



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Program in Jewish Studies

Academic Review and Planning
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

Signed by:

Ann Stevens
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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Program in Jewish Studies (JWST) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over March 20 and 21, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the director, and wrote this report.

Past Reviews

The 2016 ARPAC review was Jewish Studies' first program review, as the program was founded in 2007 and began offering a major in 2012. The committee made 13 recommendations addressing archival management, faculty hiring, interdisciplinary connections, governance structure, staffing, space, and funding models. Through their annual follow-up reports from 2018, 2019, and 2020, JWST demonstrated notable progress in several areas.

The program showed strong responsiveness in areas under their direct control. JWST successfully addressed archival management concerns by creating a new academic director of collections position, establishing clear collecting priorities, and working with the University Libraries to improve accessibility of their Post-Holocaust American Judaism Archive. The program made significant progress on faculty hiring, successfully recruiting Samira Mehta in the Department of Women and Gender Studies (focusing on American Jewish religious life) and instructor Rebecca Wartell (specializing in Sephardic studies). These hires aligned with ARPAC's guidance to leverage archival strengths and expand into new geographic areas of Jewish studies. The program also launched graduate certificate programming and expanded public programming from 4-8 events annually to 13-17 events.

The program demonstrated exceptional success in fundraising. In 2018-2019, the program raised over \$750,000, including a substantial estate gift of \$683,000. This momentum continued in subsequent years, with additional estate gifts totaling over \$100,000 secured in 2019-2020, plus successful matching initiatives that created new endowed funds. These achievements provided crucial support for program operations and student scholarships.

However, several recommendations requiring institutional support proved more challenging to implement. Space improvement requests were not approved, and sustainable funding for a community engagement coordinator position was not provided, requiring the program to rely on gift funds for this role. The student credit hour accounting issue remains unresolved, with Jewish Studies not receiving institutional credit for courses taught by their affiliated faculty. Director compensation levels also remain a concern for the program.

Jewish Studies has been highly effective at advancing recommendations within their direct control but faces ongoing challenges with structural issues that require broader institutional support.

Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Program in Jewish Studies is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at

<https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in October 2025, reflecting the state of the Program in Jewish Studies as of the academic year (AY) 2024-2025.

Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

The Program in Jewish Studies offers a Bachelor of Arts (BA) major and minor in Jewish Studies, as well as a minor in Hebrew and Israel Studies. The program also provides a graduate certificate in Jewish Studies. The program defines its teaching mission around creating "high touch" educational experiences that provide personalized attention within a large research university environment, emphasizing intensive mentoring, community building, and interdisciplinary learning. The program's interdisciplinary structure draws faculty from two divisions within the College of Arts and Sciences (Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences) and extends to the College of Music, allowing students to develop critical thinking skills across disciplines. The program serves both majors and a substantial non-major population, with 95% of student credit hours (SCH) in fall 2024 taken by non-majors, indicating significant contributions to general education and interdisciplinary learning campus-wide.

The program assesses undergraduate degree effectiveness through regular curriculum review, student feedback mechanisms, and tracking of post-graduation outcomes. Jewish Studies is currently undertaking significant curricular changes outlined in their goal setting exercise, including: moving tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty into introductory courses through new cross-listings with the Department of Women and Gender Studies and the Department of Religious Studies; revising major requirements to offer students a choice between "Introduction to Jewish Cultures" and "Judaism" as gateway courses; expanding Hebrew language offerings by adding a second section of First Year Hebrew; and streamlining the graduate certificate process by creating clearer lists of qualifying courses. The program has also recently added a non-language intensive track to accommodate diverse student needs.

The program's small size enables exceptional personalized attention, with students describing a "liberal arts college experience" within a large research university. However, with 8 undergraduate majors (fall 2024) and one bachelor's degree awarded in 2024-2025 despite serving over 1,300 student credit hours annually, the program faces a challenge in converting course enrollment to major declarations. The Hebrew language program represents a particular strength, gaining recognition for innovative teaching methods and community building, though enrollment drops significantly in advanced courses. The external reviewers noted that having the gateway course(s) taught by adjunct instructors has been "sub-optimal" for recruiting majors, which provides even further validation for the program's current goal of moving TTT faculty into these introductory courses.

