

Statement of Educational Effectiveness

Updated Fall 2021

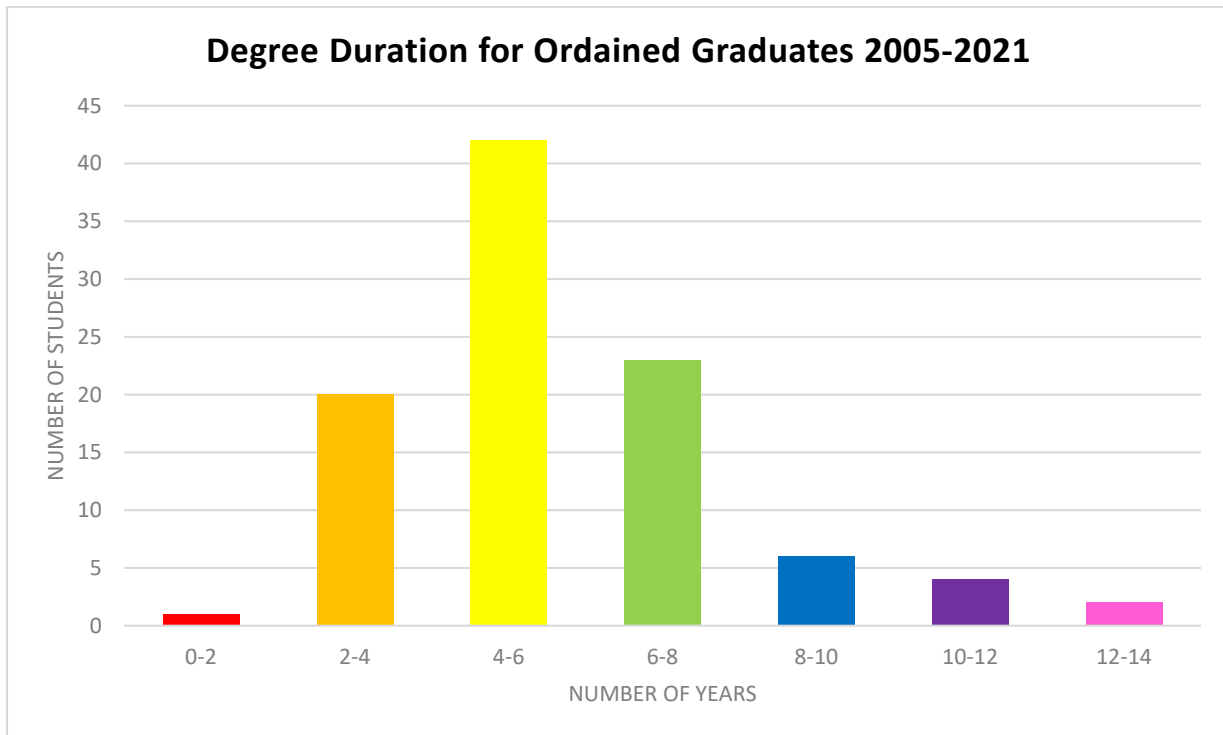
Accreditation Status

The Academy for Jewish Religion is accredited by [The Association of Theological Schools](#) and is approved to offer comprehensive Distance Education. Information about AJR's accreditation status can be found [here](#).

Enrollment Duration and Graduation

Our records for graduates going back over the last two decades show that AJR ordination students take an average of six years after the date of their matriculation to complete their ordination program. There is a wide range among completion times—some students who enter with substantial relevant experience or transfer credits may take only three years to complete their program, while other students who take only one or two classes each trimester may take ten or more years.

In general, the typical AJR graduate completes their program in between four and eight years. **88%** of graduates complete their programs within eight years after the date of their matriculation, and **94%** within ten years. In some extreme cases students may take longer. Because many of our students are enrolled part-time, getting an accurate picture of our programs' graduation rates requires considering students who began their programs many years ago. The graph below reflects all students enrolled within the past ten years (even if they initially came to AJR prior to 2005).



