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CUNY, Yale, Evergreen and U of Minn. Awarded Up to \$300K to Combat Antisemitism

AEN Launches New Nationwide Antisemitism Education Initiative

Washington, DC – September 8, 2022: To address rising antisemitism across the U.S., the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) today announced it has awarded antisemitism education grants to four campuses – City University of New York, Evergreen State College, the University of Minnesota, and Yale University. This innovative approach aims to go to the heart of the problem by educating our nation’s next generation of leaders about the multifaceted nature of contemporary antisemitism, while also fostering a more positive campus climate for the current Jewish community.

The Antisemitism Education Initiative grants, a maximum of \$25,000 per year renewable for up to three years, will support a range of new programs and resources designed to create sustainable mechanisms to educate and train campus stakeholders – including administrators, faculty, and students – about the diversity of Jewish experience, historic and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, and strategies to improve inclusivity.

Designed to be tailored to the specific culture and needs of each of the campuses, programmatic components of the initiatives include the establishment of campus-wide symposia on antisemitism, the advancement of professional development opportunities for administrators, the creation of academic coursework on antisemitism and Israel, and the development of faculty-administrator alliances.

Grant recipients will also build institutional infrastructures that can be quickly and effectively activated in response to antisemitic incidents on campus, enabling faculty, staff, and administrators to form a united front to counter these challenges. Utilizing the [UC Berkeley Antisemitism Education Initiative](#) – which has been funded by AEN since 2020 and is now expanding to a California statewide initiative – as a test model, the new initiatives are intended to serve as local and regional hubs for the dissemination of knowledge and best practices for addressing Jewish inclusion, anti-Israel activism, and antisemitism on campus and in the academy.

AEN Executive Director Miriam Elman cited the need to develop effective partnerships and programming on key campuses to address the challenges that Jews face on campus, including frequent attacks on the core components of their Jewish identities. “Most university leaders, especially those tasked with advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals and initiatives, don’t yet have the expertise to address the lived experiences of Jewish students, faculty, and staff. And with an increasing number of Jewish students, and even faculty and staff too, reporting that they have to hide or disavow their Zionist identities and attachments to Israel in order to fit in and succeed, it is vital that faculty and administrators work collaboratively to create more welcoming, inclusive learning and workplace environments,” she said. “Our hope is that the new AEN-funded Antisemitism Education Initiatives will provide DEI leaders and university administrators with the knowledge, awareness, and strategies that they need to be good allies to the campus Jewish community.”

The four campuses were chosen following a competitive application process led by AEN’s leadership team and a selection committee comprised of AEN’s faculty members and members of its Advisory Board. The new initiatives

to address campus antisemitism at the City University of New York, Evergreen State College, the University of Minnesota, and Yale University have in common a commitment to education, dialogue, and outreach to multiple campus constituencies. Campus-based AEN faculty members will spearhead the initiatives, in partnership with administrators and campus Jewish student life professionals.

The Antisemitism Education Initiative grants are among a number of programs and projects that AEN is supporting through its [Improving the Campus Climate Initiative](#) (ICCI), launched in 2020, which engages senior officials in Student and Academic Affairs, DEI, and related offices on campuses throughout the country, providing expert, customized guidance, training, and best practices for understanding, identifying, and countering antisemitism on campus.

This week is also the start of ICCI's yearlong [Signature Seminar Series](#) geared for campus diversity officials to better understand antisemitism and how they can support the Jewish community on their campuses. Nearly 30 university and college administrators from 20 schools across the country will participate in the program, which will include monthly online sessions and immersive in-person experiences in Washington, DC, and Israel.

ICCI Director Naomi Greenspan emphasized the challenge of identifying campus antisemitism and the importance of collaboration between faculty and administrators to create a more positive campus climate. "While antisemitism emanating from the far right is relatively easy for campus administrators to identify and condemn, too often they are not aware of how historic antisemitic tropes play out in conversations about Israel, and how hostile rhetoric about Zionism can be perceived as an attack on Jewish identity. Faculty members play a key role in educating the campus community on these issues so that campus administrators and staff will be better equipped to support Jewish inclusion. Partnerships between faculty and administrators are essential to ensuring an inclusive environment for all members of the campus community."

The efforts at Yale, for example, are proceeding in partnership with the Medical School's Deputy Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Darin Latimore. AEN faculty member and grant recipient Evan D. Morris, Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Imaging at Yale, remarked that "Dean Latimore has a way of energizing those around him. When I leave his office after one of our meetings, I feel I can conquer the world." Morris sees Yale's Antisemitism Education Initiative as an important means for reinforcing the bedrock principles of the academy. "The need to fight antisemitism can be viewed through the lens of free speech. Movements to boycott Israelis or Zionists are bald attempts to stifle Jewish voices. This is anathema to the free and civil exchange of ideas that is so essential to a healthy academy."

Nancy Koppelman, Professor of Humanities at Evergreen State College, also expressed gratitude for AEN's grant and believes that it will positively impact the campus climate. "Thanks to the AEN, Evergreen can integrate education about the history of the Jewish people and about antisemitism into its social justice commitments. There are so many misperceptions about what it means to be Jewish. Jews are often excluded from minoritized identities that college campuses explicitly recognize. Education about the facts can change that, and so improve campus life for Jewish students and so for all students."

Earlier this year, AEN developed the [2022 Guide and Resource Book](#) for university administrators to use to advance Israel literacy, recognize and counter antisemitism, and ensure academic freedom and free speech on campus.

AEN is an independent, non-partisan national organization that mobilizes college faculty to reject the delegitimization of Israel on U.S. campuses. It is comprised of over 850 faculty members on more than 250 campuses across the United States that seek to defend campus free speech and academic freedom, promote robust discussion of Israel in the academy, and respond to antisemitism on campus when it occurs.