

New JUC director hopes to challenge his students

BY STEPHANIE SIEGEL

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Why be a Jew?

That's the question that Aaron Weil, the new executive director of the Edward and Rose Berman Jewish University Center, plans to ask students who come to Pittsburgh's Hillel.

He also hopes to arm them with the knowledge to answer that question through new, exciting Jewish programming and experiences.

"I want to challenge the students, confront them, give them questions that make them stay up at night," Weil said. "I want to create an environment where students have a place to go to find these answers."

Weil, who started this week, comes to Pittsburgh from Ra'anana, Israel, where he lived for 10 years. His professional experience includes working in politics, marketing, public relations and high technology. Most recently, he was a media strategist and community development organizer for former Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Natan Sharan-sky in this year's election.

He also worked as a media strategist for Nortel Networks and the Jewish National Fund of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In addition, Weil served as Hillel president at the University of Alabama and later at the University of Georgia, from where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science.

"Our ideal candidate was someone with both Hillel and non-Hillel experience and with some nonprofit and some for-profit experience," JUC President Andrew Stewart said. "We thought here's our perfect candidate."

Weil said his professional experience will help him to attract new students and strengthen relationships between the JUC and the community.

"Hillel has a building, but more than that, Hillel is a concept," he said. "It's a potential way of life for college students. Hillel, if successful, will mean a lot of different things to a lot of people."

Weil was attracted to the JUC position because he thinks building Jewish consciousness and identity is important.

"Working with the next generation of Jewish leaders is the most important thing I could do," he said.



File photo

Aaron Weil

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Weil: 'Successful transition' done

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Weil will live in Squirrel Hill with his wife, Sharon, and three children.

He replaces David Terdiman, who resigned from the position this January. His last day is June 30. Terdiman will become the associate director of annual giving at Ramapo College of New Jersey.

Terdiman, who was the JUC's executive director for two years, led the agency

through a transition to a new building and a growing role in Jewish student life.

"We had a very successful transition to our new building and we've seen more students this year than in previous years," Stewart said. "It's a very exciting time watching the agency mature and have an increasingly important role in the community."

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