

Pioneering Consortium Advances Role of Research in Jewish Education

February 18, 2014 – The Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) today announced a first-of-its kind collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and funders of Jewish education. With gifts to the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, the Consortium will lead efforts to identify key education questions, assist researchers in designing more robust methods, and facilitate work that translates research findings into strengthened practice — in informal and formal Jewish education.

The key to the Consortium is creating the conditions for collaboration among scholars of practice and scholarly practitioners in the world of Jewish Education. Those involved with the Consortium already include a host of scholars from over twenty universities, hundreds of practitioners in an array of Jewish education venues and organizations, and a small but growing contingent of funders from across the Jewish world.

Officials from the AVI CHAI and Jim Joseph foundations announced today that they will be supporting this effort with, respectively, \$2.1 million and \$1.5 million — for a total of \$3.6 million — an unprecedented investment in applied research in Jewish education. Gifts are intended to provide a portion of the support needed for the work of the Consortium over the next six years. The gifts follow initial contributions totaling \$450,000 in 2011 from the two foundations, along with support from the Mandell and Madeleine Berman Foundation, with which initial Consortium partners developed “proof of concept,” and evolved the first iteration of the Consortium’s goals and structure.

Specifically, over the last two years a group of more than 350 researchers, graduate students, practitioners, strategic funders of Jewish education, and leading scholars have worked to launch the Consortium. Their aim was straightforward — creating an enterprise that would strengthen the reach and effectiveness of Jewish education, by basing content, strategy, and design on the results of applied research. CASJE is based on a three-part model — research, practice, and support from philanthropists interested in the growing field of Jewish education. All three elements will address the most serious challenge facing practitioners — building programs with high quality evidence to guide their educational strategies. In March, the Consortium will begin accepting proposals (in response to its first RFP) for applied studies in Jewish educational leadership.

“A few years ago, we recognized the need to bring together the talented scholars, educators and philanthropists to create a more robust field of Jewish education,” says Lee Shulman, chair of the Consortium’s board and the Charles E. Ducommun Professor Emeritus of Education at Stanford University. “We engaged the efforts and energy among those who lead, investigate and support Jewish education across its many settings and circumstances. After two years of work, we are ready to both expand our network and deepen our efforts to develop strong programs of applied research for Jewish educators.”

As Shulman and his colleagues began to assemble the Consortium, they sought guidance from colleagues across the world to identify which areas of investigation would serve as fruitful starting points for coordinated study. Responding to that guidance, they focused on promoting research in three key areas of research: the development of educational leaders in Jewish Education, Teaching and Learning about Israel, and the Financial Sustainability of Jewish Education. They brought together leaders from Jewish day schools, camps and other educational settings with university scholars, along with leading philanthropists in the sector, to identify priority issues for research and new ways to promote such work.

Stanford University's Graduate School of Education is the fiscal agent for this work, funded by the foundation gifts. The success of the effort will depend on the active participation of the broader community of educators. Stanford will be able to play a leading role in the Consortium's growth, as a consequence of the University's doctoral Concentration in Education and Jewish Studies, established with support from the Jim Joseph Foundation. The Concentration's head, Ari Kelman, who holds the Jim Joseph Chair in Education and Jewish Studies at Stanford, has played an important role in launching the new initiative nationally. The Consortium will be managed by Berkeley-based Rosov Consulting, led by Wendy Rosov, a Stanford alumna who received her doctorate from the Graduate School of Education.

"This is an exciting moment filled with potential," said Rosov. "We spent the last two years experimenting and designing the Consortium, finding and connecting with partners who have significant expertise in key areas. Now, in partnership with others, we're poised to make a substantive difference by further expanding and animating the often siloed networks within the field."

Over the next six years, CASJE's goals are concentrated in three key areas:

1. **Sponsoring, managing, engaging, and sharing research: In order to invest energy and resources most productively,** CASJE will work collaboratively with researchers, practitioners, and funders to determine which important research questions to pursue and ensure the resulting findings are shared and applied.
2. **Developing funding strategies for applied research in Jewish education:** CASJE will work with an array of philanthropic actors to develop and support the core work of the Consortium, and specific programs of applied research.
3. **Expanding the talent pipeline of Jewish education researchers:** CASJE will expand the opportunities for new scholars (doctoral students, recent PhDs) to participate in significant research projects and benefit from mentorship by senior scholars. In addition, the work of the Consortium will include identifying and cultivating "cause-friendly" senior researchers and emerging scholars in the field of general education.

“We at AVI CHAI believe that developing a strong evidence base, as well as a culture and processes for creating and using it, is within reach,” said Yossi Prager, The AVI CHAI Foundation’s executive director for North America. “Since such an evidence base will advance the field’s ability to make education, program, and funding decisions, it is aligned with our hope of leaving a strong Jewish education field after our sunset. We are delighted at the opportunity to partner with the Jim Joseph Foundation and other funders on this investment.”

“Following the lead of The AVI CHAI Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation is investing in a long-term effort to ultimately create an evidence base for Jewish educational practice,” said Chip Edelsberg, executive director of the Jim Joseph Foundation. “This collaboration of such diverse individuals, some of whom have never before contributed to the study of Jewish education, is unlike anything I have experienced in more than 20 years of Jewish communal work. The collective hope of these accomplished academicians and talented Jewish education practitioners is that CASJE can catalyze an entirely new generation of applied research to inform, improve, and enrich Jewish education on an ongoing basis.”

The board of CASJE represents the diversity of the Consortium and includes scholars and practitioners from both inside and outside Jewish education, including:

- Lee S. Shulman, Charles E. Ducommun Professor Emeritus of Education at Stanford University and President Emeritus of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Ellen Goldring, Professor of Leadership, Policy and Organizations, Vanderbilt Peabody College
- Paul Goren, Senior Vice President for Program, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Chicago
- Michael J. Feuer, Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Professor of Education, George Washington University
- Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Mandel Professor of Jewish Education and Director of the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, Brandeis University
- Charles “Chip” Edelsberg, Executive Director, The Jim Joseph Foundation, San Francisco
- Susan Kardos, Senior Director of Strategy and Education Planning, The AVI CHAI Foundation, New York City
- Mitchel Malkus, Head of School, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Rockville, MD