President's Report 2008



BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב

Going to the moon and coming to the desert to plant saplings are similar acts in my opinion.

David Ben-Gurion



# From the Chairman \_

The singularity of Ben-Gurion University is closely linked to, and intertwined with, the uniqueness of Israel's history and mission. The official declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel speaks of revival, of making the desert bloom, of loving peace, of creating a thriving community and of bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants.

As Chairman of the Board of Governors, I take great pride in the fact that this University is ever mindful of its own role and responsibility to strive for these aspirations.

Today, it is clear that the University – like Israel – is at a critical juncture, facing both longstanding difficulties and new challenges. We must now build upon our accomplishments, expand current programs, strengthen infrastructure and advance new initiatives – all this in spite of severely curtailed support for higher education by the Israeli government. Additionally, the University must weather the repercussions of recent financial problems, the volatility of world markets, and a weakened dollar.

Despite these difficulties and challenges, the past year was marked by tremendous success in fundraising. Donations from private donors and foundations exceeded all expectations and proved critical in financing the needs of our growing and dynamic University. Our efforts to engage the University alumni have also met with some success and we will continue to encourage greater participation and support.

I am pleased that BGU is moving forward with a major development program that will be broadbased and comprehensive. The program will expand the University's base of philanthropic support, engage volunteer leadership, better articulate our needs for external support, and engage all who join us in a shared sense of mission. It will be incrementally implemented by our Worldwide Associates in an integrated campaign designed to leverage overall success.

As we embark on this ambitious campaign to find new resources and ensure the University's unique position as the Negev's focal point for science, research, higher education and community involvement, there are many challenges and hurdles that must be confronted. However, I am filled with confidence and optimism thanks to the steadfast commitment of all those associated with this extraordinary University.

I am likewise confident in the capable stewardship of President Rivka Carmi and her senior administrative and academic faculty, who have accomplished so much already and who are poised to accomplish much, much more. I have every faith that this University will continue its path towards academic excellence, acting in both the name and spirit of its namesake David Ben-Gurion.

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Roy J. Zuckerberg Chairman of the Board of Governors

# From the President

Over the past 60 years, this once desolate land has been transformed into a homeland for a people of high intellectual and scientific standing. This has happened despite recurrent wars and few natural resources. Modern Israel is universally recognized for its innovation, encouraged by its well-nurtured brain power.

Lest we forget, the importance of knowledge and learning was a critical component of the early Zionist dream. Academic institutions were established decades before there was any hope for a state. Once created, the new country poured its meager resources into providing free primary and secondary school education for all and invested in the pursuit of scientific excellence.

Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion believed that the new state needed "to build a scientific research and teaching center, which will be a source of moral inspiration and courage, rousing people to a sense of mission, noble, creative and fruitful."

Unfortunately, in recent years the critical and essential importance of higher education seems to have lost its central place on the national agenda, particularly regarding research universities. Today Israeli academia is in a state of crisis, struggling to receive the promised – and crucial – budgets needed to maintain its global relevance and competitive edge.

It is within this context that we at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev have stayed true to our original mandate. Having created a worldclass university that is recognized for its quality in teaching and excellence in research, we are realizing David Ben-Gurion's dream of creating an "Oxford at Yavneh" in the Negev. We have established a myriad of outreach programs that promote social equality while preparing our students to be socially-sensitive leaders. Our unique international programs – in fields ranging from global health to management and desert studies – are attracting outstanding students from around the world.

And, of particular importance, we have succeeded in bringing many promising and talented young Israeli scientists back home thanks to our special "Ben-Gurion Spirit" – an ethos of pioneering that places our students and faculty at the forefront of national efforts to develop the Negev.

Our researchers are also determined to accelerate development in the region. Despite formidable obstacles, they are actively working towards collaboration with their counterparts in neighboring lands in the hopes of fostering an environment for peace.

All of this has been made possible thanks to the involvement of an international community of friends who believe in the important role that the University plays for the future of the State of Israel and the critical need for this country to be competitive in the global marketplace.

So let us celebrate our accomplishments by saying: *L'Chaim!* To life – and to the realization of our dream. Together, we will ensure a strong Israel for the future...and forever!

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Prof. Rivka Carmi President

# Academic Development

Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt I Rector

This academic year began with a three-month national strike by senior academic faculty members. Though the conflict was between faculty members and the Israeli Government, considerable efforts were made to work with students to minimize the impact of the strike without compromising academic standards.

In recent years, Israel has witnessed the phenomenon of increasing numbers of students seeking academic degrees from private colleges. This disquieting trend in higher education represents a real challenge. We have utilized several strategies to overcome this situation.

The University has intensified its efforts to become a first-class research institution. We have recruited some of the best and brightest young researchers who are attracted by excellence and innovation, and who in turn, contribute to academic life.

Much of this success can be directly attributed to the Kreitman Foundation and Pratt Fellowships. The newly-created Negev Fellowship Program for Ph.D. candidates now supplements these prestigious programs. The University has also worked to increase the fields available for students seeking advanced degrees. This year, the Kreitman School for Advanced Graduate Studies is granting a record 146 doctoral degrees.

Following the new policy of Israel's Council of Higher Education to grant autonomy for opening graduate study programs, the University has decided to offer a number of new Masters level programs, including: Conflict Management and Resolution, Gender Studies, Cognitive Sciences, and Art Studies. Additionally, the Council accredited Masters degrees in Information Systems Engineering, Communication Systems Engineering, and Tourism and Hotel Management.

A system combining majors and minors at the undergraduate level was recently approved by the Faculty of Natural Sciences. This will allow our students to enrich their curriculum by adding studies from other fields to their designated majors.

The newly-established Office of International Academic Affairs is developing new international programs, educational consortiums and student exchange programs in an effort to establish and strengthen relationships with universities around the world. A number of new study tracks and exchange programs have been created for Israeli and foreign students. Noteworthy among them, over 30 students have already participated in the Erasmus Mundus programme, which provides European Union-funded scholarships for Israeli students to spend a semester in Europe.

Our student body has been enriched by a number of existing international programs taught in English that continue to develop: the Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University; the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies; the Master of Arts Program in Middle East Studies (MAPMES); and the Honors MBA Program at the Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management. We are introducing English as the language of instruction in certain graduate courses to attract international students.

The eighth class of the Academic Program for the Israel Air Force Flight Course will graduate this June. The cadets have excelled in their studies with



a number of them expressing interest in continuing for advanced degrees.

Faculty members volunteer their expertise as guest lecturers in the *Ofek* series, providing popular talks in communities throughout the Negev. The Accessibility to Higher Education program brings together over 1,200 tenth- to twelfth-grade students from 28 high schools in 14 communities for enrichment and empowerment activities. Partnering in this venture are the Ministry of Education, the Sacta Rashi Foundation, Atidim and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, supported by the Jerusalem Fund and Bank Leumi. The program is jointly coordinated by the Center for External Education and the Community Action Unit.

## Distribution of Students by Faculty and Degrees for 2005 – 2008

Total		5,243		1,969		5,791		2,530		2,439	17,750
Other	_ エ	138	$\_$ $\ge$ $\_$	7		69	$ \parallel \Xi \parallel$	9	_ ഗ _	13	
Ph.D.	Ę	324		252	. <u> </u>	220	0	214		40	
Masters	OD	1,396	0	253	0 C	888	L L	982		1,549	
Bachelors	iti	3,479	<u>v</u>	1,464	Ω.	4,660	S	1,345	JO	837	
2007/08	SS O		Ci@C		2		IQU.		Mc		
Total	pug	5,145	JCØS	1,957	Sciö	5,422	COS	2,490	jud	2,191	17,230
Other		321		23		220		45		25	
Ph.D.	<u>O</u> .	283		246	SS	185		195	) L	26	
Masters		1,269		240		746		976	UL CL	1,424	
Bachelors	U	3,345		1,456		4,312		1,309		717	
2006/07	SUCO										
Total	Ń	5,509		1,981		5,334		2,480		2,102	17,630
Other		290		29		220		29	_	17	
Ph.D.		275		237		194		177		24	
Masters		1,418		257		764		913		1,450	
Bachelors		3,505		1,458		4,156		1,361		611	
2005/06											

• Not all totals add up because there are students enrolled in multiple Faculties or pursuing multiple degrees. (e.g., 121 interdisciplinary Masters students of the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies and 113 interdisciplinary Ph.D. candidates of the Kreitman School of Advanced Graduate Studies, who are included in the total figures).

• The above figures relate to the first semester only.

• First- to third-year medical students are included in the Health Sciences - Bachelor category.

• Students of the Medical School for International Health and Medicine in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center receive their Masters degrees in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

• An additional 634 students are studying for their Bachelors and Masters degrees at the BGU Eilat Campus in during 2007/08.

• "Other": Preparation for graduate or doctoral studies.

