Clarion Review

Education

Oy Vey, It's Time to Apply: A Cultural Guide to Colleges for Jewish Parents

Jerome Ostrov
CreateSpace
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Four Stars (out of Five)

As the author of this amusingly titled book points out, Jewish parents have a special investment in where their children go to college. Assimilation and intermarriage are big concerns within the Jewish community, and parents who have invested in Hebrew school, Jewish day school, and Jewish summer camps are loath to risk everything at this last crucial stage of the keep-the-kids-Jewish game.

With SATs, APs and campus tours, the college application process is already rigorous, and finding out which campuses have significant Jewish populations, provide kosher food, honor Shabbat and holiday services further complicates the choices for many families. Meant as an addendum to books that rank schools based on academics, this one provides a Jewish lens that will help families ensure that an active Jewish life will be included in their child's college experience.

By the late 1950's, anti-Semitism on college campuses began to erode, opening the door for post-graduate education in the nation's top graduate and professional schools. The once-rare Jewish law firm partner has given way to law firms that cater from kosher restaurants and whose partners leave early for Shabbat and take off every Jewish holiday. Hillel, the world's largest Jewish campus organization, has played a prominent role in the successful integration of Jews in academia and the professions—the days when Jewish doctoral students who refused to Anglicize their names, and consequently, could not get hired are long gone.

As Hillel celebrates its eighty-fifth anniversary this year, it maintains an active presence on more than five hundred college campuses, and it provides much-needed leadership and activism for students struggling with the organized anti-Israel sentiment that now exists at many schools. Reading this movement accurately as anti-Semitic, author Jerome Ostrov devotes the book's final chapter to a thoughtful discussion of the challenging questions about Israel that can

confuse incoming freshmen.

Hillel rightly plays a significant role in this book, as does the historically Jewish fraternities and sororities. Each college's Jewish history is summarized, and the entries are organized based on their academic similarities. This information will reassure families that both quality education and important social opportunities are available within a Jewish context at many schools.

Oddly, the book does not consider the growing presence of the Chabad Campus International Foundation, now active at over 150 colleges and universities. Chabad is expanding to ten new campuses this year alone. Although Chabad does not offer Hillel's religious diversity, it is noted for its lively Shabbat meals and energetic young rabbis. Families would be remiss to ignore this important addition to Jewish campus life.

Nevertheless, this first non-legal book by attorney Jerome Ostrov makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on choosing colleges, and parents will thank him for taking the time to visit over one hundred colleges and research many more. This book will be memorized, talked about, and promoted in Jewish communities nationwide.

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Elizabeth Breau