



בית הספר הגבוה לטכנולוגיה בירושלים
JERUSALEM COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mesila
A Program
to Enhance the
Employability of Graduates
and
Promote
Diversity in the Workplace

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Background

The Jerusalem College of Technology was one of the first institutions of higher education in Israel to develop and implement special programs enabling students from all segments of the population to study for academic degrees especially those whose families had had no previous experience of higher education.

One of these groundbreaking programs is the “Ethiopians for Engineers” (EFE) Program. Established in 1999, EFE helps Ethiopian students to become engineers and high-tech professionals, thus empowering the Ethiopian community to contribute to the Israeli economy and in so doing, raise some of the most disadvantaged of Israeli society to the highest levels possible through a high-tech academic education.

The success of EFE is evidenced by the increasing number of students graduating with academic degrees. To date, 27 students have graduated the program and most are now serving as officers in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) in their professional fields. Several graduates have already completed their service in the IDF and are now seeking work in their chosen fields.

The problem of finding suitable employment for members of the Ethiopian community with academic degrees has become part of the public debate in Israel including a Parliamentary investigation on the subject. Currently very few graduates are able to find employment in their chosen professions. Many are working in fields far below their academic training e.g. as security guards.



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The challenge now is to help these and other students find employment and take their rightful place in Israel's workforce, as contributing members of society.

Project Proposal

Mesila (the Path) is a program that aims to help students find jobs on graduating from JCT. Many young people have difficulties when searching for their first professional positions, all the more so, students from population groups that are under-served in higher education and/or under-represented in professional fields. JCT graduates students in the fields of engineering and industrial management with most seeking positions in the hi-tech workforce. Many of our students come from lower socio-economic communities including new immigrants from Ethiopia and the CIS, as well as the ultra-orthodox Haredi community. Mesila seeks to promote the rights of these young people to gain employment at the cutting edge of Israel's hi-tech industry irrespective of their origin.

Mesila is an affirmative action program whose objective will be to enhance the employability of, and opportunities for, those population groups under-represented in Higher Education. We aim to develop the competitiveness and employability of undergraduates and graduates through a program of suitably tailored guidance and career development learning activities.

In addition JCT aims to counter any form of discrimination of these populations in the country's workforce. Our objective is to promote a culture of diversity within the workplace through dialog and active participation of employers in the program. By involving employers in mentoring and in the training of students towards more enhanced employment skills, we hope to bridge the gap between different sections of society and encourage



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employers to offer employment to graduates whose families have had no previous experience with Higher Education.

The Program

Mesila will follow the format of Impact, a similar program that has been very successful in the U.K. and which was launched in 2000 in North East England as an innovative project working in collaboration with employers to address the workplace diversity agenda, and enhance the employment prospects of students and graduates.

The project requires forming a strategic plan and developing a versatile program that will guarantee Mesila's continued success. Once established, Mesila could be used as a model for collaboration with other colleges.

The program will be designed to enhance employment skills and increase employment opportunity, helping students build their self-awareness, raise their aspirations, and enhance their self-esteem and motivation. It will offer a range of services including guidance, mentoring, workshop and seminar programs, and opportunities to engage with potential employers.

Target Population

As Students enter their fourth and final year of studies they begin to focus on their immediate future post-graduation and so this is an ideal time to provide them with this program. All students would be eligible to participate – for students studying in special programs such as the EFE, participation would be compulsory.



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We are currently in the process of employing a program director who has experience in the field of job placement. He will be responsible for establishing and overseeing all facets of the program, including the following:

- ❖ Student recruitment - identifying and engaging students who would benefit from the program,
- ❖ Workshop planning – developing and producing curriculum for 12 workshops
- ❖ Mentor recruitment - identifying and engaging employers, personnel officers and alumni who will act as mentors
- ❖ Mentor training – develop and produce workshop for mentor training
- ❖ Workplace diversity – engaging employers and employment officers in a dialog through discussion of the issues
- ❖ Support groups – organize and lead ongoing support group meetings for students and unemployed graduates
- ❖ Job Fair – organize an on campus occasion for employers to actively recruit and for students to seek employment

The Partners

Mesila will be a partnership between students, employers, mentors and supporters who will all contribute to the success of this important and essential project.

Students

Each year some 500 students graduate from JCT. At least 50% come from families who have no previous experience with higher education or with employment in high-tech and other professions. We seek to enhance the personal and employment skills of our students and graduates through a range of learning and development activities including:



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- ❖ Practical workshops on team working, employment opportunities, job search strategies, writing curriculum vitae, filling out applications, interviews and assessment using an array of multimedia and printed material, role-playing and guest lecturers.
- ❖ Confidential one-to-one discussions with mentors and/or the program director for individual guidance and advice.
- ❖ Mentoring by employers, personnel officers, alumni or other employees that provides an opportunity for support whilst planning a career and during the job search.
- ❖ Access to work experience – All fourth year students are required to carry out a project which is an excellent opportunity for them to gain experience in the field under supervision
- ❖ Ongoing student/graduate support groups that provide an informal forum for networking and support.
- ❖ Personal development activities such as Dale Carnegie can help boost students' confidence.