Faculty maintain long-term mentoring relationships with students well beyond graduation, and the program's interdisciplinary structure exposes students to diverse methodological approaches. The goal setting exercise demonstrates strong commitment to curricular innovation, with plans to "think collectively about what we believe a major or minor in Jewish Studies, or a minor in Hebrew and

Israel Studies needs to know.” The program has established a comprehensive Student Learning Assessment Plan with five Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).

The program’s cross-departmental structure provides unique interdisciplinary learning opportunities, with faculty from the Department of History, the Department of Religious Studies, the Department of Women and Gender Studies, the Department of English, and the College of Music enriching student perspectives. However, this structure creates a significant administrative challenge: JWST does not receive student credit hour allocation for courses taught by its affiliated faculty, as these credits go to faculty members’ home departments. This understates the program’s educational contributions and affects resource allocation decisions.

Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

JWST operates as an interdisciplinary unit that coordinates and supports research across multiple departments rather than housing tenure-track faculty directly. The program’s research identity centers on fostering collaborative scholarship that bridges traditional disciplinary boundaries in areas including Jewish history, literature, religion, philosophy, anthropology, and music. According to the external review committee, the program serves as “an interdisciplinary gem” that enhances the university’s reputation through its unique scholarly resources and innovative programming.

JWST has 8 TTT faculty affiliates who maintain active research profiles across diverse areas of Jewish studies. Faculty achievements include two endowed chairs (the Louis P. Singer Endowed Chair in Jewish History and the Endowed Professorship in Israel/Palestine Studies), demonstrating significant recognition within their fields. The program’s most distinctive research asset is the Post-Holocaust American Judaism Archive, now formally known as the Innovations in Jewish Life (IJL) collections through a 2023 partnership agreement with University Libraries. This partnership establishes shared stewardship, with Jewish Studies providing an academic director for collection development and community engagement, while the Libraries provide professional archival management, preservation, and access services. The IJL collections document “innovative ritual life, Jewish Renewal, Jewish social justice movements, Jewish farming and camping movements, progressive Jewish figures, and activist Jewish student groups across North America.” The program successfully leverages its archival holdings to attract national and international scholarly attention, including visiting scholars through the Jim and Diane Shneer Fellowship and the bi-annual Embodied Judaism symposium. Teaching faculty have also garnered recognition, particularly Eyal Rivlin, whose innovative Hebrew instruction includes creating community events and developing a nonbinary Hebrew grammar that has gained widespread national and international attention.

The program demonstrates both strengths and significant needs in supporting faculty research. While two endowed positions provide substantial research support (\$25,000 annually for the Singer Chair according to budget documents), the goal setting exercise reveals that most faculty receive only \$1,500 annually from the college—a figure that has not kept pace with research costs. The program has identified critical funding needs for “expenses associated with publication, such as editing, permissions, and other subvention costs.” Faculty report that their service obligations in Jewish Studies reduce time available to pursue external funding, making enhanced internal support essential. The program has established ambitious goals to strengthen its research culture, including “expanding communal conversations about research,” which builds on the success of semesterly brown bag workshops to include writing retreats for faculty and potentially for dissertating graduate

students. Long-term aspirations include hosting manuscript workshops for all faculty, creating visiting scholar positions through programs like Fulbright and the Israel Institute, and leveraging the IJL collections partnership to enhance the program's national research profile. The formalized partnership with University Libraries for the IJL collections represents a model for sustainable research infrastructure that could be expanded to support additional faculty research initiatives.

Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2024-2025, faculty in the Program in Jewish Studies consisted of 0 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty (TTT faculty have their tenure homes in other units; Jewish Studies does not act as a tenure home), 2 teaching-track faculty, 1 research faculty, and 2 exempt faculty. Additionally, Jewish Studies has 1 student hourly employee, and 8 TTT affiliates with tenure homes in other units. Based on the JWST website (which provides more current information than the D&A profile), Jewish Studies has 8 active TTT faculty affiliates, 1 teaching professor, and 4 lecturers. Like other interdisciplinary programs, none of the TTT faculty have tenure locus in Jewish Studies itself—all hold their tenure lines in other departments including the Department of History, the Department of Women and Gender Studies, the Department of Religious Studies, the Department of English, and the College of Music. As of 2025, the program is led by Director Samira Mehta (the Department of Women and Gender Studies), with an executive committee including Professors Elias Sacks, Samuel Boyd, and Hillary Kalisman.

The program has experienced significant personnel changes since the 2016 review. Most notably, it suffered the loss of David Shneer who passed away in 2020, a key figure in the program's development. The program also lost a teaching professor position in spring 2024 who left for a tenure-track position elsewhere, creating staffing pressures, particularly for the critical gateway course "Introduction to Jewish Cultures." Additionally, Jewish Studies seeks to hire a Hebrew lecturer to enable expansion of First Year Hebrew from one to two sections, addressing consistent waitlist demand. Eyal Rivlin (teaching professor) and Jaime Myers (lecturer) are the only faculty 100% rostered in JWST according to the faculty roster.

The current leadership team demonstrates strong potential, with external reviewers noting that Director Mehta "looks to take the Program in new and exciting directions and offers a new model of leadership." The executive committee "works together well, has a wealth of knowledge both of their subjects and of the program, and has terrific (potentially untapped) potential as fundraisers."

The program has developed mentoring initiatives, including formal teaching faculty evaluation and promotion policies (adopted April 2023) with clear advancement criteria. The goal setting exercise identifies opportunities to strengthen mentoring, particularly for mid-career faculty who have fewer university-wide resources available. Plans include creating a centralized guide to mentoring resources and implementing more frequent teaching observations for professional development. However, the ERC identified the need for better mentoring support for the director, noting this is her first large administrative assignment and "it is taking more of her time than she imagined".

Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

As of fall 2024, Jewish Studies enrolled 8 undergraduate majors and 12 undergraduate minors. The program awarded one bachelor's degree in 2024-2025. Of the 8 majors, 63% were female, 25%

were in-state residents, and none represented Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) or underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. In fall 2024, Jewish Studies taught 1,309 undergraduate student credit hours, representing substantial growth over the past five years. However, 95% of these credit hours were taken by non-majors, indicating that the program serves significant campus-wide educational needs.

The external reviewers found exceptional evidence of student success and satisfaction. Students and alumni consistently praised “the extraordinary attention they received from faculty, the sense of community that the program provided, and the exceptional scholarly opportunities they had access to because of faculty investment, the program’s internship structure, and its fellowship opportunities.” Multiple students told reviewers that the program “manages to provide the intimacy of liberal arts college in a university context that can sometimes feel less personal.” Students contrasted the attention and dedication they experienced from Jewish Studies faculty with their experiences in larger majors, describing how “included” they felt at program events and courses. The program provides notable research and internship opportunities, well-funded scholarships, and access to the Post-Holocaust American Judaism Archive. Students also benefit from faculty-led study abroad programs and strong mentoring relationships that result in “credible and personal letters of recommendation” from faculty who maintain long-term relationships with students.

The program recognizes the need to rebuild its student community infrastructure. According to the goal setting exercise, prior to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), JWST had “a robust student advisory board that provided the backbone of a very strong Jewish Studies student community.” While this board did not survive the pandemic, Professor and Associate Director Sam Boyd has worked to reinvigorate it, with students now “enthusiastic about planning events.” The program aims to create a board with students at all stages of their careers to ensure continuity, as the current board consists largely of upper-class students resulting in almost complete leadership turnover every year. The program has also identified a critical need for better student tracking systems. The goal setting exercise notes that very few students come to CU Boulder with a declared major or minor in Jewish Studies, and that students typically discover the program through electives. The program plans to create better mechanisms for tracking students who move through its courses to identify and approach students nearing major or minor requirements.

