

Presidential Task Force on Strengthening Community and Combating Antisemitism

**Strategic White Paper:
Making SDSU the Premier Higher Education Destination for Jewish Students**





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Executive Summary

San Diego State University (SDSU) has committed itself to a bold, nationally significant goal: to become a premier higher education destination on the West Coast for Jewish students. This White Paper defines the roadmap to move beyond mere accommodation of Jewish life toward **Integrated Normalization**.

The “Premier Institution” standard is reached when Jewish life, culture, and scholarship are no longer treated as “special interests,” but are recognized as integral and woven into the very fabric of the university. By addressing longstanding philosophical tensions and adopting a model of **Predictive Inclusivity**—one that proactively designs the university environment to be inclusive from the outset, rather than requiring students to self-advocate or navigate bureaucratic hurdles for accommodations—SDSU aims to establish a national blueprint for campus belonging and safety. This document outlines the 36-month transformation required to realize this vision, organized across six strategic pillars.

I. Background and Charge

The Presidential Task Force was established in 2021 as a permanent advisory consultative body to ensure that SDSU remains a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for Jewish members of the SDSU community. In her 2025–2026 Charge Letter, President Adela de la Torre directed the Task Force to shift from reactive crisis management to a model of proactive excellence.

The mandate is clear: Jewish life and well-being must be woven into the very fabric of SDSU—academically, socially, and culturally. A “premier” university for Jewish students is one where they do not have to “negotiate” their identity to participate fully in campus life. This report marks the transition from a baseline “safe campus” to a “flourishing campus,” where Jewish identity is normalized and integrated as a core element of the institution.

II. Methodology

The Task Force’s findings are the result of a rigorous, year-long investigation involving four distinct workstreams:

- 1. Identifying Excellence:** Conducting virtual site visits and engaging in information-sharing with **Arizona State University, Elon University, Florida Atlantic University, and SUNY Binghamton**. These institutions were selected based on several criteria, including: attracting and serving a large number of Jewish students, their innovative approaches to Predictive Inclusivity, their reputation for having positive outcomes and support structures in specific areas of interest to the Jewish community, and their willingness to serve as resources for this research.
- 2. Stakeholder Engagement:** Consultations with and the participation of representatives from Hillel of San Diego, SDSU Chabad, and Students Supporting Israel (SSI).
- 3. Policy Audit:** A comprehensive review of campus policies and practices, including the “Principles of Community” to ensure that anti-Zionism is not co-opted as a vehicle for antisemitism.
- 4. Legal and Academic Review:** Reaffirm alignment with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act for campus conduct, ensuring that academic freedom and student safety are mutually reinforcing rather than in tension.

III. Foundational Strengths

SDSU's pursuit of "Premier Institution" status is built on a legacy of excellence:

- **The Lipinsky Institute:** For decades, the Institute has advanced community engagement and promoted Israeli visiting scholars, serving as a vital bridge between SDSU and the broader San Diego community. A vital partnership with the Murray Galinson San Diego-Israel Initiative has built on this commitment, bringing an average of four top Israeli scholars as guest professors each year.
- **The Jewish Studies Program:** An interdisciplinary program that has sustained academic rigor and intellectual openness while withstanding complex global and political pressures.
- **Strategic Geography:** Our strategic location in San Diego enables unique partnerships with the region's vibrant tech sector—a hub of innovation with strong global connections—while leveraging local strengths in community engagement. Additionally, SDSU's location on one of the world's busiest borders, between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico, gives the region a multinational flavor while also connecting its local Jewish community to those further south and the larger Sephardic world.
- **Jewish Campus-Related Organizations:** There exists a strong culture of Jewish life and collaborative partnership with Hillel of San Diego and SDSU Chabad.



