

לשכת סגנית הנשיא למגוון והכלה  
אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
מكتب نائبة الرئيس للتنوع والاحتواء  
جامعة بن غوريون في النقب



**Diversity and  
Inclusion**  
Newsletter, 2025



## The V.P words

Prof. Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder

This year, the team continues to lead efforts in accessibility, academic excellence, inclusion, and partnership

Dear Community members of BGU,

The academic arena remains one of the key spaces where processes of diversity, inclusion, and partnership are shaped within a turbulent and complex political and social reality. The past year has been a difficult one, full of tension, loss, and challenges.

The university community has experienced the pain of losing members of community, alongside external pressures that have attempted to suppress freedom of speech and open spaces on campuses. Amidst all of this, the office team works tirelessly to provide resources and infrastructure that will ensure a safe, equitable, and respectful academic environment, creating spaces that will uphold freedom of expression, and help develop knowledge and tools that foster open dialogue, active listening, and new opportunities for collaboration with all student and faculty communities.

We continue to work across four key areas. Below is a glimpse of some of our activities:



## Office Team



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## Accessibility and Academic Excellence



The Office for Diversity and Inclusion works diligently to promote accessibility and representation of diverse populations in fields that are in demand within society and the country. The team is focused on developing infrastructure and resources to make higher education a

resource that is accessible to all marginalized populations in Israel. This year, we have successfully established several collaborations aimed at reducing gaps and making academia more accessible to these populations.

### **Mentorship Program for Outstanding Youth from Ethiopian community:**

In an effort to open the doors of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to young people from the Ethiopian community, we have established the "Together to Academia" mentorship program, aimed at identifying talented and motivated youth from the Ethiopian community. As part of the pilot program in 2025, we collaborated with the Be'er Sheva Education Administration to identify 10th-grade students with notable potential and motivation. These students will be offered significant academic support tailored to their abilities and aspirations, through selected students from Ben-Gurion University, who will be specially trained for this role. The program will operate as a unique and innovative track within the Perach tutoring program.

### **Promoting Scientific Leadership in STEM Fields**

Ben-Gurion University has received two grants from the Yad Hanadiv Foundation to develop scientific leadership programs for graduate students in STEM and environmental fields from the Arab community. The programs are managed under the auspices of the School of Sustainability and the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Additionally, this year we signed an agreement with the New Bower Foundation to support outstanding doctoral students from the Arab community in STEM fields. Both grants are designated for three cohorts.





## Hebrew for Success Program

This year, we launched the second cohort of the “Hebrew for Success” program, which aims to empower Arab-Bedouin youth with proficiency and confidence in using the Hebrew language during their high school years. The program offers Hebrew language practice based on a

unique model specifically developed for this purpose, delivered by native Hebrew-speaking students from Ben-Gurion University. The program is supported by the Council for Higher Education (CHE), the Ministry of Education, and the educational association of Hura.

## Promoting Dialogue and Communication to Create a Shared Space on Campus



## Ambassadors for Shared Live Program

The Ambassadors for Shared Live program at Ben-Gurion University was created out of the need to establish a foundation for activities that promote intergroup relations among students. Led by students, this is the program’s second year.

The program is a year-long initiative that includes student leaders from all five faculties at the university. The group undergoes training in three core areas: partnership, entrepreneurship, and leadership. They engage with

questions of campus belonging, the common good, and understanding the agendas of students from diverse groups. Additionally, the group members engage in dialogue on sensitive and complex social issues and receive tools for active, empathetic communication.

In the practical component, members are introduced to resources and tools for developing fair and positive relationships among students. In the final part of the program, group members lead initiatives that foster a safe and inclusive living environment within their faculty.

**Partners: The “Rothschild Ambassadors” program. SVF: Social Venture Fund**



## Sabaya Community

This year, the Sabaya Circle community for female students will be launched. This community will include both Jewish and Arab female students from the campus. The community aims to foster deep and broad personal and cultural connections between the students, as well as create a safe space for expressing personal social, gender, and

political views. The community will operate both internally and externally, with a focus on solidarity with women in the Negev region.

Partners: The Gender Fairness Office at Ben-Gurion University, "Seeds of Partnership" from \*HaChalutz\*, Na'amat, and the \*Mabat\* Association.



