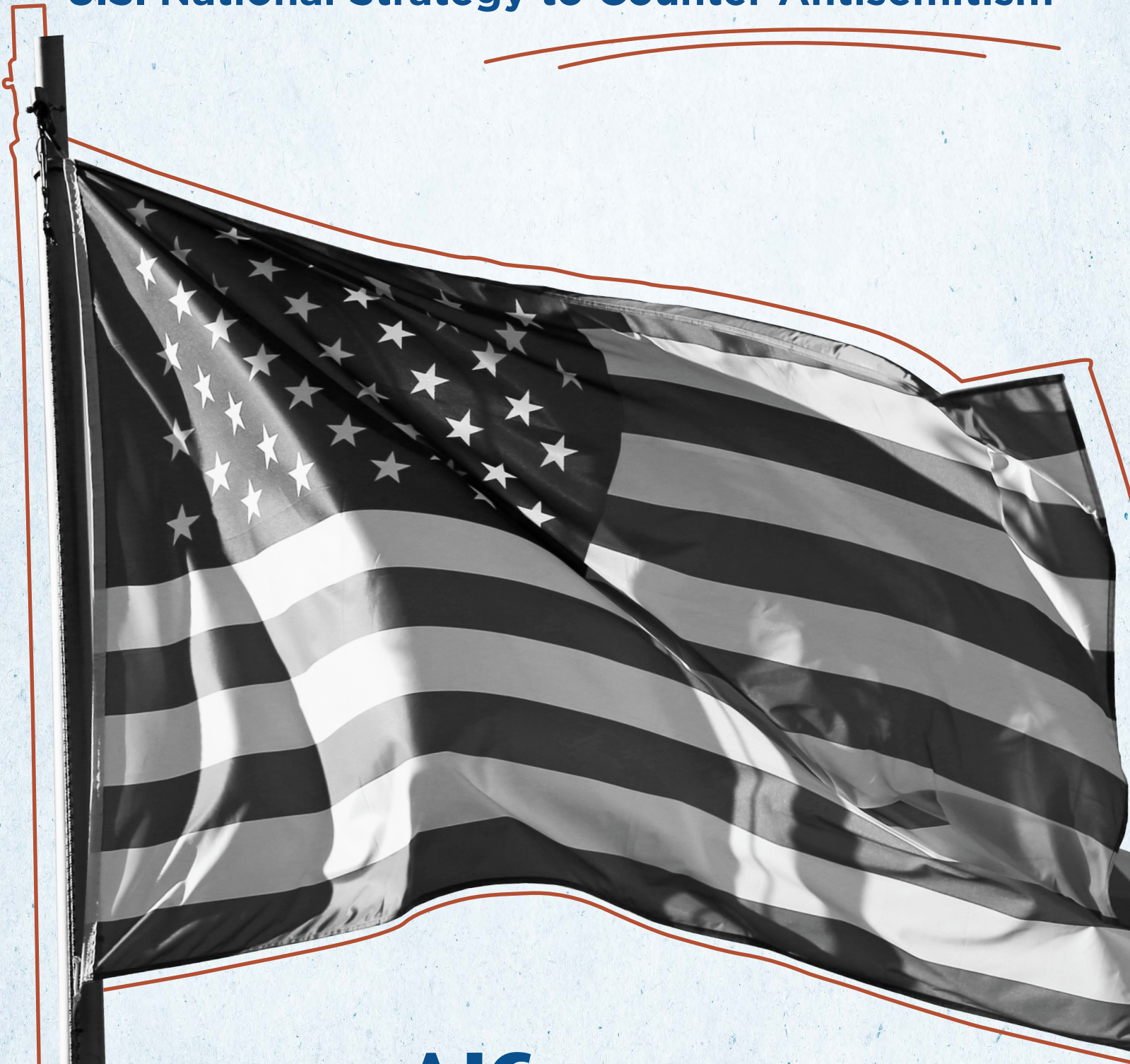


AJC Guide for Higher Education Administration
**Tools for Successful Implementation of the
U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism**



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In May of 2023, the White House published a 60-page [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#)¹. The National Strategy is the first federally-issued set of guidelines to outline society-wide action steps aimed at confronting antisemitism, including steps aimed specifically at colleges and universities. At American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, we are proud to have served as key interlocutors in its development. We have prepared a guide for our higher education partners to help you be part of this historic national initiative to confront anti-Jewish hatred. We hope you will use our guide to identify specific areas of focus that will make your campus more inclusive for Jews and all minority groups. We are eager to work with you and the members of your team to devise a specific, actionable plan that addresses antisemitism effectively.