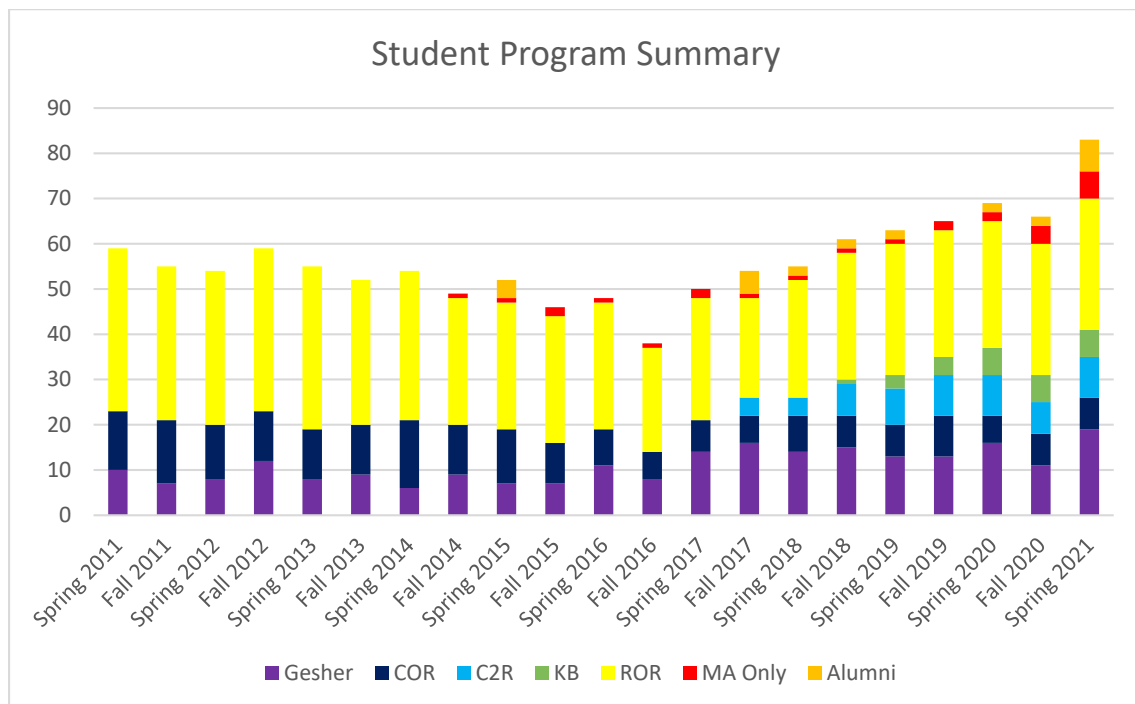
Student Program Summary

AJR's various programs are best understood in relation to our two ordination programs: Rabbinical and Cantorial. Separate to this, but integrated into the Rabbinical and Cantorial programs, is the M.A. in Jewish Studies, which is required of all Rabbinical and Cantorial students, unless they enter AJR already holding an equivalent degree.

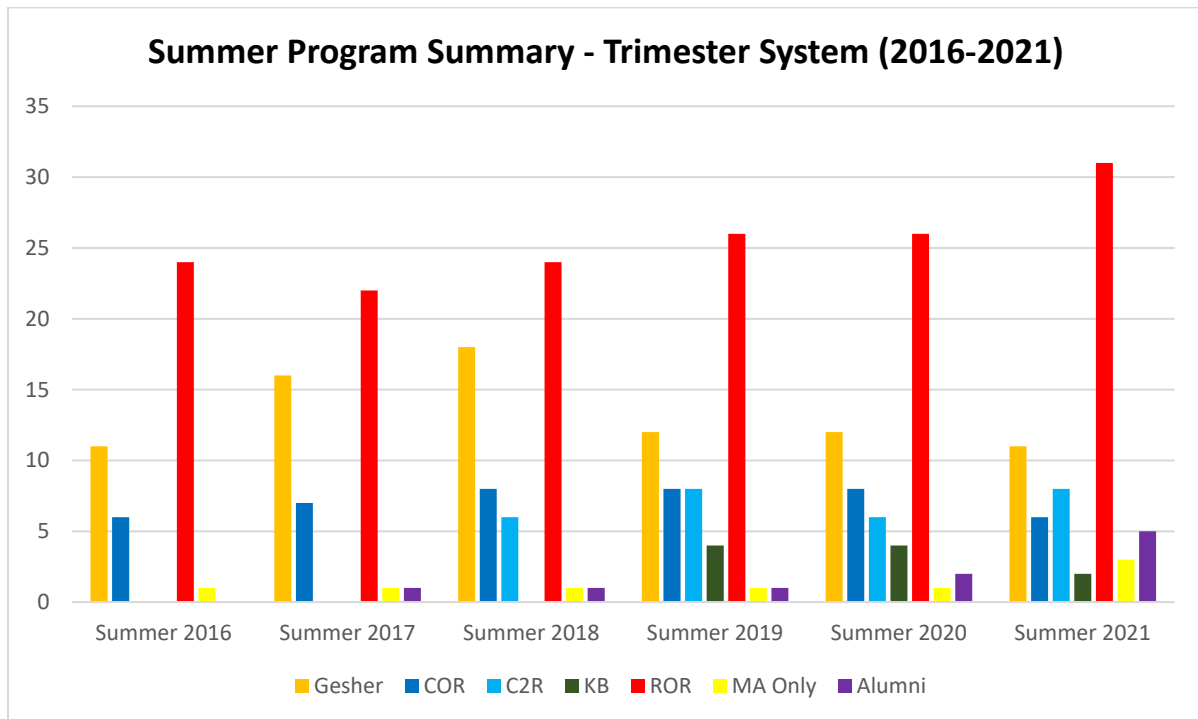
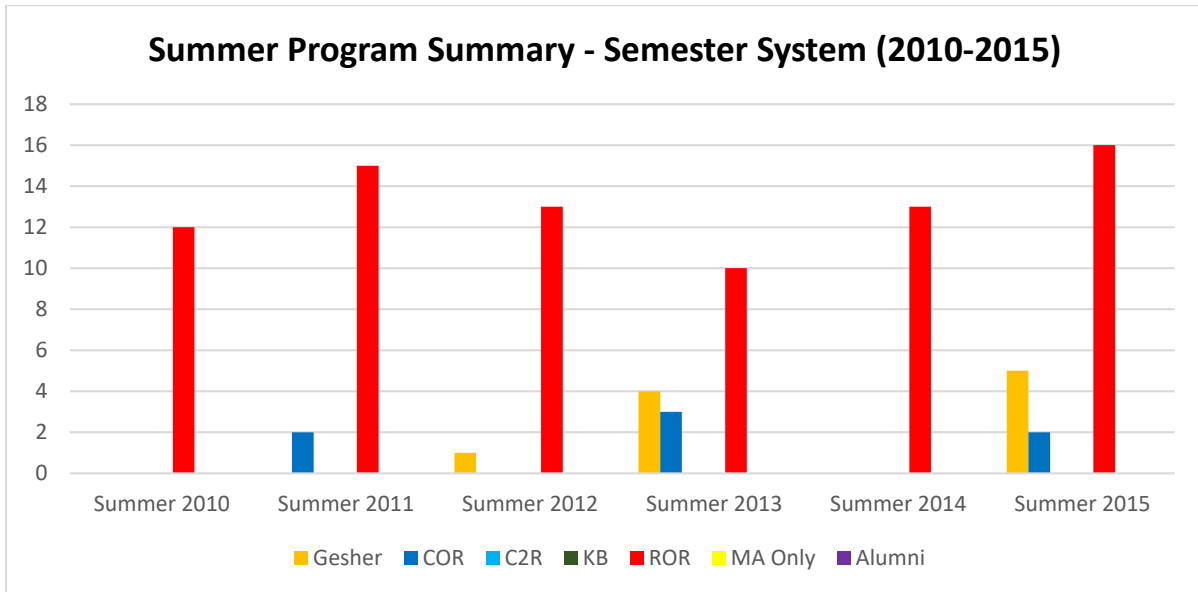
Our current programs include: Rabbinical (ROR), Cantorial (COR), M.A., *KolBo* (KB), and the Cantors to Rabbis track (C2R), which is part of the Rabbinical Program. We designate students who are taking courses at AJR but have yet to formally matriculate as Gesher, meaning "bridge," as a transition into the ordination programs. We also allow Alumni to audit courses at a discounted rate (non-credited).

