



Gratz Insider, December 2015 - Story Continuation

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### **Gratz Mid-Career Fellows: From Philly to Silicon Valley**

Gratz Mid-Career Fellowships are available to eligible students seeking a master's in Jewish education, nonprofit management or Jewish communal service. With classes conducted almost entirely online, these degrees can be completed on a part-time basis at a significantly reduced tuition rate.

"The Mid-Career Fellowship opened up a door that I thought was already closed to me," says Amanda Glincher, marketing director of the Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley and Mid-Career fellow in the Gratz Master of Science program in Nonprofit Management.

Glincher has worked for the Jewish Federation for the last six-and-a-half years, first as director of the Young Adult Division and now as director of creative strategy. She is also a single mother with two young children.

For years, Glincher had toyed with the idea of going to graduate school. This idea resurfaced last year during a trip to Israel and Hungary that she won as a recipient of The Bernard Rodkin Professional Development Fellowship. During a stroll through the *shuk* in Jerusalem, Brenda Gevertz, trip leader and executive director of JPRO, encouraged Glincher to pursue graduate studies.

The notion of graduate school was tempting, but daunting for a working mother who was still paying off her college loans. Nevertheless, when Glincher learned about the Gratz online Master of Science program in Nonprofit Management, she applied. She also applied to the Federation Executive Recruitment & Education Program (FEREP), which awards significant graduate school scholarships.

Glincher was accepted into the Gratz master's program and made it through the highly competitive FEREP process, only to lose in the final round. Without the financial support of a FEREP grant, she could not enroll at Gratz - or so she thought. However, as soon as she learned that she was eligible for the Gratz Mid-Career Fellowship, she matriculated in Gratz's summer session, ordered books and started her online classes.

"One of the beautiful things about the Mid-Career Fellowship," says Glincher, "is that everything we learn, we get to use right away on the job."

She has in fact already brought lecture notes in to work from her fundraising class. And, after she completed her nonprofit law class this summer, her organization coincidentally began the process of rewriting its bylaws.

Describing what she hopes to achieve from the Gratz program, Glincher says, "I want to have as many resources as possible so that I can help support my community with a larger toolbox."

Rachael Ellis, another Mid-Career fellow, is also looking to Gratz to expand her “toolbox,” but in her case, it’s in the area of Jewish education. Growing up in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, Ellis was very familiar with Gratz College. So, it’s not surprising that she chose Gratz for her master’s in Jewish education; what is surprising is the geographically circuitous route she took to get there.

After graduating from Georgetown University, Ellis moved to Morocco, where she taught kindergarten and first grade in a Canadian school. Two years later, yearning to incorporate Judaism into her career as an educator, she decided to return to the United States. She also sought a particular experiential approach to education: Reggio Emilia, which encourages young children to help direct their own learning by building on their existing interests and knowledge. Both of her criteria were met at the Jewish Community Center in Fairfax, Virginia, where she took a job teaching prekindergarten.

Eventually, Ellis wanted to be closer to home and began looking for a teaching position in the Philadelphia area. She also wanted to enhance her credentials with a master’s degree in Jewish education - from Gratz. She waited to apply, however, until a Mid-Career Fellowship became available, providing her with a substantial reduction in tuition.

By the end of her first semester at Gratz, her job search yielded what she described as “a perfect fit”: a position as a kindergarten teacher at the Yeshiva Lab School, a Modern Orthodox school that was opened this year in suburban Philadelphia by the Kohelet Foundation. Since the school is in its infancy, Ellis is able to have an impact on every aspect of the program, from curriculum design to teaching.

And, her education courses at Gratz are supporting her along this journey, such as in the area of differentiated learning for different students. However, it’s not just the practical application that Ellis appreciates about her Gratz education. As she says, “One of the things I love about Gratz is that there is such a diversity of students, enabling me to learn more about the Jewish world. I don’t experience this same kind of openness outside of Gratz.”

For Glincher and Ellis, the Gratz Mid-Career Fellowship is enabling them to pursue their educational goals in an affordable, practical and stimulating way. For more information about the Mid-Career Fellowship, contact us at [admissions@gratz.edu](mailto:admissions@gratz.edu) or at 215-635-7300, x154 or x140. A limited number of fellowships are still available for the spring semester.