

**THE HARRY AND SYLVIA HOFFMAN
LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM
AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM:**

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

May 2012

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Executive Summary

At the time of its establishment in 2007, it was agreed that the Harry and Sylvia Hoffman Leadership and Responsibility Program would be reviewed during 2012.

The process established for this review ensured that the reviewing committee received ample information:

- the file of documentary material supplied in advance was comprehensive;
- candid interviews provided a range of useful insights;
- practical administrative support for the review was thoughtful and helpful;
- and the approach taken by the Hebrew University to the whole process could not have been more scrupulously transparent.

The committee's main findings are entirely positive:

- the fundamental concept underpinning the Hoffman program is a powerful and distinctive one;
- its implementation through the details of program management is truly impressive;
- participants value highly the experiences provided by the program, testifying to an enriched understanding of socially responsible leadership;
- the University's leaders recognise that the program is unique – indeed a world leader – and thoroughly deserves to be cherished;
- and the program's potential as a bridge from the academic world into the wider community is already beginning to be appreciated.

The review committee's advice to the University is chiefly that it should continue to give the strongest possible support to this prestigious program. In addition there are a few opportunities to enhance the program further:

- some small changes to the program content may be worth considering;
- there is a need for arrangements that would keep alumni more closely engaged with each other, with the Hoffman Program, and with the University;
- it could be publicised more effectively, e.g. through a dedicated website;
- a slightly more formal governance structure appears to be desirable.

1. Review Process

1.1 Terms of Reference

In 2007 Harry and Sylvia Hoffman agreed with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to support a program within the University aimed at encouraging young graduate students of exceptional ability to combine a serious academic career with an identifiable commitment to play a leadership role and to have an impact on Israeli society and the global community as a whole, whether in public service, business, or scholarly leadership.

It was also agreed that, on the basis of an independent review to be conducted during 2012, two reviewers (one nominated by Mr and Mrs Hoffman, one by the University) would together prepare a report to facilitate a decision on whether the program ought to continue. It was specified that the reviewers should examine relevant documents including data from participant surveys; should interview a sample of past and present program participants, program coordinators, and key stakeholders; and should formulate advice on the quality of the program and on opportunities for its enhancement.

1.2 International Committee

Professor Joseph Lampel (City University, London) and Winthrop Professor Ian Reid (University of Western Australia, Perth) were invited to form the International Review Committee. Their visit to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem took place in the second week of May 2012.

1.3 Documentation

In February 2012 the reviewers submitted a list of documentary items that they would like to receive, along with a list of requested interviews. In response, a month before the visit, the University provided a comprehensive compilation of papers (146 pp. plus appendices) to the reviewers. Among other things, this information included a clear description of the program's nature and goals, sample publicity material, details of the selection process, lists of participants in each cohort, notes on meeting

arrangements and topics for each year, summary review comments by all participants, and assessments of each session.

1.4 Interviews

During the visit, the reviewers interviewed the following:

- 10 program participants, male and female, drawn from the first, second and third cohorts and from a variety of academic disciplines.
- Present and former Heads of the Hoffman Program – Prof. Amalya Oliver, Prof. Roi Baer and Prof. Avner De-Shalit.
- The Rector, Prof. Sarah Stroumsa, and Vice-Rector, Prof. Yaacov Schul.

Discussions with the Rector and Vice-Rector took place both at the beginning and at the end of the visit. There were several opportunities for discussions with Prof. Oliver. All interviews and other conversations were refreshingly open and constructive.

1.5 Administrative Support

The reviewers warmly appreciate the quality of the practical administrative support given to them and to the review process. This included not only the timely provision of documents and other information beforehand but also various convenient arrangements during the visit, for which particular thanks are due to Ms Lital Myers of the Hoffman Program and Ms Frances Neumark of the Rector's Office, both of whom gave considerate assistance. The accommodation, meals and transport kindly provided by the University were excellent.

It was a pleasant bonus to be shown some of the impressive features of the campuses (e.g. library facilities) and especially the fine new building that will house the Hoffman Program).

2. Main Findings

2.1 Program Concept

The supplied documentation characterises neatly the primary goal of the Hoffman Program: “to offer the most highly qualified doctoral students at the Hebrew University an opportunity to work together on understanding issues of leadership and

responsibility and at the same time provide them with the fellowship that enables them to focus on their academic research.” Thus the program arrangements give these exceptionally capable people “three years of participation in a collaborative process that emphasises their strong commitment to group activities and needs, and social activities that lead to cohesiveness and intra-group diffusion of norms and expectations.”

Similarly, when program participants themselves were asked during interviews to summarise the essence of the Hoffman experience, they described it as a group of intelligent individuals from different backgrounds, committed to serious enquiry and social responsibility, coming together to solve problems by sharing knowledge in a spirit of respectful curiosity and thus learning “to think like a leader.”