For more information about anything in this guide or to discuss programming initiatives, please contact AJC Director of Academic Affairs, Sara Coodin, PhD at coodins@ajc.org.

¹www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf

Context for *The National Strategy*



ANTISEMITISM IS A PROBLEM WHOSE SCOPE IS not limited only to Jews or Jewish communities. Data from [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report](#)² unequivocally affirms that a vast majority of the general American population - 91% - feels that antisemitism affects society as a whole and is a problem that impacts everyone. The National Strategy also recognizes antisemitism's long reach, which "threatens not only the Jewish community, but all Americans." (National Strategy, p. 2) To confront it effectively requires a community-wide effort involving cooperative intergroup action, modeling effective practices from the top, sharing knowledge across sectors, and creating clear pathways of inclusion so that Jews can participate fully and freely in all aspects of American social life. Unfortunately, recent data also makes clear that too many Jewish college students feel the need to conceal aspects of their Jewish identity on campus. [In 2022, 21% of recent Jewish American college students](#)³ reported avoiding wearing, carrying, or displaying an identifying object such as a Star of David or head covering.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE AN IMPORTANT role to play in addressing antisemitism, and not only because [antisemitic incidents on college campuses nationwide have increased in recent years](#)⁴. As centers of knowledge-creation and education, academic institutions are uniquely equipped to deepen societal understanding of antisemitism's roots and the spaces where it proliferates now.

BECAUSE OF THEIR DEEPLY-HELD COMMITMENT TO inclusive and diverse community-building, universities routinely grapple with the challenges posed by bias, bigotry, and intolerance within a pluralistic setting. Prejudice itself often moves across an interlocking set of targets and therefore requires coalition work to be effectively addressed. When anti-Jewish hatred emerges, it is frequently in combination with other forms of hate such as misogyny, Islamophobia, racism, and homophobia that target many marginalized groups. It is vital that we understand the intersecting lines that connect them if we are to devise meaningful pathways forward.

²[AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2022](https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022)

³[AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2022/AmericanJews](https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2022/AmericanJews)

⁴www.wsj.com/articles/antisemitism-is-rising-at-colleges-and-jewish-students-are-facing-growing-hostility-11671027820

HISTORICALLY, ANTISEMITISM HAS FOUND FERTILE ground in a broad distrust of shared institutions, including the ones that underwrite democracy. The conspiracy theories that animate antisemitism, which turn Jews into scapegoats for broader societal problems, imagine undue Jewish influence over key areas such as politics, the media, and the economy. Because antisemitism traffics in a dangerous distrust of these shared social institutions, it is vital to scrutinize both familiar and newly emergent forms that fall into these tropes. While antisemitic conspiracism primarily endangers Jews and Jewish communities, it also erodes the fabric of our democracy in ways that affect all Americans. The National Strategy correctly calls for a broad coalition of voices and a shared sense of responsibility to confront antisemitism effectively.

IN THIS GUIDE, WE HAVE DESIGNATED TWO MAIN categories of action that universities can invest in: **Proactive Initiatives**, and **Responsive Measures**. Each of the specific action items in these two categories elaborates on the points issued in the National Strategy. And while we recognize that not all campuses can or should implement every one of these items, our hope is that this guide will offer concrete, actionable steps that will build on your existing initiatives. In crucial respects, the ideals of higher education are already aligned with the National Strategy's highest aims: helping to create a more inclusive environment for a robustly pluralistic population; helping foster informed conversations about diverse identities and cultures; and recognizing the requirement that we all work together to combat this and all forms of hatred and bigotry.