Our current student enrollment is the highest it has been in many years, and, in terms of program enrollment, is also the most diverse. Due to a lull in enrollment in Fall 2016, we addressed a number of issues in our systems. This resulted in the implementation of our now-thriving Distance Learning program, the introduction of a trimester system, and an overhaul of our admissions system, as well as a continued commitment to the development of our programs and courses (such as adding our Cantors to Rabbis track and *KolBo* program).

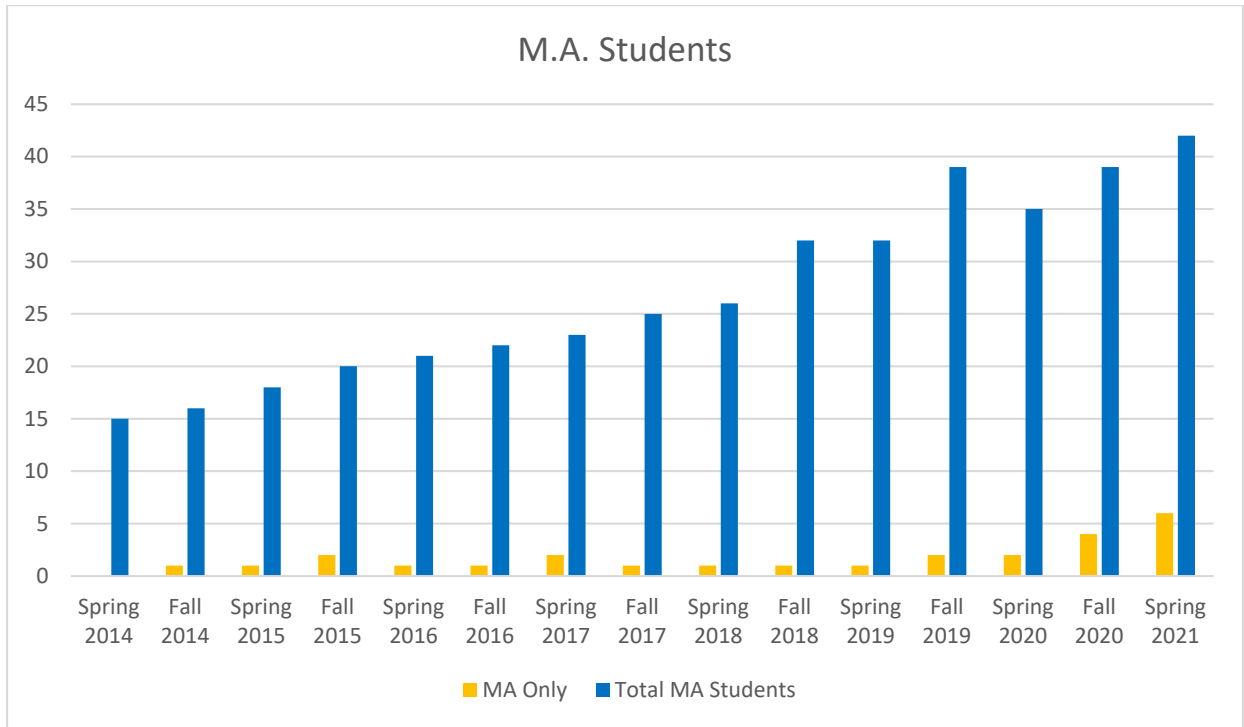
AJR's Enrollment by Program Summary for the last ten years is as follows:



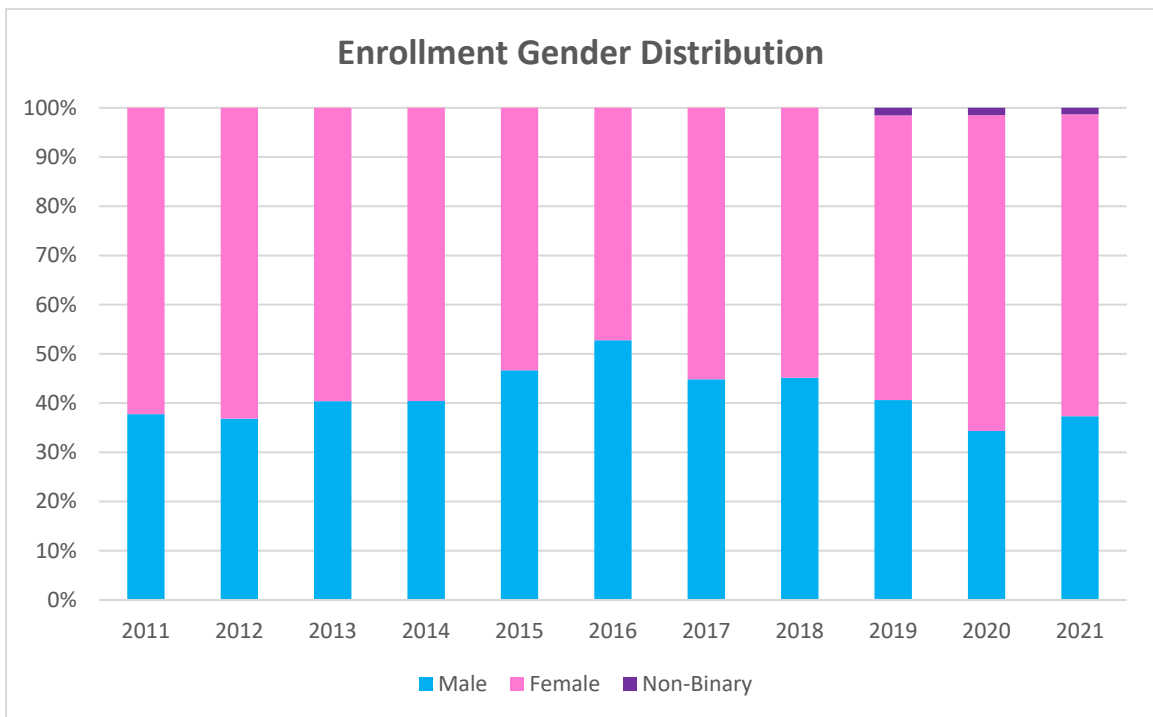
After the introduction of a trimester system, our data tracking changed to include our total students during the summer trimesters. Any data prior to Summer 2016 therefore represents only the students who enrolled for summer courses.



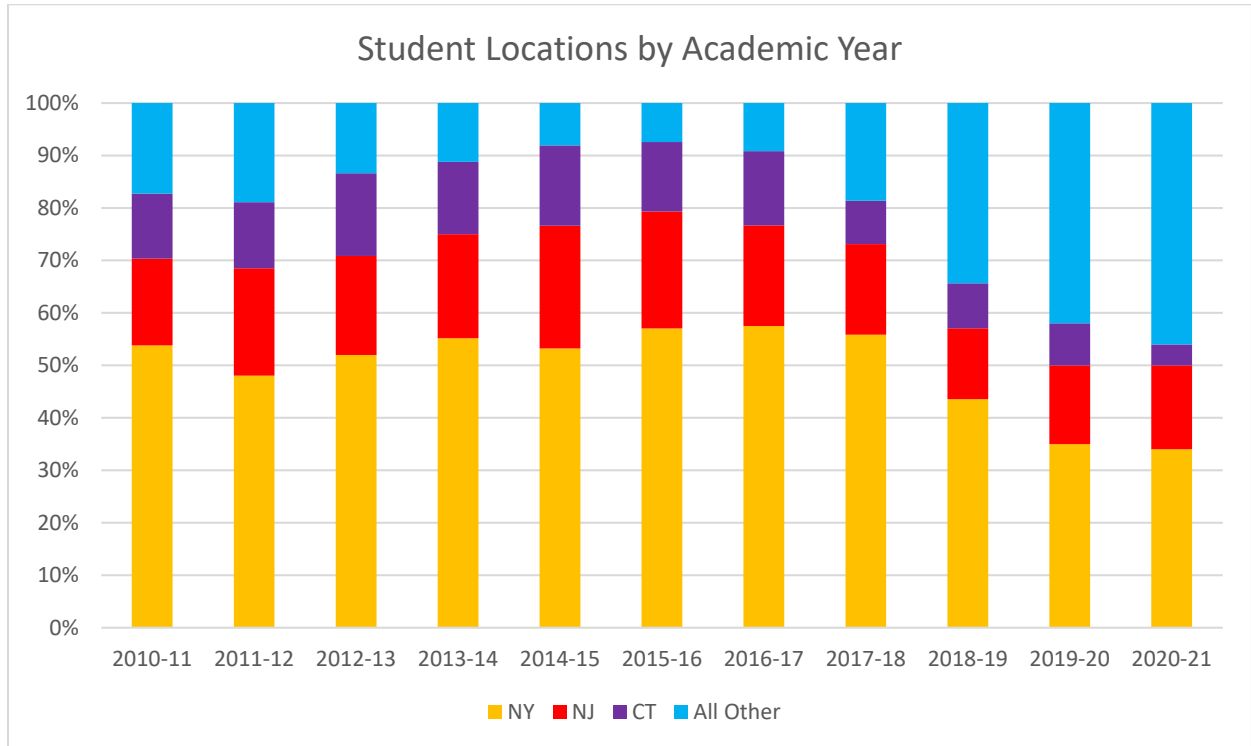
In 2014, AJR began offering an M.A. in Jewish Studies and it has since seen continued growth. All ordination students must complete their M.A. before ordination, unless entering into AJR with an equivalent degree.



