THE YASCHIK/ARNOLD JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM
2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT
submitted by Martin Perlmutter, Director
August 27, 2012

I. BIG HIGHLIGHTS

A. Professor, author, and activist Elie Wiesel was on campus for two large events at Sottile Theatre on Sunday, September 25, 2011. He spoke to a student panel at Family Weekend and at a community kickoff of A Time to Build. Both events were full. The events were sponsored by a supplemental grant to the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Education by the Zucker Family.

B. Jewish Studies graduated its first class of (three) Jewish Studies majors at the College of Charleston. The newly approved major was a result of years of hard work. It is the only Jewish Studies major in South Carolina, and one of only a handful in the region.

C. Jewish Studies received its largest single gift in its history—a $2 million from Gina and Sam Shapiro. The gift was to support Jewish student life and financial scholarship awards. Other major 2011-2012 gifts to Jewish Studies include $100,000 from Allan and Carol Mysel for faculty/staff development, $36,000 from Risa and David Milbauer for Jewish student life, $50,000 from Don and Bobbi Bernstein for general operational support, and $50,000 from the Raymond and Florence Stern family for a memorial scholarship.

D. The College of Charleston was awarded a Schusterman Professor of Israel Studies for the 2012-2013 academic year. This is a nationally competitive program from one of the major Jewish foundations in the United States.

E. For the first time in its brief history, the Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies brought two nationally prominent scholars to the College, each for a semester. Professor Alan Nadler of Drew University taught an advanced course on Jewish heresies in the Fall of 2011 and Professor Jeffrey Gurock of Yeshiva University taught a course on Jews of New York City in the Spring of 2012.

F. Jewish Studies received a sequel grant from the Legacy Heritage Fund of the Association for Jewish Studies to focus on Jews and social justice. It became the theme of our Kronsberg Lecture and our Sunday morning presentations.

G. Marty and Julie Klapar established the Klapar Annual Summer Fellowship to provide major funding ($5,000) for an academically able Jewish Studies major or minor. It is designed to fund a transformative summer learning experience, while advancing Jewish life and values, broadly conceived.

H. Jewish Studies was awarded a tenure-track position in Hebrew for the first time in its history. The position will be filled in 2012-2013 and begin in August 2013, upon Tzipi Wagner’s retirement from the College.
II. ONGOING HIGHLIGHTS

A. Jewish Student Life

JSU/Hillel remains the most active student organization on campus, with an array of social, cultural, and charitable activities, involving hundreds of our undergraduates on a regular basis. Our Wednesday night meet to eat and Shabbat dinners each attract 60-100 students every week.

Recruiting students to the College of Charleston remains a high priority of the Jewish Studies Program. We have secured funding from the Henry and Sylvia Yaschik Foundation to hire a recruitment Specialist to focus on attracting more Jewish students to the College of Charleston. We think there are 800 Jewish undergraduates currently enrolled at the College of Charleston.

B. Community Outreach

Jewish Studies continues a very active community-wide presence, with films, lectures, classes and, brown bags, etc. designed to be attractive and of interest to the larger community. There are some big events that we do. Chanukah in the Square has become the largest annual Jewish celebration in South Carolina. A World of Jewish Culture has become a popular fixture at Piccolo Spoleto, expanded this year to include a serious showing of European Films. And our Three Rabbi Panel is a unifying program for the Charleston Jewish Community, attracting hundreds of persons to the event each semester.

C. Academic Life

Academics has done very well. Josh Shanes was awarded tenure and a promotion, without a dissenting vote. Adam Mendelsohn passed his third-year review, with excellent reports on his progress at the College of Charleston. Jewish Studies courses continue to be well-subscribed and popular with our students. We currently have about 30 minors in Jewish Studies.

III. FACULTY REPORTS

Joshua Shanes received the Gerald Westheimer Career Development Fellowship from the Leo Baeck Institute to conduct primary research on his second book, The Jewish Club: The First Jewish Parliamentary Party. Shanes was granted tenure at the end of the year and was awarded a sabbatical to continue work on this project. His first book, Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia, was published in August by Cambridge University Press.

In 2011-12, Adam Mendelsohn guest-edited a special issue of the journal American Jewish History devoted to the Civil War, and published two articles on Jewish military contracting during the conflict. He was invited to speak about his work at Yale University, UNC-Chapel Hill, Creighton University, and Fairfield University.