Slifka Center
Building forward
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE AT YALE

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR SLIFKA CENTER
“Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life is a vibrant community space at Yale. It inspires students, faculty, and staff to lives of leadership and service, to tzedakah (philanthropy) and tikkun olam (repairing the world), and to a deeper engagement with their faith, cultures, and one another. Its success is important to me and to Yale.”

Peter Salovey ’86 Ph.D.
President of Yale University
Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology
Dear Friends,

Since 1995, Slifka Center has been home to Jewish life at Yale. Our dedicated facility for programs and worship, and Yale’s only source of kosher food, is located in the heart of the university at 80 Wall Street, across from Silliman College.

We are now in our second year leading this multi-faceted institution which has already served several generations of students. We are honored to be a part of its history, but we also feel the responsibility to be change agents at this transformative moment.

The *Slifka Center: Building Forward* capital campaign will fund the building’s first significant renovations in its 25 years. We are literally “building forward” by investing in our facility’s ability to support the needs of Yale students in 2020 and beyond. We will modernize the Kosher Kitchen, enlarge the dining commons, update the tired interior, reorganize study and meeting spaces, and expand our security infrastructure to enhance student safety. 1995 was a long time ago.

Success in this campaign requires bold aspirations, compelling vision, and extraordinary partners. We are grateful to have the strong support of the university which will provide reunion and class credit for capital and endowment campaign contributions, for a limited time period. This is a moment and opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

Slifka Center’s signature impact is best seen through the stories of our students. Each day, they are authoring the next chapters of their lives, of the Jewish community of Yale, and of the American Jewish community. Our work is to link their stories to one another and to the past and future of the Jewish people.

Judaism both informs and is continually formed by these evolving stories. Our students add new voices and creative possibilities that were unimaginable just a few years ago. Theirs are stories of self-discovery, and of renewal. Slifka Center is where our students encounter each other, and develop and share their stories. This campaign will make sure the building continues to serve this critical end for many more generations.

We are ready to do our part to prepare these promising young leaders by connecting them with Jewish values, history, and identity, and we hope you will join us by participating in the *Slifka Center: Building Forward* campaign. Together, we can ensure the continuation of vibrant Jewish life at Yale, which both inspires and elevates the Jewish community and the world.

Uri Cohen
Executive Director

Rabbi Jason Rubenstein
Howard M. Holtzmann Jewish Chaplain at Yale
The year 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of Slifka Center. To celebrate, and in response to the need to revitalize the facility, we are launching the $10 million Slifka Center: Building Forward capital campaign. A total of $8 million of the funds raised will renovate and expand the building, to enhance student programming. The remaining $2 million will create an endowment to maintain the kosher kitchen and dining facilities.

The creation of Slifka Center was transformational for Jewish life at Yale. Beginning in the 1940s, religious services and kosher meals were held in modest off-campus facilities. Dedicated in 1995, Slifka Center brought together two core programs, Yale Hillel and the Kosher Kitchen, in a new facility on land provided by Yale. Rabbi James Ponet ’68, p ’97 and Dr. Donald Cohen z”l ’66, p ’92, p ’02, p ’97 ph.d. brought inspiration and determination while visionary donors Alan Slifka z”l ’51, p ’01, p ’13 and Sylvia Slifka z”l p ’51 brought critical support to create Joseph Slifka Center.

Looking ahead, the Slifka Center: Building Forward capital campaign will prepare Slifka Center for the future, and bring it in line with renovations that have taken place in other campus buildings. Much has changed over the last quarter century in terms of student study patterns, eating and dietary habits, and compelling activities on the one hand, and energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, and security requirements on the other. Slifka Center now warrants significant modernization in order to meet the needs of those we serve, including both the greater Yale and New Haven communities.

The project has two main parts: updating the lower level kitchen and dining facilities, to feature state-of-the-art equipment and an expanded layout featuring additional seating, serving, and meeting areas; and reconfiguring the building to make it more welcoming, more flexible, and able to support additional programming.

“It is extremely important to support the Jewish community at Yale. By providing educational, religious and social programs, the Slifka Center makes available the resources which barely existed during my undergraduate years in the early ’60s. It enriches all of Yale.”