Proactive Steps Your Campus Can Take to Confront Antisemitism and Promote Intergroup Allyship and Jewish Inclusion

Action item: Ensure that your school's student-focused DEI programming addresses anti-Jewish hatred and discusses it alongside other forms of hate, including misogyny, islamophobia, homophobia, and racism.

Action steps: When antisemitism isn't treated with the same seriousness as other forms of hate, it risks becoming normalized. DEI programs have a vital role to play in confronting antisemitism and resisting its normalization. When antisemitism isn't addressed as a relevant form of hatred that is still part of today's world and when Jews are assigned an identity that equates Jewishness with whiteness and privilege, Jews can easily become scapegoats for a host of perceived social ills, and misperceptions about Jews flourish unchecked. It is essential that DEI programming aimed at students include robust discussions about antisemitism. Ideally, this should include discussion of the common threads linking various forms of hatred that are experienced by marginalized groups in addition to antisemitism's distinctive features, such as its connection to conspiracy theories and its tendency to escalate, not shrink, in tandem with Jewish socio-economic prosperity.

AJC resources: We recognize that DEI officers themselves often require better resources in order to understand the identities and histories of Jewish students and stage these discussions. AJC has highly specialized staff who excel in educating student-facing administrators and staff. We can help sensitize small and large teams to the needs of Jewish students and improve staff's understanding of where Jews fit into the current DEI landscape. We can also help collaborate on productive pathways towards respectful intergroup communication on your campus.

Action item: Ensure that antisemitism awareness is an integral part of workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and awareness training for university employees.

Action steps: Providing programs and resources that build awareness of what antisemitism looks like and how it commonly manifests helps contribute to a fairer and more inclusive community for everyone in a university space.



AJC resources: We can help by supplying resources and training sessions that will create improved sensitivity and understanding among the members of university communities, including administrators, faculty, students, and staff (including development staff, who may benefit from guidance on responding to donors' concerns about campus antisemitism). AJC offers dynamic educational tools about antisemitism which can be found [here](#)⁵. Of particular importance are [AJC's Translate Hate glossary](#)⁶, which explains the history and modern manifestations of antisemitic tropes; and AJC's annual survey on the [State of Antisemitism in America](#)⁷, which portrays the magnitude and impact of that hatred. For questions about these resources or to arrange a training specifically tailored for the needs of your university or college community, please [contact us](#).

Action item: *Ensure that Jewish holidays are respected within the academic calendar, and enhance awareness and accommodation of Jewish culture and practices, including holidays and dietary restrictions.*

Action steps: Jewish holidays require accommodation, which includes making sure that major school programs and/or testing are not scheduled on those dates and offering alternatives to students who cannot attend school on Jewish holidays due to religious observance.

AJC Resources: AJC's [Guide to Jewish Religion and Culture](#)⁸ helps staff plan around Jewish holidays and become better acquainted with key Jewish cultural practices.

Action item: *Make an effort to attend Jewish campus groups' cultural events and holiday celebrations.*

Action steps: Modeling an effective "tone from the top" starts with demonstrating warmth, curiosity and a willingness to learn about Jewish life on campus. Consider attending a Shabbat dinner hosted by a campus organization such as Hillel or Chabad and make time to meet with Jewish student leaders. These gestures signal to the entire school community that Jews are welcome and their differences are seen and respected at your institution.

AJC resources: AJC has 25 [regional offices](#)⁹ that span the United States. We are happy to connect you to the regional office closest to your school to discuss further opportunities to engage in your nearby Jewish community.

Action item: *Create forums to discuss resources and best practices for antisemitism education, where academics can partner with Jewish and non-Jewish community leaders and educators.*

Action steps: The National Strategy cites universities as crucial areas where knowledge transfer takes place between researchers and the wider community. Addressing antisemitism is a shared undertaking. It requires that everyone involved engage in conversations about best practices – from K-12 educators to religious leaders to corporate and political officials to non-profit practitioners. Because of their investment in research, universities are uniquely positioned to become centers for the communication of vital knowledge. However, too often, knowledge circulates in only a limited way among fellow specialist-researchers.

