TRANSCENDING THE OBVIOUS, BUSTING MYTHS AND INTEGRATING DIVERSE RESEARCH FIELDS, A NEW GENERATION OF NEUROSCIENTISTS AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY SEEKS MULTIFACETED ANSWERS TO COMPLEX QUESTIONS THAT AFFECT OUR LIVES.
In my message last year, I wrote that no vision for the future of Tel Aviv University is beyond its capabilities so long as it has the support of its Board of Governors, its friends and its alumni.

I think the University and its supporters have much to be proud of. Tel Aviv University plays an integral part in building the State and in making Israel a world center for creative thinking. A forward-looking society should embrace new research fields, enter into major international collaborations, train educators, bring learning and enrichment to its children, and instill a sense of social responsibility. The faculty, students and graduates of Tel Aviv University are leading the way in all these areas.

Now the challenge is to raise the resources needed for continued world-class accomplishment. Our recent efforts to consolidate and reinvigorate the University leadership have borne fruit. Together, TAU’s supporters can play a vital role in developing new areas in science, technology and the humanities that will keep Israel in the top echelon of knowledge-powered nations.

Tel Aviv University plays an integral part in making Israel a world center for creative thinking.

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Walking through the campus these days, I feel energized and inspired by the visible surge of growth. Earth is being moved and foundations dug for new multi-story buildings; advanced equipment is being installed in new labs; and the new Science Promenade is rapidly being carved from the campus’s eastern hillside. Four more buildings are in the planning or negotiation stages.

This physical growth is paralleled by academic expansion. We recruited 65 new faculty members, up from 50 in 2011 and 34 in 2010. The total student body exceeded 30,000 for the first time in a decade. Together with opening two major interdisciplinary frameworks, the Sagol School of Neuroscience and the Renewable Energy Center, the University has launched a multi-field Mediterranean Studies initiative.

Tel Aviv University was the only institution in Israel to win a leading or senior partnership in five national centers of excellence – in computer science, genomic medicine, cognitive science, renewable energy and nano-medicine. And with the help of foundation and private funding, we launched or dedicated some 50 new projects this year.

Growth for its own sake has little meaning; what is important is to develop areas where we can have the most impact. Thanks to the immense dedication of our faculty and students, our alumni and our supporters around the world, Tel Aviv University is continuing to build on its strengths and increase its contribution to society.

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Harvey M. Krueger
Chairman, Board of Governors

Prof. Joseph Klafter
President, Tel Aviv University
IS OUR FREE WILL REALLY FREE?

Equipped with a background in medicine, computer science, biology, psychology and philosophy, PhD student Omri Perez is asking a provocative question: Are all decisions biologically predetermined? Perez seeks to understand what happens in the brain before we make a conscious decision. Essentially, he is theorizing that our preconscious self decides before our conscious self, a notion that challenges our traditional conception of free will.

By monitoring volunteer subjects’ brain waves using electrodes, a process known as electrocorticography (ECoG), at the TAU-affiliated Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, Perez is able to “see” a person’s neural activity before he makes a decision.

His findings, initially very promising, could herald the development of brain-computer interfaces for patients with locked-in syndrome, a severe neurological condition affecting a person’s ability to move and communicate. Perez speculates, “If we can understand what people want before they act, we could potentially predict or manipulate these choices beforehand.”

Omri Perez, recipient of the Excellence in Converging Technologies Scholarship of the Council for Higher Education, works in collaboration with Prof. Yehezkel Yeshurun of the Blavatnik School of Computer Science, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences, and Prof. Yitzhak Fried, a neurosurgeon at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine.
Anthropologists have long marveled at the curious behavior of the Utku, a small group of Eskimos who lack any conception of anger. Intrigued by this evidence of how culture shapes our emotional states, doctoral student Gal Raz is combining his interests in medicine and film to investigate the impact of culture and upbringing on the brain. Employing fMRI technology to map the neural activity of people watching films, he studies how patterns of connectivity in the brain dynamically change during intense emotions such as sadness, anger, joy and disgust. His technique is also used by fellow students to explore how people with a mental illness or disease, such as those with schizophrenia or Parkinson’s, experience cinematic art in a different way.

Raz hopes that one day his research will lead to therapeutic films based on principles of neuroscience for patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression. His studies also have broad implications for better understanding the relationship between mental disorders and the functioning of specific regions in the brain and could help explain significant variations in behavior among individuals and communities.

Gal Raz works as part of a research team led by Prof. Talma Hendler of the Sackler Faculty of Medicine and the Tel Aviv Functional Brain Center, a cooperative brain imaging lab of the Wolf Institute for Advanced Imaging at the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center and TAU’s Levie-Edersheim-Sitter Institute for Functional Brain Imaging. He also teaches a course on cinema and emotions at the Department of Film and Television, Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts.
HOW DO WE PROCESS FEAR DIFFERENTLY?

It seems logical that highly anxious people would be quicker to spot fear in others and would be acutely aware of their surroundings. PhD candidate Tahl Frenkel decided to test this assumption, using EEG technology, to see if our brain and behavior always tell the same story.

