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Old Dominion University Professor Amy K. Milligan Receives Major Recognition from National Academic Organization

Milligan recognized for her work combating antisemitism and supporting students on campus

Norfolk, VA – Professor Amy K. Milligan, Batten Endowed Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at Old Dominion University, has received the second Academic Engagement Network (AEN) Faculty Changemaker Award ever to be awarded, in recognition of her leadership in combating antisemitism and fostering a safer, more welcoming campus environment for Jewish and Zionist students. AEN is an academic organization comprised of more than 1,300 faculty members on nearly 400 campuses who combat antisemitism and advocate for open and robust discourse on Israel.

The Faculty Changemaker Award honors AEN members who demonstrate exceptional dedication to confronting antisemitism on campus and whose actions have helped bring about positive change in their community.

Last year, AEN presented UC Berkeley Professor Ron Hassner with its inaugural Faculty Changemaker Award, recognizing his open-ended [“sit-in protest”](#) calling on university administrators to better protect Jewish students. Inspired by Hassner’s courageous action, AEN launched the [Faculty Against Antisemitism Movement \(FAAM\)](#) in April 2024, mobilizing academics to stand against antisemitism and anti-Israel bias on their campuses and urge university leaders to act. Over the past two years, more than 30,000 faculty nationwide have become active in FAAM.

This is not the first time Milligan has received recognition for her commitment to fighting antisemitism and dedication to teaching. In 2018 she received the John R. Broderick Diversity Champion Award from Old Dominion University. In 2020, she won the Jeffrey B. Spence Award for Interfaith Understanding from Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. In 2023, Milligan accepted the Robert L. Stern Excellence in Teaching Award from Old Dominion University. In 2024, she was selected as one of 20 participants nationwide for Resetting the Table's training on navigating difficult conversations about Israel and Palestine. In 2025, she earned the Shine a Light on Antisemitism Civic Courage Award for University Educators and Administrators from The Jewish Education Project.

"This national recognition is especially meaningful to me because it reflects work that has become such an important part of my professional and personal life: supporting Jewish and Zionist students, confronting antisemitism in higher education, promoting civil discourse, and helping create campus communities where students feel supported, empowered, and able to speak openly about their identities and their connections to Israel," **said Milligan.** "I see this award not as a culmination, but as an encouragement to continue this work."

At Old Dominion University, Milligan has worked to create a safe environment for her students. In April, with initial funding from AEN, she opened the [Am Yisrael CHAI Café](#) in her office to provide Jewish students with a gathering place to find community, ask difficult questions and talk through their experiences in a supportive environment. Her mission is to promote civil discourse on campus to create an environment where all students can speak openly about their identities, perspectives, and connections to Judaism. She has sneakers that are painted with Am Yisrael Chai and feature the Star of David, which she wears regularly while teaching and attending events. It's just one of the many ways she truly walks the walk.

Milligan focuses her work on building bridges and fostering a campus community grounded in open and respectful dialogue. Through her efforts, she hopes to instill in her students the courage to connect across differences while empowering them to stay true to themselves and their identities.

Through her work with AEN, she collaborates with other faculty confronting antisemitism and works to develop best practices for supporting Jewish and Zionist students. Milligan has described AEN's faculty network as an important source of professional support and community that has strengthened her work as an advocate and educator.

"Amy Milligan embodies what it means to be a faculty changemaker," said **Miriam Elman, Executive Director of the Academic Engagement Network, Inc.** "She has responded to the challenges facing Jewish and Zionist students not only by speaking out, but by showing up for them day after day. Her courage, creativity, and commitment demonstrate

the profound impact that faculty can make in shaping a campus culture where Jewish and other students feel welcome and empowered to express who they are.”

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AEN is a national organization that mobilizes networks of university faculty and administrators to counter antisemitism, oppose the denigration of Jewish and Zionist identities, promote academic freedom, and advance education about Israel. More at <https://academicengagement.org/> and <https://www.facultyagainstantisemitism.org/>.