

# ST. LOUIS JEWISH Parents

MAR  
2016

FREE

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## POWER & YOUTH

### CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Baby** Can She Wipe?
- Child** Negotiating Control
- Tween** Matters of Privacy
- Teen** Traveling Teens

THREE-IN-ONE

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jewish  
Secular  
School/Synagogue

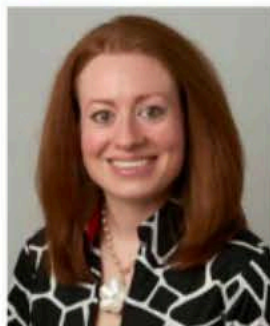
### FEATURED SCHOOL

Congregation  
Temple Israel  
Religious School

# TOP 11

## JEWISH QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

BY ERIN SCHREIBER



Erin Schreiber is Director of the Maryville University Hillel. Prior to Maryville Hillel, Erin spent 10 years in Admissions and previously served as the Assistant Director at Washington University Hillel. She loved her college search and still wears the many t-shirts collected along the way. She can be reached at [eschreiber@maryville.edu](mailto:eschreiber@maryville.edu).

Each spring it becomes a rite of passage for families with high schoolers to plot out trips traversing the country with stops at colleges and universities. Often a parent's alma mater will be included, along with visits to popular state schools, schools where siblings or cousins attended and those who just happen to be along the route. By the time many of these trips commence, mailboxes have been clogged with enough slick college viewbooks from places you've never heard of, you've considered joining the witness protection program, and many an hour has been burned up late into the night scanning websites, lists and statistics. For all the research – and worry – that goes into applying to college and ultimately selecting a school, most current college students will reveal that their choice was largely based on what felt right, on where they felt most at home. And chances are, feeling like home will involve ways to connect and grow as part of a young Jewish community member.

College is often a turning point "Jewishly". We're taught that the Bar or Bat Mitzvah signifies adulthood, but college is where you have the chance to actually live that latitude – and stretch the wings and roots you've been given. Alongside questions about academics and scholarships, asking questions about how the school can support you Jewishly during college can help guide you to your new home away from home, and make an otherwise intimidating and unfamiliar place be a fit. Here are 11 questions to ponder – and ask! – as you dig beyond the statistics to the daily life of your next four years.

So much of choosing a college can feel complicated, but when you've done your homework and explored Jewish life on and even off campus, following your heart may make the decision very clear. Wherever your search leads, move forward knowing your biggest job is to stretch and grow – and enjoy the journey as much as the outcome.



1

**What are the Jewish organizations on campus?** What is the focus of their programs? Are there programs to be mentored and opportunities to grow as a leader from the beginning? Schedule a visit with these groups, or call to find a good time to stop by. Speaking with student leaders and staff will likely give you the best view of Jewish life on campus. Look at their flyers and social media history to get a sense of the organization.

2

**Are the Jewish organizations on campus part of the university or external groups?** Jewish groups that are part of the university may have access to training and leadership programs that connect them to other campus leaders, and staff are university employees.

3

**Is there a robust Jewish community or resources beyond the campus you might benefit from?** While Jewish groups that serve college students specifically are often what families look for first, relationships with nearby synagogues, JCCs and Federations can provide meaningful experiences that enhance a student's Jewish growth during college.

4

**What is the Jewish climate on campus?** How does the university specifically support Jewish students? Are faculty aware of Jewish holidays and supportive of students' observance? How have any incidents of anti-Semitism been handled? Is there strong anti-Israel dialogue? Are collaborative interfaith groups active on campus?

5

**What are the best parts of being Jewish on campus?** Maybe it's a cadre of opportunities, maybe it's a Jewish sorority or fraternity. Maybe it's a campus with great opportunities nestled in a city with additional resources. Asking current students what they love will help you decide if it's an ideal fit for you and your interests.

6

**What are the challenges of being Jewish on campus?** No campus is perfect, but are these challenges you can live with?

7

**What options exist for study abroad,** particularly to Israel or other places of significance to Jews, or your particular family history? Can college credit be obtained through these programs? What are the additional costs to you? What does support for these programs look like on the ground in the country where you will be studying?

8

**Are there Jewish faculty and staff who support students?** These people may become your home away from home, be it helping you navigate the university system, connecting you to opportunities in the community, or sharing their table and brisket with you at Rosh Hashanah. Maybe your advisor is great at academics, but not who you feel comfortable with more personal conversations. Often the relationships with staff transcend their roles as professors or even holiday hosts and they can be there to celebrate your victories large and small, and offer guidance and support during difficult times. When you are having a moment, theirs may be the office doors that open widest.

9

**Are there things you need to be YOURself Jewishly?** How are holidays celebrated on campus? Are there opportunities for creative Jewish expression and exploration? What kinds of services are offered and where? Is kosher food available and at what locations and costs? Is it part of the standard meal plan? Are there students there who participated in the same youth groups, camps or programs who can share some similar stories and experiences? When you're homesick or feeling lost, similarities will bond you and open doors.

10

**Is there something here to challenge you and stretch you Jewishly?** Can you take on a leadership role? Can you explore and learn? Can you teach religious school or be a youth group leader in the community if that feeds your soul?

11

**Do you feel at home? Do you see yourself here? Do you fit?** Every school can – and will! – give you endless statistics. The only one that really matters is how "you" feel on this campus, in this community, with these students. Ask most students why they made their college choices and they'll tell you they just knew it, it just felt right, they fit right in, they could see themselves there. They may mention academics, the great Hillel, Chabad, AEPi or Jewish community...but all of that takes a second seat to what just felt right. This is a great place to trust your gut.