IV. Pillar 1: Academic Offerings

The Philosophical Why: Jewish Scholarship as a Strategic Anchor

To be a premier destination, SDSU must reject the idea that Jewish Studies is a “defensive” discipline. We recommend moving Jewish Studies out of the Department of the Study of Religion, mainly because Jewish Studies encompasses much more than religion. Different models can be explored within the College, including relocation to another department (e.g., History), as well as the free-standing Center model as currently employed for several other majors. The Jewish Studies mandate should be to create “**Curricular Bridges**” into other professional colleges. A premier institution ensures that a business student, an engineering student, and a nursing student all encounter Jewish intellectual contributions as a normal part of their general education.

While beyond the scope of our campus-level recommendations, we also recommend that courses should be included in the CSU Ethnic Studies requirement (Area F at CSUs and across the system) and also from Jewish Studies or related areas that center on inclusivity, the combating of antisemitism, and the recognition of Jews. Currently, Jewish Studies courses do not count toward this requirement. Participation in Ethnic Studies is a defining aspect of the SDSU undergraduate experience. This is not merely an additive change; it is a structural one. By expanding the pool of eligible students who can count these courses toward their graduation requirement, we move the program from “departmental headcounts” to considering transdisciplinary impact metrics, measuring success by the total number of SDSU students reached across the entire academic spectrum.

A. Detailed Findings

A review of the current course catalog reveals that Jewish scholarship is often siloed in lower-division electives.

B. Policy Recommendations

1. **Coordinated Leadership Structure:** Appoint a new, highly qualified Director who oversees both the Jewish Studies Program and the Lipinsky Institute. Members of the Task Force should be involved or engaged in the selection process as appropriate. Director candidates should be committed to the university's Principles of Community.

2. **Administrative Relocation/Home Transition:** Formal relocation of the Jewish Studies program from the Department of the Study of Religion. The Task Force prefers the free-standing "Center" model, but understands the important role of the College of Arts and Letters in this process as options are explored. This move would signal that Jewish Studies is not merely the study of religion, but also the study of the history and culture of the Jewish people.

3. **Endowed Chair Professorship:** Identify funding gaps that may prevent the Lipinsky Institute endowment from funding a permanent director. Additionally, evaluate if a permanent Chaired Professor position in Jewish Studies could be endowed. This will ensure faculty continuity and program stability.

4. **Ethnic Studies and Cultural Diversity Designations for Jewish Studies Courses:** Enable and classify Jewish Studies courses to fulfill both lower-division and upper-division general education requirements, including (a) SDSU's local Ethnic Studies graduation requirement (which is currently restricted to other disciplines) and (b) the cultural diversity requirement for Explorations GE categories.

5. **Task Force Representation on Hiring Committees:** As a body of faculty, staff, students, and community members committed to combating antisemitism, we recommend requiring appropriate Task Force representation on the committee selecting the Director of the Lipinsky Institute, Chair of the Jewish Studies Program, and other similarly situated positions.

C. Action Recommendations

1. **Comprehensive Endowment Audit:** Perform an audit to understand the fund balance in the endowment and what funding allocation criteria exist, if any.

2. **Global Curriculum Expansion:** During the next academic year, engage the Task Force in further discussions to investigate a model Jewish Studies program, and make recommendations to identify curricular gaps. Work with the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters and university leaders, as appropriate, to develop a long-term plan for increasing the breadth of Jewish Studies courses and increasing enrollment in courses. Also, work with the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters to create benchmarking for the growth and success of the program. Develop new courses going beyond the Ashkenazi experience: Sephardic/Mizrahi Diaspora and Jewish Communities in Latin America.

3. **The Academic Living Room:** Dedicate a room on campus with state-of-the-art technology to create a Jewish Studies Living Room. Among other things, this may facilitate hosting “transdisciplinary” lectures that attract students from the hard sciences and professional schools.