# Research and Development

The University has made considerable strides in advancing its research agenda. The process was accelerated this year as part of the comprehensive plan to complete our transformation into a top-tier research university, with total grants, contracts and funding approaching \$60 million, a significant increase over past years.

This increase is a result of our investments – direct and indirect – in support of research, including the completion of a number of major physical infrastructure projects and improved administrative services for researchers. Together, this has had a major impact on the University's ability to compete for peer-reviewed research funding.

This was facilitated by the University's ability to offer competitive start-up packages based on scientific merit, strengthening existing research groups while also creating a number of excellent new groups in emerging fields. Of note is the newly-created Safra Center for the Design and Engineering of Functional Biopolymers based on an exceptional group of researchers from the Faculties of Natural and Engineering Sciences. This Center will specialize in pure "biomimetic" approaches and tools for the design of functional materials.

The available start-up funding for new researchers was increased considerably over the past four years. This was accomplished through extensive use of external funding – such as the Rich Initiative for Excellence in the Negev, the Converging Technologies Fund, the *Morasha* (Legacy) Fund of the Israel Science Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation of the United Kingdom, together with generous donations from our friends around the world – which was invested in our advanced research infrastructure.

There was a significant increase in the number of grants from highly-competitive foundations such as the Israel Science Foundation; the German Science Foundation for Scientific Research and Development; Germany-Israel Binational Fund; and the U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation; as well as successful grant submissions to the EC Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Developments (FP7).

Interdisciplinary institutes and centers are one of the most important tools for advancing research. The National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev research activities have been reviewed in preparation for undertaking a \$90 million investment over the next nine years. The Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology, supported by the Israel National Nanotechnology Initiative, continues to develop and provide the critical infrastructure for conducting high level research.

The establishment of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research, the French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands and the Institute for Energy and Environment of Drylands Research at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research has positively impacted on the Institutes' development.

The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism and *Heksherim*: The Institute for Jewish and Israeli Literature and Culture, which has



also received generous support from the Caesarea Foundation in Israel, serve as engines that advance research in the Humanities.

In addition to our more established frameworks of research, new initiatives based on our proven expertise are being promoted in the fields of renewable, green energy and homeland security. The former concentrates on solar energy, renewable fuels, fuel cells and energy crops. The latter will deal with, among other fields, information technology, sensing threats, protective technologies, and medical treatment in mass disasters.

## Percent of Grants by Faculty 2006/07\_





# B.G. Negev Technologies

BGN Technologies is the technology transfer company of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, responsible for the commercialization of know-how, technologies and inventions of the University's researchers.

In 2007, BGN showed 200% higher annual revenue from research and royalties than in 2004. During those three years, BGN signed research and licensing agreements with more than 130 companies in Israel and worldwide. The number of yearly patent applications has also more than doubled.

In 2007, BGN continued the previous years' process of founding promising start-ups based on BGU technologies, such as PixelScan Ltd. for camera resolution improvement or Thulium Ltd.





# From the Vice-President & Director-General

David Bareket

As reported last year, the dramatic budget cuts by the Council of Higher Education's Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) have produced herculean fiscal challenges. Last year, the Shohat Committee addressed the budget crisis faced by all Israeli universities; their preliminary recommendations included tuition increases which are vehemently opposed by the students.

The current academic year was seriously harmed by a nationwide strike of the senior academic faculty, which ended just before the threatened cancellation of the academic year. The last-minute compromise that was reached – including substantial new salary burdens – left both the University and the students trying to salvage the year.

On a positive note, our assertive marketing campaign resulted in an increase in the number of first-year undergraduate students for the past two years. This is a result of the combined efforts of the academic faculty and administrative staff. We are very proud to be the only university in Israel that showed an increase in undergraduate enrollment for the 2007/08 academic year.

Special emphasis was given during the past year to strengthening the University's research activities, which is reflected in the outstanding research grants that were achieved by our faculty, reaching record figures. This is a result of the resources that the University has invested in research infrastructure, equipment and recruitment of outstanding young academic faculty.

The University has continued the process of selfassessment to improve the quality of its service to students and faculty. Members of the University administration at all levels have participated in special workshops in which they were asked to initiate service projects. The ongoing high level of cooperation and teamwork on these projects reflects the positive atmosphere at BGU.

Extensive physical development continued on all campuses this past year, with a number of buildings completed and others still under construction. Advanced laboratories are constantly being established, but the critical shortage of classrooms and computer labs continues to be a top priority.

Considerable progress has been made in the establishment of the Advanced Technologies Park next to the University. The park is a joint venture with the Beer-Sheva Municipality and is being financed and constructed by KUD International LLC. It will house the elite technology units of the Israel Defense Forces and attract hi-tech industries to the region. We are eagerly awaiting the realization of this dream.

The University has established three new units: the Office of International Academic Affairs, to increase academic ties and student exchanges with universities worldwide; a Career Counseling Office, which helps students and alumni integrate into the Israeli work force with an emphasis on identifying employment opportunities in the south; and BGU's Industrial Affiliates Program, which will increase academic-industrial relations.

Of course, our many accomplishments would not have been possible without the vision and support of our worldwide friends. Working together, there is no limit to what we can realize at BGU, for the benefit of the region and the world.



# Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Operating Budget \_\_\_\_\_

		2005/06			2006/07		2007/08		
	NIS m	\$ m	%	NIS m	\$ m	%	NIS m	\$ m	%
INCOME									
Planning & Budgeting	536.2	121.0	65.1%	546.7	119.1	64.5%	609.7	144.5	69.0%
Committee									
Tuition and Dorms	148.0	33.4	18.0%	151.5	33.0	17.9%	165.5	39.2	18.7%
Contributions	17.8	4.0	2.2%	14.1	3.1	1.7%	15.4	3.6	1.7%
Endowment Funds	35.0	7.9	4.2%	40.0	8.7	4.7%	40.0	9.5	4.5%
Other Income	41.2	9.3	5.0%	41.6	9.1	4.9%	48.3	11.4	5.5%
Transfer between Funds	45.8	10.3	5.6%	54.1	11.8	6.4%	5.1	1.2	0.6%
TOTAL	824.0	186.0	100.0%	848.0	184.7	100.0%	884.0	209.5	100.0%
EXPENDITURES									
Salaries	618.7	139.7	75.1%	636.0	138.6	75.0%	644.5	152.7	72.9%
Fellowships	52.0	11.7	6.3%	53.3	11.6	6.3%	52.8	12.5	6.0%
Teaching Expenses	42.7	9.6	5.2%	41.1	9.0	4.8%	45.6	10.8	5.2%
Institutes &	9.2	2.1	1.1%	8.2	1.8	1.0%	20.3	4.8	2.3%
Research Centers									
Computer Expenses	10.0	2.3	1.2%	10.2	2.2	1.2%	10.4	2.5	1.2%
Library Expenses	19.6	4.4	2.4%	20.2	4.4	2.4%	19.5	4.6	2.2%
Administration	19.4	4.4	2.4%	21.3	4.6	2.5%	26.9	6.4	3.0%
Maintenance	50.5	11.4	6.1%	54.4	11.9	6.4%	60.5	14.3	6.8%
Financing	2.0	0.4	0.2%	3.3	0.7	0.4%	3.5	0.8	0.4%
TOTAL	824.0	186.0	100.0%	848.0	184.7	100.0%	884.0	209.5	100.0%
NIS/\$ exchange rate:		4.43			4.59			4.22	
Higher education expenses index		102.1			104.0			102.6	

# 2007/08 Overall University Budget (NIS Thousands in Current Prices)

	Operating Budget	Research Budget	Development Budget	Special Programs	Total Budget
Expenditures	884,000	240,000	145,129	90,131	1,359,260
Income	884,000	240,000	110,257	96,856	1,331,113

Part of the difference between Expenditures and Income is covered by a loan from the German Government for developing the Sede Boqer campus.

# From the Vice-President for External Affairs.

Prof. Amos Drory

Though in my new position only a few months, I have been a member of both the academic faculty and administration of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for over three decades. This allows me the historical perspective to better appreciate our incredible accomplishments of today.

Every day, faculty, students and staff are joined by visitors who are impressed by the beautiful architecture and vibrant campus atmosphere that radiate positive energy.

Thanks to the University's reputation for innovation and excellence, we have attracted more than 17,000 enthusiastic students from Israel and around the world, together with a new generation of brilliant young researchers who have come here from the most prestigious international universities. It is an honor to join such a professional and successful administrative team that has brought the University to such impressive accomplishments.

Our mission at BGU is to combine scientific achievements for the benefit of Israel and the world with the best possible academic training for our students, while leading the development of the Negev and supporting its community. We look to the partnership and support of our worldwide friends to sustain these crucial endeavors, which are so essential for our future success and that of the State of Israel.