Student Demographics

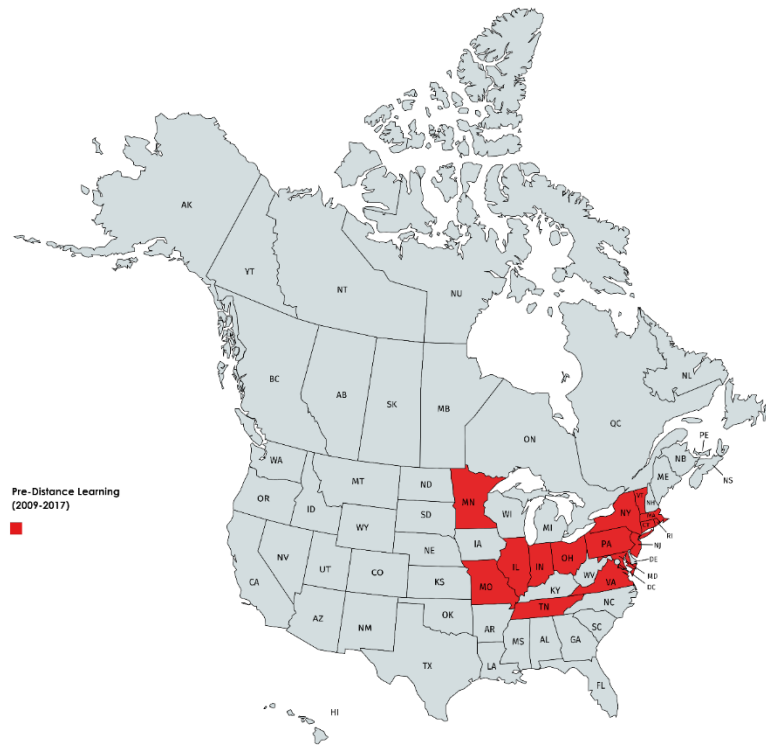


Historically, AJR has drawn the large majority of its students from New York’s tri-state area. However, since Fall 2017, thanks to the implementation of our state-of-the-art Distance Learning program, enrollment of distance students from other parts of the country (and beyond) has increased dramatically. Our high percentage of non-local attendees earlier in the decade reflects a small number of super-commuters who were willing to travel an immense distance each week for classes. This level of commitment not only proved the importance of AJR’s work, but the necessity of a well thought out Distance Learning program.



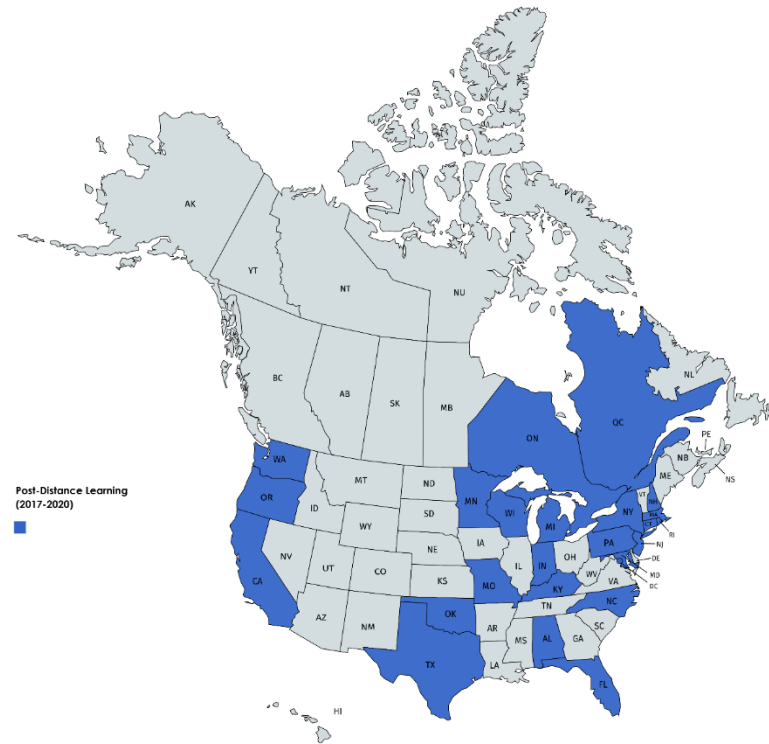
These two maps show locations from which AJR drew students prior to and following Fall 2017, excluding students outside of North America.