Richard S. Pechter ’67, p ’93
Campaign Co-Chair
Slifka Center Board Member
Student program offices will be relocated to the first floor off the lobby, and two new amenities—a coffee bar and a wellness lounge—will be added. A new security booth is being constructed to control entry to the building, and the exterior terrace will be restored.

The second floor will continue to be dedicated to meeting spaces for prayer services and other gatherings, and include a new centralized clergy suite. The third floor and its expanded mezzanine will house the new library and reading room, a new conference room, and a series of small meeting rooms, as well as executive and administrative offices.

Structural and system improvements will be made throughout, upgrading ancillary security systems and improving energy efficiency in lighting and HVAC systems. Necessary repairs to the roof and brick façade will also take place.

“Over 25 years ago, my father joined with many others to realize the long-held wish to create a Jewish student center at Yale. He studied at Yale during the era of restrictive quotas on Jewish admission, and the loneliness of that experience inspired him to undertake a project ‘for God, for country, and for Yale’—to ensure that future generations of Jewish Yalies would have a welcoming Jewish community. I am so pleased to be continuing my family’s service to the Yale Jewish community.”

David Slifka ’01
Slifka Center Board Member
Immediate Past Chair
Enhancing the dining and kitchen spaces to meet today’s needs

“The kosher kitchen was integral to my experience as a student and as a Jew at Yale. Over delicious food, we pursued political and academic discussions, strengthened social bonds, met new friends, and immersed ourselves in a student-run pluralistic community. The dining commons remains an important forum for all who choose to engage in open dialogue on the pressing as well more mundane issues of the day.”

Victoria Lindenbaum Feder ’90, P ’19
Campaign Co-Chair

Slifka Center’s lower level is home to the Lindenbaum Kosher Kitchen and Heyman Dining Commons. Much of the original kitchen equipment and dining furnishings remain in daily use. Renovations will address key electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and water leakage issues.

Part 1, Dining Hall Expansion: Our current facility (seating 180 students at full capacity) cannot support the needs and trends in campus food service today, which includes providing meals over extended hours. The planned project will enclose the existing courtyard (A), adding room for approximately 20% more seating and new serving stations.

Part 2, Update Seating: The mid-1990s dining tables and chairs will be replaced by modular seating, allowing for easier reconfiguration of the space and storage. New wall alcoves (C) will provide areas for semi-private meals or gatherings. The dining commons will become a day-long destination for small groups as well as individuals, over meals and at other times for study or meetings. At the same time, the space will be flexible enough to support large gatherings for Shabbat and holiday meals.

Part 3, New kitchens and serving areas: Full meat and dairy kitchens (B) and dedicated storage areas will be created to the standards of Star-K, our newly-appointed kosher supervision agency. Students today are interested in eating healthier and fresher foods. Plans include new hot and cold stations, a “grab-n-go” for takeaway meals, and a mobile food preparation “action station” to provide made-to-order entrées (D).
LOWER LEVEL PLAN

A  Expanded Dining Commons
B  Meat and Dairy Kitchens
C  Flexible Seating Alcoves
D  Expanded Serving Areas
Making Slifka Center more welcoming and more secure

“A beacon of pluralism, Slifka Center provides essential support for Yale’s Jewish students while welcoming students from all backgrounds. A vital partner of Yale, together we create educational opportunities and inclusive social experiences that unite diverse groups of undergraduates, preparing them to take their place as the leaders of tomorrow.”

Marvin M. Chun ‘21
Dean of Yale College
Richard M. Colgate Professor of Psychology; Neuroscience; Cognitive Science

Beyond the lower level kitchen and dining commons, planned renovations will create a more welcoming, secure, and efficient facility. Key areas of the main floor and the upper levels will be reconfigured to better meet student and organizational needs, with access and flexibility in mind. Smaller areas will be created on all four floors to provide dedicated space for use by one or several students. Furnishings throughout the building will be replaced, and art and displays highlighted, all creating a sense of invitation and warmth.

The first floor will include both new and updated spaces. Just beyond the main entrance, a security booth (E) will be located, providing enhanced sight lines and increased security. The expansive lobby will feature a coffee bar (F) and a wellness lounge (G). All program staff offices will move to the first floor (H) to improve student access. And, the outside terrace (I) will be restored and furnished, providing an open-air gathering space.