This has been a record year in the magnitude of support from our friends. We look with pride at the dedication of our long-time supporters and welcome a growing constituency of new donors to the BGU family. Perhaps the greatest physical changes this past year can be seen on the western section of the Marcus Family Campus and at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research. In both cases, a series of recently-completed infrastructure projects have created new public spaces that invite students and researchers to meet and interact.

The recently-dedicated Deichmann Plaza is bordered by the majestic Helen Diller Family Center, the newly-named Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management, the Spitzer-Salant Building for the Department of Social Work and the Deichmann Building for Community Action. Similarly, the completion of the building for the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research and the Biology Building has created an opportunity to completely reconceive the Sede Boqer campus with the creation of a dramatic new entrance and public square.

This month, we are dedicating the spectacular new Abraham Ben David Ohayon Behavioral Sciences Complex, which will house the Department of Psychology. Work continues on the impressive new building to house the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology as well as the Caroline House – Health Sciences Student Center, both slated for completion in 2009. Long overdue plans are underway to renovate existing facilities for advanced laboratories in the Department of Chemistry and also to expand the library.

On Ben-Gurion Day, we dedicated the French Associates Institute for Drylands Agriculture with our friends from France. And now our Swiss friends have confirmed their commitment to support the Institute for Energy and Environment of Drylands



Research. This will then complete the historic step of establishing three research institutes in agriculture, energy and environment, and water under the umbrella of the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research and open new horizons to the tremendous work going on at the Sede Boqer campus.

Nonetheless, we cannot rest on past achievements and need to increase our visibility and bolster our donor relations and fundraising capacity in order to facilitate the University's efforts to achieve its goals. Efforts are already underway to launch a major international fundraising campaign.

Towards this end, an international consulting group has been brought on-board to assist us in further defining the University's needs and priorities, while assessing present capabilities and designing our campaign strategy.

We have begun to reinforce our Worldwide Associates, with an emphasis on improving channels of communication while providing fundraising tools and a BGU presence wherever possible. We are also trying to provide additional opportunities for our supporters around the world to meet and interact. One vital key to improving resource development is the renewal and strengthening of ties with the University's talented alumni, who play a central role in almost every sphere of life in Israel and around the world, and who are well positioned to strengthen our fundraising capacity.

We sincerely thank you for your support.

# Our Worldwide Family of Associates at Work: 2006/07 Year-End Figures

	Total	Unrestricted
Contributions from Associates	\$54,381,770	\$3,364,139
Interest Income from Endowments	\$8,033,504	\$4,166,947
Endowment Fund Balance (as of 30/9/07)	\$182,648,647	\$94,679,984

1. All figures are approximate due to fluctuating exchange and interest rates.

2. 2006/07 interest income was calculated at approximately 4.5%.

3. Figures do not reflect approximately \$33.4 million in endowment and trust funds held in the U.S. by and on behalf of AABGU (including outside managed trusts).

# Senior Administration.



Roy J. Zuckerberg Chairman of the Board of Governors



Lord Weidenfeld of Chelsea Honorary Chairman of the Board of Governors



Robert H. Arnow Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Governors



David Brodet Chairman of the Executive Committee



Prof. Rivka Carmi President



Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt Rector



**Prof. Moti Herskowitz** Vice-President and Dean for Research & Development



David Bareket Vice-President and Director-General



**Prof. Amos Drory** Vice-President for External Affairs



Prof. Moshe Justman Dean - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences



Prof. Abraham Parola Dean - Faculty of Natural Sciences



**Prof. Yigal Ronen** Dean - Faculty of Engineering Sciences



**Prof. Shaul Sofer** Dean - Faculty of Health Sciences



Prof. Arie Reichel Dean - Guliford Glazer School of Business and Management



Prof. Shaul Krakover Dean - Eilat Campus



**Prof. Ramy Brustein** Dean - Kreitman School of Advanced Graduate Studies



Prof. Avigad Vonshak Director - Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research & Director - Ben-Gurion Research Institute for Study of Israel and Zionism



**Prof. Varda Shoshan-Barmatz** Director - National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev



Prof. Yael Edan Deputy-Rector



Prof. Lily Neumann Vice-Rector



**Prof. Arie Moran** Deputy-Vice-President and Dean for R & D



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David Ben-Gurion had a dream that a world-class university would bring development to the Negev. He believed that a center of learning would "make the desert bloom," while its passionate faculty and students would transform the region. In essence, researchers living in the Negev desert are in a unique position to be an integral part of the region's social fabric, while learning how to better understand its past and improve its present and future.

••••• For sociologist Dr. Michael Feige of the Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, understanding "the dream" involves studying collective memory – namely, how a place, event or person are remembered in the minds of a particular group of people. Together with a colleague from the Institute, he is analyzing how the legacy of Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion is documented and retold in Israeli society. He is also examining the relationship between archeology and nationalism and the impact of opposing ideological movements such as Gush Emunim and Peace Now. "I don't think that I would have been drawn to the research on David Ben-Gurion if I weren't in the Negev," says Feige, who lives and works in the Midreshet Ben-Gurion community, adjacent to the University's Sede Boqer campus and David and Paula Ben-Gurion's gravesite.

Feige is also the newly-appointed co-editor of the academic journal *Hagar*–Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities. He shares this responsibility with Dr. Pnina Motzafi-Haller of the Department of Man in the Desert at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research. Together, they are committed to exploring the experience and social implications of living in and with the desert.

"In that sense, the University is situated in a very important place," he continues. "It's large and successful, yet due to its location in the periphery, it holds a certain critical perspective that other universities lack. Ultimately," he explains, "our self-awareness is about more than geography. It is about how we perceive ourselves in time and space, in both the present and in a historical context."

••••• Founded on a pioneering mythos, any study of modern Israel must be rooted in the rebirth of the Hebrew language and the cultural development of the new Israeli psyche.

Prof. Yigal Schwartz, Director of *Heksherim:* The Institute for the Research of Jewish and Israeli Literature and Culture, looks for the links between culture, society and community. The name *Heksherim* means "in context," with the idea that literature must relate to its time and surroundings and not be viewed oversimplistically as art for art's sake, explains Schwartz.

"It's part of a fabric that contains a great many threads and represents something in total," he says. "Literature is a full-time pursuit and refers to all parts of human life. So it's important to analyze it in context."

With a declared mandate to examine the first generation of Israelis - those authors, poets and playwrights who found their voice after the creation of the State of Israel - the newly-upgraded Institute has gathered the works of these first Israeli writers. "We think that they give a picture of a generation," says Schwartz. Now ensconced in impressive new facilities in the Helen Diller Family Center, the archives include the collected works of literary icons such as authors Amos Oz and Aharon Appelfeld, playwright Nissim Aloni and poet David Avidan.

"The idea is to have a bank of different literary figures from one generation, permitting us to then look at the period from different directions," Schwartz says. "Whoever comes to the archives can enter a world that has the literary reflection of the culture."

In his own research, Schwartz recently finished a study that took 15 years and deals with the formation of the new nation, with a perspective of the phenomenon as seen from literature. "It's two tracks: the development of the new Jew and the new home," explains Schwartz. "We are trying to see the intersection and interaction." Currently, he's writing about the features of Israeli literature from 1948 through today.







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"I love journeys, long journeys. That gives me the feeling that I have a map with which to navigate," Schwartz says. "It gives me a framework, coordinates and in essence is my cultural map."

•••• David Ben-Gurion retired from the government and moved to Kibbutz Sede Boqer in the hope that he would serve as an example to the nation and that others would follow him southward to work in and advance the local communites and transform the region.

For Prof. Miri Amit, Director of the University's Center for Science and Technology Education, educational outreach to the Negev community is her lifework and personal mission. In the ten years since she established Kidumatica – the Youth Mathematics Forum, she has touched the lives of hundreds of gifted children.

A Negev resident and former National Superintendent of Mathematics for the Ministry of Education, Amit wanted to create an educational program that nurtured excellence for school-age children specifically in the periphery. She decided to focus on mathematics as the main subject of the program, given its cross-culture appeal – an important factor in the myriad of intertwined immigrant communities of Israel's south. "I wanted the best pupils, based on a strong desire to learn," she says. "I saw the opportunities that were available in the center of Israel, and wanted to create equal opportunities for all the children of the Negev, including Bedouins. Where there is talent, you must develop it."

The extracurricular enrichment program began with 60 pupils in 1998 and now provides its services to more than 400 pupils a year, focusing on students from fifth through eleventh grades in 70 schools throughout the Negev. With the launch of the Velva G. and H. Fred Levine Kidumatica Scholarship Fund, "we will be able to expand our programs," she says.

"The program helps create logical and critical thinking, and becomes a tool for learning and in everyday life," says Amit, who is now writing her second book about the program. "We want to encourage these kids' personal potential and help them reach for the stars."

