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Fred Leeb, Rabbi Kasriel Shemtov and Dov Stein at the MJI construction site

## MJI Eyes The Future

### College gets new grant of accreditation, construction under way on new building.

**Ronelle Grier**  
Contributing Writer

**M**ichigan Jewish Institute (MJI) received a new grant of accreditation from the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), the same agency which has provided accreditation to MJI since 1997.

The accreditation renewal, which is valid through December 2017, will allow MJI to continue its mission of providing career-oriented degrees through quality online and on-site courses available to students all over the world.

The school's accreditation process had made national news. Last Sept. 27, the New York-based *Forward* newspaper published an article claiming the MJI could lose its accreditation and be forced to close because, among other charges, a large number of its American students were receiving U.S. government Pell Grants, studying half-time at yeshivot in Israel and not graduating MJI.

The *Detroit Jewish News* published a cover story on Oct. 24 wherein the MJI charged the *Forward* story contained "inaccuracies and misrepresentations" and, indeed, the *JN* story reached different conclusions than the *Forward's*. With its renewed accreditation, MJI appears to have been vindicated.

Rabbi Kasriel Shemtov, president of MJI, said the accreditation process used by ACICS is very thorough; including on-site visits and a comprehensive review of course offerings, content, faculty and other factors. About 1,000 schools nationwide receive accreditation through ACICS, which focuses on career-oriented institutions such as MJI.

The nonprofit college currently offers bachelor of applied science degrees in Judaic studies, business studies and information systems, and computer information systems, as well as a certificate program in Talmudic law and jurisprudence.

Dov Stein, director of academic administration, said the number of MJI graduates has risen steadily in the last

few years and would continue.

"Since our inception, we have been affording Jewish students around the world an opportunity for a practical and affordable education, and the renewal of our accreditation will allow us to continue offering quality programs," Stein said.

The renewed accreditation ties in with the new MJI building currently under construction in West Bloomfield, next to The Shul on Maple Road between Drake and Halstead. Currently, close to 2,000 students are enrolled this semester, with the majority participating in courses online. The new building will allow the opportunity for increased on-site enrollment, which is one of the college's goals.

According to Fred Leeb, chief operating officer for MJI, the new building will be a contemporary three-floor, 16,000-square-foot facility that will centralize operations for the organization.

The main floor will feature a spacious glass entranceway, a large welcoming open space for use by students and faculty, a well-stocked library, a computer area and conference rooms. The classrooms will be located in the lower level and the third floor will house the administrative offices.

MJI currently utilizes classroom sites located throughout Metro Detroit. The two principal locations are The Shul's Jack and Miriam Sherkman building in West Bloomfield, which also serves as MJI's main campus, and the Specs Howard Broadcasting building in Southfield, which houses the administrative offices. The new facility will allow MJI staff to consolidate all of its office space, although it will retain its other classroom locations.

"The building will allow us to implement plans to better serve local students," Shemtov said. "For the past five years, we've had wonderful growth internationally and online; now we're ready to expand our focus locally."

Leeb said the building, which broke ground last year, is expected to be completed during the first quarter of 2015.

Shemtov said. "We hope it will be an educational resource as well as a beacon of light for the Jewish community." □