

## A Viable Alternative?

### Lander College

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Yeshiva University has established itself as the paradigm model of yeshiva education fused with scholastic excellence. For the better part of three-quarters of a century, YU has been synonymous with the collegiate experience for the Modern Orthodox world. Parents have elevated the institution onto a lofty pedestal, confident that their children who attend YU will perpetuate their religious education while reaching the greatest of heights in academia. The university, in turn, has responded by raising its secular standards, maintaining its glamorous Top 50 ranking amongst colleges across the country, while continually producing more semichah students than any other yeshiva in the world.

However, over recent years, there seems to have been a noticeable shift in the youth of this Modern Orthodox world. Instead of following the path of their parents in seeking the fulfillment of a Torah education while simultaneously mastering secular subject matter, the next generation has carried different and sometimes conflicting aspirations. In layman's terms, the right has gone more to the right while the left has gone further leftward. This schism has widened in recent years, with many adolescents seeking alternative options to their predecessors' traditional established approach. Even YU's top tier beis-midrash program has been neglected by some of these boys, with demands of full-time yeshivas instead.

Greeting the ideology of this new movement, Dr. Bernard Lander introduced Touro College as a prospective suitor in providing collegiate fulfillment for those on the religious right. With an ever so slight shift in motto to "Torah U'Parnassah," Dr. Lander set up an institution whose role centers on providing a livelihood rather than academic superiority. The goal is to afford the student every opportunity possible to maximize beis-medrash learning time while maintaining respectable academic standards that enable successful careers. This tender dichotomy was well accepted by most of the yeshiva world, with throngs of boys from Torah Vodaath, Chaim Berlin, Chofetz Chaim, and other well-regarded yeshivas, who were slower in embracing the notion of yeshiva boys going to college, leaping into post-high-school education.

Still, many had not regarded Touro as a viable alternative to YU in that the yeshiva and college pursuits of Touro students were kept completely separate, with no recognizable affiliation between the two entities. Only at Yeshiva University could a talmid dorm, learn, research, and go to college under the guidance and tutelage of one harmoniously blended institution. Many parents felt Touro needed to provide more structure before feeling secure in allowing their bachurim to adopt the Torah U'Parnassah approach.

Once again, Dr. Lander has used his sensitivity and creativity, constructing an elaborate, state-of-the-art campus in the heart of Kew Gardens Hills. Following his dictum of Torah U'Parnassah, the president of Touro College meticulously picked deans and rabbanim who share his lofty aspirations of providing education necessary to secure lucrative professional positions while not requiring the students to be cultured at the expense of Torah study.

Lander College for Men, centered around its rashei yeshiva—Rabbi Parnes and Rabbi Bronspigel, originally from YU; and Rabbi Shmulevitz, formally a rebbi at HAFTR—as well as its mashgiach, Rabbi Bamberger, has afforded the alternative to students and parents agreeing on a happy medium between YU and a more traditional full-time yeshiva. The rabbanim, along with the well-respected Dean Sokol, joined together with a united vision towards providing a forum for personal growth that is reminiscent of an Old Country yeshiva, while not compromising on the academic standards necessary to allow advancement in 21st-century America. As a result, the establishment has seen steadfast growth since its inception only six years ago.

So, what exactly makes Lander's model unique in respect to the seemingly identical program already in existence at the world-renowned Yeshiva College? Firstly, the college accepts a generous 48 credits of yeshiva study towards a degree in any one of its numerous majors. Cutting out peripheral courses that are not requisite towards success in the field of study, Lander's has enabled greater focus to be put upon its beis midrash program, both by the faculty and the students. This also lifts part of the educational burden off the talmidim, limiting the amount of secular courses needed before receiving their bachelor's degrees.

Secondly, because the student body of Lander's is significantly smaller than similar institutions, it affords close relationships between rebbi and talmid. The atmosphere promotes intimate nurturing and guidance. Further, the size of the yeshiva allows the faculty to keep a closer eye on who is enrolled in the program. This, in turn, allows for cohesiveness within the student body in their adaptation of one united vision.

A third consideration is the significant difference in price between the institutions. As previously mentioned, YU's focus remains on academic superiority. What comes along with that is the tuition

of Ivy-League caliber schools. Tuition has inched close to the \$40,000 mark. Lander's, on the other hand, requests less than \$20,000 for a reasonably competitive program. YU does generously offer an array of scholarships and tuition breaks, making its college more attractive to the middle class. However, with the starting cost at less than half that of Yeshiva University, Lander's is clearly indicating that they have no intent of challenging or usurping YU's role as the "Harvard" of yeshiva college programs, but rather presenting an alternative model with different aspirations.



*Dr. Bernard Lander*

Certainly, there will never be a shortage of ambitious Orthodox men excited to tap the opportunity YU has afforded them in molding an all-encompassing enclave, satisfying the needs of a wide range of students. Dr. Lander, though, has created an appealing option for young men who yearn to continue their years of Torah study in Eretz Yisrael in a cocooned yeshiva environment in America, while satisfying the necessary preparation for a fruitful occupation. ■