Campus Compass:

Assessing Campus Environments for Jewish Students

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boundless

This guide is designed to empower Jewish students, parents, alumni, and supporters in evaluating the college campus environment regarding Jewish identity, Israel, Zionism, and antisemitism. It aims to provide a structured approach to understanding how universities address these critical issues through their curriculum, faculty, funding sources, student organizations, and policy actions. This guide equips you with the tools needed to assess a campus climate and determine if its leadership addresses incidents of antisemitism effectively and fosters a welcoming environment for Jewish students.

If you have questions, contact us at info@boundlessisrael.org for further assistance.

Table of Contents

1. Curricula

Curricula, especially those related to Jewish, Israeli, and Middle Eastern topics, play a key role in shaping students' understanding of complex issues. On many campuses, diverse perspectives are lacking in the Core Curriculum or Humanities disciplines like **Jewish Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, African-American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies.**

Diversity of thought involves presenting multiple viewpoints on complex topics and encouraging critical analysis from various angles, rather than endorsing a single theoretical framework or narrative. For example, a course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that includes Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, Jewish, Muslim, and international perspectives exemplifies diversity of thought; in contrast, a course that addresses the conflict solely from one side or through a single theoretical lens (e.g., colonialism) lacks this variety of viewpoints.

Action Steps:

1) Review course descriptions, syllabi, and readings to verify that a broad range of perspectives are integrated.
2) Scan departmental websites to glean the above material.
3) Contact students or faculty to gain insight into how these subjects are handled.

2. Campus Media

Campus media can shape student perceptions on Israel and Jewish issues. Reviewing content can reveal bias that impacts campus climate.

Action Steps:

1) Evaluate the tone and language of headlines and articles to determine whether they maintain neutrality or exhibit bias. Consider whether inflammatory language is being used and if there is sufficient relevant information provided to support balanced understanding.
2) Assess whether multiple viewpoints are represented or if one-sidedness is apparent.
3) Check if editorials in particular reflect a range of perspectives or if a single viewpoint is dominant.

3. Foreign Funding Sources

Foreign donations can influence a university's programs, potentially impacting how Israel is portrayed. Some governments, particularly from the Middle East, fund centers and programs that may encourage biased views against Israel.

Action Steps:

1) Use the [U.S. Department of Education's database](#) to check if a university has reported foreign donations.[1]
2) Investigate funding from countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, and China, especially in Middle Eastern Studies programs, as well as medical, law, engineering, and technology programs.
3) Obtain the terms of agreements between the university and foreign donors, and determine if the institution reported the donation to the U.S. government.

[1] [Section 117](#) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) requires institutions of higher education that offer a bachelor's degree or higher and receive federal financial assistance to disclose semiannually to the U.S. Department of Education any gifts received from and contracts with a foreign source that, alone or combined, are valued at $250,000 or more in a calendar year.

a) To obtain agreements between a university and foreign donors, contact the **Office of Sponsored Programs or Office of Research and Sponsored Projects**, as they typically handle external funding agreements. You can also try contacting **University Advancement/Development Office** (for donor agreements related to gifts), **General Counsel/Legal Affairs** (if the agreements involve legal terms), **Office of International Affairs** (for partnerships with foreign entities), and **Public Records Office** (especially at public universities, where agreements may be accessible through a records request).

b) Mention the [Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)](#) for public universities; it may be useful to have a resident of the state file the request.

c) For private institutions, persistence might be necessary to access information.

4. Academic Associations and External Partnerships

Many academic organizations have taken public stances on [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)](#) against Israel. It is important to assess which associations your university affiliates with and whether any support the delegitimization of Israel.

Action Steps:

1) Check whether the institution fosters academic exchange programs and/or research collaborations with Israeli institutions of higher education. While the absence of such partnerships is not necessarily a red flag, it may be worth investigating in the broader context of the university's stance on Israel, especially if the institution has ties to organizations that support BDS, has a record of campus antisemitic incidents, or has partnerships with other institutions in other countries to the exclusion of only Israel.

2) Investigate university partnerships with groups and organizations that have encouraged BDS resolutions. Identify which schools or departments are connected or endorsing this position, and determine if these partnerships affect hiring, curriculum, or public stances on Israeli issues. Below are a few academic associations that have encouraged BDS resolutions (not an exhaustive list):

   a) US Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI)

   b) Middle East Studies Association (MESA)

   c) American Public Health Association (APHA)

   d) Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS)

   e) American Studies Association (ASA)

   f) National Women's Studies Association (NWSA)

   g) Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA)

3) When evaluating public outreach initiatives sponsored by the academic organization—such as K-12 education programs and those targeting foreign policy professionals—it is important to assess who supports these programs, who develops the materials, what the review process entails, and whether any foreign funding sources are involved. Additionally, identify the specific target audiences for these initiatives.

