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March 17, 2025

Dear Provost Jeff Bowman (bowmanj@kenyon.edu), President Julie Kornfeld (kornfeld@kenyon.edu); and Chair of the Resource Allocation Committee David Rowe (rowed@kenyon.edu):

We are writing as the Executive Committee of the Association for Jewish Studies, the world's largest professional society for Jewish Studies, at the request of our member Krista Dalton, who serves on your faculty. Professor Dalton shared with us Kenyon's Resource Allocation Committee's response to her proposal to create a Jewish studies concentration.

While it is beyond our scope to comment on internal university matters, we affirm Dalton's assertion that Jewish Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field. As we describe on the [AJS website](#), "The field of Jewish Studies includes Jewish history—ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary; Jewish literatures and linguistics in Hebrew, Yiddish, and the other Judaic and vernacular languages of wherever Jews have lived; Judaism, the religion; and Jewish thought, theology, philosophy, and mysticism. Social scientists study Jewish communities around the world. Some study Jewish politics; others, Jews and the arts. Still others focus their explorations on Jews and gender. Jewish Studies incorporates unique subfields: Bible and biblical interpretation, rabbinic literatures and culture, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, Holocaust Studies, and Israel Studies." In other words, while Jewish studies faculty may be housed in religion departments, they often do work that is not traditionally encapsulated in the study of religion. This would suggest that a Jewish Studies concentration with a significant number of courses taught by faculty appointed in a religion department can still be deeply interdisciplinary. As such, Jewish Studies is not necessarily a subset of the field of Religious Studies, even if many of its core faculty may come from that department.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Laura Leibman, President, Association for Jewish Studies
Helen Kim, VP of Program, Association for Jewish Studies
Laura Lieber, VP of Publications, Association for Jewish Studies
Hartley Lachter, VP of Membership and Outreach, Association for Jewish Studies
Lila Corwin Berman, Secretary/Treasurer, Association for Jewish Studies
Robin Judd, Past President, Association for Jewish Studies