



NJ STATE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH FEDERATIONS

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NEWS from the New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations – January 31, 2018

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Leadership of Jewish Federation Meets With Rutgers University President Robert Barchi

With concerns raised within the State's Jewish community and many questions received about anti-Semitism at Rutgers, The State University, a leadership working group of community leaders from Jewish Federations in NJ, coordinated by the State Association of Jewish Federations (State Association), met with Rutgers President Robert Barchi and senior members of his administration. The meeting took place on January 25, 2018 at the President's offices on the Old Queens Campus in New Brunswick.

Meeting with President Barchi were Gordon Haas, President of the State Association; Roy Tanzman, Chairman of the Board for Rutgers Hillel and former State Association President; Marlene Herman, President-Elect of the State Association; Leonard Cole, Co-Chair, Task Force on Global Anti-Semitism, Jewish Agency for Israel; Keith Krivitzky, CEO of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ; Geri Palast, Executive Director of Israel Action Network; Andrew Getraer, Executive Director, Rutgers Hillel; and Jacob Toporek, Executive Director, State Association.

"This meeting was sought by our state federations out of deep concern we heard from members of our individual communities that anti-Semitic statements on the part of certain faculty had occurred at Rutgers," stated State Association President Gordon Haas. "It was welcomed as an opportunity to speak frankly with President Barchi about the impact recent events at Rutgers had on Jewish students at the school, their families and our community in general," Haas added.

"Rutgers University enjoys remarkable religious diversity, including a vibrant Jewish community. The University has a fundamental commitment to provide an environment where our students can discover their passions free from fears of discrimination or religious bias," said President Barchi. "I am grateful to the members of the state federations for meeting with me to discuss strategies for combatting anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry on our campuses."

Jewish life is currently thriving at Rutgers University, with a new Hillel facility, an active Chabad and other Jewish student organizations, and the largest number of Jewish students of any

university in the country. “This is certainly a source of pride,” noted Keith Krivitzky, CEO of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ, the federation catchment area where the main campus of Rutgers is located. “We were pleased to hear that President Barchi agreed that Rutgers should do everything possible to counter these concerns about anti-Semitism and ensure the continued vibrancy and success of the Jewish community on campus,” Krivitzky stated.

Providing an update on Rutgers’ review of the three professors in question, Barchi noted his response is subject to the university’s principles of academic freedom and limitations of a public university under the First Amendment. President Barchi also shared with the working group that former Syrian diplomat at the U.N., Dr. Mazen Adi, is not currently employed at Rutgers and has not taught at the school since the summer of 2017.

“While the response to faculty who express inappropriate sentiments is governed by faculty and union procedures, we were pleased to hear from President Barchi that he has agreed to speak out clearly and forcefully in response to anti-Semitic and other bigoted statements made within the University community,” acknowledged Roy Tanzman, Chairman of the Rutgers Hillel Board. “We accepted the concern he expressed that the story reported in the media thus far have been incomplete, and appreciated his sincere interest in addressing the matters in which we have a strong interest,” Tanzman noted.

In response to these recent events, Rutgers University is convening a full day symposium on diversity, inclusion and tolerance scheduled for March 27, 2018. The Symposium will address concerns about anti-Semitism and other incidents of bias and hate on campus. “All members of our federations’ leadership team agreed with President Barchi that such sentiments, whether targeted against Jews, Muslims, or any other particular group, are antithetical to a healthy university community. We are looking forward to learning more about this program and sharing feedback with the Jewish community,” stated Marlene Herman, President-Elect of the State Association.

Geri Palast, Executive Director of IAN, the Israel Action Network, created by Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council of Public Affairs to meet the increasing challenge of efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel, shared with President Barchi a set of principles adopted by the university of California and guidelines on responding to anti-Semitic incidents crafted and approved by UC Irvine. “President Barchi agreed convene a high-level work group with representatives of the Jewish community to formulate together a statement of principles and policy as to how best to mitigate concerns of anti-Semitism in the future,” Palast indicated.

“All who participated in the meeting agreed that this discussion was a positive step. While this discussion doesn’t fully address all the concerns raised, the outcomes will, hopefully, be a series of constructive steps in the near future to do so. We look forward to continuing to celebrate Jewish life at Rutgers University and proclaiming how Rutgers is and will continue to be a great place to be Jewish,” concluded Haas on behalf of the federations.