Did you know that Slifka Center gets more than 31,000 visits each year? After the renovations we expect usage to increase nearly 20%! This will include students, staff, faculty, and community members who participate in our programs, eat in our dining facility, attend our prayer services, and make use of our new coffee bar.
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

E  Security Booth
F  Coffee Bar
G  Wellness Lounge
H  Program Offices
I  Terrace
The second floor will continue to serve as a spiritual and cultural center, home to the building’s two chapels. They will be accessed from a central gallery which can also accommodate services, receptions, rehearsals, and exhibitions. The adjoining clergy suite (J) will feature individual offices, for study or consultations, and a shared lounge. For the first time, all rabbinic offices will be located together, increasing collaboration.

The third floor will open to a library and reading room (L), and provide additional small meeting rooms (K). A new multipurpose conference room (M) with campus views will be created from a former storage area. All administrative offices will be consolidated on the third floor and a newly-expanded mezzanine (N).

“More than being a supportive and comfortable community, Slifka Center is the place at Yale where I was encouraged and pushed. I grew in my leadership and community building capacities more than I thought possible. I was able to both work on myself and see my community grow. Being Hillel co-president was uplifting, and I am grateful for the opportunity.”

Margalit L. “Margo” Feuer ’20
Student leader

“Making memories at Slifka Center was a central part of my undergraduate experience. I learned so much from my Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues when we came together to discuss history, religion, current events, and more. Slifka Center reinforced my already strong connection to Israel, and it played a pivotal role in preparing me for my current job in global affairs. No place can produce compassionate and thoughtful Jewish Yalies who are ready to shape the world better than Slifka Center.”

William E. Ellison ’18

Designing a program-focused building
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

J Clergy Suite
K Small Meeting Room

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

K Small Meeting Rooms
L Library and Reading Room
M Multipurpose Conference Room

MEZZANINE EXPANSION

N Administration Duplex Suite
A hallmark of Slifka Center is its dedication to relationship-based engagement. Getting to know each student enables staff to tailor programs to their unique interests. Our rabbinic and program staff meet daily with students—as individuals, in interest groups, and informally over meals—providing friendship, advice, mentoring, and counseling.

Slifka Center’s wide offerings explore Jewish life and values through communal gatherings, including worship services, holiday celebrations, community service projects, and immersive travel experiences in the United States, Israel, and beyond. Diversity is central to all our current programming.

The Slifka Center: Building Forward campaign will strengthen our ability to provide programmatic offerings, including:

• Access to hands-on experiences in leadership, program planning, social justice, interfaith relations, community organizing, and more.
• Opportunities to make the world a better place—both near and far—such as organizing blood drives and service projects that benefit the New Haven community, and direct service to those in need, at the United States’ southern border and beyond.
• Educational forums to bring Jewish students in closer relationship to their Jewish identity, and to help shape the future of Jewish community and its relationship with 21st century America and the world.
• Career-building internships and fellowships in the arts, business and industry, the non-profit sector, and more.

For 25 years Yale’s students, Jewish and non-Jewish, have been drawn to Slifka Center to enjoy Jewish and international cuisine, to engage intellectually and culturally, and to experience a warm sense of family. An expanded and renewed Slifka Center will provide a place where students will want to meet their friends, and to envision their future. It will continue to be the on-campus place Yale students will want to call home.

“Slifka Center makes an invaluable contribution to intellectual, moral, and spiritual life on campus. It convenes members of the Yale community, nurturing growth and connection through study, debate, celebration, and worship. We look forward to the next chapter of Slifka Center’s partnership with Yale in mentoring future leaders—of the Jewish community and of the world.”