This program concept is unusual and powerful. Its particular configuration of features – notably, interdisciplinary cooperation among select participants who are diverse in their specialised expertise but united in their devotion to standards of academic excellence and ideals of community engagement; self-organised sessions that focus on issues of socially responsible leadership; and an expectation that each individual will maintain volunteering activities alongside their research projects – has the potential to transform usual notions about the nature of advanced-level academic work.

2.2 Implementation

The reviewers were delighted to see how intelligently and conscientiously the Hoffman Program concept has been implemented in the day-to-day management of activities.

There is ample evidence (in the survey results, in the other documentation, and in the details provided during interviews) that every aspect of the program is thoroughly planned and carefully executed. Not only in the structure of fortnightly sessions and the intensive summer retreat but also in the administrative and pastoral support arrangements, the program’s organisation is of a very high standard, as befits the original concept. This reflects great credit on all concerned, but special mention must be made of the vital role that Amalya Oliver has continued to play in nurturing the group members and modelling the behavioural norms on which the program’s success ultimately depends. Participants particularly appreciate the sensitive and

caring attitude shown by Amalya, Lital and others, the expert facilitation, the openness to suggestions, and the readiness to make changes in response to feedback.

One practical matter of timing was raised with the reviewers and seems worth consideration. Because another highly prestigious scheme for supporting doctoral students at the University, the President's Scholarship scheme, announces its awards a little earlier than the Hoffman awards, the situation sometimes arises where someone who is a candidate for both and is offered a President's Scholarship will decide to take it to avoid missing out on financial support – even though he or she may prefer to participate in the Hoffman Program. If the time frames for the two awards could be aligned, candidates would be able to make a less constrained decision.

2.3 Perceptions of Participants

The summary written comments supplied by participants are full of enthusiastic statements about the value of the program. It is tempting to quote more extensively, but the following excerpts (taken from remarks by some of the people not available for interview) represent a consensus that matches what the reviewers heard directly in conversations:

- “The Hoffman Program was an empowering experience that provided me with the opportunities, motivation, inspiration and role models for developing my personal vision and confidence that everything is possible. It was a lot more than a generous scholarship.... I believe it is one of the most important educational tools available for Hebrew University students, and I hope to see it extended in the coming years.” (Shiri Tal-Landman)
- “The Hoffman Program provided me with a huge support – financially and morally, for my volunteer work.... It has also allowed me to invest time in my research, thus expanding it to new horizons.” (Adva Eichengreen)
- “The Hoffman Program had a very strong impact on me. I grew up in a neighbourhood that did little to encourage understanding of others. During my years in the Hoffman Program I was exposed to a group of highly intelligent and capable men and women and their ideas (which differed from mine in many cases). I really feel that taking part in these meetings has helped me to shape a new insight into the world I live in.” (Ohad Ilovich)

- “The constant dealing in social responsibility issues along with the exposure to the activities of the group members provide an incentive to take action and a strong sense that it is possible to make a difference in the society we live in.” (Matan Golan)
- “An important and empowering program. I feel that it contributed both to my research and to my motivation for the future in many ways.... A special thanks goes to Amalya – she is greatly empowering, sensitive and kind, always believing in us and encouraging us to do and to think. The program is wonderfully organised, and both Amalya and Lital deserve great thanks for that.” (Anat Itay)
- “Certainly the financial support was crucial to find the free time to concentrate and push forward a complicated and demanding research program. But no less important was being part of a group of fellows that was chosen and then nurtured with much care and thought.” (Yonatan Livneh)

2.4 Comparability

The Terms of Reference ask the reviewers to advise whether the Hoffman Program meets the highest international standards for this type of program. There is no doubt that it is indeed excellent, but one of the most remarkably valuable features of the Hoffman Program is that it is almost incomparable – *sui generis*.

While a few other doctoral programs elsewhere (particularly in some colleges in the United States) do have a focus on community leadership and social responsibility, these are relatively specialised, tending to concentrate on preparing graduates for work in the not-for-profit sector. In a larger number of university programs, usually in Business Schools, the approach to leadership education is framed primarily in management terms.

There appears to be no parallel case, at least among high-ranking research-intensive universities comparable in their calibre to the Hebrew University, of the kind of opportunity that the Hoffman Program represents – i.e., a program that draws together a select group of outstanding young scholars from various disciplines, supports them generously in their own particular research projects, and utilises that range of expertise to create an interdisciplinary resource for engaging responsibly with challenges in the wider community.