AJC resources: We are actively engaged in supporting institutions that seek to broaden the reach of important research and scholarship on antisemitism. [We can help](#)¹⁰ your researchers convene conversations across a broad range of sectors and communities to maximize the impact of their work. We also strongly encourage you to attend AJC's second University Presidents Summit on campus antisemitism, co-sponsored by Hillel International and the American Council on Higher Education, which we are planning for Fall of 2024. [The University Presidents Summit](#)¹¹ represents a focused opportunity for university presidents and chancellors as well as DEI officers to engage in dialogue and learning with peer institutional leaders.

Action item: *Strengthen academic research on antisemitism and its impact on American society.*

Action steps: The National Strategy recommends expanding investment in research on antisemitism across a range of disciplines, especially research that explores antisemitism's intersection with other forms of hatred.

AJC resources: We can help you find ways to incentivize and amplify research activities that take an intergroup approach to studying hate and engage in collaborative research into antisemitism across scholarly disciplines. We have strong existing partnerships with Holocaust museums, research libraries and archives, and scholarly organizations and are keen to discuss new and productive ways to incentivize and amplify your campus' antisemitism research.

⁵AJC.org/Antisemitism

⁶AJC.org/TranslateHateGlossary

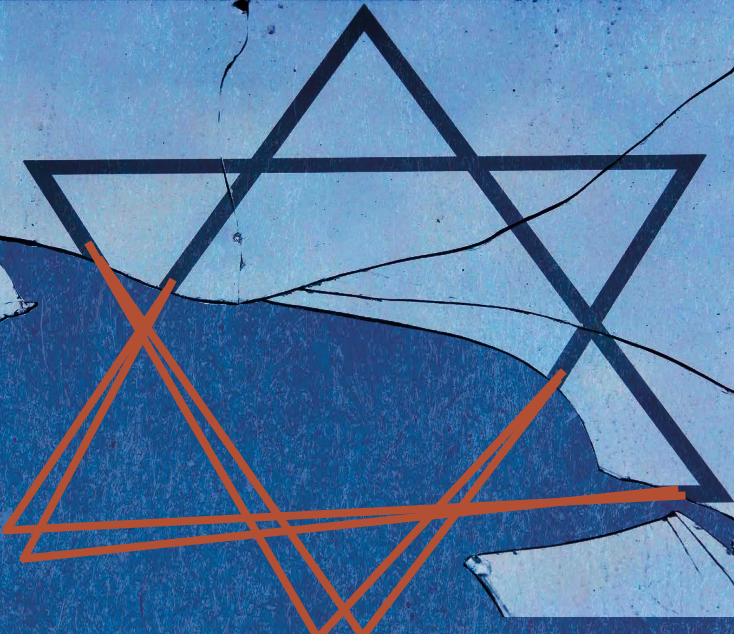
⁷AJC.org/AntisemitismReport2022

⁸AJC.org/GuidetoJewishReligionandCulture

⁹AJC.org/regionaloffices

¹⁰Please email coodins@ajc.org

¹¹[AJC.org/news/university-presidents-diversity-officers-learn-new-tools-to-address-antisemitism-at-summit](https://www.ajc.org/news/university-presidents-diversity-officers-learn-new-tools-to-address-antisemitism-at-summit)



Responsive Measures *Your Campus Can Adopt to Help Address Antisemitic Incidents on Your Campus*

Action item: *When antisemitic incidents occur on your campus, make clear, unwavering statements that specifically name and condemn them.*

Action steps: The National Strategy has stated that clear statements from university administrators are vital to confronting the normalization of antisemitism on campus. Normalization occurs when antisemitism is ignored, downplayed, or diluted, and it can occur when authority figures fail to name and condemn antisemitism or when it goes unremarked in the general population. Authority figures, particularly those who occupy high-level administrative roles on campus, have an important role to play in responding to antisemitic incidents and setting a “tone from the top” that makes clear that antisemitism is not tolerated on their campus. Strong statements combating normalization specifically name and condemn antisemitism when it occurs, even in the larger context of free speech and academic freedom imperatives. Strong statements also affirm that inclusion and belonging apply equally and without reservation to Jewish campus citizens, including those who profess a connection to Zionism or the State of Israel. Productive statements offer pathways forward, including resources for victims, that can help the campus community heal while also proactively addressing antisemitism by generating improved understanding about Jewish history, identity, and heritage.

