THE YASCHIK/ARNOLD JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM
2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT
submitted by Martin Perlmutter, Director
July 29, 2013

I. BIG HIGHLIGHTS
A. Jewish Studies graduated its second class of Jewish Studies majors at the College of Charleston. Now entering our third year with a major, it remains the only Jewish Studies major in South Carolina, and one of only a handful in the region.

B. We have made considerable progress in the expansion of the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center with a collective $1,000,000 gift toward the building project, an effort that will lead to a kosher vegan/vegetarian dining facility, tentatively set to open in December 2014. Getting all the approvals at the College has slowed the process down from its initial August 2014 opening date.

A. Naomi Gale, Schusterman Professor of Israel Studies for the 2012-2013 academic year, recently departed Charleston after a successful year-long visit. Naomi was a valuable addition to Jewish Studies faculty, and was treasured by the community at-large. A highlight of her visit was her team-teaching a course on Middle Eastern Cultures with Professor Abuhakeema.

B. During the spring of 2013, Gershom Gorenberg served as the Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies. A respected Jerusalem-based historian, author and journalist, Mr. Gorenberg taught the course “Writing Israel’s History,” which focused on the various ways Israeli and Palestinian histories have been written.

C. This coming spring the Arnold Distinguished Professorship will be held by Gary P. Zola. Dr. Zola is the Executive Director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati.

D. Jewish Studies is coming off of a strong year of community programming, with a wide variety of classes and lectures delivered by visiting academics, authors and clergy. The 2013 Milton and Freddie Kronsberg Memorial Lecture was delivered by Rabbi David Wolpe of Los Angeles, considered by many to be the most influential rabbi in America. That visit was used to celebrate the $2 million gift to the College by Sam and Gina Shapiro.

E. The Jewish Studies Program Advisory Board welcomes Chairwoman Anita Zucker, who will serve a two year term, and Vice Chair Alan Nussbaum who will serve a two year term as vice-chair before assuming the chairmanship. Outgoing chair Kevin Archer has been pivotal in helping the Program pass the $7 million mark towards our $10 million A Time to Build capital campaign.

F. Jewish Studies has been authorized to hire a “future” director of the Program to begin August 2014, to overlap Dr. Perlmutter’s final year as Director. Our Advisory Board will be a participant in this process, represented by Alan Nussbaum.

G. Jewish Studies has hired a tenure-track position in Hebrew for the first time in its history. Oren Segal, formerly of the University of Michigan, who will begin in August 2013.
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 eats and Shabbat dinners each attract 60-100 students every week. Jewish Student Life Coordinator Dara Rosenblatt spent ten days this summer in Israel on a Taglit-Birthright trip with nine College of Charleston students. We estimate that there are 800 Jewish undergraduates currently enrolled at the College of Charleston.

Recruiting students to the College of Charleston remains a high priority of the Jewish Studies Program. Thanks to funding from the Henry and Sylvia Yaschik Foundation, Jodie Singer will serve as the Jewish Student Life Engagement Coordinator. Jodie is a recent graduate, with honors, from the University of North Carolina. Jodie’s main focus will be on engaging freshmen and fraternity/sorority members in our Jewish Student Life initiatives, and, in particular, Jewish student recruitment. To that end, we will continue to work closely with the Office of Admissions and the Honors College to coordinate our recruitment strategies.

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, with a concert by Charleston violinist Yuriy Bekker featured as part of the festivals Spotlight Concert Series. Our *Three Rabbi Panel* remains a unifying program for the Charleston Jewish Community, attracting hundreds of persons to the event each semester. And the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, which is housed at the College, is the largest statewide Jewish organization.

C. **Academic Life**

Jewish Studies is transitioning between faculty members. We bid farewell to Hebrew teacher Tzipi Wagner and Schusterman Professor Naomi Gale, as well as Adam Mendelsohn, who is taking a two year leave from the College. Joining the faculty are Oren Segal, David Slucki, replacing Adam for two years, and Josh Shanes, who is returning from sabbatical. Jewish Studies courses continue to be well-subscribed and popular with our students. We currently have about 40 majors and minors in Jewish Studies. Our classes are also heavily audited by senior citizens.

III. **FACULTY REPORTS**

Joshua Shanes recently completed a sabbatical, during which he was a visiting scholar at the University of Chicago working on his new book project entitled, “The Jewish Club: The First Jewish National Parliamentary Party.” Shanes is also finishing an article entitled “The ‘bloody election’ in Drohobycz: Violence, Politics and Memory of the 1911 Austrian Elections,” which he will be presenting this December at the conference of the Association of Jewish Studies in Boston.
Adam Mendelsohn was recently appointed editor of the Jewish Studies Book Series at the University of Alabama Press; he was also appointed as the Modern Jewish History subject editor at The Marginalia Review of Books, and was awarded the 2013 Lapidus Fellowship by the American Jewish Historical Society. Mendelsohn’s publications in the past year included “Samuel and Saul Isaac: International Jewish Arms Dealers, Blockade Runners, and Civil War Profiteers,” in Southern Jewish History, and “Beyond the Battlefield: Reevaluating the Legacy of the Civil War for American Jews,” in the American Jewish Archives Journal.

IV. CHALLENGES

The unique model of Jewish Studies remains problematic in the administrative structure of the College and in its financing. Our involvement in community outreach, student life, admissions, building maintenance, and an annual fund is unusual for a program that reports to a dean whose charge is primarily academic. That academic focus has helped with Jewish Studies securing a major, getting its faculty tenure, and helping supplement some of our funded academic initiatives like the Schusterman Professor, the Arnold Distinguished Visiting Professor, and the Zucker/Goldberg Professor of Holocaust Studies. But we need additional institutional support for some of our other initiatives. Funding the Community Liaison from state funds is thus a high priority, since it is part of our core mission, compatible with the institution’s mission, and beyond the ability of the Program for long-term funding.