The uniqueness of the program is recognised by those Hoffman participants who have studied in other institutions. Notably, Jennifer Oser (now a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania) remarks that “the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship and Hoffman community is simply unparalleled” – and she contrasts it with the way in which American academics tend to be “siloed into their particular sub-specialties within a particular academic department and discipline.” Other Hoffman participants also understand how distinctive the program is; for instance Roy Oppenheim says it “stands out in its social commitment, as opposed to other, merit-based only, programs that focus only on the academic aspects. The Hoffman program therefore designs a new model of the academic researcher, ... with obligations towards the community.” Tamar Berenblum, similarly, sees the Hoffman program’s emphasis on social responsibility as “extremely important in changing the organisational culture of the university.”

3. Opportunities for Enhancement

3.1 Program Content

Given the very high level of satisfaction with program content, the reviewers do not wish to suggest any substantial changes. The choice of speakers and topics is already commendably self-regulating, e.g. through candid evaluation of each session.

One minor point that may be worth consideration is that a few of those interviewed thought it desirable to hold more sessions or activities out in the “field”. While there are no doubt practical constraints such as logistics, safety and (within the present budget) cost, perhaps it is still feasible to extend the scope of the group’s collective engagement with the community beyond the University.

Another suggestion that emerged from some of the participant feedback is that, while the primary emphasis on volunteering is entirely justified, it could also be valuable to include a wider range of entrepreneurial leadership ideas, for instance regarding the practical challenges of establishing start-up organisations that can produce tangible community benefits. This would be in keeping with the fact that the program was characterised in the Agreement (Recital A) in a way that seems to envisage more diverse channels for socially responsible leadership than volunteering alone.

3.2 Alumni Relations

A recurrent theme in interviews with participants is that most and perhaps all of them would like the University to provide arrangements for alumni to continue to be more closely engaged with each other and with the Hoffman Program – and thus with the University itself.

This has great potential for enlarging the influence of the program. The desired continuity could be achieved in several ways.

- Among program graduates who remain in or near Jerusalem there is an appetite for “reunion” meetings once or twice a year. Perhaps they themselves could be given a large part of the responsibility for organising such meetings, but it is surely in the University’s interest to facilitate arrangements.
- Some former participants could be invited to speak to current participants from time to time within the program of meetings.
- A long-term multi-faceted community project could be devised as something to which many Hoffman alumni could contribute over a period of time.
- As some former participants disperse, e.g. for postdoctoral work in other places, face-to-face meetings will not cater for all those who are keen to remain in touch. An on-line forum, perhaps in the form of a limited-access “corner” of a more general Hoffman Program website (see 3.3 below), would be popular, and could also be a vehicle for occasional electronic newsletters from the program organisers.

3.3 Publicity

Such an impressive program deserves to be more widely known. While the internal publicity seems adequate for local student information within the Hebrew University, the Hoffman Program is almost invisible on the internet unless one happens to know to combine search terms such as “leadership” and “doctoral program” with “Hoffman.” This is disappointing. The program should have its own prominent, attractively designed and informative website, not only in order to bring it to the attention of potential applicants from outside the Hebrew University and even from outside Israel but also to celebrate it as an outstanding initiative – one that redounds to

the credit of the benefactors, participants and host institution. This could palpably strengthen the international reputation of the University itself.

The website ought to include testimonial statements from former participants about the distinctive nature and benefits of the Hoffman Program. Reference to what one former participant (Orly Aziz-Boaron) calls “the moving vision of Mr and Mrs Hoffman and their generous support” would be appropriate in this context.

3.4 Governance

The organisational chart (volume of review papers, p. 2) indicates that there is an Academic Committee for the Hoffman Program, comprising Prof. Hanoch Gutfreund as chair, Prof. Amalya Oliver and Prof. Roi Baer as co-organisers of the program, and three past co-organisers (Prof. Boas Shamir, Prof. Avner De-Shalit and Prof. Udi De-Shalit).

This is no doubt a very useful assortment of experienced people to serve as a resource for the current program co-organisers. However, the impression gained by the reviewers is that it tends not to operate as a formally constituted group with regular reporting obligations. In any case, there may be value for the program and for the University in considering whether to formalise the membership and terms of reference of this committee and to include one or two members who are external to the University. Expanding the range of perspectives, so that support for those managing the program can come from suitably qualified representatives of the wider community as well as from senior academics, would be consistent with the nature and goals of the Hoffman Program – and could also help to make its work better appreciated by stakeholders in Israeli society at large.

In conclusion, the reviewers believe that the Hoffman Program has achieved great success in fulfilling its ambitious aims. Judged by any relevant criteria, it operates at an admirably high standard of excellence and is a credit to all parties. Conducting this review has been a pleasure and a privilege.

Joseph Lampel and Ian Reid

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