5. University Publishers

University presses and journals may reflect the institution's stance on Israel through the kinds of scholarship they publish and through their public statements.

Action Steps:

1) Check the university press or journal's website under "Publications" or "Catalog."

2) Identify relevant topics by using search terms like "Israel" to find related books or articles.

3) Check for diversity of authors and perspectives. Are there various voices from different backgrounds offering various perspectives?

6. Interviews with Students (Jewish and Non-Jewish)

Current students and recent graduates can provide firsthand accounts of campus dynamics, including any antisemitism or bias related to Israel.

Action Steps:

1) Conduct interviews with both Jewish and non-Jewish students, particularly leaders in campus organizations and student government.

   Questions to Ask:

   a) Classroom Dynamics: Do faculty allow open discussions, or do they promote politicized positions that marginalize Jewish and/or Zionist students? Can students comfortably offer dissenting positions that differ from the faculty's views?

   b) Campus Organizations: Has the student government passed or debated BDS resolutions? Do Jewish students feel welcomed and included in major campus groups such as student government, LGBTQ+ organizations, climate action groups, People of Color organizations, women's and feminist initiatives, progressive student movements, political clubs, and Greek life?

   c) Campus Atmosphere: Do students feel safe on campus? Are they comfortable sharing their identity? Have they overheard any rhetoric that has made them feel alarmed?

Helpful Resources: Connect with organizations like Hillel International, Chabad on Campus, or Israel on Campus Coalition to identify student leaders and interview subjects.

7. Interviews with Faculty

Faculty, including graduate teaching assistants, can offer insights into how academic freedom and political bias affect discussions about Jewish issues and Israel on campus.

Action Steps:

1) Conduct interviews with both Jewish and non-Jewish faculty, ranging from department heads to adjuncts.

   Questions to Ask:

   a) Freedom of Expression: Do faculty feel they can openly express views about Israel and Zionism, or is there hostility toward Jewish identity? Do faculty feel a culture of antisemitism has been cultivated on campus?

   b) Hiring Practices: To the extent possible, inquire about the role of faculty in hiring committees for positions related to teaching Israel, Jews, Judaism, and antisemitism. Determine how committees are arranged for junior and tenured faculty positions.

   c) Antisemitism Task Force: Is there a faculty task force focused on antisemitism? Who is involved, and what is the mandate? Does the taskforce report to the President of the Institution? If the task force has completed its work, were the findings made public? Did the university provide a clear roadmap for incorporating the task force's recommendations?

Helpful Resources: Identify faculty involved with networks like the [Academic Engagement Network (AEN)](#) or [Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME)](#) for support.

8. Guest Speakers and Campus Events

Guest lectures and campus events influence student perspectives and reflect campus culture.

Action Steps:

1) Review campus events over the past year or two to identify if speakers with controversial views on Israel or Jews have been invited. Check the following links and webpages:

   a) News Section, Campus Calendar or Events Page (some universities have a dedicated events calendar, but it might be under sections like "Student Life," "Campus Involvement," or "Academic Events")

   b) Departmental Websites (particularly those in Political Science, Middle Eastern Studies, or Jewish Studies, may list guest speakers or lecture series)

   c) Social Media Accounts (University-affiliated Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts often promote events)

   d) Archived Videos or Livestreams (Some schools post past lectures and events on YouTube or their own university video platforms.)

   e) Student Organization Pages

2) Note the hosting groups (e.g., student organizations, departments), and whether diverse perspectives were presented.

3) Ensure the campus promotes a marketplace of ideas in their programming, encouraging open dialogue and the inclusion of multiple viewpoints.

9. Social Media Accounts

Social media is a powerful tool for student activism but can also promote antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric.

Action Steps:

1) Review the social media accounts of campus organizations. Do they promote hate speech, target Jewish or Israeli students, faculty, or staff, or violate university conduct codes?

2) Check if a BDS-affiliated student organization exists on campus, and if its social media accounts violate university codes of conduct. Student and other organizations that support or advocate for the BDS movement include (not an exhaustive list):

   a) Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

   b) Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)

   c) Within Our Lifetime - United for Palestine (WOL)

   d) Muslim Student Association (MSA)

   e) Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA)

   f) United States Palestinian Community Network (USPCN)

   g) Young Communist League USA (YCLUSA)

   h) The Red Nation

   i) Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO)

   j) ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism)

   k) Students for Democratic Society (SDS)

   l) Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM)

3) Review university department and administration accounts.

4) Review the personal accounts of high-level administrative personnel.

5) To the extent possible, review student-exclusive platforms, including anonymous chat platforms, and determine whether these chats are monitored by faculty or staff and, if so, how problematic language or hate promotion is addressed.

