



## Best Practice: Academic Forum to Promote Economic Development

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**CITY: JERUSALEM**

**POLICY AREAS: EDUCATION; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### BEST PRACTICE

The Jerusalem AcademiCity project, led by the Jerusalem Development Authority and the city of Jerusalem in collaboration with several university partners, was initiated in 2008 to strengthen Jerusalem's image as a higher education capital and to attract growing numbers of students to the city, thereby contributing to the city's economic development.

### ISSUE

The city of Jerusalem notes that it was once regarded as the capital of the higher education in Israel. However, over the years, as more educational institutions opened throughout Israel, the city of Jerusalem began to lose its position as the foremost place to study for Israelis. Meanwhile, according to project stakeholders, the image of the city deteriorated and the number of migrants out of the city, especially young couples, grew steadily. In the past decade, even though there has been growth in the percentage of students who are accepted to academic institutions in Jerusalem and the institutions remain the highest ranking in the state, Israelis have chosen to study elsewhere.

The city of Jerusalem also notes that in some cases, the local media has perpetuated a negative portrayal of life in Jerusalem while some studies have shown that students who do study in the city view it as a vibrant, modern young city with thousands of students, a lively nightlife and vast cultural opportunities.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the AcademiCity project is to market Jerusalem as an attractive city for higher education both within the borders of Israel and in the international "study abroad" market. The marketing strategy is based both on highlighting the existing attributes of the city and on adding value from strong collaboration among the academic institutions and between these institutions and the city. By 2020, the city of Jerusalem's goals are to attract 20,000 new students to the city, including 5,000 international students and to increase the current number of employees working in the higher education system in the city by 3,000 new employees.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The Jerusalem AcademiCity project consists of three main fields of activity – building an academic forum, enhancing student life, and becoming more competitive in the international market.

Representatives from Jerusalem's academic institutions regularly meet to solve problems, create new partnerships and add value to their existing efforts to attract new students and enhance student life in Jerusalem. Representatives from the forum lobby the government to increase student quotas and to provide construction budgets for new academic facilities. In March 2009, the forum members signed an agreement enabling students from one academic institution to take courses from another academic institution free of charge and to receive credits for these courses at their home institution. This gave students at smaller institutions access to the vast range of courses at the Hebrew University. Prior to the agreement, courses in the arts, music and dance were not available.

Efforts under the AcademiCity project to enhance student life include:

- Providing grants and stipends to groups of students who rent apartments in certain neighborhoods and volunteer as a group on local projects that aim to make their neighborhood more attractive to students, young couples and young families;

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- Developing a one-stop-shop website for students with information about academic programs, financial benefits, student life, renting apartments, transportation, night-life and employment in the city;
- Creating discounts for students at local venues and cultural institutions;
- Investing in festivals and attractions aimed at students;
- Supporting internship programs.

The AcademiCity project also aims to make Jerusalem more competitive in the international education market by encouraging new study abroad opportunities among Jerusalem's academic institutions. This is initiated by granting institutions start-up funds for creating new study abroad programs, providing information to international students looking to study in the city and marketing Jerusalem internationally. Funded by the Jerusalem Development Authority, which is supported by the government of Israel, the project employs a full-time manager.

Other partners of the project include:

- Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (prepared the initial report recommending the creation of AcademiCity)
- Hebrew University of Jerusalem (ranked one of the top 100 universities in the world)
- Bezalel Academy of Art and Design
- Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance
- Hadassah College
- David Yellin Teachers College
- Jerusalem College of Engineering
- Jerusalem College of Technology

### COST

The initial first year investment was minimal as most of the work in the first year was focused on forming the academic forum and initiating partnerships among the different partners.

The initial annual budget was \$100,000 USD in 2008 and has grown to an annual operating budget of approximately \$1.2 million USD. Ongoing expenditures include stipends, personnel costs, national and international marketing budgets and funds to support festivals and other student events.

### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The AcademiCity project targets the year 2020 as its deadline for reaching its goals with quantifiable and measurable results.

However, the project has already produced several outcomes, namely that the number of students in the city has grown by 1,000 students every year since the project started.

Other outcomes include a signed agreement among the institutional partners to enable students to take courses from other academic institutes with no added tuition and a signed agreement to allow students from Jerusalem institutions to make use of the libraries of the Hebrew University. Most importantly, the AcademiCity project has greatly improved the relationships among the different academic partners in the city.

It is too early to measure whether the AcademiCity project has improved the city's image, but furthering Jerusalem's reputation as a higher education capital continues to be an overarching theme.



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### TIMELINE

Late 2007	Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies prepared a report to initiate the AcademiCity project
February 2008	AcademiCity project begins
2020	Last year AcademiCity project will be funded

### LEGISLATION

Not applicable.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The initial development and eventual success of the project has evolved. The project was designed to initially engage a small group of representatives from partner institutions. Hebrew University was first identified as a leading partner institution and then three other academic partners were invited to join the effort at intervals. After the first year of the project, the forum was enlarged and three more academic partners joined for a total of seven institutions.

A lesson the project leaders learned is that a dedicated, full-time manager is of great importance to the project. This type of project requires a coordinator who infuses the project with new ideas and consistently meets with the different partners and organizations which can benefit from the project and ensure that communication remains active and ongoing.

Also, the funding of the program by a municipal agency is of great importance – it gives the academic partners a financial incentive to join the project, but it also sends a message to the public that the city is entirely committed to its students and the academic institutions in the city.

Finally, striving for mutually beneficial situations for the partners involved is key. Partners will be more motivated to ensure that the project continues to operate if each party benefits in some way.

### TRANSFERABILITY

Higher education is becoming more influenced by localities. Students no longer decide where to attend based solely on the reputation of an academic institution, but also on the city it resides in, its atmosphere and culture, employment opportunities available after graduation, and the cost of living. Therefore, cities around the world are forming similar partnerships between the cities and local academic institutions focused on joint marketing, pooling resources and improving student life.

### CONTACTS

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Facts and figures in this report were provided by the highlighted city agency to New York City Global Partners.