Pre-Distance Learning (2009-2017)



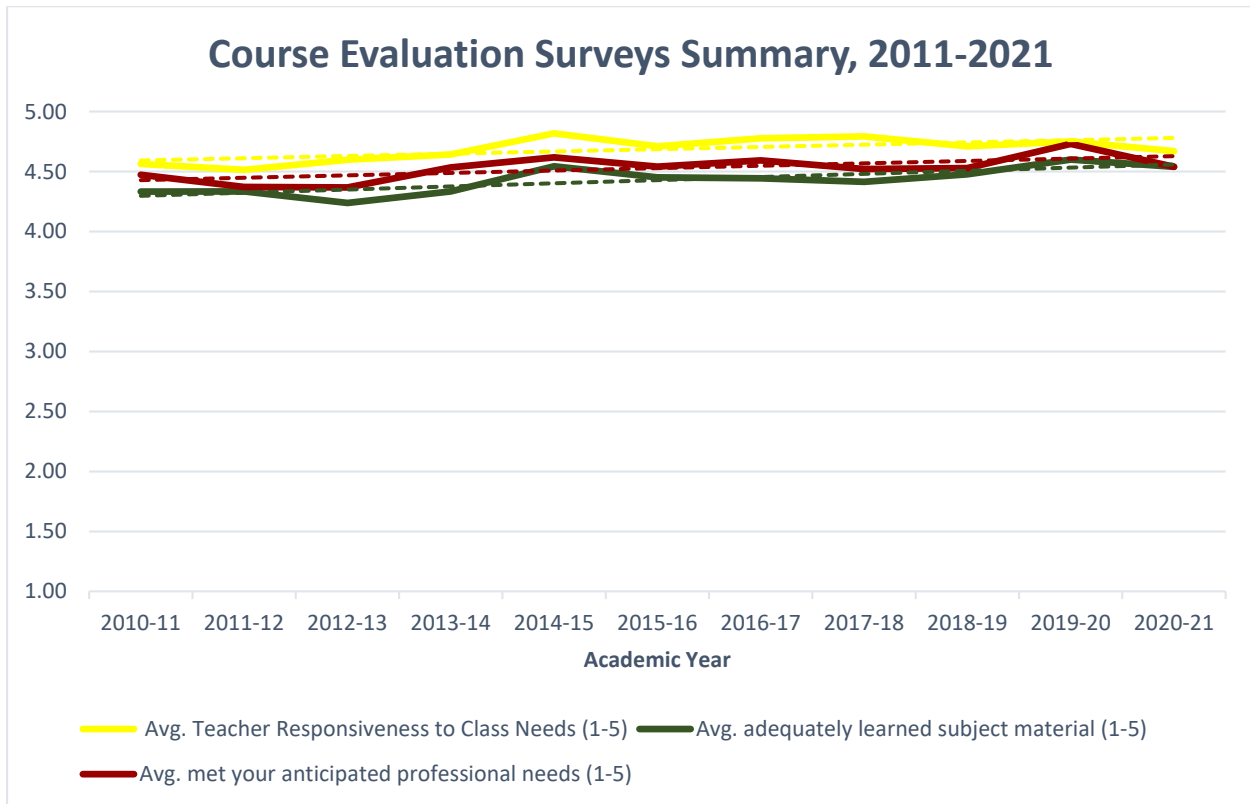
Created with mapchart.net

Post-Distance Learning (2017-Present)



Created with mapchart.net

Course Quality and Satisfaction



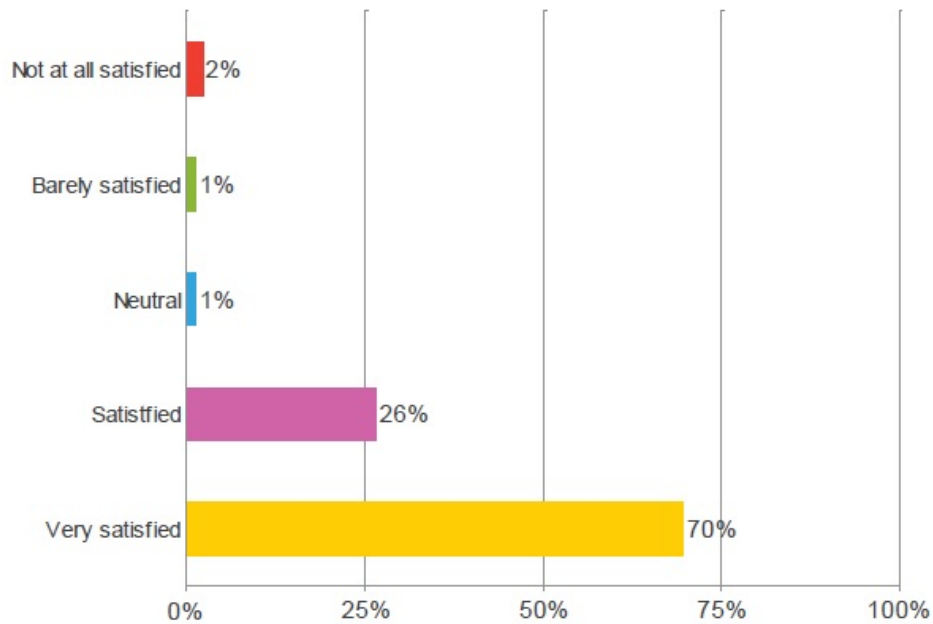
AJR has seen consistent and growing positive feedback from students with regard to the quality of our courses. The graph above summarizes the average rating given by students in three keys areas of the academic experience for future clergy: teacher's responsiveness to the needs of their class, the degree to which courses addressed students' anticipated professional needs, and the degree to which students believe they gained an adequate mastery of the course's subject material.