V. Pillar 2: Admissions & Outreach

The Philosophical Why: Active Invitation and the “Alumni Social Proof”

A premier destination institution does not wait for Jewish students to find it; it engages in active invitation. One anchor of this pillar is the **Jewish Alumni Network (JAN)**, understanding that prospective students and their families are looking for a lifelong community. By establishing a Jewish Alumni Network within the SDSU Alumni, we provide “Social Proof” that an SDSU degree is a gateway into a powerful, supportive network. This alumni group will be established in direct consultation with Hillel of San Diego and SDSU Chabad to ensure alignment with student and community needs.

A. Detailed Findings

Hillel of San Diego estimates that 800–1,000 Jewish students attend SDSU. SDSU does recruit at several southern California Jewish day schools and in local areas with large Jewish populations, but there are gaps in its representation across the nation. Institutional websites do not provide much detail on Jewish life, nor is Jewish life incorporated into campus tours and broader literature about SDSU for prospective students.

B. Policy Recommendations

1. **Awareness and Recruitment:** Create an awareness and recruitment roadmap for schools and regions with large Jewish populations across the country, while being attentive to federal and state-level restrictions such as Prop 209.
2. **Infrastructure Integration:** Institutionalize the inclusion of Jewish life (Hillel/Chabad) in official university marketing and digital platforms.
3. **Alumni Formalization:** Charter the Jewish Alumni Network (JAN) as a core interest group within the SDSU Alumni Association.

C. Action Recommendations

1. **Admissions Training:** Conduct a deep-dive cultural competency training for all Admissions Officers to help them answer questions about Kosher life and campus climate.
2. **The “Jewish Life” Narrative:** Update official campus tour scripts to include the vibrant Jewish history and present-day opportunities at SDSU.
3. **High Visibility Landing Page:** Create a dedicated **“Jewish Life at SDSU”** portal for prospective families, highlighting everything from Kosher dining to Jewish Greek Life. Incorporate images and details about Jewish life into broader marketing and recruitment materials.
4. **Dedicated Recruitment/Outreach Position:** Identify a position to coordinate Jewish community outreach.

CAMP HILLEL



VI. Pillar 3: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB)

The Philosophical Why: The Particular as a Blueprint for the Universal

We reject the notion that focusing on Jewish “Belonging” is exclusionary. Instead, the **Particular is a Blueprint for the Universal**. By solving the unique challenges of Jewish belonging, SDSU builds a more sophisticated DEIB framework for every student. When we improve institutional belonging and support structures for Jewish students, we improve the institutional belonging and support structures for the entire SDSU community.

A. Detailed Findings

Jewish students often feel they must hide their Zionism or heritage to participate in other DEI-sponsored spaces. Integrated Normalization means that Jewish identity is accepted as a multifaceted ethnic and cultural identity, protected from social “litmus tests.”

B. Policy Recommendations

1. **IHRA Adoption:** Advocate for the CSU system to adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, a definition already adopted by the U.S. State Department and used by the Department of Education when evaluating antisemitism complaints under Title VI.
2. **Principles of Community Update:** We recommend that the university incorporate/codify into the university’s documents a lasting commitment to oppose the condemnation of Zionism and protect students from harassment based on their real or perceived connection to Israel.
3. **Title VI Integration:** We recommend that the university review and update its harassment policies to explicitly reflect the “shared ancestry” protections of Title VI, where appropriate.

C. Action Recommendations

1. **Faculty and Staff Advisor Accountability:** Implement inclusive leadership certification for all faculty and staff advisors to prevent identity-based exclusion in student groups.

2. **Highlight Holiday Protocols:** Provide a process to annually highlight Jewish holidays that are part of the university's master academic calendar to proactively prevent conflicts with exams and other key university events (e.g., first day of classes, career fairs, major events for prospective and incoming students). Consistent communication to the University community is essential. This should be coordinated comprehensively rather than on a serial basis.

3. **Wayfinding Inclusivity:** Ensure that Hillel and Chabad are clearly labeled on official university digital and physical maps.