••••• As the debate about global warming increasingly highlights issues relating to our fragile environment, researchers who have lived in and with the desert are now at the forefront of the international scientific community, looking for "green" solutions to global problems. The Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) on the Sede Boqer campus have turned the challenges of the desert into a research advantage. Capitalizing on their growing strength, members of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research, the French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands and the Institute for Energy and Environment of Drylands Research are world leaders in these critical fields.

A multi-disciplinary team led by Prof. Isaac Meir, architect and Chair of the Department of Man in the Desert at the BIDR, was recently chosen by Israel's Mifal HaPayis, or National Lottery, to prepare standard criteria for "green building" to be applied to all future buildings – from schools to community centers – funded by the quasi-governmental agency.

Meir has been studying the way humans affect their immediate environment. "If we relate to our surroundings and adapt to different environments, we are likely to be more successful in desert regions," he explains. "By creating buildings that use less energy, we are minimizing the ecological footprint in a number of ways."

"As a group, we've been trying to design buildings that will help us demonstrate the whole concept behind our scientific research," says Meir, who lives in Neve Zin, the environmentally-sustainable neighborhood that he helped design, adjacent to the campus in Sede Boqer.

"The Lottery decision means that what we've been trying to do for years is becoming a reality," says Meir. "We're going to shape the essence of the buildings. It means that every party asking for funding for a public building will have to qualify for a green label to be eligible; we'll be changing the whole understanding toward green architecture and – not least – the way future public buildings will interact with their environment."

••••• With his eyes focused on the heavens, Director of the Ben-Gurion National Solar Energy Center at the BIDR Prof. David Faiman works to make solar energy affordable. "Israel has the potential to be a world leader in the field," he says.

When he arrived in Sede Boqer in 1976, "there were solar panels on the roofs of buildings in the center of the country, but none in the Negev because people thought they would get covered in dust and wouldn't work," explains Faiman.

Today, the Center focuses almost exclusively on how to obtain electricity from solar energy on a large scale, in a manner cost-competitive with fossil fuel. A year ago, Faiman and his colleagues were able to produce 1500 watts from a 4" x 4" photovoltaic module, using a reflector that magnified the sun a thousand times, thus breaking all records of solar energy production from such a small solar receiver.

Faiman has been working on a collaborative project with a European partner under the auspices of the EU's Sixth Framework program. As a result of their success, BGN Technologies recently signed a contract with Zenith, a technology start-up that has committed to build a beta version solar field in Israel based on this technology.

"It's a worldwide problem and the more good people who can be brought to work on it, the better the prospects of success."

Truly a "light unto the nations.



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Rapid technological developments have created a whole new language of communication. These dizzying changes have left human beings around the globe trying to rediscover how to connect – to ourselves, to our past and to others.

The School builds upon the unique guiding philosophy of the "Beer-Sheva Experiment" at the Faculty of Health Sciences' Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School, which is rooted in the commitment to provide firstclass community-based multi-cultural healthcare and the well-known BGU orientation to medical students' needs that itself teaches care for others. MSIH Director Prof. Carmi Margolis stresses that the essence of global medicine is "compassion for another human being whose cultural world is outside your own." He noted that the School was recently selected by the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center to lead a prestigious invitational conference on global health.

The numbers speak for themselves: in the 46 member class that began its studies this year, 36 percent of the students are American citizens who immigrated from nations such diverse nations as Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Morocco, Panama, Sudan, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Three were former U.S. Peace Corps volunteers and 85 percent of the class had never been to Israel before enrolling at the School.

"These are not the same kinds of students that are applying for residency programs at Columbia," said Margolis. "They are more altruistic and idealistic, by definition."And their hopes are to provide healthcare to a more connected and culturallysensitized global village.

••••• The world has become all the more accessible, thanks to cellular phones and satellite communications.

Dr. Yuval Elovici, Director of the Deutsche Telekom (DT) Laboratories at Ben-Gurion University, heads an interdisciplinary team of over 120 researchers and students who are working together to find new ways for people to use these technologies in a secure environment with a wider variety of applications. The first research facility of its kind established outside of Germany by Deutsche Telekom, the two-year old DT Laboratory is looking for new ways to connect people using information technology and telecommunications.

In this unique effort to apply virtual research into real-life applications, the current projects range from the ePaper project – the newspaper of the future – to Media Scout and eDare. ePaper gathers news-based content from various sources and distributes the material to subscribers on ePaper mobile devices, explains Elovici.

Media Scout uses an online engine geared for entertainment media to present the content on mobile electronic devices, providing recommendations as well as supplying subscribers with information based on their online profile.

Other projects include eDare: an application that uses powerful network traffic scanners to detect and remove known and new "malware", or malicious software, from corporate and public network traffic. The Prosero business process orchestration aims to use business process modeling tools to enable better personalization of business processes.

"What's great about the project is that we can develop things that are practical and useful," says Elovici. "It's research that brings millions of people around the globe together."

••••• Before there were Blackberries and the Internet, even before there were mass-produced books, communication took the form of illuminated manuscripts.

"Almost everything we know about medieval Jews is through medieval manuscripts," explains Prof. Katrin Kogman-Appel from the Department of the Arts. "In the Middle Ages, images were not just decoration but an eloquent mirror of life.





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Illuminated manuscripts contain whole cycles of images that fit together and create a coherent picture of what was going on in the communities. You get a picture of what these people actually thought and what agendas they had," she continues.

Kogman-Appel's book *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain*, published this year, describes how the Sephardic version of the Exodus from Egypt – recounted at Passover in the Haggada – reflects different visualizations of scripture under various social conditions. Kogman-Appel has also been looking at Ashkenazi holiday prayer books, and the well-documented custom of reciting *piyyutim*, or liturgical hymns. Thanks to the many existing volumes of these richly illuminated liturgical hymns, she has gained a look at the scholarship of those times, dealing with the customs and the role that liturgy played in their society.

Remaining in the period of the Middle Ages, Kogman-Appel plans to shift her focus on the transition from hand-written manuscripts to printed books. "I expect that studying the various ways in which books were used and understanding by whom they were used, will explain the social changes that occurred in late medieval Jewish communities," she says. "There's a whole corpus of liturgical poems and they apparently played an incredible role in communal identity," adds Kogman-Appel. "You get a picture of medieval life. It's not just a painting of a man sitting on a stool; it's the whole world around him."

••••• At the heart of all communication is the brain and its ability to process information efficiently. Prof. Nachshon Meiran's research explores the role of the brain's capacity to control its own processing, through the retention of information "online". This ability is sometimes called "working memory".

Meiran is Chairman of the Department of Psychology – one of the newly-reconfigured departments that made up the former Department of Behavioral Sciences. He explains, "Our new understanding of the actions of working memory has interesting implications. One such implication is that one's intention to act in a certain way is made well in advance of the action itself, when preparing for the situation in which the action is made."

A member of the Zlotowski Center for Neurosciences, Meiran has studied the brain's "executive" functions, or the abilities that allow the mind to control actions, thoughts and emotions. The executive functions are what "prevent us from





doing things we don't intend to do, and enable the coordination of the brain functions to allow more cognitive flexibility," he explains.

"Acting according to intention is important because people can be aggressive towards others. The ability to control those impulses is critical in allowing efficient copperation among group members," he says. One extension of Meiran's research is the study of the process of updating working memory. At present, he says, "there is very little research on how updating works, because we haven't teased apart the various components."

"Science requires flexibility and creativity," comments Meiran and adds that he is especially energized by the unique atmosphere at BGU, "where there is always interesting academic exchange. In other words, good communication contributes to the fun of making science."

••••• "Conversations between cold atoms" – that's what Prof. Ora Entin-Wohlman's colleagues joke that she is doing at the University's Atom Chip Laboratory. In essence, Entin-Wohlman clarifies, she is trying to get atoms to communicate in order to create ever more sophisticated electronic tools.

A member of the Department of Physics, Entin-Wohlman has focused her research on the particular properties of electrons.

Her main work over the last two years has been on the charge transport of electrons in electronic devices. Most new electronic equipment is based on the charge properties of electrons. Immobilizing the electrons by confining them to tiny puddles, Entin-Wohlman is attempting to manipulate these charges in order to improve very small, even microscopic, state-of the art, nano-sized devices. However, because of the charge that each electron carries, the electrons end up repelling one another. This obstacle is overcome in current electronic devices via the phenomenon of "screening", by which the electrons protect one another from the action of all their fellows. "In life-size materials, as opposed nano-size, the more electrons there are, the better they can screen the repulsion," says Entin-Wohlman. "But in miniature devices there aren't as many electrons, so they don't screen so well and start repelling each other."