The shift to Distance Learning correlates with a slight drop in student perceptions of faculty responsiveness to class needs. AJR has introduced specialized pedagogy sessions for faculty dedicated to online instruction and the administration has implemented new measures for working to ensure that faculty are able to address the needs of our diverse student body.

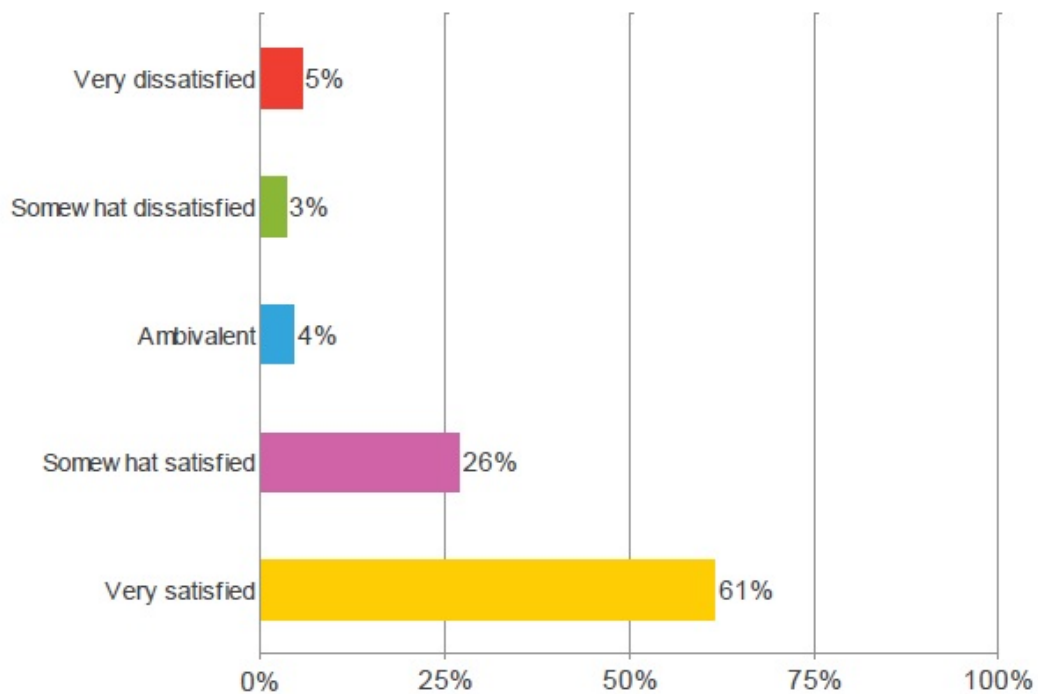
Alumni Satisfaction

We survey our alumni every five years. Overall, our surveys show a high level of alumni satisfaction, as is evident in a few of the following sample graphs:

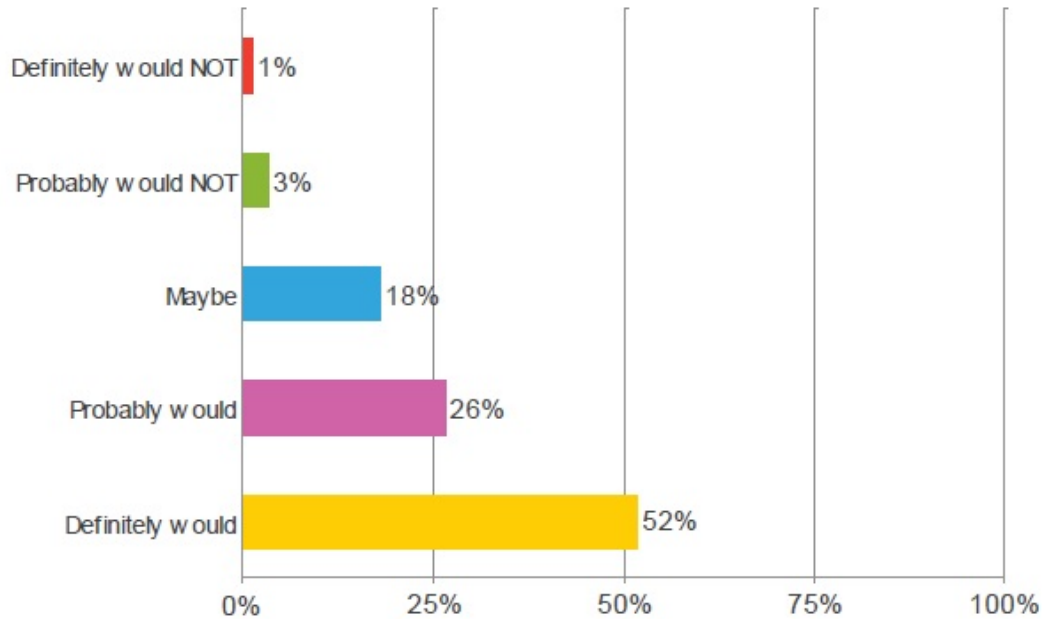
Personal and intellectual growth



Overall, how satisfied are you with your AJR experience?



Would you encourage a student with an educational background, work experience, and personal and professional goals similar to yours to pursue ordination at AJR?



