaping my summer into what it is right now. I really enjoyed the three-week training and all the speakers we had along the way,” said Lekowsky. While utilizing the summer opportunities YU offered, others trailblazed their own professional experiences.

Steven Paul (SSSB ’23), co-vice president of YU’s Networking Club, worked for Brahman Capital, an investment management corporation that works on allocating CEOs that are uniquely shareholder driven. Paul worked remotely on one-pagers, which provides a high-level report of a candidate’s qualifications in relation to a specific position. He also worked on investment theses while handling daily research projects for companies and industries that Brahman is like to work on consulting projects.

Consequently, all future years of the contract are tied to a percentage of the cap. If they owe any money to the owners from previous years, will be worth less than what was expected to be free to spend. Therefore, not only will certain players have contracts smaller than they deserve, but they will also have to pay a small amount if they owe any money to the owners from this season.

Lastly, max contracts, a contract with the first year as a certain percentage of the team’s cap, with small incremental increases for future years, will be worth less than previously thought. If a player signed a max contract that kicks in after this season, the amount they were expected to be paid will be lower than previously thought, as their contracts are tied to a percentage of the cap. Consequently, all future years of the contract will also be lowered by default. This will affect rising NBA stars such as Ben Simmons, Pascal Siakam and Jamal Murray. At the end of the day, NBA players will still be paid an absurd amount, given their profession, just not as much as in past years.