

How Rutgers Can Demonstrate Compliance with the December 2024 OCR Agreement
Recommendations by JFAS Rutgers
January 30, 2025

Since its inception in 2016, JFAS Rutgers (Jewish Faculty, Administrators, and Staff at Rutgers) has worked constructively with the Rutgers University administration to promote a supportive climate for Jewish faculty, administrators, staff, and students, free from bias and discrimination. In light of the agreement between the university and the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, JFAS offers the following recommendations to mitigate those factors that have allowed a hostile campus environment to take hold.

Attached, as an appendix, is the December 11, 2023 document, "JFAS Proposals to Address Antisemitism at Rutgers," the recommendations of which we endorse again as constructive steps to address the OCR report.

A. Preventing Disruptive Actions That Violate University Policies

Since Hamas invaded Israel and massacred its people on October 7, 2023, Rutgers has witnessed a profusion of disturbing campus incidents that have included antisemitic behavior and have violated university rules. Despite new, clearer university rules about speech and protest promulgated in the fall of 2024, serious disruptive and harassing incidents have continued to occur. To prevent such incidents, Rutgers can and should do the following:

1. When university or RUPD officials are aware of events that will violate time, place, and manner restrictions or other university policies, take preemptive steps to make sure that these events do not go forward (instead of letting them proceed in knowing violation of rules).
2. Investigate more swiftly and thoroughly any violations of university rules and guidelines that may contribute to the creation of a hostile environment for Jews or Israelis.
3. Respond to violations with firm and meaningful disciplinary action, against individuals (faculty, staff, and students) as well as groups.
4. Publicize the resolution of any investigations and disciplinary actions, to communicate both to the affected parties and to prospective offenders that the university does not tolerate disruption and rule-breaking.
5. Promulgate and enforce an anti-masking policy to prevent disruptive parties from intimidating Rutgers community members and from impeding efforts to identify the offenders and thereby implement appropriate responses.

B. Implementing Effective Anti-Semitism Education and Training

The resolution agreement with OCR calls for antisemitism training. Rutgers has taken some preliminary steps in this regard but can go further. To ensure that everyone at Rutgers can identify antisemitism in its various forms, Rutgers can and should:

1. Rely on JFAS, Rutgers Hillel, and the New Brunswick Chancellor's Advisory Council on Antisemitism and Jewish Life to: identify the groups and individuals who are best suited to oversee antisemitism education and training; develop and review materials used in antisemitism education and training; ensure that websites and other public materials disseminated by the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement and related offices include accurate and relevant discussions of antisemitism and all its manifestations.
2. Partner with nationally recognized groups such as Hillel International, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the Academic Engagement Network to educate and train administration officials and others at Rutgers in understanding and combatting antisemitism.
3. Hire senior administrators across multiple divisions (Student Affairs, DICE, etc.) who have cultural competency in Jewish and Israeli communities. Where administrative divisions have in the past proven skeptical about antisemitism allegations or reluctant to address them, commit to responding more quickly and thoroughly.
4. Establish and fund a center to combat antisemitism that can provide public programming, research opportunities, collaborations with Tel Aviv University and other institutions, and other forms of campus engagement to correct for biases and prejudices in the overall campus presentation of issues pertaining to Jews, Judaism, and Israel. This center should be able to complement and work with the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, the Department of Jewish Studies, the Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience, and the Network Contagion Research Institute.

C. Addressing Bias and Discrimination in the Classroom and Other Academic Settings

Additional factors contributing to a hostile environment for Jews and Israelis have included inappropriate political statements by departments or units; one-sided, non-scholarly, and propagandistic public programming by Rutgers centers, departments, or organizations on issues relating to Israel; derogatory and false statements, or the use of false or biased materials, by classroom instructors on issues relating to Jews and Israel. All of these activities harm Jewish and Israeli members of Rutgers, undermine Rutgers' academic mission, and sully the university's reputation. As a remedy, Rutgers can and should:

1. Promulgate and enforce a policy of institutional neutrality for departments and other units, making clear that while individual faculty and students may personally hold whatever political position they wish, departments may not. Departments must remain open to a wide diversity of political viewpoints and impose no political litmus test on its faculty or students.

2. Establish and enforce policies to ensure that Rutgers' authorized centers adhere to standards of political neutrality appropriate to a scholarly unit and do not become vehicles of an ideological agenda. Enforce existing policies mandating the regular review of such centers. Any team reviewing the centers should include or consult with Rutgers community members who understand how and why a given center may be contributing to a hostile campus environment. In undertaking a review of the controversial Center for Security, Race and Rights, for example, the university should consult representatives from JFAS, Rutgers Hillel, and the New Brunswick Chancellor's Advisory Council on Antisemitism and Jewish Life.
3. Develop rules for addressing faculty who improperly use their classroom platforms to disseminate false, biased, or extremist political positions, especially when unrelated to their expertise or the course's subject matter. New rules should also set forth remedies to the harm caused to students by the improper use of the classroom for political purposes.
4. Develop rules whereby faculty who have shown a bias that may be contributing to a hostile environment for Jews or Israelis may not hold positions of power regarding hiring, diversity requirements, or student affairs.
5. Provide support for displaced Israeli students and international Jewish students who have experienced antisemitism in their home countries to study at Rutgers.