As part of a study on how the brain processes fear among anxious and non-anxious people, she presented each group with a set of pictures featuring a person’s face looking progressively more frightened. She then calculated the precise moment when the two groups identified fear. Frenkel found that while anxious people seemed quicker to respond to fear in the subject’s face, EEG data did not support this observation. The brain waves showed they were actually less sensitive than non-anxious people to subtle changes in facial expressions. Frenkel theorizes that anxious people could be lacking in their threat evaluation capability, which is necessary for effective decision-making and managing fear. Anxious individuals may therefore compensate for this deficit by reacting more strongly to a supposed threat.

Her study highlights how advanced brain technologies are transforming the field of psychology. It is now possible to see up close the neurophysiological correlates of anxiety as well as better understand the complex mechanisms underlying our behavior.

Tahl Frenkel is supervised by Prof. Yair Bar-Haim, Head of the School of Psychological Sciences, Gershon H. Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences, and conducts research at the Adler Center for Research in Child Development and Psychopathology.
One of the hallmarks of neurodegenerative disease is when neurons can no longer communicate with one another and simply stop functioning. Recent breakthroughs at TAU show that glia cells, special cells long thought to be just the “glue” holding neurons together, in fact play a fundamental role in ensuring healthy communication. Serving as the brain’s traffic lights, they control the transfer of information between nerve cells and may provide important clues as to why brain signals stop, go, or eventually fail.

As part of a large collaborative initiative, two students from different disciplines are combining their expertise in order to build a comprehensive picture of the function of glia cells and their role in the onset and progression of disease.

Master’s student Leenoy Meshulam takes a more applied approach. Combining her background in physics, biology and nanoscience, Meshulam uses optical imaging technology to record neurons and glia cells in the brain’s cerebellum. Her current study focuses on changes in glia activity caused by ataxia telangiectasia (AT), a fatal neurodegenerative disease. In the future, she hopes to contribute to innovative solutions to repair damaged DNA in AT and cancer patients.

The students’ work is part of an interdisciplinary study led by Prof. Eshel Ben-Jacob of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences, incumbent of the Alex Maguy Chair in Physics of Complex Systems; Prof. Ari Barzilai of the Department of Neurobiology, George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences; and Prof. Yael Hanein of the Iby and Aladar Fleischman Faculty of Engineering, co-director of the Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology.
About one in every ten children has dyslexia, a learning disorder that affects the ability to read and perform well in school. Yet, despite its prevalence, little is known about the brain development of dyslexic kids and what might cause this neural miswiring to begin with.

Doctoral student Aviv Spektor, specializing in neurolinguistics, sought to test a possible link between diet and the development of dyslexia, a previously unexplored subject: “I wanted to know if there was any special meaning behind the idiom, ‘food for thought.’” His research idea was sparked by a 2003 scandal in Israel when a baby formula importer mistakenly sold a milk product lacking in vitamin B1 (thiamine). As a result, three Israeli babies died and dozens of others suffered from severe damage. Those who survived were given vitamin B1 supplements, which led to an improvement in their condition.

While there is no direct connection between vitamin B1 and language acquisition, due to the central role of this supplement in brain development, Spektor theorized a possible link between vitamin B1 deficiency in newborns and the development of dyslexia later on. To check his hypothesis, he tested a group of healthy seven- and eight-year-old schoolchildren who consumed tainted formula during their first year as well as a control group of similar children who did not.

The results were unequivocal. Ninety-eight percent of the children who lacked vitamin B1 as babies later developed dyslexia while, in contrast, only 10% in the control group experienced reading difficulties. This study provides further evidence of the fundamental role of nutrition in childhood development and learning.

Aviv Spektor works with Prof. Naama Friedman at the Jaime and Joan Constantiner School of Education, Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities.
Fascinated by how bats can perfectly orient themselves in darkness and communicate with one another, undergraduate Orit Dashevsky has been conducting fMRI-based analysis of brain activity in order to understand, for the first time ever, how social behavior is encoded in bats. “Studying bats, which are among the world’s most social mammals,” explains Dashevsky, “could help us understand the origins of human behavior.”

Dashevsky works closely with new young faculty recruit, Dr. Yossi Yovel, in an emerging field they call neuroecology. Dr. Yovel’s team is establishing a bat colony to record the animals’ communication and movement. However, this is not an easy task, since Yovel wants the bats to remain wild and be able to forage off campus. In order to research bats in a natural setting, his team has designed the smallest GPS devices in the world and miniature ultrasonic microphones—specifically developed for this purpose.

“We can learn a lot by studying animal behavior as it is driven by its natural environment,” explains Dr. Yovel. For example, bats rely on echoes reflecting off nearby objects to “see” in the dark, a principle that could be incorporated into navigational techniques for the blind. The way bats communicate and detect objects through sound with super-high accuracy can also teach us a lot about sonar technologies. Researching bats, therefore, has vast implications, from protecting submarines to object recognition by robots to helping the blind “see.”