## Poetry Writing Community

This year, a new community for poetry writers, both Jewish and Arab, will be launched. Participants will be invited to multilingual writing and creative sessions led by poet Saad Abu A'nam. The writing meetings will provide an opportunity for direct interaction among participants and for weaving together diverse voices and identities into a southern linguistic tapestry. Partners: The Chaim Herzog Center and the Student Union.

## The office is partnering in the implementation of two courses that will take place this year:

The course *"Racism: Past, Present, Future – Personal and Policy Perspectives"* is a course taught by Dr. Yael Ben-Zvi and Yael Ronen in the first semester.

The *"Intergroup Relations in the Academic Space in Israel – Tools for Change"* is a general course open to all students, taught by Dr. Yael Ma'ayan during the second semester.





## Training for Faculty and Staff

This year, we are launching the fifth cohort of the "Gvanim" program for senior academic and administrative staff. The program offers participants an opportunity to explore the issues, challenges, and successes that characterize diverse populations in academia, with a particular focus on Ben-Gurion University. The program is rich and varied, including sessions with guest lecturers, personal stories from group members, engaging meetings with students at Ben-Gurion University, tours, short lectures on key issues in diversity and inclusion, and group discussions.

### Teaching in a Diverse Classroom

University classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, and accordingly, we invite faculty members to update their teaching styles to align with this changing reality. The goal is to support students from groups that are underrepresented in higher education and learn how to manage a classroom with its diverse populations. Tools for teaching in a diverse

classroom can enhance the teaching experience, help more students realize their potential, and improve the social climate within the classroom.

### Learning in Heterogeneous Groups

The campus provides a unique opportunity for interaction between students from different social groups. This is a tremendous social opportunity that positions campuses as a space with high and unique potential to improve intergroup relations in Israel. The practice of working in heterogeneous, mixed groups is the strongest predictor of improved intergroup relations within the classroom. Additionally, learning in mixed groups enhances learning skills among students from minority groups and increases their sense of belonging. These positive effects can help reduce dropout rates. Group learning also increases student engagement with the course material.



## Inclusion and Belonging

### Leadership Club for Minority Student Groups

As part of the university's mission to create an inclusive environment for students from minority groups, this year we have established a leadership group for students from the Arab community. A similar group for students of other groups is currently being formed. The students learn about leadership and acquire tools for driving change and making an impact. The office will support the groups in developing initiatives that enhance the sense of belonging on campus.



### Course on Arabic Culture and Language

This year, during the spring semester of 2025, we will offer a unique course on Arabic culture and language for academic and administrative staff at Ben-Gurion University. The course will provide a general perspective on the Arab population in Israel, with an internal examination of the dynamics and distinctiveness of the Arab minority living in the state. The course will be conducted in a peer-discussion format, with each session focusing on a specific content area. Throughout the course, we will incorporate terms from the Arabic language that are directly relevant to the topics being discussed. The course will be taught by Dr. Atef Abu Ajaj.

## Knowledge Development

The Office for Diversity and Inclusion led an extensive study among students during May-June 2024. The research aimed to examine students' experiences and their sense of belonging on campus since the October 7th, map students' attitudes toward the messages and responses offered by the university, and identify the perceptions, views, and emotions of both Jewish and Arab students toward one another and toward shared life and study on campus.

The study also sought to identify predictors related to motivation for joint studies and a sense of belonging.

The findings of the research will be presented to the university administration and will serve in the strategic planning of the office's activities.

The research was funded by the Rothschild Foundation and the San Francisco Federation (UJA).





## The First Academic Conference on Diversity and Inclusion in Academia was Held at Ben-Gurion University 27.1.25

The first national conference on researching diversity in Israeli academia was titled "Between Routine and Emergency" and focused on the question: What has changed in the field of diversity, partnership, and inclusion in academia? Over 200 participants gathered at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to explore this question.

Approximately 200 researchers, research students, philanthropists, civil society organizations, and representatives from the Council for Higher Education gathered today for the first national conference on diversity, inclusion, and partnership, held at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

This complex and pressing topic was addressed in a conference organized by the Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion at Ben-Gurion University, in partnership with Edmond de Rothschild Partnerships and the Forum of Vice Presidents for Diversity and Inclusion in Israeli Universities.

The event featured 10 engaging sessions on diverse groups in academia, the role of vice presidents in this era, as well as discussions on the threat of silencing voices and the impact of war on academia.

Additionally, three research awards were granted to three outstanding researchers in the field.