These graphs reflect a continued progress from previous surveys. For example, between our 2007 and 2015 surveys, AJR saw growth in the following areas (“Very Satisfied” pertains to the most positive possible response):

Satisfied with “personal and intellectual growth”:

2007 – 58%

2015 – 77%

Very Satisfied with “spiritual growth”:

2007 – 47%

2015 – 60%

Very Satisfied with “relationships with classmates”:

2007 – 64%

2015 – 85%

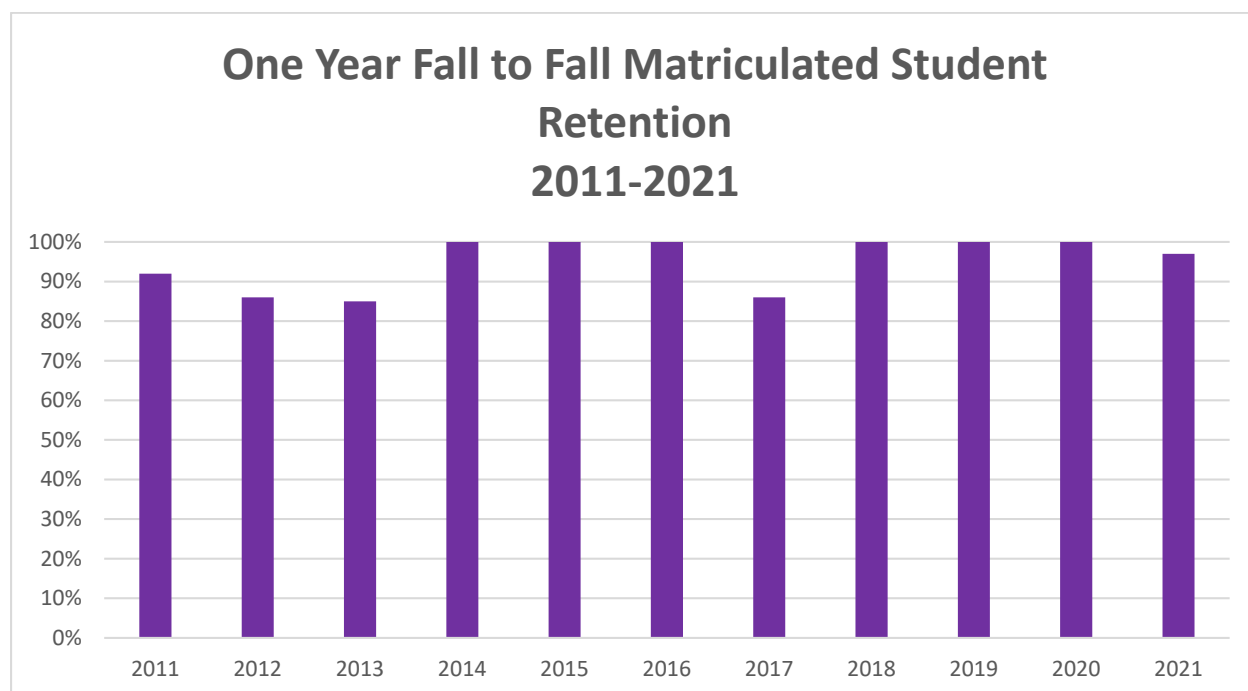
Similar trends were seen with respect to specific skills, such as Hebrew, which jumped from 27% to 65% during that same period, textual skills, which jumped from 49% to 89%, and leading synagogue services/ritual skills, which jumped from 45% to 65%. Qualitative data, withheld here for the privacy of our students and alumni, shows a similar increase in overall satisfaction.

Placement Rates

In order to accurately understand our placement rates, it should first be clarified that AJR considers placement to mean the following: finding employment (full-time or part-time) in a field to which the degree is relevant. This does not necessitate that the company or organization be overtly religious, as long as graduates are applying skills they learned in our program(s). Placement rates only track initial employment, within a few months of ordination.

In the past decade, in all years but one (2021), our placement rate has been 100%. In 2014 and 2018, this excludes a single graduate who did not seek employment after ordination. Of our most recent graduates, only one out of the three ordainees is still seeking placement. While the roles for placement can vary, a majority of our graduates take up positions in the pulpit. Of our last 24 graduates, 10 now work as pulpit rabbis and 7 as pulpit cantors, with the rest taking up roles as Jewish educators.

Retention Rates



The retention rate refers to matriculated students who remain at the school for one year or longer (counted as a single Fall to Fall period). Our high rate of retention—always above 80% over the past ten years and averaging 95% during that same period—is a testament to the success of our Gesher program, which allows student to ease into their chosen program and decide what mode of study suits them best.

Master's Project Data

The Master's Project is a major component of completing the M.A., and often takes several trimesters to complete. All students seeking ordination are required to complete an M.A. in Jewish Studies, unless entering into the program with an equivalent degree. If a student has a relevant M.A. but did not complete the equivalent of a Master's Project during that degree (e.g. a thesis) then they will be required to complete a Master's Project.

Here are some titles from Master's Projects over the past ten years:

Synagogues in Crisis Mode: Models from the Covid-19 Pandemic (2021)

South American Conservative Rabbis in The United States of America: Exploring the Origins of a Particular Style (2020)

Developing Cultural Sensitivity When Working With Muslim and Orthodox Jewish Patients (2017)

Blood Libel Accusation: A Precursor to Anti-Semitism (2016)

Comedic Talmud: Humor in Talmudic and Rabbinic Sources (2015)

Comparing Jewish and Christian Mystical and Allegorical Commentaries to the Song of Songs During Late Antiquity (2013)