Our purpose is simple: to inspire Jewish students through community building, collaborative ventures, leadership opportunities, and educational experiences. From enjoying a home-cooked Shabbat dinner at the Freeman Center to road tripping through the South, our students can explore Judaism and Jewish culture from countless vantage points and discover what excites them about leading a life inspired by Jewish values. There are so many entry points into Jewish life here at Duke - discover yours...
“I was struck by the similarities between American college kids and the Israeli soldiers that accompanied us on our Birthright Israel trip. Their lives and experiences are so vastly different from ours but still we all had this unbelievable connection. Touring their country with them, getting to know them, and seeing things through their eyes was truly an incredible experience.”

Amy Kramer

Hometown: Boca Raton, FL
Anticipated major & graduation year: Public Policy, T’18
We understand that the first year of college can be intimidating; being out on your own, not knowing anyone, and having to adjust to college life is a lot to take on all at once. That’s why we make it a priority to welcome incoming students before they even set foot on campus. As part of the university orientation, our Jewish First Year Advisory Mentorship (JFAM) program provides you with a personal liaison to campus life who will reach out during the summer, so when you arrive on campus, you’ve got a friendly face eager to greet you. JFAM bridges the gap between first-year students and upper-class students, fostering relationships that make adjusting to both the Jewish and larger Duke communities much easier.

You’ll quickly learn that our community is a welcoming, close-knit, active group of students with diverse interests. We value that you will also bring your own ideas and passions to the mix. As a first-year student, you’ll have many opportunities to get involved and take on leadership roles. Whether you decide to join the Freshman Council, sit on the Jewish Student Union board, or bake with Challah for Hunger, you’ll find that your voice is always valued. From the get-go, you’ll have the ability to effect real change and help us nurture Jewish life on campus.
I was in Cameron Indoor Stadium the night of the 2015 National Championship game and we were all crowded into the stands like sardines. It was during Passover, and all I’d eaten beforehand was a small Matzoh PB&J at lunch. We won the game, rushed the court, and I don’t think I’ve ever been simultaneously so happy, and so hungry!

Ben Africk

Hometown: Dayton, Ohio
Anticipated major & graduation year: Neuroscience, T’17
Between classes: Junior Representative for Jewish Student Union | Recruitment Chair on Undergraduate Admissions Tour Guide Leadership Team | First-Year Advisory Counselor | Brotherhood Education Chair for Chi Psi Fraternity
At Duke, you’ll have countless opportunities to engage with renowned Jewish academics and leaders from all facets of university life. Through the Duke Center for Jewish Studies, you can earn a certificate or design your own interdisciplinary major based on individual interests and professional goals. Enroll in Hebrew language courses and use those skills abroad on DukeEngage or for study in Israel. Take advantage of funded internships, supported honors research projects, and programs that have sent students all over the world.
“Before arriving at Duke, I was a little nervous about not being able to find people I would fit in with. But the day I got to campus, I was immediately greeted with a Jewish Life at Duke cup outside my dorm room door and then I kept seeing other residents in my hall with the same swag outside their doors! I joined JFAM shortly after, got connected with my Jewish peers, and made some amazing friendships. Looking back, it’s funny to think about how concerned I was about making friends.”

Lauren Katz

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA
Anticipated major & graduation year: Computer Science, T’18
Between classes: Pi Beta Phi Sorority | Hack For Humanity | Marketing Team for Spoon University blog | Writer for FORM magazine’s weekly blog
But learning isn’t just confined to the classroom walls. Our Jewish Agency Israel Fellow helps students discover Israel in all its complexity. And every year, the Israel Fellow leads a busload of Jewish students on Duke’s annual Birthright Israel trip. It’s an experience that goes far beyond the trip’s ten days: exploring sites of historic, cultural, and religious significance, students form deep bonds with the country, their fellow students, and the Jewish community.

Closer to home, our Roots to Rights trip brings Jewish and African-American students together on a six-day bus tour exploring the Civil Rights movement in the South. Offered in collaboration with the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, the trip examines the shared beliefs that brought these seemingly disparate communities together during this pivotal period in American history.

There are scores of ways to explore your Jewish identity here, and no matter how you choose to engage, we’re confident that you’ll discover your own personal connection.
I grew up in Manhattan and attended Jewish day school for almost my entire life, so I was accustomed to being surrounded by a lot of other Jewish people. In visiting colleges, I was looking for schools with warm Jewish communities that would welcome me whether I wanted to be extremely active or, at times, less deeply involved. Duke’s Jewish community has allowed me to be “Jewish” according to my own definition, giving me every religious opportunity I could want without any attached expectations.

Zack Spiera

Hometown: New York, NY
Anticipated major & graduation year: Undecided, Pre-Med Track, T’18
Between classes: Manager for Duke’s Men’s Basketball team | Assistant Coordinator for Duke Basketball Camp
Duke students are driven, smart, and dedicated, so we rely on them to help move us forward. We know that today’s Jewish students are tomorrow’s Jewish leaders. That’s why, at Jewish Life at Duke, students are encouraged to flourish and develop their leadership talents. They help lead religious services, attend national conferences, and guide our Jewish student body. Students can seek out leadership roles with established Jewish student groups, or pioneer new programming and initiate student groups based on their own interests. Of course, Jewish students aren’t just leaders within the walls of the Freeman Center. Whether serving as President of the Inter-Fraternity Council or being recognized as one of Business Insider’s “incredibly impressive” Duke students, Jewish students shine in every aspect of campus life.
Located at the corner of Campus Drive and Swift Avenue on Duke’s Central Campus, the Freeman Center for Jewish Life is the hub of all things Jewish on campus and a home away from home for Jewish students. Since we’re right on the campus bus line, it’s easy to swing by. Grab dinner in our kosher dining hall, shoot some pool, catch the game on our big screen TV, or use our smart board technology to study with friends across campus. Come on by – our doors are always open to you.
Jewish Life at Duke is proud to be an accredited Hillel, fostering an enduring commitment to Jewish life. From Shabbat to Sukkot, from Hanukkah to Passover, the Rubenstein-Silvers Hillel offers our students a place to explore their unique cultural and religious identities. Our full-time campus rabbi facilitates Shabbat and holiday celebrations and services, and is always available for spiritual guidance and support. In true Duke form, our students are not afraid to dive in, taking on everything from shofar blowing to hosting their own Passover seders.

But we’re not only a Hillel – we’re also an official department of Duke University, fully integrated into the fabric of university life. It’s the best of both worlds, really – terrific Jewish programming, of course, but with the added benefit of Duke University’s full support. Kosher dining is offered through the Duke meal plan and available to all students. Duke also maintains a Religious Observance Policy, which recognizes all Jewish holidays and provides the opportunity to be excused from class on those days. This policy reflects the University’s commitment to honoring Duke’s increasing diversity, and to enabling its students’ spiritual development.
SHALOM, Y’ALL

You’ll feel right at home in Durham, North Carolina, a progressive, diverse, and rapidly growing city with a vibrant and active Jewish community. The Durham-Chapel Hill area is home to a number of distinct congregations, a local Jewish Federation, a Jewish Community Center, and myriad other Jewish community organizations, so our students never lack for opportunities to connect with the larger Jewish community.

BE IN TOUCH

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