

Jason S. Cook

(He/Him/His)

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Every teacher is a learner, every learner is a teacher, and the best Jewish learning happens in community.

Unique Capabilities and Experiences

- Working in a variety of professional settings (Federation, Jewish NGOs, small town pulpits, large school Hillels, remote, in person) has provided me with a broad view of how different parts of the Jewish community can fit together to build impactful coalitions.
- My strong Reform upbringing coupled with my broad work experience gives me the confidence to integrate many strands of Jewish practice, thought, and tradition to develop a diverse and creative Jewish experience.
- Spent significant time in the Jewish non-profit and organizational space and have a strong grasp on the issues facing Jewish life in the 21st century as well as the drive and desire to develop new strategies to confront new challenges.
- Specializes in developing boundary-pushing interpretation strategies that allow learners to integrate text into practical life applications.
- Create unique and customized liturgical experiences grounded in place and time, rather than relying on status quo. I have a particular expertise in creative Passover *haggadot*.

Engagement Experience

Rutgers Hillel, New Brunswick, NJ, July 2021-Present

Senior Jewish Educator and Reform Rabbi

- Created a new fellowship (including assisting with donor stewardship) for students to develop creative ways to engage their peers. Fellows engage in Jewish learning, perform one-on-one relationship building, and propose and execute new initiatives at Hillel to serve under-served student populations.
- Supervised student leaders in community building efforts, particularly in developing the Reform community at Rutgers Hillel as well as supporting the efforts of students to prioritize pluralistic Jewish education.
- Administrated Rutgers Hillel's formal education programs, particularly the Jewish Learning Fellowship. Also crafted educational essential questions that guided all educational programming and engagement. Managed a team of three educators, including a first-ever student leader in the role.
- Oversaw the development of a new strategic engagement plan for Rutgers Hillel that helps set the direction of the Student Life Team. This strategic engagement plan aligns education and programming goals, fosters collaboration and team building amongst staff, and offers action-oriented steps for bolstering engagement.
- Fostered relationships between Rutgers Hillel and the Reform community of New Jersey through serving on the executive committee of the North Jersey West Hudson Valley Association of Reform Rabbis to develop Reform leadership and lay-leadership buy-in to the Reform community at Rutgers Hillel.
- Built coalitions of like-minded Rutgers staff who are invested in relationship and community building at Rutgers to connect students with as many resources as possible. Particular success

has come with partnering with the Paul Robeson Cultural Center and the Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities on dialogue programs regarding bigotry and hate on campus.

Ohio University Hillel, Athens, OH, September 2019-May 2021

Rabbinic Intern

- Managed transition of Jewish life, particularly High Holy Day services and Shabbat experiences to a virtual setting facilitating new engagement from college students and retaining previous year's attendance numbers for all High Holy Day programming.
- Entrusted with creating and developing a distinct Passover Haggadah for OU Hillel that is flexible enough to speak to college students and older community members alike. Also transitioned Passover celebration, using the new Haggadah, into a virtual space.
- Re-launched the Jewish Learning Fellowship at OU Hillel where we had nineteen students register for our first cohort and seeded a strong new cohort to continue JLF. Also transitioned over half of the students from the first JLF cohort into the inaugural Israel Learning Fellowship cohort.
- Developed student intern board leadership skills through integrating Jewish *mussar* into weekly meetings and coordinated a new strategic planning initiative to prepare students to effectively engage OU Jewish community while distanced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

B'nai Brith Youth Organization, Various Locations, January 2018-February 2020

Jewish Education Consultant

- Consult for various BBYO regions around North America (Mid-America, Greater Toronto, Greater New Jersey, Kentucky-Indiana-Ohio, Pacific Northwest) on Jewish education. This involves working with both teen leaders and professional staff to offer recommendations and help with implementation of Jewish education best practices on a regional level.

Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, West Palm Beach, FL, December 2013-June 2016

Jewish Teen Initiative-Teen Engagement Coordinator

- Plan, coordinate, and execute middle and high school community informal education programs.
- Reimagined the Palm Beach community trip for teens to Washington, DC through Panim el Panim (BBYO's teen DC experience) to emphasize local engagement as well as the dynamic travel experience.
- Consult on strategic planning projects regarding the future of the Jewish Teen Initiative in Palm Beach County, focusing on data management as well as how to shift from a program-based model to an engagement model, emphasizing leadership grants, experiential education, and in-person connections, rather than one-off programming.

HUC National Office of Recruitment and Admission, Cincinnati, OH, August 2018-May 2020

Recruitment and Engagement Intern

- Create experiential educational programming for college and high school students to visit Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati where they learn American Jewish history, Jewish culture, and community building. Manage budget and logistics coordination with a team for weekend-long retreats.
- Transitioned the Cincinnati Office of Recruitment and Admission from a program-based model to an engagement-based model to support recruitment strategies.
- Develop a strategic vision for recruiting students to study at the Cincinnati Campus of HUC.

Community Experience

North Jersey West Hudson Valley Association of Reform Rabbis, New Jersey, July 2022-present

Vice President

- Support a Reform rabbinic chevra in New Jersey through programming and engagement

Mayerson Jewish Community Center, Cincinnati, OH, August 2020-June 2021

Rabbinic Fellow

- Serve as rabbinic presence and representative to the broader Cincinnati Jewish community on behalf of the JCC.
- Act as “pinch hitter” for programming and program development, helping ensure that JCC programming integrates Jewish content in fresh and dynamic ways.
- Develop a consistent and engaged learning cohort for the “60 and better” demographic around Torah study.

Jewish Cemeteries of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH, May 2019-August 2019

Cemetery Survey Consultant

- Set the foundation for a large-scale project to document and digitize all grave markers in the Cincinnati area Jewish cemeteries, involving leveraging new data collection tools requiring integration of low- and high-tech documentation.

Jewish Community Relations Council, Cincinnati, OH, May 2018-August 2018

Rabbinic Fellow

- Worked on city-wide taskforces to combat hate crimes and to develop interfaith relations and multicultural celebrations in Cincinnati
- Advocated for financial and political support for the Cincinnati Jewish community in state-wide gatherings, particularly on the subject of the Ohio opioid crisis.
- Brought nuance to weekly Israel news digest through emphasizing multiplicity of sources and highlighting unique Israeli viewpoints.

Pulpit Experience

Congregations B’nai Israel and B’nai Abraham, Kokomo, IN and Portsmouth, OH, August 2017-March 2019

Student Rabbi

- Organized the first ever integrated Simchat Torah celebration between Congregation B’nai Israel and a local Kokomo “neo-Hasidic” *chavurah* made up largely of formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Shared the pulpit at B’nai Abraham with a local Episcopalian pastor to create a “unity and solidarity” service following the Tree of Life shooting.
- In both settings, connected aging Jewish communities with organizations to ensure that the lasting legacy of these congregations would not be forgotten, despite dwindling numbers.

Congregation Beth Israel, Portland, OR, Summer 2017

Rabbinic Intern

Education

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH,

- Rabbinic Ordination, May 2021
- MA in Hebrew Letters, May 2020
- Thesis: “The Ethics of Reading in Reform Judaism” and “An Institution for All Time: Developing a Digital Platform for Developing a Jewish Ethic of Reading”
- Clinical Pastoral Education (August 2019-May 2020)
 - Served at University of Cincinnati Hospital in West Chester, Jewish Hospital, and the Kenwood Skilled Nursing Facility
 - Regularly provided pastoral care in a hospital and nursing setting and served as a night and weekend chaplain on call at Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati
- Shalom Hartman Institute Yearlong Seminar for Rabbinical Students, Jerusalem (August 2016-May 2017)

iCenter, iFellows Master’s Concentration in Israel Education, Chicago, IL, May 2020

American University, School of International Service, Washington, DC, May 2013

- BA in International Studies, Minor in Religious Studies
- European Union in Action study abroad program, Brussels, Belgium, Fall 2012

Professional Development

Weinberg Accelerate, Hillel International, August 2022-Present

- Anticipated completion in Spring 2024
- Receive professional support for and training in executive management at Hillel