This gives rise to new phenomena, which involve the other degree of freedom the electron has, the "spin". Spin can be thought of as a tiny magnetic moment, carried by the electron in addition to its charge. Entin-Wohlman also aims to manipulate the spins, to understand how the electrons manage to move freely and communicate, which will help to improve nano-devices.

"Most of my work is theoretical, but I collaborate with the people at the wonderful atom-chip lab at the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology," she says. "Together, we have recently published the results of a study about a specific phenomenon in cold atom clouds in the prestigious international journal *Science*. This phenomenon has to do with the fragmentation of the atom clouds, brought about by tiny modulations in the magnetic fields holding them together."

"We want to communicate with atoms," continues Entin-Wohlman. "But by simply trying to see what they are doing, for example, by probing them, you disturb them and they end up doing something else. The key is to disturb them as little as possible."

Bringing everything – and everyone – together.



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# Saving a

Locked deep inside the human body are untold secrets – how we think, how we move, how we become ill and how we are cured. Attempts to unravel these mysteries have motivated scientists for generations to engage their intellectual curiosity in the pursuit of new lifesaving technologies.

• • • • • For many researchers, the drive is to understand why certain illnesses develop and how to get rid of them. For others, the overriding concern is to find a cure. Prof. Marina Wolfson has always been motivated to understand the big picture, which first led her to the study of biology.

"I wanted to understand why a cell becomes a cancer cell, why it stops receiving and hearing the 'right' signals," explains Wolfson, a member of the Shraga Segal Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Faculty of Health Sciences. "It's the basic question of cancer, of why these cells don't respond to all kinds of signals to stop their destructive behavior and do what they're supposed to." Wolfson has focused on ovarian and brain cancers, which she feels don't get the same kind of attention as other, more common cancers.

"Ovarian cancer is a woman's cancer and the least successful in terms of treatment, partially because there are so few symptoms," she says. "We need to think biologically, since the body knows before we know." Wolfson works on the assumption that a body that perceives the start of an illness begins to produce a small amount of antibodies. She is trying to "capture" the antibodies stage of the illness and amplify the system in order to discover what characterizes ovarian cancer: what the molecules look like and then to enlarge them.

"We need to understand how the antibodies recognize what is different in ovarian cancer cells," explains Wolfson, who says that in clinical trials she wants to find out if blood or other fluids taken from a woman with early stage ovarian cancer contain cancer-specific molecules that can bind and be detected by genetically-engineered antibodies. This might, she hypothesizes, allow for the production of a positive response that can then be compared to that of a healthy woman.

In this way, she believes, it may be possible to discover the disease early enough to save a life.

••••• The intensity of exertion, stamina and pain involved in rowing on M.I.T.'s crew team was part of what led Dr. Opher Donchin to study the relationship between the body and the brain.

"I was majoring in computer science but was rowing all the time," he says, explaining how he became interested in human movement. "I was fascinated by the way people 'virtually' live in their bodies and connect with it," he says. "I like the way we take our bodies for granted, hardly ever really stopping to notice them until they remind us of their presence with pain."

A member of the Department of Biomedical Engineering, Donchin is a physiologist who explores how the brain controls the body. His work focuses on the role of the cerebellum in motor adaptation, specifically how the brain learns new movements. "I am studying function of the brain by recording the activity of individual neurons during certain actions. I also study the behavior itself," he ellaborates.

Most of his research focuses on reaching with the arm towards a specific goal: studying the act of reaching itself while observing what happens in the brain while it is making simple movements.

His research team hopes to unravel the secrets of the brain that may lead to understanding diseases such as epilepsy, Parkinson's disease and essential tremors. His research is also directly relevant to the development of neuroprostheses: biomedical devices designed to interact with the brain.

"This may help us go beyond motor prosthetics, Maybe we can help the paralyzed and many others suffering from motor disease," he says. "If we aren't able to cure the disease, we can at least help people lead a better life."

•••• Knowing how to administer and distribute life-saving vaccines is often as essential as the vaccine itself. Prof. Ron Dagan of the Faculty of Health Sciences says that while the main goal of his research is to reduce diseases through vaccines, "It is crucial to know how to use the vaccine most





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effectively. Part of our research is focused on how to get the best out of an immunization program."

As Director of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Unit at Soroka University Medical Center, Dagan and his team are on the front line in the battle against pediatric infectious diseases. His research focuses on developing a vaccine against pneumococcus, considered the deadliest bacteria in the world for children under the age of five.

Often resistant to antibiotics, pneumococcus causes meningitis and pneumonia, among other diseases, and is responsible for the annual deaths of an estimated one million children worldwide, primarily in the developing world – this despite it being preventable by vaccines.

Dagan, who divides his time between teaching, clinical work at the hospital and conducting research, holds a number of positions in the field of pediatric vaccinations, including President of the World Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases, and serves as a consultant to the Ministry of Health on infectious diseases.

Among Dagan's many outstanding and prize-winning contributions has been the implementation of a vaccination against the viral disease Hepatitis A. He convinced the Israeli health authorities to inoculate nationwide, beginning in 1999. Within three years, the cases of jaundice dropped from several thousand annually to fewer than 150. "This is considered to be a smashing success – the result of looking at the approach of how to use vaccines. We showed that the way we use it can eradicate the disease within a few years," says Dagan. This system is now considered a paradigm of how and when to immunize the population. Many countries with Hepatitis A have adopted these methods.

Novel vaccines being studied and developed by Dagan's team will eventually be patented at BGU – and save lives.

•••• The ever-growing field of biotechnology is at the forefront of the development of new, lifesaving technologies. "We're here to enable new advances in biotechnology and to serve as the bridge that links academia and industry," says Prof. Varda Shoshan-Barmatz, who serves as Director of the National Institute for Biotechnology of the Negev (NIBN), created and guided by the driving vision and commitment of Edgar D. de Picciotto of Switzerland. Endowed with human resources and core infrastructure of a standard and intensity assuring world-class excellence in specific fields of research, the NIBN is at the cutting-edge of lifesaving technologies. Shoshan-Barmatz is proud of what the Institute is accomplishing: focusing on the discovery and development of technologies, devices, and reagents that address human needs – generously supported by groundbreaking work at the Morris Kahn Human Molecular Genetics Lab – and creating an effective academic platform for the emergence of a successful biotechnology industry in Israel. It also serves as a driving force to attract life sciences-based industries to the Negev region.

Nonetheless, she is eager to expand as well: "We have to seek out the other side of the coin, the realm of product-driven biotechnology represented by industry."

A member of the Department of Life Sciences, her own research is focused on novel approaches to cancer therapy. These include arrest of cancer cell growth, activation of cell death in all cancer types and interfering with the self-defense mechanisms of cancer cells.

"The challenge of our study is to develop therapy for cancer based on activation of a process called programmed cell death, or apoptosis," she explains. "It is a natural process, but when it malfunctions, the cells don't die and tumors are created. If we can program the cells to die, we will be able to find novel ways to treat certain cancers," says Shoshan-Barmatz.

••••• The ultimate goal in research is often about helping people. In medicine, the rapidly advancing field of Medical Informatics is helping both doctors and patients.

Prof. Yuval Shahar, Chair of the Department of Information Systems Engineering and head of the University's Medical Informatics Research Center, uses his degrees in medicine, mathematics and computers to bring artificial intelligence to the medical field.

"We're working on creating a sort of twenty-first century stethoscope," he jokes. "We don't aim to replace physicians, but rather to improve the way they manage their patients, by enabling them to apply state-of-the-art medicine at the point of care."

One of Shahar's software projects collects clinical information about the patient from various sources, everything from lab results to x-rays, thus enabling more informed monitoring and interpretation of the patient's data. The computer then integrates the processed patient-specific information with an electronic, machine-comprehensible representation of a clinical guideline relevant to the patient, and assists the physician in applying the protocol to the patient in a customized manner. "What you really want is to look at clinical data over time," explains Shahar. "The doctor might thus be better able to detect a gradual deterioration in someone's health that they would otherwise miss."

"Doctors don't always have the time to look at all of the patient's current and historic data, ask all of the necessary questions, or answer all of the patient's questions. They have to use the short time available for each patient to give the best care, using evidence-based medicine, which is based on scientific facts. We see ourselves as a vehicle to facilitate this."

"In fact," points out Shahar, "physicians might then actually have more time to talk to patients, once the routine management tasks are handled by a computer. Patients, especially chronic ones, might also get involved in updating their own information."

And in this way, possibly saving their own lives.



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One theme that has emerged in Israel, as an integral part of the Middle East, is the critical need for coexistence, based on people of different ethnic, religious and national backgrounds living and working together. In the Negev, the concept of living together is both an ideal and a reality. Unique research activities, such as those at the Robert H. Arnow Center for Bedouin Studies and Development and the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy, highlight the importance of teaching, researching and affecting regional understanding.

