



Gratz Insider, Summer 2016 - Story Continuation

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Meet the Gratz College Board of Governors: A New Leader at the Helm

Michelle Portnoff is well positioned for her role as board chair in part because of her extensive leadership experience. For the last 27 years, she has run the busy law practice of Portnoff Law Associates, Ltd., which she cofounded with her father in 1989. The firm represents over 125 municipalities, school districts and other municipal authorities throughout Pennsylvania in the collection of delinquent taxes and municipal user fees.

In addition to her professional experience, Portnoff has deep-rooted family ties to Gratz, which span multiple generations. Her family's Gratz lineage began with her grandmother and great aunt who were students in our supplementary school program. Her uncle also attended Gratz, followed by Portnoff and her sister. Portnoff not only graduated from the former Hebrew High School of Gratz College, but she also taught there. Finally, three of her children attended the College's current supplementary school program: the Gratz Jewish Community High School (JCHS).

Over the years, Portnoff has participated in Gratz continuing legal education courses and adult education programs. In 2012, she strengthened her commitment to the College with her election to the board of governors, the institution's governing body, which she now leads.

Prior to assuming her current role, Portnoff served as the board's development chair. During her tenure in that position, the College hired an experienced development professional, who has successfully expanded the donor pool and increased total donations. As board chair, Portnoff will continue her involvement with development because, as she explains, it is "important for our continued vitality."

Among other things, she would also like to see Gratz create more continuing legal education (CLE) programming. "In my opinion," she says, "CLE and Jewish learning go hand in glove, and it is a niche we are well qualified to fill."

As Portnoff now takes the reins of board chair, her predecessor, David Weinstein, says, "Michelle has been involved with Gratz College on so many levels for such a long time. Because of her proven dedication to the College and its mission, as well as her many talents, she is going to be an outstanding chair of our board of governors."

In addition to appointing a new chair, the board has recently elected some new members: David Gordon, general manager of Roosevelt Memorial Park; Jonathan Wallace, graduate student at Temple University; and Dr. Sharon Portnoff, professor of Judaic Studies at Connecticut College and sister of our board chair. These new board members will be featured in future issues of The Insider.