Tamar Szabó Gendler ’87, p ’20
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Vincent J. Scully Professor of Philosophy
Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science

Enhancing our programming to meet the diverse interests of today’s students
Slifka Center offers or hosts over 50 programs

PROGRAMMING OFFERED AT SLIFKA CENTER

**Leadership**
First-Year Ambassadors
Hillel Student Board
Urim Fellowship—students connecting with their Jewish colleagues on campus

**Learning**
Blanksteen Curatorial Fellowship at The Jewish Museum
Jewish-Christian Bible Study
Jewish Learning Fellowship
Kashrut Cooking Class
Marilyn G. and Joseph B. Schwartz ’62 Israel Education Fellowship
Shalom Hartman Fellowship
Shibboleth and Yale Israel Journal—student publications
Theology Reading Group
Yeshivat Yale—weekly Jewish text learning

**Jewish Life**
High Holy Day Services
Holiday Celebrations and Weekly Shabbat Dinners
OU-Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus
Passover Seders and Seders-to-Go
Reform Chavurah
Traditional/Egalitarian Minyan
Yoga T’filah—prayer service
Young Israel House at Yale (YIHY)—Orthodox Minyan

**Engagement**
AEPi—Jewish leadership fraternity
Grad Student Network—campus group
Magevet—Yale’s Jewish, Israeli, and Hebrew a cappella group
Russian-speaking Jews at Yale
W(Holy) Queer—interfaith LGBTQ discussions
Yale Klezmer Band

**Social Justice**
ASB: Border Awareness Experience—interfaith
Alternative Spring Break trip to El Paso, TX
Challah for Hunger—social justice bake sales
Fellowship to Social Justice—spiritual resilience for social change activists
Tzedek Fellowship—social justice learning and doing

**Israel Programming**
AIPAC/YIPAC—Yale Israel Public Affairs Committee
Birthright—Jewish education trips to Israel
JSTREET U @ Yale—campus chapter
PDLI Fellowship—Peace and Dialogue Leadership Initiative of Yale and the United States Military Academy, West Point
TAMID—engagement with Israel through business ventures
Yale Friends of Israel (YFI)
Yalies in Israel—summer internships, fellowships, and jobs in Israel

**OTHER PROGRAMMING HOSTED AT SLIFKA CENTER**
Foreign Language Tables—French, German, Hebrew, and Spanish
Muslim Students Association’s Weekly Halal Dinner
Red Cross Blood Drives
Swing Dance and Tango Dance Classes
The Yale Cellos Rehearsal Space
Yale Judaic Studies Biblical Hebrew Classes
Yale School of Music Lunchtime Chamber Music Concerts
Yale-New Haven Yiddish Reading Circle
Yoga Classes
The $10 million Slifka Center: Building Forward campaign will be launched to renew and enhance Slifka Center as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in 2020.

This campaign is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enrich Jewish life at Yale, with an impact for decades. Alumni, parents, and members of Yale’s Jewish community can help. Naming opportunities at different funding levels are available. A total of $8 million of funds raised will renovate, refurbish and expand Slifka Center, to support programming and staffing functions. The remaining $2 million will create a kitchen and dining endowment to fund ongoing maintenance.

Yale Credit offered
With the cooperation and approval of the university, alumni, parents, and friends may choose to be granted Yale Credit for gifts to Slifka Center: Building Forward received by June 30, 2021, or up to a total of $8 million, whichever comes first. Granted Yale Credit in support of this effort will apply to the university’s campaign.

“As a current parent and an alumna, I understand the impact that a vibrant Jewish center makes in the lives of students and Yale itself. Under the leadership of Rabbi Jason Rubenstein and Uri Cohen, students are bringing their authentic voices in contributing to the rich cultural and intellectual tapestry of Yale, while learning who they are as Jews. For these reasons, our family supported the Building Forward campaign and we encourage others to do the same.”

Rabbi Angela Warnick Buchdahl ’94, p ’22  
Senior Rabbi of Central Synagogue

“It is a game-changer that the university is granting Yale reunion credit to those who participate in the Building Forward campaign by June 30, 2021. We appreciate Yale’s recognition that Slifka Center is an integral part of student campus life.”

Robert L. Bildner ’72 and Elisa Spungen Bildner ’75, p ’06, p ’09, p ’10, p ’16  
Campaign Co-Chairs  
Slifka Center Board Members
Let’s talk!

We are here to answer any questions you may have about the Slifka Center: Building Forward capital campaign, with the special opportunity to receive Yale Credit, and to discuss the gift that we hope you and your family will choose to make.

Please contact Jennifer Rogin Wallis, Director of Development, at jennifer.wallis@yale.edu or 203.432.7376.

Thank you!