• • • • • • • • With an emphasis on the multicultural nature of Israeli society and the importance of being inclusive, the Jack J. and Charlotte B. Spitzer Department of Social Work combines scholarly research with social activism. When Department Chairman Prof. Alean Al-Krenawi was an undergraduate student at the University, he was struck by the dichotomy between what was being studied in the classroom versus what people were really experiencing, particularly in his own Bedouin culture.

"There was literature that dealt with the anthropological perspectives of these cultural topics – polygamy, blood vengeance – but there was very little research on the psychological impact of these issues," says Al-Krenawi, who grew up in a traditional encampment in the area of what would eventually become the government-planned Bedouin city of Rahat.

Al-Krenawi decided to tackle unexamined sensitive issues associated with the phenomena, including different models of intervention, to increase awareness of these issues. "So I opened the door and highlighted that aspect of it, such as the psychological impact of being a woman in – or a child of – a polygamous marriage," he says.

Al-Krenawi also extended his research to Palestinian and Israeli Arabs and to the broader Arab world with new studies in which he is collaborating with researchers in Jordan, Egypt and Kuwait. "We must train mental health professionals to be culturally aware of local customs and their psychological impact, and integrate that knowledge into their work with the community," he states, "for the betterment of the whole region."

••••• Based on the belief that there is no better method of learning than experiencing the reality of someone else's way of life, the University offers a unique, intensive Masters of Arts Program in Middle East Studies (MAPMES). Taught in English, the program provides in-depth knowledge of the Middle East to English-speaking students from around the world. According to Academic Director and member of the Department of Middle East Studies Dr. Avi Rubin, the program benefits from the fact that students are able to experience living and learning in a city like Beer-Sheva. "One of the advantages is the opportunity to interact with a lot of other groups," he explains. "The students can immerse themselves in different societies, and we do everything we can to promote that." The program includes internships and volunteering opportunities, particularly in the Bedouin city of Rahat. Students have an opportunity to interact with their Israeli counterparts and to join the Department of Middle East Studies' annual visit to a different Middle Eastern country.

The program gives students the background they need to move on to further research or work in NGOs and, most of all, to provide them with knowledge, a deeper understanding and familiarity with the peoples, cultures and histories of this diverse and intriguing region.

••••• In a region that is fraught with divisions, living together is sometimes unfathomable. For many Israelis, the October 2004 bombing of tourist sites in the Sinai Peninsula was a pivotal event which forced them to weigh the risk of vacationing in a neighboring region that until then they had viewed as safe. According to Prof. Natan Uriely of the Department of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management, a team of researchers from the department began to analyze the risk-related perceptions and behavior of Israeli tourists who traveled to the terror-inflicted Sinai after this major attack. "We were interested in why people take risks when they become tourists and what are the components of their risk perceptions," he explains.







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As part of this research, Uriely and his colleagues interviewed Israeli tourists and their Egyptian hosts. They discovered that together the two groups somehow managed to construct a "volatile bubble of serenity" while in Sinai, sharing their Middle Eastern lifestyles, avoiding politics and viewing the region as extra-territorial to what was happening worldwide. But soon after the terror attacks, they found that Israelis and Egyptians had shifted their views with Israelis describing Egypt as the "third world". For their part, Egyptians seemed to have lost their trust in Israelis, who had gradually stopped coming to Sinai.

"Theoretically, the attitude of fear and suspicion can co-exist with warmth and friendship," says Uriely. "Under specific circumstances, you can create an isolated bubble. But the existence of tourism within this bubble in the midst of war or extended conflict is very unusual."

••••• The olive branch has always been a symbol of peace. Now we have a chance for the olive oil industry to open doors for cooperation," states Prof. Zeev Wiesman of the Phyto-Lipid Biotechnology Lab in the Department of Biotechnology Engineering. He has formed a research consortium of Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian olive growers and scientists to improve yield and production techniques throughout the region. Wiesman's research focuses on the juncture of plant oils, biotechnology and industry.

More than 250 participants attended a Universityorganized conference of the Forum for the Technological Upgrading of the Olive Oil Industry this winter. Top scientists from various technological and industrial fields took part in lectures and workshops on olive cultivation in desert conditions. Of particular interest were the environmental aspects of olive oil production. The solid and liquid residues left after oil extraction can be recycled as biodiesel and biogas fuels, animal feed and fertilizer.

Olives were not intensively cultivated in the Negev until it was discovered that they can grow well in saline water, Wiesman explains. As part of his research in the last decade, he has gathered some 60 varieties of olive and pomegranate trees from around the world and planted them in the Negev. He selected superior varieties with emphasis on their performance in semi-arid conditions. "The final products are the bottles of extra virgin olive oil and novel pomegranate oil. But what interests us is the basic raw material, the genetic material that is made here, namely the olive and the pomegranate," says Wiesman. "When you grow crops in the Negev, there are disadvantages that can turn into advantages," says Wiesman. "We found that because the plants have overcome the stressful conditions of the Negev, they produce a richer yield with more of the compounds that we're looking for in terms of health properties."

The Forum is part of a greater effort to establish a regional network for scientific cooperation in the olive oil industry. "I believe that the use of sustainable biotechnologies may contribute in the mid- and long-term to economic development and cooperation in the Middle East," Wiesman says.

••••• The Gulf of Eilat/Aqaba is bordered by Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In these shared waters exists a unique network of coral reefs that has become a world-class tourist attraction. But the increasing popularity of tourism – and with it recreational underwater diving – has had a negative impact on this delicate ecosystem.

Dr. Nadav Shashar of the Department of Life Sciences joined the University's Eilat Campus last year to be a resident scientist in the newly-created Marine Biology and Biotechnology Program. He is studying marine animal vision, dolphin behavior and, in collaboration with other members of the Department, the possibility of creating man-made coral reefs to claim new ground and reduce the pressure on the natural reefs.

Undergraduate students of Marine Biology and Biotechnology spend their first two years studying in the Department of Life Sciences in Beer-Sheva. In the third year, they do their specialization on the Eilat campus. The program has been so successful that a similar track in Ornithology is now in its initial stages. Shashar's original goal was to reduce the negative impact of tourism on natural reefs, while creating an artificial underwater ecosystem that will integrate into the natural environment. But by creating a cooperative Israeli-Jordanian effort, he has managed to initiate a project that is doing much more than simply restoring the region's most treasured natural tourist attraction.

With the same waters being shared between Eilat in Israel and Aqaba in Jordan, as well as fish and coral larvae moving between Israel, Jordan and Egypt, "it made sense to work together," says Shashar. "We're promoting each other."

So far, the team has built one artificial reef in Israel's waters and is about to start building three others in Aqaba, to be followed by another in Eilat. Undergraduate and graduate students working on the project have been joined by Israeli youth from Eilat and Jerusalem. These teams have been helping to plant the coral in both countries while building personal relationships with their Jordanian peers.

"Building the artificial reef is a real test for an ecologist," says Shashar. "You can make scientific estimations, and try and predict what will work. But the real test is in the water – can you create what you predicted? Will you be able to draw a large number of fish and other animal species to the reef? Will the coral be able to grow and propagate? Will people come?" So far, preliminary results are most promising.

In other words, coexistence both above and below the water.

# New and Noteworthy.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev continues to grow, expanding its academic opportunities and research facilities, while investing in its physical infrastructure. Our researchers and students are involved in a wide range of academic initiatives and industrial collaborations in Israel and around the world. Highlights of the past year include the following:

#### Milestones

- The University marked 50 years since the establishment of its precursor, the Negev Institute.
- The Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management was named. The rapidly growing School ranked third in a nationwide survey, ahead of many larger and more established business schools.
- The French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands was inaugurated at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research.
- The Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work marked its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

## New Academic Centers and Study Programs

• The Safra Center for the Design and Engineering of Functional Biopolymers was created, becoming the first center in Israel that specializes in the implementation of pure biomimetic approaches and tools for the design of functional materials.

- The late Prof. Daniel E. Koshland, Jr. provided a magnanimous legacy to promote desert sustainability and viability for the future of the Negev.
- The Martin-Springer Center for Conflict Studies and Negotiation – devoted to promoting mutual understanding between the peoples of the region – was dedicated.
- The Jacques Loeb Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences was inaugurated. The Centre strives to integrate philosophical thought with the natural sciences.
- The Ginsburg-Ingerman Overseas Student Program was named and expanded, allowing for a wider range of activities and scholarships to expose more international students to the Negev.
- The Women's Forum Fellowships Program was launched with the support of the Rich Foundation and others to promote women in academia.
   Fellowships will be offered to outstanding postdoctoral students for academic positions in science and technology.