Jewish Studies offers a graduate certificate and hosts a monthly graduate colloquium that serves students across multiple disciplines. The external reviewers noted that “the graduate seminar, which can lead to a graduate certificate, has created a much-needed locus of support for students from multiple disciplines by providing an expansive and flexible understanding of Jewish Studies.” The graduate certificate program functions effectively as an interdisciplinary supplement, providing community and support for students across departments who share interests in Jewish Studies. The goal setting exercise outlines specific plans to enhance graduate student support through professional development workshops. While the graduate colloquium has created “a deep trust between the students and the Director of Graduate Studies,” the program recognizes the need for broader mentoring opportunities. Planned workshops include “how to write an academic article, how to construct a CV (curriculum vitae), how to write a grant proposal, and how to write a cover letter,” which would expose students to more faculty mentors while building essential skills in professional and academic socialization.

Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy. Jewish Studies has demonstrated particular strength in community building and preparing students for diverse democratic participation. The program's interdisciplinary structure naturally promotes diversity of perspectives, drawing faculty from History, Religious Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and other departments. The external reviewers found a positive climate characterized by collegiality and mutual respect. The program successfully handles sensitive topics with academic rigor, as evidenced by their effective navigation of difficult discussions following the events of October 7, 2023, that marked the beginning of the ongoing Israel-Gaza war. The reviewers noted that during this particularly fraught period regarding questions about Jewish identity and the state of Israel, the program provided "an outstanding space of learning and critical intellectual engagement that students found crucial to their education."

The goal setting exercise reveals specific initiatives to strengthen inclusive community building. The program plans to increase utilization of its administrative office space for student engagement, recognizing that before the pandemic, students would regularly spend time studying and socializing there. Plans include hosting student advisory board meetings, graduate colloquia, and other activities in this space. By bringing the part-time staff person back into the office several days a week, the program aims to keep the administrative space open more consistently, which will aid in fostering student community and casual faculty-student interactions when faculty visit. The program has also identified the need to build community among its faculty, who maintain offices in their home departments across campus. The goal setting exercise notes that because JWST faculty are dispersed through the university and do not share office space, they do not have many opportunities to engage with each other informally. Plans include increasing social events, of different types offered at different times, to accommodate different schedules and needs. The program plans to expand its successful faculty research brown bags to include pedagogy discussions, which would enable broader participation from teaching faculty.

Long-term planning demonstrates commitment to sustained inclusive excellence. The program commits to working on creating a more equitable community with respect to race, gender, and sexual orientation in classrooms, faculty meetings, interpersonal experiences, on the Community Advisory Board, and in interactions with the broader community. The program also commits to ongoing climate work, aiming to create "structures that are sustainable for all community members, regardless of their academic rank, protected class status, and other life circumstances, and that can adapt as the needs of both [JWST] and its members change."

Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The program operates under bylaws last revised in September 2021, which establish a director appointed for three-year renewable terms, an executive committee, and voting rights for regular faculty members who maintain formal memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with the program. The goal setting exercise acknowledges the dean's directive to streamline governance while recognizing that required tasks like "writing Program Learning Objectives, ARPAC reports, and other important tasks" demand the same effort regardless of program size, necessitating a governance structure that balances efficiency with adequate coverage of essential functions.

The most pressing governance challenge involves the Community Advisory Board. Both the external reviewers and goal setting exercise identify problems, noting that the Board “does not generate enough revenue to justify the frequency of its meetings or the degree of its involvement” and “is not fulfilling all of the terms of its bylaws.” The program plans to “shift their priorities to the current needs of the Program, which largely means shifting the board to a fundraising model” and increasing alumni participation to enhance both connection and understanding of current program needs.

Service equity represents another issue. The goal setting exercise notes that because of the loss of faculty, shifting faculty commitments within JWST, and the structure of MOUs with partner units, the work that needs to be done to keep the unit afloat is not distributed evenly among faculty. The program plans to review governing structures and assess “how each colleague is engaging with those structures” to increase equity in both labor distribution and resource access. Additionally, the program aims to implement “a more structured system of review” for teaching observations, proposing to observe “untenured faculty every semester, and all tenured and teaching professors annually.”