6) Document problematic posts and if they violate university policies, report them to one or more of the following:

   a) Office of Student Conduct – for violations of student behavior policies, including hate speech or harassment.

   b) Dean of Students – oversees student affairs and can escalate issues related to campus climate and student safety.

   c) Bias Response Team – addresses reports of bias incidents.

   d) Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – on issues of discrimination and inclusion

   e) Title IX or Civil Rights Office – handles discrimination cases, including antisemitism under Title VI protections.

   f) Ombuds Office – confidential guidance on reporting concerns and navigating university procedures.

g) Office of Equal Opportunity – investigates discrimination complaints in employment and student matters.

h) Campus Security or Public Safety – for safety concerns, harassment, and physical threats.

i) Provost's Office – academic-related discrimination or concerns about faculty bias.

j) Legal Affairs/General Counsel – if legal issues arise regarding discrimination policies.

k) Human Resources (HR) – if faculty or staff are involved in discriminatory behavior.

l) Office of International Affairs – may handle incidents related to international student policies or foreign funding concerns.

m) Public Records Office (at public universities) – for obtaining official documentation on policies or funding agreements.

n) Office of International Affairs – may handle incidents related to international student policies or foreign funding concerns.

o) Public Records Office (at public universities) – for obtaining official documentation on policies or funding agreements.

p) Office of Equal Opportunity - promotes equal opportunity and diversity, and enforces non-discrimination laws.

10. University Policies and Administrative Action

Review university policies to determine how seriously antisemitism is addressed.

Action Steps:

1) **Statements and Policies:** Has the university decided to issue statements regarding Israel? Many institutions of higher education are increasingly adopting the Chicago Principles, particularly with regard to maintaining institutional neutrality. Has the institution embraced these principles? Are there specific policies for addressing antisemitism that clarify the university's stance and response strategy? Check the following on the university website:

   a) University Policies or Governance Section – Often found under "About," "Administration," or "University Policies."

   b) Student Handbook – Usually available under "Student Life," "Dean of Students," or "Campus Conduct."

   c) Office of Equal Opportunity / Title IX Office – often outlines discrimination policies, including Title VI compliance.

   d) Office of DEI – May list policies related to bias, discrimination, and grievance procedures.

   e) General Counsel / Legal Affairs – May include detailed policy documents and compliance guidelines.

   f) Campus Conduct or Judicial Affairs – If there is a specific student code of conduct addressing discrimination.

   g) University News or Announcements

   For private institutions, policies might be less centralized online, so contacting student affairs or administration directly might be necessary.

2) **Code of Ethics and Conduct:** Has the university reviewed its code to ensure it addresses antisemitism and shared the findings with students, faculty, and staff, reinforcing a commitment to a respectful environment?

3) **"Time, Place, and Manner" Policies:** These policies (see 9F for where these can be found on a university's website) regulate when, where, and how members of the university community can express themselves on campus. These policies aim to ensure that free speech does not infringe on the rights of others or disrupt campus operations. They typically specify permissible locations, times, and methods for public demonstrations or events and outline consequences for actions that intimidate or create a hostile environment. Are these policies clearly outlined and widely known within the university community? Do they specify consequences for individuals or groups that create a hostile environment or intimidate others by misusing campus spaces?

4) **Grievance Procedures:** Is there a clear, well-publicized process for reporting antisemitism, and are students, faculty, and staff made aware of resources like the Office of Equal Opportunity or the Ombuds Office?

5) **Title VI Compliance:** The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued a Dear Colleague Letter on May 7, 2024, addressing schools' obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This guidance emphasizes that Title VI's protections against discrimination based on race, color, or national origin extend to individuals who share ancestry or ethnic characteristics, including those who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, or of other backgrounds. Universities that receive federal funding are required to address incidents of discrimination and take appropriate action to prevent further discrimination.

Are university leaders aware that Title VI protections can apply to antisemitism? How does the administration handle complaints under this framework? Does Title VI, in its comprehensive definition, appear in the student and faculty handbooks, the university's code of ethics, and/or the policies of the Office of Equal Opportunity or the Ombuds Office?

To address these questions and to learn more, look to the following:

a) **Check University Policies** – Look for mentions of antisemitism in anti-discrimination policies, student handbooks, or the Office of Equal Opportunity's website.

b) **Review Public Statements** – Search for official statements addressing antisemitism and whether they reference Title VI.

c) **Look for Title VI Complaints** – Check the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) website for investigations involving the university.

d) **Engage with Campus Officials** – Ask DEI offices, Student Affairs, or the Civil Rights Office about their approach to antisemitism and Title VI compliance.

e) **Speak with Student Groups** – They may have experience filing complaints and can share insights on administrative response.

6) **Sensitivity and Awareness:** Does the university offer ongoing opportunities for the community to learn about Jews, Judaism, Israel, and antisemitism, promoting a more inclusive campus environment?