Dr. Yossi Yovel is a member of the Department of Zoology, George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences.
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“GREAT MINDS
THINK BRAIN
TOGETHER”
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PROJECTS 2012

Young Faculty Recruitment
> William F. Cohen Business Faculty Recruitment Fund - USA
> Recruitment Fund for Outstanding Young Researchers - Latin America

Academic Development
> Thomas Arthur Arnold Excellence in History Fund - USA
> Renewed Support for David Berg Institute for Law and History - USA
> Vida Leon Bensolos Fund - Lichtenstein
> Ahfale, Ellis and Hans Breitbarth Life Sciences Fund - Latin America
> Support for Institute for National Security Studies - Crown Family Foundation, USA
> Naamir Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program - Naamir Foundation, USA
> Kahaneff Retention Initiative for Israeli-Arab Students - Canada
> Support for President’s Fund - Dr. h.c. Karl-Heinz Kipp, Germany
> Dr. Bernard Lewis Book Collection - USA
> Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lewis Book Collection - USA
> British Trust 2011 Living Legacy Fund - UK
> Weis S. Nadal Institute for Technological Entrepreneurship - Canada
> Mano-Ron Foundation Scholarship and Special Courses Program in the Humanities and Arts - Switzerland
> Support for Institute for National Security Studies - Mr. and Mrs. Israel Rozman, USA
> Raymond and Beverly Sackler Harvard-Tel Aviv University Astronomer Initiative
> Expansion of Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in the Physical Sciences - USA
> Edmond J. Safra Center for Bioinformatics - Lichtenstein
> Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics - Lichtenstein
> Sagol School of Neuroscience - Israel
> Community Mental Health Rehabilitation Track in Occupational Therapy - Laszlo N. Tabor Foundation, Israel
> Support for Iranian Studies Program and Scholarships - Naamir Foundation, USA
> Support for Institute for National Security Studies - Cukier-Goldstein-Goren Foundation, Italy
> Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies of New York, USA

Research
> Samir and Ayala Abramov Research Fund in Zionism and Israeli Studies - Israel
> Alliance Research Fund for the Development of Novel Drugs for Alzheimer's Disease - UK
> Support for Breast Cancer Research - Breast Cancer Research Foundation, USA
> "Iron Ages: Archaeology, Text and the Exact Sciences" Research Project - Charm Kateman Foundation, USA
> Bruno Landsberg Chair for Green Chemistry - Israel
> Leon Tishler Medical Research Fund - Israel
> USAID-ASHA Center for AIDS and Infectious Diseases Project - USA
> Ovarian Cancer Research Fund in Memory of Dr. Otto Weinmann, Vienna - Dr. Becklin, Israel

Campus Development
> Refurbishment of the Elter-Smolozik Library of Life Sciences and Medicine - Latin America
> Goldbich Family Foundation Project in Student City - USA
> Avam and Stella Goldstein-Goren Seminar Rooms - Goldstein-Goren Foundation, Italy
> Dr. Habib Levy Collection for Jewish Iranian History and Heritage and Dr. Habib Levy Peres Garden
> David and Laurie Menage, USA
> Upgrade of Porter Ecolab to LEED Platinum standard - Porter Foundation, UK
> Helene Weinstein Film and Television Studio - William F. Cohen and Gail White, USA
> Equipment for Functional Genomics - Wolfson Charitable Trust, UK

Student Aid and Fellowships
> Crown Family Foundation Graduate Fellowships in the Sciences - USA
> Eleonore and Harold Foxenberg Doctoral Research Fellowship in Alzheimer’s Disease - USA
> Israeli Friends of Tel Aviv University Scholarship Fund for Students in Need - USA
> Israeli Friends of Tel Aviv University Presidential Scholars Fund - Israel
> Anna and Georgie Laufer Endowment Fund for Graduate Fellowships in Biomedical Engineering Research in Respiratory Diseases - USA
> Professor Dan Michael Schwall Scholarship Fund at the School of Public Health - Israel
> Irene and Max Anders Mossia Scholarship Fund in Memory of Their Families Who Died in the Holocaust - Israel
> Max Rich Foundation Student Scholarships - Switzerland
> Shared Program for Ethiopian Students – Rothschild Caisseana Foundation, Israel
> Helen Sarah Steyer and Thomas Mark Steyer Scholarship Endowment Fund - USA
> Scholarship Fund for Outstanding Students in Need – Yehi Lorfat Estate, Israel
> Ruth and Allen Ziegler Student Services Division - USA

Community
> Soccer Training Course - Kahaneff Foundation, Canada

Listed Projects of $100,000 and above, by alphabetical order within categories.
ISRAEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS

Prof. Yaacov Benyamini | Exact Sciences

A leading expert in the integration of theoretical and applied research in statistical methodology. Prof. Benyamini is recognized for his development, together with Prof. Yosef Hochberg of TAU, of an innovative approach for handling multiple testing and preventing false statistical results known as the “False Discovery Rate (FDR).” The FDR has become the most popular method for analyzing complex hypotheses in extensive areas of science, including in bioinformatics, and is one of the most highly cited studies to come out of Tel Aviv University. Prof. Benyamini gained his BSc and MSc from the University of Jerusalem and his PhD from Princeton University. He joined the TAU faculty in 1980 and has served as Chairperson of the Department of Statistics and Operations Research at TAU’s Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Mathematical Sciences, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences. He holds the Nathan and Lily Silver Chair for Applied Statistics. He has held numerous positions including Vice President and President of the Israeli Association of Statistics.

EMET PRIZE IN MATHEMATICS

Prof. Noga Alon | Exact Sciences

A specialist in pure mathematics and computer science, Prof. Noga Alon focuses on combinatorics and graph theory applications. He is an influential world authority on the application of probability methods in discrete mathematics, and has solved mathematical problems that had previously remained unanswered for years. Born in Haifa in 1956, Prof. Alon completed his bachelor’s degree at the Technion—Israel Institute for Technology, his master’s at Tel Aviv University and his doctoral studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Prof. Alon is the recipient of numerous honors including the 2008 Israel Prize in Mathematics; the Israeli Security Prize and the Bruno Award of the Rothschild Foundation, and he is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Academia Europaea. He holds the Flavia and Ted Baumriner Combinatorics and Computer Science Chair of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Mathematical Sciences, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences. 