According to the D&A profile for 2024-2025, staff personnel in Jewish Studies consisted of 2 university staff members. The program’s goal setting exercise outlines plans to “re-structure staff support” by converting the manager of finance and business operations position into an assistant director position and increasing “the second staff position, currently the Events and Communications Manager, from 20 hours a week to full time.” These changes would enable enhanced advancement, donor relations, and grant-writing capacity while providing consistent office coverage for student support.

The program demonstrates strong external partnerships crucial to its operations. The 2023 agreement with University Libraries for the IJL collections establishes a model of shared governance with clear delineation of responsibilities. The goal setting exercise emphasizes continuing to build and strengthen relationships with partners on campus, including Advancement, the University Libraries, Foundation Relations, and the Anderson Language and Technology Center (ALTEC), recognizing these partnerships as essential for fundraising, archival management, and program support.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Program in Jewish Studies and to the offices of responsible administrators:

To the Unit:

1. Develop strategies to increase the number of majors and graduates, such as by tracking students who take multiple JWST courses and reaching out when they are close to completing major/minor requirements.
2. Work with program faculty and Advancement staff to restructure the Community Advisory Board (CAB) to focus on fundraising, increase alumni representation on the Board, and align activities with current program needs. In addition, work with them to expand donor relations beyond the CAB.
3. Establish regular teaching observation schedules to support faculty's professional development.
4. Continue to advocate for more equitable allocation of student credit hours to JWST.
5. Address service distribution inequities by developing guidelines and expectations for JWST faculty affiliates, reviewing faculty MOUs, and redistributing responsibilities more evenly across faculty ranks and appointments.
6. Formalize MOUs between affiliated departments and JWST to ensure equitable arrangements in service responsibilities, and criteria for annual merit evaluations and tenure and promotion.

To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

7. Continue efforts to advocate for an Arts & Humanities budget process that accounts for units' high share of student credit hours (SCH) from non-majors and develop a plan to robustly account for and reward these SCH, recognizing units' significant educational contributions. Under the current budget model, there are concerns that JWST will not be allocated appropriate resources for the courses taught/students served.
8. Allocate funds for an additional Hebrew lecturer to meet documented student demand to enable the expansion of First Year Hebrew from one to two sections and, if appropriate, eventually consider converting this position from a lecturer to a teaching professor. In addition, convert the full-time lecturer position into a teaching professor position, replacing the teaching professor who left CU Boulder in spring 2024.
9. Given the gaps in staffing due to attrition, consider helping the department hire at least one 100% administrative support staff position. Relatedly, ARPAC recommends a systematic review of staffing needs throughout Arts & Humanities to ensure that staffing is adequate to deliver programs, curriculum, and support staff and students.
10. Explore creating shared administrative support services for certain key functions for which individual units, especially smaller units, may not have staff personnel, e.g., graduate student administrative support, event support, budget and finance support, etc.

11. Consider developing a plan to increase the standard XQK \$1,500 allocated to faculty because it is not sufficiently meeting their research needs.
12. Help facilitate more support from Advancement for JWST to help with fundraising. In positive and productive collaboration with Advancement staff, JWST demonstrated exceptional success in fundraising from 2018-2020, but new fundraising models may be hampering their ability to fundraise through their Board and expanding into other donor bases.
13. Support JWST and their partner units in addressing service distribution inequities by developing guidelines and expectations for JWST faculty affiliates, reviewing faculty MOUs, and redistributing responsibilities more evenly across faculty ranks and appointments.
14. Emphasize and support the important role that JWST—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

To the Provost:

15. Develop campus-wide policies to address student credit hour allocation for interdisciplinary programs, ensuring that programs like Jewish Studies receive credit for courses taught by their affiliated faculty.
16. Emphasize and support the important role that JWST—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

Required Follow-up

The director of the Program in Jewish Studies shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.