## Newly Inaugurated Chairs

- Aaron Fish Chair in Mechanical Engineering – Fracture Mechanics
- The Ernest Scheller, Jr. Chair in Innovative Management
- The Milton (Mickey) and Frimette Snow Professorial Chair in Nanotechnology



- The Dr. Gabi and Eng. Max Lichtenberg Career Development Chair in Natural Sciences
- The Zehava and Chezy Vered Career Development Chair for the Study of Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases

## Physical Development

- A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Advanced Technologies Park in the presence of the Israeli prime minister, members of the cabinet and other dignitaries to mark the start of the work on the infrastructure. A partnership of the University, the Beer-Sheva Municipality and KUD International LLC, the 150-acre park adjacent to the University will serve as an anchor to attract hi-tech industry to the region.
- The impressive new Helen Diller Family Center opened last fall, providing new facilities for the University's diverse research centers and an expanded home for the Hebrew literature archives.

- The Deichmann Plaza was dedicated, creating a new entrance to the Deichmann Building for Community Action and providing an aesthetic central area that connects the Humanities and Social Sciences with the Community Action Unit, the Jack J. and Charlotte B. Spitzer Department of Social Work and the Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management.
- The Regina and Simon Liebermann Student Dormitories, including the Regina and Simon Liebermann Dorm Entrance, Tonia and Alvin Schmerbach Dorm Entrance and the Hyman and Fanya Tower Dorm Entrance, were named this year, enhancing student accommodations in the Dalet neighborhood.
- The cornerstone for the new Caroline House the Health Sciences Student Center was laid, adjacent to the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School Complex at the Faculty of Health Sciences, and will include study rooms, expanded office space and meeting rooms for student activities.

# New and Noteworthy (cont'd)\_

- The Zlotowski Dormitory Complex was rededicated after a comprehensive renovation that included a complete overhaul of the student apartments and of the public facilities, including the laundry area, computer rooms, bicycle storeroom, machine room, main electricity room, self-study room, communications rooms and clubhouse.
- A state-of-the-art Stable Isotope Laboratory was established by the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences with the generous support of the Wolfson Family Charitable Trust. A unique Gas Source – Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometer will allow researchers to analyze the geological history of rocks and minerals, offering insight into the processes that shaped these global ecosystems.

## New Dedications

- The Abraham Ben David Ohayon Behavioral Sciences Complex for the Department of Psychology
- The Stan Flinkman Foyer in the Henry and Anita Weiss Family Building for Advanced Research
- The Landau Family Microalgal Biotechnology Laboratory at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research
- The Eric F. and Lore Ross Atrium for Community Action and Enrichment in the Deichmann Building for Community Action and the Eric F. and Lore Ross Lecture Hall in the Ruth and Heinz-Horst Deichmann Building for Health Professions

## Excellence Recognized

- Prof. Gerald (Ya'acov) Blidstein of the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought and an Israel Prize laureate in Jewish Thought was inducted into the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
- Prof. Ron Dagan, a member of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Director of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Unit at the Soroka University Medical Center, received the Samuel and Paula Elkeles Prize for Outstanding Scientist in Medicine.
- Prof. Shaul Ladany of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management was awarded the Pierre de Coubertin Medal for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Conference of Industrial Engineering and Management.
- Internationally-acclaimed author Prof. Amos Oz of the Department of Hebrew Literature was awarded the prestigious Dan David Prize and the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature in Spain.
- Prof. Reuven Yosef of the Department of Life Sciences and the Eilat Campus was recognized by the Council for a Beautiful Israel for his work on behalf of bird migration in the region.

## Regional and International Impact

 Exxon Mobil Corporation will partner with QuestAir Technologies, CellexPower and BGU's Blechner Center for Industrial Catalysis and Process Development from the Department of Chemical Engineering to commercialize the world's first onvehicle hydrogen fuel system.



- Building upon the successful research experience and recent graduation of the first Jordanian student from the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies (AKIS), the number of graduate students from neighboring lands continues to rise at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research on the Sede Boqer campus. These students are an important addition to the international student body of the School, whose offerings are focused primarily on environmental issues with a regional impact. A doctoral degree will be granted to an AKIS Ph.D. candidate for the first time this year.
- The Hubert Burda Center for Innovative Communications has undertaken an international study in collaboration with two institutes: the Oxford University Internet Institute (OII) and the Helsinki Institute for Information Technology (HIIT).
- A massive Bronze Age settlement was uncovered by the Department of Bible, Archaeology and the Ancient Near East Studies. Excavations were carried out by a consortium that included BGU, the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and the Universities of Rostock and Leipzig, Germany.



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# Community Action Unit

Launched in 1976, the Community Action Unit focuses on the educational and social challenges of the Negev, in an effort to establish a more value-oriented, equitable social environment.

Marking its thirtieth year of activity, the Open Apartments Program runs 65 apartments located in some of Beer-Sheva's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Participating students organize after-school activities for the neighborhood children, teenagers and adults, including homework and computer clubs, drama and sports programs and storytelling, in addition to operating summer camps, holiday programs and community centers. This year, an Entrepreneurship Week program was launched. These activities are made possible thanks to a worldwide network of supporters. The Training Program for Public Activists and the Gross Fund Program provide scholarships to students who undertake the organization of a

variety of social action activities, such as the Youth Leadership in Communication program, which teaches youth about the media as a vehicle for social action.

The Leadership Training Program, supported by Keren Moshe and other donors, combines practical and theoretical training to prepare students to be involved citizens. The program partners leadership training courses and skills workshops with handson volunteer programs. Students are required to create new volunteering options. Forty students are involved in *Meitar* – or "strings" in Hebrew – a new project that encourages youth to learn to play musical instruments.

The Unit's Newstart Program offers adults the opportunity to complete their formal education. This year, some 50 students of Ethiopian origin between the ages of 25 and 60 are studying mathematics and reading comprehension. In another program, 23 working prison guards recently completed an intensive two-year course that earned them high school equivalency certificates.

Sparks of Science provides youth of Ethiopian origin with academic enrichment courses as well as an overall framework, encouraging them to excel in the natural sciences. This new program has been made possible by the Branco Weiss Institute for the Development of Thinking, Atidim and the Jewish Agency.

The *Barvaz* Theater Group, an innovative drama enrichment program, continues to perform in high schools around the region. This spring, the group opened the annual Barvaz Theater Festival in the Western Negev, with their new play, *Journey to Badolina*, based on a popular Israeli novel.

## Perach

Perach is a nationwide tutoring and mentoring program that pairs University students with underprivileged children and youth in exchange for scholarship assistance. The national program received the Israel Prize this year, as part of the country's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration's focus on children.

The University is part of the greater southern division of Perach, which also includes students from surrounding colleges. The core of Perach's activity consists of one-on-one tutorials given four hours per week to third- through twelfth-grade pupils. Some 1,600 students from the University served as student mentors this year.

This year marks a distinct increase in Perach's activity in Beer-Sheva and amongst the Bedouin sector. Involvement of students in the southern city of Eilat as well as the towns of Arad and Netivot has notably increased. This is thanks to a special stipend offered to students by the respective local municipalities. Additional incentives for students working in the townships of Yeruham, Netivot, Ofakim and Mitzpeh Ramon have also been made available thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor.

A pilot program provides professional training and workbooks for mentors in the fields of mathematics, linguistics education and English. Assistance for troubled adolescents continues and expands in most of the junior high schools in Beer-Sheva. Perach conducts one extra day of



studies each week in the Bedouin communities, during which some 100 children receive individual tutorials on Fridays.

The majority of tutors for children with special needs are students from the Faculty of Health Sciences. These students receive academic credit and special training in a course that was created by Perach.

Perach operates four *Havayeda* interactive science centers in the south, including one in the Bedouin city of Rahat and a number of neighborhood enrichment centers. Thanks to the generous support of Teva Pharmaceuticals, the programs are growing. The impressive new enrichment center that opened this year in the Deichmann Building for Community Action hosts dozens of children in the game room and library and at the computer stations on a daily basis.

New programs this year include the creation of a Purim costume exchange for children, communal gardens and green programming. An emphasis was placed on creating programs that allow participants to experience the privilege of giving to others. Often, for the first time ever, they find themselves on the side of the giver rather than the recipient – an invaluable experience for children in need of assistance.

## The Center for External Education

The University Center for External Education brings academic studies to the wider community, capitalizing on existing resources to offer an array of over 100 distinct courses. Adult education programs range in subject matter from classes for professional accountants and executive training programs to foreign language programs and personal enrichment workshops.

The Youth for Science Unit provides specialized courses for students in sixth- through twelfthgrades. This year, a new "Youth Research the Desert" program was initiated in cooperation with scientists at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research. The course aims to spur interest and curiosity about deserts and desert research among high school students. At the heart of the program is a project competition that offers a University scholarship to the student with the winning concept.

# Academic Preparatory Course

The University offers an array of pre-academic programs to prepare potential students for the

rigors of higher education. Existing programs include a full range of options for those who might not otherwise qualify for university studies, including high school graduates who did not sit for their matriculation exams, Bedouin students, and working adults who are interested in pursuing an academic degree. This year, a number of new, specially-tailored courses have been created that supplement the traditional programs.