Employers / Personnel Officers

Many employers are keen to increase diversity within the workplace, but often report difficulties in attracting candidates with appropriate attributes. For others, involvement in the program may increase awareness of and sensitivity to the issue.

Mesila intends to bridge the gap by better preparing students for the process of job seeking and providing employers with advice and assistance in recruiting a diverse workforce.

We would particularly value direct contributions from managers, recruiters and others, acting as mentors, plus the opportunity for project placements.



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We are not seeking a financial contribution from employers, although this could be an alternative way of contributing to the program's objectives.

Employers would not have to volunteer for every aspect of the program nor are they expected to offer graduate jobs to the participants. We do believe, however the program has the potential to enhance recruitment in the long term by creating a cohort of better developed and motivated candidates and more sympathetic and understanding employers

Employers could lead workshops on job hunting including CV writing and interview skills or skill development activities such as team building, leadership and presentation skills. They may also promote job opportunities, provide mentors and work shadowing/experience.

Because the involvement of employers is crucial to the success of this program we intend to establish a 'Supporters Club' of organizations who are willing to participate.

Participation in Mesila would have the following benefits for employers:

- Raising the company profile amongst a targeted potential workforce of talented students and graduates.
- Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce can raise cultural awareness and sensitivity amongst staff.
- Active participation in the project can benefit recruitment processes and improve retention strategies.
- Addressing diversity issues in recruitment can help the company reflect and be sensitive to the needs of the communities it serves.
This can have strong financial benefit!

Mentors



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The mentor's role is to use one's skills, experience and knowledge to support mentees as they make decisions about their future career. He/she is there to offer advice and guidance, to answer questions, and to work with the mentee on specific tasks.

Mentoring contributes greatly to one's own development of people management and relationship building skills. It also contributes to job enhancement as the mentee may have new ideas and knowledge to share. The satisfaction of helping others as well as an increase in one's own job satisfaction are other benefits of the program.

Mentoring will also benefit the mentor's company as a bond is developed with the student and JCT. It is an opportunity to identify and recruit potential employees and raises awareness of the company amongst the students.

Mentors would be expected to receive some basic training and then meet at least four times with the student over the course of the program (six months).

Supporters

To establish Mesila and ensure it fulfills its mission, we are in need of long-term financial support. Our supporters include mentors and employers as well as donors who are not directly involved in the program but believe in its importance and wish to see it succeed. Supporters will receive regular updates on the program and the graduates' success in the job market.



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Methodology

1. **Workshops** - Two hour weekly practical workshops during the winter semester for students in their fourth and final year. The Program Director (PD) would be responsible for presenting the workshops and inviting guest lecturers where relevant.
2. **Mentoring** - In the second semester of the final year the student is paired up with a mentor. The student meets at least once a month with the mentor as he guides him through the job placement process. Mentors receive 4 hours of basic training and then meet at least four times with the student over the course of the program.
3. **Projects** - As the students work through their chosen final project, additional experience in the field is acquired. Weekly meetings with the project supervisor present more informal opportunities for the student to enhance his skills and develop confidence in the work field.
4. **Outreach to employers** - During the year the PD also initiates contact with employers and personnel officers to encourage diversity in the workplace. Lectures on diversity and open dialogs on the subject would contribute to the program's success.
5. **Support Groups** - Ongoing weekly support group meetings from the second semester for students and unemployed graduates – students can bring up issues they wish to deal with. It is also an opportunity for networking.
6. **Job Fair** - A Job Fair in the second semester will enable students to learn about current employment opportunities and enable companies to recruit potential candidates.



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Evaluation

All participants are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback to the PD on the usefulness of the course as a whole and of individual workshops in particular. In addition student attendance will be monitored as well as feedback on the mentor/student relationship. At the end of each year the PD will meet with students, mentors, employers, and personnel officers to evaluate the program.

Long term evaluation is measured by the numbers of students who successfully find employment over time as well as an evaluation of the number of companies that are showing more diversity in their workforce.



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Annual Budget for Mesila		
Expenses		
Personnel (gross)		
Program Director	full time (incl. social security etc.)	\$30,000
Secretary	part time (incl. social security etc)	\$10,000
Workshops		
12 meetings x 2 hours		
Printed Materials	2 Training Packages	\$3,000
Audio Visual Materials	7 Training DVDs	\$7,000
Mentoring		
2 Training sessions x 2 hours		
Materials		\$2,000
Support Group		
Meetings x 2 hours (per week) - ongoing		
Materials		\$2,000
Refreshments		\$750
Job Fair		
		\$10,000
Supporters Club		
		\$5,000
Publicity		
		\$5,000
Transport		
		\$2,000
Total		\$76,750
Overhead*	6.5%	\$4,989
Total Annual Cost		\$81,739
*includes lecture room costs, maintenance, telephone, utilities etc		