EMET PRIZE IN SCIENCE, ART AND CULTURE

Prof. Dan Zakay | Social Sciences

A leading researcher in the field of cognitive processes and conflict resolution. Professor Emeritus Dan Zakay of the School of Psychological Sciences, Gorden H. Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences, is the number one expert in the research of “psychological time” and its influence on decision making and self-confidence. He is widely known for his “Attention Gate Model” of time perception and for his work in the psychology of financial risk taking. Born in Tel Aviv in 1956, Prof. Zakay completed his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral studies at Tel Aviv University and joined the Department of Psychology as a faculty member in 1974. He has served, among other positions, as Chairman of the Department Chairman of the Israel Association for Organizational Development and Chair of the Israel Association of Psychologists. His research has won grants from leading foundations, among them the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF).
Cell Therapeutics has begun the process of developing material. Based on this new technology, start-up Stem back into insulin-producing pancreatic cells, they could discovered that by converting human pancreatic cells colleague, Prof. Nissim Benvenisti of Hebrew University, (Medicine), incumbent of the Nancy with conventional stem cell therapy has led Hope for Diabetes Sufferers STUDYING HEALTH FROM EVERY ANGLE landmark production of the play. all its professional stagings since 1920, was hailed as a Japanese-inspired production of The Dybbuk, among direction of Western productions. At TAU, Serper's applies these to performance, actor training, and principles from the Japanese theatrical form, he analysis of speech patterns. Extracting such underlying stage, for example, and how it is used to signal important of fostering a supportive work environment in an increasingly impersonal technological world. New Look at Living Organisms A new laboratory, the Sacker Cellular and Molecular Imaging Center, houses state-of-the-art equipment such as the first commercially-available light microscope with an imaging resolution two to three times higher than that of conventional confocal microscopes. Headed by Prof. Ilay Tsarfati (Medicine), the lab is an interdisciplinary facility where scientists can study intact biological systems and gain new perspectives on biological processes, all with the goal of developing innovative diagnostic and therapeutic tools. CANCER RESEARCH GOES HIGH-TECH “Theranostics” for Cancer and Other Diseases TAU’s interdisciplinary Center for NanoScience and Nanotechnology tested 3D applicants to become the home of the new Israeli National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI), to be directed by cancer researcher Dr. Dan Peer (Ev. Sciences). The initiative’s 71 researchers, of which 5 are from TAU, will apply nano-scale techniques toward developing personalized theranostics [therapy and diagnostics] for cancer, cardiovascular and inflammatory diseases. The $11.5 million, five-year project will receive half its budget from the government and half from institutional and private sources. Supportive Work Environment – A Matter of Life and Death In a collaborative study between organizational behaviorists Prof. Arie Shioim, Dr. Sharon Toker and Yasmin Alkayal (Management) and colleagues Ran Frlicer and On. Jacobsen of the Daniel Health Care Services Research Institute, data collected from more than 800 employees over a 20-year period revealed the grim cost of social alienation in the workplace. Those who felt they had little or no emotional support from peers at work were 2.4 times more likely to have died within the 20-year period of the study. This finding has generated international interest regarding the importance of fostering a supportive work environment in an increasingly impersonal technological world. ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT Designing Future Policy for Israel’s Electricity Grid In a collaborative study, Prof. Asher Tishler (Management) and Prof. Yoram Margaliot (Law) have joined Prof. George Weiss and Dr. Doron Shmilovitz (Engineering) in laying down guiding principles for Israel’s policy regarding its electricity grid for the years 2015-2050. Aiming to assist the country’s policymakers, the project addresses such issues as the viability of many small solar panels on rooftops versus a few large solar farms, effective management of power supply and demand, and other important issues for creating a comprehensive and efficient national electricity policy. Social Effects of Traveling Green MA student Elad Shochat (Environmental Studies) is studying the use of green technologies in transportation, with a unique focus on social aspects. Asking questions such as how introduction of green technologies might affect people’s travel habits or influence government decisions regarding public transportation, Shochat’s study may have major implications on future use of these technologies and related policymaking. Supervised by Dr. Moshe Givoni (Humanities) and Dr. David Katz of Haifa University, Shochat is the recipient of a large and prestigious scholarship awarded by the Israel Ministry of Energy and Water Resources. Seeking Sustainable Energy Sources Dr. Yiftah Yacob (Life Sciences) has bioengineered a synthetic enzyme that, if successfully incorporated into algae cells, would vastly increase their ability to produce hydrogen, an important source of renewable energy. His work is part of TAU’s new Renewable Energy Center, an interdisciplinary team that coordinates the research of 55 teams at seven faculties and the Porter School of Environmental Studies.
Technology That Imitates Life

Green lungs clean themselves with rain or dew drops rather than polluting detergents; leaves act as effective solar panels; and the peel of a juicy fruit is a degradable food package that does not contaminate the environment. Doctoral candidate Yael Haitman Cohen [Environmental Studies], in collaboration with Prof. Yoram Reich [Engineering], is seeking to uncover the underlying principles and patterns of such non-polluting and efficient designs of nature. She is developing a method for identifying suitable biological phenomena for imitation, and analyzing them in a way that allows engineers to replicate the design and develop innovative and sustainable products. Director of the Israel Biomimicry Organization and recipient of a Porter Fellowship, Haitman Cohen is pushing the frontier of the emerging field of biomimetic design.

