

From: Patricia A. Prelock, Provost and Senior Vice President <noreply@uvm.edu>
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Subject: Supporting Jewish students in our community



The University
of Vermont

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

September 22, 2022

Dear Students,

I imagine you are preparing for your first exams and quizzes and completing assignments that are coming due. Hopefully, your first three weeks have been productive—exploring new subjects, asking great questions, and challenging yourselves. If you haven't already, don't forget to connect with an advisor!

Many of you are aware of last week's media coverage of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) into allegations that the university failed to respond adequately to complaints of biased, anti-Jewish, behavior at UVM and the university's subsequent [response to those allegations](#).

I am writing to share information on steps we are taking to engage and support Jewish students and our whole community as we navigate the myriad perspectives being offered internally and externally.

Caring for Our Community

There is no question that antisemitism is a problem nationally and that it reaches our campus. Our unwavering commitment to a safe and inclusive campus means the university and its leaders reject antisemitism and all hateful and biased behavior. We are engaging with students, community leaders, and external organizations to identify and take actions that will ensure every Jewish student is welcome and supported at UVM.

If you experience or witness a bias, discrimination, or harassment incident you can file a report at uvm.edu/report. Additionally, support services available to Jewish students include [UVM Hillel](#), [the Interfaith Center](#), [UVM Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#), the [Dean of Students Office](#), and [Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity](#).

Our Work Over the Past Year

- We have met with many students to better understand their experiences on campus related to their Jewish identity. The results of our collaborations included numerous ideas for increasing prevention, education, and training focused on ending antisemitism. These ideas are currently being turned into new programs and offerings.
- Our Executive Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, Alex Yin, has met with Jewish students regularly since February 2022, exploring this year's campus climate data and conducting charrettes to assess the comfort and safety of students who publicly express their culture, identity, ethnicity, and religion; and, how we could shift responsibility from Jewish students to everyone—including university leadership—for educating our campus about prejudice. At their most recent meeting, on September 9, they worked on a proposal to integrate the campus climate data they collected and offer suggestions to my office on next steps. I look forward to receiving their proposal and discussing the findings with them.
- President Garimella and I participated in national meetings to learn more about combating antisemitism on college campuses and supporting those who experience it.

Additional Steps Currently in Progress

- Jewish students, friends, and allies have been invited through various organizations and networks to talk with university leaders about their UVM experiences and Jewish identities tomorrow, September 23, prior to Shabbat. Vice Provost for Student Affairs Erica Caloiero, Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Amer Ahmed, and I will host the conversations with help from Hillel, the Interfaith Center, and Student Life. Jewish students, their friends and allies who would like more information about joining the conversations can contact Lori Desotell at 802-656-4400 or Lori.Desotell@uvm.edu.
- University leaders are working with multiple safety and student support units and programs to ensure every student knows how to [report bias incidents](#), how our bias response protocol was enhanced recently to more closely connect response and support, and how we will sustain student engagement in constructive dialogue about their personal experiences at UVM.
- Vice Provost Erica Caloiero has discussed additional ideas this week with the American Jewish Committee to effectively engage our Jewish campus community with university leaders.
- President Garimella and I are exploring ways to increase UVM's engagement not only with the Hillel community but with the broader Jewish community in Burlington and throughout the state, including our local rabbis with connections to our students.
- We continue to examine UVM's [Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) to ensure it sufficiently addresses incidents of bias that occur at UVM.

Our work continues indefinitely as we recognize the importance of creating and sustaining a safer and healthier environment for Jewish students, acknowledging and understanding their experiences with antisemitism, and supporting their ability to share their Jewish culture, ethnicity, identity, and religion.

Please join me in affirming our shared responsibility to recognize the experiences of all UVM students with marginalized identities and to live, study, and work in an environment that honors our mutual commitment to [Our Common Ground values](#).

Sincerely,

Patty Prelock

Provost and Senior Vice President