WELCOME HOME

Jewish AZTECS

Mag Sameach



VII. Pillar 4: Support for Jewish Faculty & Staff

The Philosophical Why: Institutional Stability and the Permanent Infrastructure

Faculty and staff are the **Permanent Infrastructure** of the campus climate. A premier destination ensures that Jewish faculty and staff never feel the need to hide their Jewish identity on campus, and particularly when it comes to achieving tenure and/or promotion. Supporting tenure-track faculty is an investment in the long-term makeup and stability of the university, and its capacity for sustained mentorship. This requires the administration to lead with institutional and moral clarity, ensuring that Jewish faculty are seen and valued.

A. Policy Recommendations

1. **Administrative Moral Clarity:** Ensure that university communications regarding campus climate are principled and reaffirm the value of the Jewish community.
2. **Reporting Channel:** Ensure a consistent point of contact for faculty and staff who have been targeted for their Jewish or Zionist identity. Ensure that the tools and resources are available to report such occurrences and that those occurrences are investigated thoroughly and provide follow-up communication to the complainant.

B. Action Recommendations

1. **Dean-Level Training:** Conduct mandatory workshops for Deans and Department Chairs on the nuances of modern antisemitism.
2. **Ombudsman Training:** Designate a point of contact in the University Ombuds office trained in Jewish identity-based grievances.
3. **ERG Support:** Strengthen the Jewish Faculty & Staff Employee Resource Group as a formal advisory partner to the administration.

VIII. Pillar 5: Safety

The Philosophical Why: The Safety-Joy Paradox and Cultural Partnership

Safety is a precondition for the “Marketplace of Ideas.” To resolve the **Safety-Joy Paradox**, SDSU reframes security from “fortification” to **Cultural Partnership**. We do not want a “hardened” campus; we want an integrated safety model where the **SDSUPD Jewish Liaison** ensures that standard security is culturally competent.

A. Policy Recommendations

1. **SDSUPD Liaison:** Establish a permanent Jewish Community Liaison officer within the SDSU Police Department to integrate community needs into standard protocols.

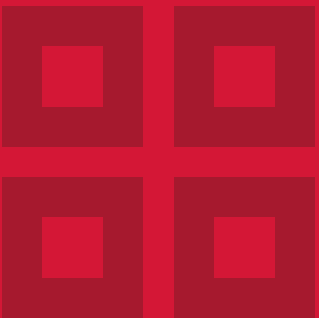
2. **Reaffirmation of the Disruption Standard:** Assure that the “material and substantial disruption” threshold, as established in the CSU Time, Place, and Manner Policy and the Student Conduct Code, remains the governing administrative standard for managing campus activities. This ensures that expressive activity is protected unless it willfully obstructs University operations or infringes on the rights of others.

B. Action Recommendations

1. **Relationship-Based Policing:** Transition to an engagement-focused security model where officers build personal connections with the community. Specifically, the SDSUPD Liaison will meet regularly with campus Jewish leadership as well as UPD and University leadership to serve as a conduit for communication.

2. **Proactive Event Security:** Ensure every high-visibility Jewish event on campus has a pre-coordinated security plan that prioritizes the “Joy” of the event. For Jewish events that occur off campus, the SDSUPD Liaison will connect event organizers with the agency in whose jurisdiction the event will take place, as appropriate within the structures of UPD. For the purpose of this action recommendation, events hosted by Hillel and Chabad will be considered on campus.

IX. Pillar 6: Student Life



The Philosophical Why: Predictive Inclusivity and Visible Culminations

A premier destination practices **Predictive Inclusivity**. The university anticipates needs, so students never feel like a “burden.” For dining, this means establishing a central Kosher kitchen as an “Anchor Facility,” supplemented by a food truck for mobile outreach. Annual Heritage events are reframed as visible culminations of a year-round presence. The creation of a Jewish Life Advisory Council takes on the task of maintaining a Strategic Audit of the recommendations and the concept of Integrated Normalization.