BRINGING BACK BEAUTIFUL MINDS

In a program to combat brain drain initiated by the government and adopted by the Council of Higher Education, Israel’s top universities are competing to establish 30 new Israel Centers of Research Excellence (I-COREs) that will employ 300 new faculty recruits to support research by top young academic talent in several areas.

> At the Center of Excellence in Algorithms led by the Blavatnik School of Computer Science, Raymond and Beverly Sacker Faculty of Exact Sciences, Dr. Eran Tromer, who recently arrived from MIT and Microsoft Research New England, and Dr. Itshach Haitner, who completed a post-doc at Microsoft Research New England, were recruited to TAU’s fast-growing research group in computer privacy, information security and cryptography.

> The I-CORE for Gene Regulation in Complex Human Disease enabled the Sacker Faculty of Medicine to bring on board Dr. Tamar Geiger, formerly of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, to perform computational studies on the influence of various genes on immunity and susceptibility to infectious diseases, as well as Dr. Tamar Seiger, who returned from the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Munich to study tumor proteins for a better understanding of the progression of breast cancer.

> Among the new recruits for the Center of Excellence in Petroleum Alternatives for Transportation (PAT) is Dr. Amir Natan, who recently joined the by and Aladar Polskyman Faculty of Engineering after post-doctoral work at Northwestern University, USA. Amir will perform theoretical modeling of novel carbon-based electrodes toward the design of more efficient energy storage devices.

Finding Common Ground among the Faiths

The Center for Religious and Inter-Religious Studies project, a new collaboration between Tel Aviv University and Cambridge University, will aim to advance mutual understanding between the three monotheistic faiths. Headed by Prof. Shlomo Biderman [Humanities] on the TAU end, the center will promote innovative research, run a dedicated master’s program in English, and organize public outreach opportunities among religious community leaders in the Middle East and Europe. Activities will also include joint conferences and student and faculty exchange.

Feeling Anxious? Talk to Your Computer!

Exploring ways of alleviating anxiety, Prof. Yair Bar-Haim [Social Sciences], head of the newly established School of Psychological Sciences, in collaboration with the US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), has launched the TAU-NIMH Cognitive Bias Modification Treatment Initiative. This large-scale study provides researchers on five continents with standardized treatment protocols and software to test the efficacy of computerized treatment of anxiety disorders. Based on promising preliminary results, the novel technique may prove to be a game-changer in psychiatric approaches to treatment.

Unraveling the Secrets of Plant Diseases

As part of an international consortium, Prof. Amir Sharon [Life Sciences] and his team at the Marina Center for Plant Bioneces in Genetica participated in determining the full genetic code of several strains of particularly prolific and damaging plant fungal diseases. A comparative study of the obtained genetic data with that of other fungi revealed, among other things, the basis of sexual mating compatibility systems, and shed some light on the genetic basis of successful crop pathogens. The new knowledge could lead the way to more effective protection of agricultural produce.

Getting Down to Business in Israel

Two initiatives were launched by the Faculty of Management in Spring 2011 to familiarize future international business leaders with Israel and its opportunities. The first one, Doing Business in Israel, is an innovative 10-day study program introducing students from leading business schools around the world to Israel’s business community and entrepreneurial mindset. The second one, the Student International Case Competition, gathers a global mix of students to devise creative solutions for an actual business dilemma involving an Israeli company. The final presentation of last year’s case studies was made before an audience of Israeli business leaders and students, with the TAU team tying for first place among 13 student teams taking part from 9 countries.

ASTRONOMY AND ASTROPHYSICS

TAU & Harvard: An Out-of-This-World Collaboration

TAU’s Raymond and Beverly Sacker School of Astronomy and Physics, at the Raymond and Beverly Sacker Faculty of Exact Sciences, is teaming up with the Harvard-Smithsonian Institute for Theory and Computation for a collaborative program covering all aspects of astrophysics research. Supported by longterm TAU benefactor Dr. Raymond Sacker, the Raymond and Beverly Sacker Harvard-Tel Aviv University Astronomy Initiative will include an exchange program for students and scientists, lecture series, workshops, and a postdoctoral fellowship in astronomy with research and studies taking place in both institutions.
understanding of the universe.

Arpitstic Networking on a World Scale

The International Language of Music

Under the direction of Prof. Tomer Lev [Arts], promising young pianists from the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music toured the Far East, performing and holding master classes at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiann Technological University and other venues. They delighted audiences with a multi-scenario program of works played with 4, 6, and 8 hands. A musical exchange program between TAU and Chinese institutions is now under discussion, and upcoming world appearances include ones in Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo.

In a separate, extremely successful two-week Brazilian tour, the Buchmann-Mehta Symphony Orchestra performed eight concerts in major cities including Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. They were joined by Brazil’s Helipolises Orchestra at the flagship concert in Paulista conducted by the Buchmann-Mehta School’s Honorary President, Zubin Mehta. The other seven concerts were conducted by Prof. Zeev Dorman [Arts], some of them featuring cellist Misha Maisky and Finnish student Petteri Iliesiu of the Adler-Buchmann International Program for Outstanding Foreign Students in Music.