AJC resources: Defining antisemitism is often paramount in effective statements. AJC offers a number of online educational resources on how to define antisemitism, which can be found [here](#)¹² and [here](#)¹³. The [National Strategy](#)¹⁴ also discusses the definition of antisemitism on page 13. Our expert staff is available to help suggest language for strong statements.

¹²[AJC.org/Antisemitism](https://www.ajc.org/Antisemitism)

¹³[AJC.org.org/AntisemitismResources](https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismResources)

¹⁴www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf

Action item: Ensure that your school has a clear, transparent reporting mechanism for hate crimes and bias incidents.

Action steps: In order for a campus to remain equitable and inclusive, it is essential that students, faculty, and staff have access to streamlined, confidential channels to report bias and harassment. It is equally important that those reporting structures protect complainants from retaliatory harassment and that complaints are adjudicated in a timely way. We strongly encourage colleges and universities to advertise their school's reporting structures for bias and discrimination visibly and clearly for all incoming students, a requirement that was recently mandated by law in New York State. Staff who address bias complaints also need to be fully cognizant of current OCR guidelines that provide a framework for complaints about antisemitism under Title VI. The U.S. Department of Education has issued a [Dear Colleague letter](#)¹⁵ that clarifies schools' obligations under Title VI, which we recommend you distribute to all university staff who oversee bias complaints. An increasingly important feature of the Title VI standard is that it [prohibits discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics; as well as citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity](#)¹⁶. This provision protects all students, including Jews, and has become newly important in cases where Jewish students have been excluded from campus groups on the basis of their real or perceived Zionism. We encourage you to carefully consider the disturbing trend on U.S. campuses to disqualify Jewish students on the basis of Zionism. We recommend you seek ways to promote more factual and nuanced discussions about Zionism's long history and scope, including the deep ties that a majority of American Jews today feel towards the State of Israel.

AJC resources: AJC's staff experts can provide nuanced, fact-based education and resources about the complexities of Israel and the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Our [Project Interchange delegations for academic administrators](#)¹⁷ also offer productive avenues for creating better awareness of Israel and more balanced dialogues about its history and geopolitics on your campus.

Action item: Convene task forces with diverse members of the campus community, including Jews, to address hate on campus.

Action steps: Consider assembling or recommending the creation of a task force to address campus hate that reports directly to a senior administrator (president or provost). This sends a strong signal that a school is actively engaged in addressing antisemitism and that it views confronting hate as a campus-wide effort involving a range of minority groups. It is essential that Jewish voices be part of ongoing conversations about actionable steps to address areas of concern specific to their campus community; however, engaging Jewish student leaders and faculty alongside representatives from other groups also communicates an expectation of shared investment in creating a safer, more inclusive campus for everyone.

AJC Resources: Our staff experts have worked with task forces at a number of universities and can offer strategic guidance to assist you in creating one on your campus.

¹⁵www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/antisemitism-dcl.pdf

¹⁶www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocr-factsheet-shared-ancestry-202301.pdf

¹⁷AJC.org/projectinterchange/university-leaders

American Jewish Committee (AJC) is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. With headquarters in New York, 25 offices across the United States, 14 overseas posts, as well as partnerships with 38 Jewish community organizations worldwide, AJC's mission is to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.

Following the historic unveiling of the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism by the White House, AJC CEO Ted Deutch announced the creation of the AJC Task Force to Implement the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. AJC's Task Force is designed to ensure the execution of the National Strategy, which includes dozens of AJC's recommendations closely resembling [AJC's Call to Action Against Antisemitism in America](#), in a meaningful and timely manner. For more information on AJC's Task Force visit [AJC.org/NationalStrategyNews](https://www.ajc.org/NationalStrategyNews).