A. Policy Recommendations

1. **Strategic Auditing:** Create a Jewish Family Engagement Group through Orientation, Transition, and Family Engagement. Task the Group (students, alumni and parents) with reviewing the university’s “Predictive Inclusivity” performance.
2. **Infrastructure Accessibility:** We recommend that all future residential construction includes “Shabbat-ready” fixtures as a standard accessibility requirement.
3. **Training for Residence Hall Staff:** Train and empower Residential Education staff—including RAs, Graduate Assistants, and Residence Hall Directors—not just to “react” to bias, but to proactively design for Predictive Inclusivity.

B. Action Recommendations

1. **Central Kosher Hub:** Establish a primary, high-quality Kosher dining facility on campus. SDSU-affiliated Rabbis (including ordained Faculty and Staff members, as well as affiliated Rabbis from Chabad and Hillel) will make the final determination on Kashrut standards. It is recommended that an outside Kosher certifying agency provide Kashrut oversight and certification.

2. **Meal Plan Reciprocity:** Enable university meal plans to be used seamlessly at Hillel and Chabad.

3. **Heritage Anchors:** Institutionalize Jewish Heritage events in Athletics and the Performing Arts as regular fixtures of the SDSU calendar.

4. **Jewish Family Engagement Network (JFEN):** Formalize a dedicated Jewish Family Engagement Network to serve as a primary conduit for families and a partner in the “Predictive Inclusivity” model.

5. **Institutional Presence and Moral Clarity:** Formalize a protocol to ensure the consistent visibility of the President, Provost, and Senior Leadership at signature Jewish community and cultural milestones, signaling that Jewish life is a valued and normalized component of the SDSU identity.



X. Metrics & Evaluation Framework

- **The Belonging Index:** A semi-annual survey measuring “Integrated Normalization.”
- **Academic Impact Factor:** Tracking non-major enrollment through “Curricular Bridges” accounting for enrollment through general education on Jewish topics.
- **Yield & Retention:** Assess relevant student data to identify whether supportive measures are having an impact on Jewish students, and whether there are disparities between admitted student groups who choose to attend SDSU.
- **Alumni Growth:** Tracking the membership and impact of the Jewish Alumni Network.

XI. Implementation Timeline

For the recommendations in this report, the Task Force proposes the following implementation timeline, recognizing that specific items may require further discussion or may need to proceed through shared governance mechanisms:

- **Immediate (0–6 Months):** Audit/Discuss Lipinsky endowment; Establish the **Jewish Alumni Network**; Appoint SDSUPD Liaison.
- **Short-Term (6–18 Months):** Hire Director at the Lipinsky Institute; Launch “Curricular Bridges” pilot; Establish Strategic Audit Council.
- **Medium-Term (18–36 Months):** Complete Kosher Kitchen construction; Relocate Jewish Studies; Execute “Academic Living Room” renovation.

XII. Fundraising Opportunities (The Premier Campaign)

- The Jewish Alumni Network Engagement Fund
- The Presidential Chair in Jewish Studies
- The Central Kosher Kitchen & “Jewish Joy” Mobile Hub
- The SDSU Jewish Excellence Scholarship Endowment
- Jewish Community Recruitment Position

XIII. Appendices

- **Appendix A:** List of Current Jewish Studies Courses & Curricular Gaps
- **Appendix B:** Working Group Rosters
- **Appendix C:** Benchmarking Notes from Virtual Site Visits
- **Appendix D:** The Tinker Test/Standard and Student Speech

XIV. Conclusion

This Strategic White Paper is a declaration of intent by the Task Force, outlining the areas and actions we think would most effectively move SDSU from accommodation to Integrated Normalization. By embracing **predictive inclusivity, academic sovereignty, and visible culminations**, SDSU will become a premier destination where Jewish life is central to the university's excellence.

As a follow-up to this report, the Task Force could continue to research model Jewish Studies programs, in partnership with the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, and determine curricular gaps. Additionally, the Task Force could work with University leadership to develop additional benchmarks to ensure the success of this initiative.