Platform for Budding Filmmakers

Entirely organized and run by students and alumni, the 14th biennial Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival to be held in June, 2012, will host new as well as recognized talent from the film industry. The International Competition will introduce a “Mediterranean Spotlight” that will include films from Turkey, Morocco, Greece, Spain, Afghanistan and Gaza. Among competition judges will be TAU alumnus Ari Folman, director of Waltz with Bashir. Continuing the previous festival’s successful Israeli-Palestinian cooperation under the direction of Prof. Yael Perlov [Arts], this year’s festival will feature Israeli and Palestinian films on the theme of water. Another new initiative, Mediterranean Congress, will be attended by 15 Palestinian television and cinema personalities.

Working for Ethiopian Employment

The Workers’ Rights Clinic of the Elga Licia Clinical Legal Education Program, the only such program in Israel dealing with employment issues, has now launched a legal aid and empowerment project aimed at improving the situation of Israeli Ethiopian workers. Headed by Prof. Neta Ziv [Law], the clinic seeks to catalyze social change by increasing the involvement of Israel’s legal community, especially TAU law school alumni, in social justice work on behalf of the Israeli Ethiopian community.

Protecting the Welfare of Survivors

Another new law clinic, the Holocaust Survivors’ Rights Clinic, was established to ensure the welfare and dignity of Holocaust survivors through the use of legal means, including litigation, representation before committees, and legislative lobbying. Law students who participate in the clinic receive weekly instruction from Prof. Jose Brunner [Law] and attorney Yossi Hayut on issues regarding Holocaust survivors and the legal frameworks enacted to respond to their needs. The project receives funding from Dr. (h.c.) Josef Buchmann, benefactor of the Buchmann-Faculty of Law and other major TAU projects and life-long supporter of Holocaust survivors and Holocaust remembrance.

The Business of Social Responsibility

MBA Cares is a new community-oriented program offered as part of the Faculty of Management’s Safair International MBA. Multinational teams of students are given the opportunity to provide free organizational counseling, business plan development and marketing guidance to clients that include a health clinic and a Druze village. While the participating organizations benefit from this input, the students get to see the impact of their managerial decisions and gain a heightened sense of social responsibility.

Meeting Special Dental Needs

Among cancer sufferers, one of the side effects of chemotherapy is oral ulcers and infection. This is particularly troublesome for children, who often stop eating as a result. On the initiative of researcher Mini Datun [Dental Medicine], a group of Sim-8th year dental students pays weekly visits to child oncology wards in TAU-affiliated hospitals, examining the children, instructing them on oral hygiene and distributing toothbrushes and mouthwash. Children benefit from alleviation of their discomfort, while students gain understanding of the importance of a healthy mouth to one’s sense of wellbeing. In a separate community outreach program, orthodontists students and their instructors provide care to Ethiopian immigrants and other disadvantaged groups.

Thursdays on Campus – Everyone’s Invited!

This year, Tel Aviv University decided to put a new spin on community involvement – instead of just reaching out, everyone is invited in. Every Thursday evening the campus is opened to the general public, with a range of stimulating, informative, entertaining and tasty options on offer. Activities include lectures, rotating exhibitions, film screenings, performances by guest artists, a campus art fair, group dance lessons and a farmers market offering choice produce. Visitors can choose to attend lectures by leading faculty members on topics ranging from the Arab Spring to renewable energy or the latest advances in brain research.
T wenty-eight year old Yuval Cohen and his startup team were under pressure. If they didn’t soon come up with a brilliant marketable product based on their ideas for an online chat platform, they’d have to abandon their dream, split up and look for regular jobs. Enter Shimon Constante with game-changing advice. Showing them it needn’t be an all or nothing deal, he suggested they carry on as a team and do freelance work while rethinking their direction. The result: the startup is alive and well, and the team is feeling less stressed and more confident.

Shimon, a successful entrepreneur in the mobile content and security fields, was paired up with Yuval, a recent MBA graduate, through the Faculty of Management’s Recanati Mentoring Program. Shimon says he joined the program because “I love working with creative young people, and I want to make sure they don’t repeat my mistakes.”

Yuval joined because he felt “there must be a hundred things you absolutely mustn’t get wrong when starting a business and it’s unrealistic to think we’d get them all right.” Shimon and Yuval have developed a strong relationship that has continued beyond the mentoring period. “I still phone Shimon with questions,” Yuval admits, and adds, “I’d like to be a mentor myself one day.”

NO BORDERS TO INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION

When Vered Blass first encountered Engineers Without Borders (EWB) in the US, her reaction was, “Wow!” An international non-profit organization, EWB enlists professionals and volunteers from a multitude of disciplines in projects for sustainable community development. Vered was intent on continuing her EWB work in Israel, and found not only a supportive partner in TAU’s Dean of Engineering, Prof. Ehud Heyman, but also a home for a new EWB-Israel chapter at TAU. One of the chapter’s many projects focuses on East Jerusalem villages where sewage flows from open pipes into a nearby stream. A small-scale water treatment system is being set up, including a facility for turning waste into usable bio-gas for cooking. “We don’t offer charity,” Vered stresses. “We help the communities help themselves.”