11. Physical Security

Physical safety is a top priority for Jewish students, especially in environments where antisemitism is prevalent.

Action Steps:

1) Assess the protections in place for Jewish students, including monitoring antisemitic activity and ensuring safe movement on campus. Look into the following:

   a) **University Safety and Security Office** – Look for policies on hate crimes, bias incidents, and campus safety measures.

   b) **Office of Student Affairs or Dean of Students** – May provide guidelines on student protections, grievance procedures, and campus climate initiatives.

   c) **Office of Equal Opportunity / Title VI Compliance Office** – Should outline protections under federal anti-discrimination laws.

   d) **DEI Office** – May have policies or training related to antisemitism and campus inclusivity.

   e) **Student Code of Conduct / Anti-Discrimination Policies** – Often found on the university's website under governance or student affairs.

   f) Speak to Jewish students on campus as they may have insight into how well the university enforces protections.

   g) Speak to **Campus Police or Public Safety Office** as they may provide information on security measures, reporting hate incidents, and response protocols.

2) Speak with security officials about measures to protect Jewish students and staff from both online and offline threats. Connect with the Director of Campus Security, Chief of Public Safety, or Head of University Police. You can usually find their contact information on the university website. If unsure who to contact, perhaps Student Affairs can direct you to the appropriate security official.

12. Outside Detractors

External groups or individuals may, at times, create a hostile environment for Jewish or pro-Israel students on campus.

Action Steps:

1) Policy Review: Check if policies address the influence of off-campus groups and their role in creating a hostile environment. Check if there are clear policies in place outlining consequences for such actions.

2) Incident Monitoring: Track incidents that appear to be organized or influenced by outside organizations, such as speakers, protests, or social media campaigns coordinated by non-campus groups. Use a keyword search on social media such as the university's name + relevant keywords or hashtags (e.g., boycott, divest, Zionist, apartheid, free Palestine, etc.)

3) Leadership Response: Examine whether university leaders respond promptly to situations involving external influences, such as condemning incidents linked to off-campus groups or strengthening protections when outside pressures are evident. Check if leadership publicly addresses the role of external detractors in specific incidents, making clear statements against off-campus groups that incite hostility and ensuring students know they are supported.

   To learn about such incidents as they arise, search for "[University Name] response to antisemitism" and/or search the university website and news section, the student newspaper, social media accounts, and OCR complaints.

Conclusion

By carefully evaluating the campus environment across these areas, you can develop a well-rounded understanding of how your college or university addresses Jewish identity, Israel, Zionism, and antisemitism. Whether you're a current student, prospective applicant, parent, or supporter, your efforts to address the campus climate contribute to creating a positive, welcoming community for Jewish students and allies alike. By identifying gaps in university policies and responses, students and supporters can bring attention to areas that need improvement, applying pressure on administrators to take meaningful action and create a more inclusive campus environment.

Let this guide empower you to make informed choices and take an active role in promoting campus environments that are welcoming for Jewish students and faculty.

If you have questions, contact us at info@boundlessisrael.org for further assistance.
For resources on Jew-Hatred, Israel, Palestinians beyond campus, head here.

Appendix: Campus Organizations & Resources

Beyond university policies and data, the following organizations provide research, legal resources, and tools to help students, faculty, and staff navigate antisemitism on campus:

- Key Jewish student life organizations: Hillel International and Chabad on Campus.

- Studies about antisemitism on campus: Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and the Anti-Defamation League.

- For legal support regarding antisemitism or Title VI violations: The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law.

- Resources and programs for higher education administrators: Brandeis University Presidential Initiative on Antisemitism, Hillel International's Campus Climate Initiative, and Academic Engagement Network's Improving the Campus Climate Initiative.

- Materials for staff, faculty, and students committed to engaging in open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and constructive disagreement: Heterodox Academy

- Resources on deconstructing the academic framing and positioning of terminology often utilized to challenge Israel's right to exist: The Academic Engagement Network and Scholars for Peace in the Middle East

Glossary

Academic Departments

Department of African-American Studies

Department of Humanities

Department of Jewish Studies

Department of Middle Eastern Studies

Department of Women and Gender Studies

University Offices & Administration

Bias Response Team

Campus Conduct & Judicial Affairs

Campus Police & Security

General Counsel / Office of Legal Affairs

Human Resources (HR)

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Office of Equal Opportunity / Title VI Compliance Office

Office of International Affairs

Office of Public Safety

Office of Research and Sponsored Projects

Office of Sponsored Programs

Office of Student Affairs / Dean of Students

Office of Student Conduct

Ombuds Office

Provost's Office

Public Records Office

Title IX / Civil Rights Office

University Advancement / Development Office

Campus Security & Administration Personnel

Chief of Public Safety

Dean of Students

Director of Campus Security

Head of University Police