

Academic Director of Israel Initiatives and Conflict Education

**Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning
and Leadership**

Chicago, IL (Preferred)

Salary: \$150,000 - \$175,000

About Spertus Institute

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership is a century-old institution of higher Jewish learning dedicated to advancing Jewish scholarship, developing leaders, and strengthening Jewish communities. Through graduate education, professional development, public programs, and applied research, Spertus brings together rigorous academic inquiry and practical leadership development to address the most pressing issues facing Jewish life today.

As a national center for Jewish learning and leadership, Spertus is committed to intellectual excellence, community building, and fostering meaningful engagement across difference.

Building on the important research of Spertus Vice President Dr. Keren Fraiman, which highlights the struggle to engage with the conflict in Jewish educational spaces and the need for a systems and multi-stakeholder approach to developing and providing nuanced Israel education, Spertus has piloted several Israel education and leadership initiatives. In addition, and central to this role, Spertus will be expanding the Conflicts of Interest program (originally developed at the iCenter).

About the Conflicts of Interest Program

Israel is perhaps the most central—and most contested—dimension of Jewish identity and Jewish communal life in the twenty-first century. It evokes profound emotional attachment, diverse political perspectives, and difficult questions that touch on history, religion, ethics, peoplehood, and power. Since October 7, 2023, these conversations have become even more urgent, transforming longstanding educational challenges into pressing communal realities.

Recent research consistently demonstrates that while many Jews care deeply about Israel, their understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and related issues often lacks nuance, historical depth, and confidence. At the same time, Jewish educators, communal professionals, rabbis, and lay leaders increasingly find themselves navigating difficult conversations about Israel without sufficient preparation, support, or educational frameworks.

The Conflicts of Interest Program was created to address this challenge. Developed at the iCenter, the program has become a leading model for helping educators engage the complexity of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with intellectual rigor, emotional intelligence, and pedagogical excellence.

As the program transitions to Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership, it enters an exciting new phase of growth and innovation. Building on the program's strong foundation, Spertus seeks to expand its reach, deepen its impact, and explore new applications of conflict education within Jewish and civic contexts. Through ongoing evaluation, thought leadership, research, and strategic partnerships, the program will continue to prepare educators and leaders to engage on difficult issues thoughtfully and constructively.

Position Summary

Spertus Institute seeks an exceptional Academic Director to provide intellectual, educational, and strategic leadership for the Conflicts of Interest Program as well as additional development and growth of related and other Israel education and leadership programs and initiatives.

The Academic Director will be a recognized thought leader in Israel education, conflict education, Jewish learning, or a related field, with a demonstrated commitment to educational excellence and educator development. The successful candidate will possess both deep knowledge of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a sophisticated understanding of how adults learn, how educators are trained, and how complex and emotionally charged subjects can be taught effectively.

Working closely with the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, faculty facilitators, and administrative leadership, the Academic Director will oversee the program's curriculum, faculty, evaluation, strategic growth, and public presence while helping shape the next generation of educational initiatives related to Israel, conflict engagement, and civic discourse.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic and Educational Leadership

- Provide overall academic leadership and vision for the Conflicts of Interest Program as well as potential expansion to other Israel initiatives.
- Oversee and continually refine curriculum, educational frameworks, and learning outcomes.
- Ensure the highest standards of educational excellence and pedagogical integrity.
- Assess participant learning, program effectiveness, and long-term impact.
- Stay at the forefront of developments in Israel education, conflict education, civic education, and related fields.

Program Development and Innovation

- Identify opportunities to expand the program's scope, audiences, delivery models, and subject matter.
- Lead strategic planning for future growth, including advanced offerings, alumni engagement opportunities, and new educational initiatives.
- Develop and pilot innovative programs that respond to emerging communal and educational needs.
- Contribute to the long-term vision for a broader Center for Conflict Education and Civic Engagement.

Faculty Leadership

- Recruit, mentor, supervise, and evaluate faculty members and facilitators.
- Foster a culture of educational excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement.
- Lead faculty development initiatives and ensure consistency across program delivery.

Teaching and Public Engagement

- Teach within the program and facilitate workshops, seminars, and community learning experiences.
- Represent the program publicly through speaking engagements, conferences, and community outreach.
- Develop educational resources and thought leadership pieces for practitioners, educators, and communal leaders.

Partnerships and Field Building

- Cultivate partnerships with Jewish educational organizations, foundations, communal institutions, and civic organizations across North America.
- Develop relationships with Israeli scholars, educators, institutions, and thought leaders.
- Convene think tanks and learning communities that advance the field of Israel and conflict education.
- Strengthen the program's role as a national hub for research, innovation, and professional development.

Recruitment and Outreach

- Work closely with program staff to recruit participants and expand the program's reach.
- Build relationships with key stakeholders and organizational partners.
- Support marketing and communications efforts that elevate the visibility and impact of the program.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate for the Academic Director of of Israel Initiatives and Conflict Education position possesses the following competencies:

Intellectual and Academic Leadership Brings deep expertise in Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jewish learning, conflict education, or a related field, and can translate that expertise into rigorous, accessible educational frameworks for diverse adult learners.	Educational Design and Pedagogical Excellence Demonstrates strong experience designing curriculum, developing learning outcomes, assessing impact, and strengthening educator practice, with particular skill in teaching complex and emotionally charged subjects.	Nuanced Facilitation Across Difference Creates learning environments that support intellectual honesty, emotional intelligence, respectful disagreement, and meaningful dialogue among participants with varied identities, experiences, and perspectives.
Program Innovation and Growth Thinks expansively about how to grow and evolve a successful program, including new audiences, delivery models, advanced offerings, alumni engagement, research, evaluation, and future applications in civic or communal contexts.	Faculty Leadership and Collaborative Management Recruits, mentors, supervises, and supports faculty and facilitators with clarity, care, and high standards, fostering consistency, collaboration, and continuous improvement across program delivery.	Field Building, Partnership, and Public Presence Serves as a credible public voice for the program, building partnerships with educational, communal, academic, philanthropic, and civic institutions while contributing to the broader field through teaching, convening, writing, and thought leadership.

Additional Qualifications

Required

- Advanced degree in Israel Studies, Jewish Studies, Education, Political Science, History, Conflict Resolution, or a related field.
- Significant expertise in Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Demonstrated experience in curriculum design, educational leadership, and educator development.
- Outstanding teaching and facilitation skills.
- Excellent written and oral communication abilities.
- Experience building and growing educational programs.
- Ability to engage diverse viewpoints with intellectual openness, rigor, and respect.
- Commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue across difference.

Preferred

- Doctorate degree in Israel Studies, Jewish Studies, Education, Political Science, History, Conflict Resolution, or a related field.
- Hebrew proficiency.
- Experience working in both academic and communal educational settings.
- Established professional network within North American Jewish education and/or Israeli educational institutions.
- Record of publications, public scholarship, or thought leadership.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Reporting Relationships

The Academic Director reports to the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer. The Academic Director supervises:

- Administrative Director (or Program Manager)
- Faculty
- Facilitators and adjunct instructors

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary

\$150,000–\$175,000, commensurate with experience and qualifications.

Benefits

- Health, dental, and vision insurance
- 403b
- 3 weeks of paid vacation per year
- Time off for Jewish holidays and other key federal holidays
- Support for professional development
- Location: Chicago, IL (preferred) with flexibility for remote candidates able to travel as needed, hybrid schedule.

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TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in this position, please [click here](#). All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

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[Submit an application](#)