NOT A TREE-HUGGER – JUST PASSIONATE ABOUT DOING THINGS RIGHT

After living and working in nearly a dozen countries, Sharon Teo knew what she wanted to do. “Promoting green business practices in emerging markets became my focus and my passion. I saw how developing countries ignored environmental issues for the sake of growth. I wanted to do something to change that.” Sharon had the business experience but lacked the necessary technical know-how, and then she saw the English-language program at TAU’s Porter School of Environmental Studies. Now armed with the knowledge she was missing, Sharon will pursue a career in cleantech. “I’m not a tree-hugger; I just know that in the long term industry will have to be sustainable.”
ALUMNUS

“TO BE A TEACHER IT’S NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW YOUR SUBJECT – YOU NEED TO INSPIRE.”

Omer Weisblum, recently named Israel’s top high school mathematics teacher, explains what drives him: “I want to be a significant figure in someone’s life just like some of my teachers were in mine.” His graduate studies at TAU gave him tools for independent research and self-criticism, he says, “I am always asking myself, how can I be better?” To that end, Omer achieves a great deal more than outstanding math instruction in Ramat Gan’s Blich High School. He presents the history and people behind every new subject, “to put a human face to the numbers and add interest.” He analyzes poems with his students and performs magic math tricks. And he teaches values. “When I educate rather than just teach, those for me are the most important lessons.”

CAMPUS-WIDE RESEARCH

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Being a Mother Doesn’t Help You Get a Job
Dr. Tamar Krichel Katz (Law), newly arrived at TAU from Stanford, is studying sources of labor discrimination that lead to persistent inequity. Focusing on perceptions of choice and how they influence job discrimination, she found that when motherhood, obesity and a gay sexual preference are perceived as voluntarily chosen behaviors, employers are less favorably disposed toward hiring such candidates – a disposition that changes when these conditions are perceived as something less than free choice.

The Work-Family Interface on the Go
Considering the increasing globalization of large organizations, Prof. Mina Westman (Management) contends that spousal satisfaction and successful fulfillment of family expectations are important factors in, and predictors of, employees’ success in overseas or highly mobile positions. She concludes that issues such as family cohesion, adjustment and needs should be introduced into relevant companies’ organizational culture.

Helping Parents, Teachers and Peers to Help Special Needs Children
Parenting children with profound disabilities is no easy job. Post-doctoral fellow Dr. Anat Zaidman-Zalt (Education), researching parental stress and coping techniques, is examining the interrelations between parent well-being and children’s developmental outcomes with the aim of formulating best practices for early intervention programs for children with disabilities and their families. Her work is under the supervision of Prof. Esther Dromi, who is also overseeing research by doctoral candidate Mati Zakai-Mashiach on how the behavior of teachers and classmates can contribute to the development of social interest in children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

Getting Teens to Turn Down the Volume
Research by Prof. Chava Muchnik, Dr. Noam Amir, Dr. Ricky Kaplan-Neemen and Esther Shabtai (Health Professions), which appeared in the International Journal of Audiology, has important implications for the welbeing of adolescents who use personal listening devices such as MP3s or iPhones. It was found that due to these teens’ music-listening habits and their preferred levels of volume under conditions of everyday noise, 25 percent of them are at risk of premature hearing loss. Results highlight the need for education, regulation and technological solutions enabling safe use of such devices.

HEALTH MATTERS

A More Potent Antibiotic
Dr. Micha Fridman (Exact Sciences) has developed a new antibiotic compound that targets a bacterium’s outer membrane, thereby overcoming most of its resistance mechanisms. Found to work on a range of infectious bacteria that no longer respond to existing antibiotics, including the strain that causes anthrax, this is the kind of laboratory breakthrough that, after a long and arduous path, can be translated into future drugs.

Winning the War on Bacteria through Spying
Deciphering an enemy’s code and manipulating it is a potent strategy in war. Dr. Avigdor Eldar (Life Sciences) is applying this strategy to the war on infectious bacteria to create a totally new kind of drug target. He is studying the way bacteria communicate using chemical signals, exploring how best to sabotage their communication and even working on designing a bacterial Trojan horse. In recognition of the importance of this work, the European Research Council has awarded him a generous grant.

Dr. Hagit Bulmash
> PhD, Zvi Modar Center for Advanced Legal Studies, TAU
> Currently a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University, NY

RECENT GRADUATE

SHOOTING FOR NOTHING LESS THAN THE TOP

When asked where she expects to be in five or ten years, Hagit Bulmash answers without hesitation – “I aim to be number one in my field of anti-trust law.” She researches legal issues relating to market competitiveness, and has worked as an antitrust lawyer and as the deputy director of the Israel Bar Antitrust Committee. “Consumers should be able to purchase products at the best prices,” Hagit believes, and her ideas on how to make this happen through legislation are already creating an international stir in the field. “My role model, since I was a teenager, is Marie Curie – the first female to win the Nobel Prize, and in a totally male-dominated field. She achieved the top.”

Omer Weisblum
> Israeli Teacher of the Year 2011
> MA, Jerome and Joan Constantiner School of Education

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Sciences) took note that many reported intense oral (Social Prof. Reuven Dar

New Insights into Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

In his work with OCD patients, Prof. Reuven Dar (Social Sciences) reported an unexpected discovery while studying the mechanics of bedsores in people who made an unexpected discovery while studying the mechanics of bedsores in people who were bedridden or wheelchair bound. They found that their subjects displayed not only muscle atrophy but also an increase in fat cells. Further experimentation revealed that constant pressure on fat cells leads to their proliferation. Published in the American Journal of Cell Physiology, these findings generated international interest, especially with regard to their implications for office workers’ prolonged sitting in chairs.