A unique 15-month afternoon course was opened for students from the ultra-Orthodox sector. Operated in cooperation with Atidim, the *Haredi* program is designed to offer students – most of whom are married with children – an opportunity to broaden their general knowledge in subjects such as Hebrew, English, mathematics and physics and provide them with an introduction to computing skills in order to prepare them for future studies in the natural and engineering sciences.

A new three-month program was created specifically to encourage students whose families immigrated from Ethiopia to pursue academic studies. A joint project of the the Jewish Agency, the Beer-Sheva Municipality and the Jewish community of Beer-Sheva's sister-city, Montreal, the course includes study strategy workshops, Hebrew language skills, English, computing skills and mathematics.

The University expanded its highly-successful new summer courses that target specific skills for individual academic programs, such as mathematics for students accepted to the Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management and courses in advanced programming for students accepted to the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management.



## Alumni Association

Dedicated to developing and expanding the University's connection with its graduates, the Alumni Association provides a full range of services for alumni around the world, with a special emphasis on strengthening the support services for graduates who have remained in the Negev. The Association organizes social events, creates alumni networks and engages in outreach to involve alumni in the campus community.

The Association works to raise the University's visibility and alumni involvement through an active website, an online newsletter and regular mailings; emphasizing social networking through the organization of class reunions and cultural events; and informing alumni about a full-range of professional career counseling services available through the Association and the University's newly created Career Counseling Office. This also includes email notification of new job postings and an online job board.

The Association's highly successful evening lecture series on the Marcus Family Campus continues to attract overflow crowds. Last March, a nostalgic reunion of graduates from the Department of Chemistry brought together alumni who had graduated over the past 38 years.

This year, the University Alumni Fund provided scholarships to ten students with limited economic means.





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# Student Life

## Dean of Students

Students returned this fall to the newlyrenovated and rededicated Zlotowski Dormitory Complex in the Gimmel neighborhood, now with completely refurbished public spaces and comfortably-redesigned and upgraded and airconditioned apartments. The impressive work includes a revamped laundromat and study and computer rooms. The landscaping and exterior of the older dormitories in the Daled neighborhood were also upgraded.

The Office of the Dean of Students continues to coordinate support services offered to students while promoting programs designed to improve their general welfare. This ranges from supervising dormitories and study rooms, to distributing scholarship support and other financial aid, which is generously provided by our worldwide supporters. Special provisions are made for students who miss classes due to prolonged military duty or have other special circumstances.



The greatest challenge at all universities this year was the prolonged nationwide strike of the academic faculty, which stretched through most of the first semester. This then delayed the start of the second semester, which has been extended through the end of the summer, creating economic difficulties for many students.

The Dean has implemented a number of steps to minimize the academic and financial problems created by this situation, including the addition of tutors, rent-waivers for students living in dormitories and the creation of interest-free, delayed payment loans for students in need.

Areas of academic assistance were expanded to include the hiring of a full-time counselor to work with students from the Arab sector. Additional aid is provided for new immigrant students, particularly for those families that emigrated from Ethiopia. Printing, photocopying and other support services for the entire student body were improved throughout the University. A campuswide program is currently under development to improve accessibility for the disabled, identifying the needs and changes as required by law.

In response to student needs, psychological counseling programs have been expanded at the Sylvia A. Brodsky Psychological Walk-In Service. Group therapy and short-term psycho-therapeutic treatment are used more frequently and biofeedback was introduced to help students cope with exam anxiety.

The harmonious cooperation between the Dean's Office, the Student Association and Hillel: The Foundation for Campus Life has yielded an extensive array of cultural offerings and holiday celebrations for the enjoyment of the student body. University-wide memorial ceremonies form the core of annual non-academic activities, also under the auspices of the Office of the Dean of Students.

A Career Counseling Office was established to assist students in finding suitable work and prepare them for job interviews, including resume-writing workshops.

## Student Association

Concern for the well-being of the student body has always been the primary focus of the nonprofit, independent Student Association. It lends an attentive ear to the students' academic needs and serves as the primary advocate of student rights both on campus and vis-à-vis the government, while creating a socially rich student life by sponsoring a plethora of cultural activities and extra-curricular classes for the student body.

The Association continues to improve its services and facilities, with additional counseling on academic affairs, programs and equipment provided by generous donors.

A shared responsibility of the Student Association and the Dean of Students Office, the Textbook Lending Library includes 4,000 titles that are available for a semester or a year for a minimal sum. Close to 1,000 new lecture summaries were added to the Association's archives, supplemented by a new service allowing students to download audio files of lectures. Over the past year, over 2,000 new exams have been included in the Exam Bank – the oldest and most extensive nationwide. Support services, such as free access to copier





machines and video lectures from the video library, were expanded for students who miss classes due to the significantly increased number of training days in military reserve duty as mandated by the IDF since the Second Lebanon War.

In addition to sponsoring over 30 extracurricular clubs, activities offered by the Association include cultural events, holiday parties, lecture series - including a newly-launched program in Arabic - and campus-wide ceremonies marking national memorial events, in cooperation with the Office of the Dean of Students. The Zlotowski Dance Troupe represents the University at events and continues to be a source of pride for the student body. The Association takes an active role in the coordination of the University's Open Days for prospective students and the annual fun-filled Student Day. Of note is the highly popular Monday Midday Discussion program that brings the country's leading musicians, influential writers, artists and cultural figures to the Marcus Family Campus to speak to students about their work.

Other events included Africa Week to raise student awareness of the diversity of cultures and issues across the continent. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of friends from abroad, BGU's Student Association continues to send the largest delegation of all Israeli universities to participate in the March of the Living in Poland. Closer to home, the Association organized an awareness week for the citizens of Sderot and Western Negev communities, including a lecture series, a public panel and a photo exhibition that is currently touring Israeli academic campuses nationwide.

## The Ginsburg-Ingerman Overseas Student Program

This has been a year of growth and expansion at the Ginsburg-Ingerman Overseas Student Program. Working with the newly-established Office of International Academic Affairs, new academic ties with other universities, international programs and student exchange programs have been developed.

A number of new programs have been instituted, encouraging students to become involved in activities that are community-based or focused on environmental awareness. A new cooperative effort has been undertaken in conjunction with the college division of the Conservative Movement in the United States to promote a track in "Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice".

This is part of a greater effort to encourage the Conservative Movement in Israel to create relevant programs at BGU. Also in the formation stage is a semester program on the Eilat campus that will focus on the geographical and geological conditions unique to the region. Courses will include marine biology, migratory birds, geology of the southern Negev and history of the southernmost Arava region.

The German-language International Summer University Program continues to grow. This year, a new parallel program is being launched in the French language in order to attract students from France and Switzerland.

## Zalman Aranne Central Library

Over the last year, great progress was made in a number of areas regarding the Library and its infrastructure. The University is planning an additional wing to the existing Zalman Aranne Central Library that will house the natural sciences collection, enabling future expansion of the humanities and social sciences collections.

Over the past year, 10,000 new titles were added – both purchased and donated. The process of organizing the impressive working library of the late Nobel laureate Sir Isaiah Berlin, donated through the generosity of his family, received top priority. Over 4,000 titles are being integrated into the Library's general collection. Personal artifacts and dedicated books will be exhibited in a special room.

This year, the acquisition budget stood at \$4 million for databases and journals and around \$300,000 for books, the majority of which was invested in strengthening the humanities and social sciences collections.

The conversion of the classification of the entire library collection from the Dewey Decimal System to the Library of Congress System has been completed. A secure computer-server room has been established in the library with a new BLADE server, made possible by a generous donation from the Auerbach family. There are currently 250 PCs in the Library, of which 170 are for public use, for searching the Aranne and regional catalogs, the many electronic databases and the CD-ROM network as well as for accessing the Internet and full-text articles from periodicals.

## Computation

Dedicated to the upgrading and maintenance of the University's computing and communication infrastructure, the Division of Computing and Information Systems continues to expand and develop its services. This year, it completed the development and activation of its extensive E-learning program, increasing the number and variety of courses now available online. Use of these courses increased dramatically following the prolonged national strike by senior faculty. BGU became the first university in Israel to join Education Roaming (Eduroam), a European wireless (wi-fi) system that enables inter-university use for members of participating institutions.

A system to monitor and measure the efficiency and use of computer classrooms has been developed. A technological infrastructure for web 2.0 applications based on Microsoft's "Moss" technology has also been established. Public printing stations that support credit card payment and the option of online purchase of academic transcripts have been added.

An online student employment service has been developed and improved, allowing for advanced searches and an interface with outside employers. It is compatible for use by the newly-created Career Counseling Office.

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