How to Build a Model Nation

Having just returned to TAU’s Department of Jewish History after spending a year as a visiting scholar at York University, Toronto, Dr. Dvir Reznik (Humanities) is studying Israel’s efforts at forging a viable democracy and model nation. Her work focuses on 1950s Israel and civil rights, still a central topic today. She is tracking civil rights campaigns, identifying both the social groups that shaped and reformed the nation’s civil rights as well as those targeted by them, to decipher the kind of Israeli identity 1950s reformers were seeking to mold and the degree to which they succeeded or failed. Partial support for the research comes from TAU’s Minerva Center for Human Rights.

Context Is Everything

After collecting and studying Holocaust testimonies in Yiddish, Hebrew and English from Lithuanian survivors in Lithuania, Israel and the US, doctoral candidate Hannah Polin-Galay (Humanities) is analyzing the influence of social context and language on how one interprets the Holocaust. Concluding that context shapes even the most basic formulations of what it means to suffer and survive, she contends that historians must take note of how culture informs the act of witnessing, and should view each testimony as a historic event of consequence. Polin-Galay is the recipient of a Rottensteich Fellowship in Humanities and a Lessing Fellowship in European History.

Historic Origins of Iranian Territoriality

PHD candidate Chelsi Mueller (Humanities) of the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies is addressing a gap in the scholarly literature on Iranian history. Supervised by Prof. David Menashri and Uzi Rabi, she is examining Arab-Iranian relations in the Persian Gulf between 1919 and 1939. She proposes that the sharp Arab-Iranian divide characterizing Gulf geopolitics today emerged largely during the interwar period as a result of Reza Shah’s aggressive claims to Iranian sovereignty over the entire Persian Gulf, including the Arab sheikhdoms.

Growing Better Crops

Considering the future food needs of a growing world population, new faculty recruit Dr. Assaf Distelfeld (Life Sciences) focuses on one of nature’s own methods — phytosynthesis. In a project funded by the prestigious Advanced European Research Council (ERC) Grant, Nelson will study the structural and functional properties of photosynthetic reaction centers in plants and apply the results to the production of clean energy.

Understanding AND Harnessing Nature

Species Begets Species — Discovering Causes of Biodiversity

Identifying new species of plant-eating insects around the world, taxonomist Dr. Nette Dorchin (Life Sciences) of the Steinhardt National Collections of Natural History has discovered some 60 new species in Israel’s Dead Sea and Arava regions alone. Her current study on whether diversification of these insects also leads to diversification of their natural enemies, such as parasitic wasps, suggests that specialization in one organism leads to adaptive changes in other organisms up the food chain and therefore to an escalation of biodiversity.
Law & Technology – Who’s in Charge?  
Commencing in the 2012 fall semester, the ShiloBeth E. Do. Workshop on Law & Information Technology (IT), headed by Prof. Michael Birnbaum (Law), will present a unique international and interdisciplinary forum on the role of law in a rapidly changing IT world. Leading scholars from Israel and abroad will present research work in progress, with guest IT regulators and lawyers joining the discussions. The workshop will enrich and broaden the curriculum of students focused on IT and intellectual property law.

NEW INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

MA in Environmental Studies - Concluding its first year with students from North and South America, Europe and Asia, the new master’s program at the Porter School of Environmental Studies provides a rare opportunity for intensive multidisciplinary investigation of environmental issues with an emphasis on Israel’s unique geographic and geopolitical setting. Students can now choose a Business and Environment track offered in collaboration with the Soffer International MBA Program and the Alfred A. Kadoorie (BA in Business and Environment). The track includes internships with Israel’s leading environmental organizations, agencies, consulting firms and cleantech investment firms, providing a springboard for future employment in fields that impact environmental attitudes and policy.

MA in Jewish Studies - In Israel’s only one-year intensive MA in Jewish Studies taught in English, students encounter classic Jewish texts from the Bible to modern times. Studies cover every aspect of Jewish culture, history, theology, philosophy, mysticism and language at TAU’s Department of Hebrew Culture Studies, the world’s single largest Jewish Studies department.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS COMING SOON

International MA in Liberal Arts – Due to commence in October 2012, this MA program will allow students to explore several disciplines by offering a broad selection of courses ranging from philosophy, literature and Israel, Jewish and Middle Eastern studies, to psychology, digital culture and communications.

BSc in Electrical and Electronics Engineering – When it opens in 2013, this program will be the only one of its kind in the country to be taught in English. It will offer an internationally-recognized faculty, access to world-class laboratories, internships with major R&D companies and startups, and an opportunity for global networking among fellow students from around the world.

Summer Institute of Advanced Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine - This first-of-its-kind intensive summer course is offered by TAU’s School of Public Health and will be taught by faculty from Johns Hopkins, Harvard and Tel Aviv Universities to MA graduates of Public Health. MSc students of Epidemiology, medical students, physicians and nurses.
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Argentinean Friends of Tel Aviv University

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Victor Wayne, President
Australian Friends of Tel Aviv University (Victoria)
David Dinte, President
Friends of Tel Aviv University (New South Wales)

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American Friends of Tel Aviv University (AFTAU)