



# Pursuing the Unknown – A Personal Journey

My Presidency at Tel Aviv University:  
Challenges, Achievements and Insights

2009-2019

By Prof. Joseph Klafter



From the place where we are right  
flowers will never grow  
in the spring.

The place where we are right  
is hard and trampled  
like a yard.

But doubts and loves  
dig up the world  
like a mole, a plough...

From *The Place Where We Are Right*  
by Yehuda Amichai

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## ●●● Preface: From physical chemist to President

As I approach the end of my decade as President of TAU, I wish to share my experiences in this world-embracing, fascinating and challenging journey. I do this because I believe that the insights I have acquired may help present and future position holders on campus, while providing any interested reader with a comprehensive overview of Israel's largest academic institution.

I have been asked many times: "What is the greatest challenge you face? What is your vision?" No answer can describe the multiple dimensions and complexities of an institution as large and multidisciplinary as TAU. And yet, in this document I will try to expose the reader to the dreams and plans, the frustrations and success stories, and especially the processes and insights of my tenure.

After taking office and becoming acquainted with the system, I knew where I wanted the university to go. And it was quite clear to me that the usual, standard work plans could not carry us to that destination. Today, after a decade of development and growth, I wish to share a 'secret': What was most crucial was to connect and empower all elements of the university community, driving them to embark together on a journey in pursuit of the unknown.

'Excellence' is a key word at TAU, as in any other research university in Israel and worldwide. So are 'interdisciplinary,' 'international,' 'entrepreneurship' and 'contribution to the community.' The distance between these words and their actual implementation can

be very great indeed. I have learned that the way to transform them from empty slogans into a living reality is by integrating them into the DNA of our campus. We must avoid using these words in a superficial way, and focus on driving onwards consistently.

As a physical chemist I specialize in random natural processes. In a world where randomness plays a central role, attaining goals can only be measured in terms of probability. There is no certainty, and many attempts are needed before the target is ultimately reached. The resemblance between my theoretical studies and my experiences as President is astonishing. I learned how to give seemingly impossible dreams a chance, not to withdraw my backing even when things are not proceeding according to plan, to show flexibility when situations change and, above all, to give members of the TAU community 'permission to fail' and support them on the road to success.

Throughout the journey I tried to listen and to bring together faculty members, students, donors and supporters. They are the pillars on which the University stands. I tried to be open and flexible, encourage researchers and students, create an enabling environment, and perhaps most important – to 'humanize' the university. When people meet people, the potential is enormous.

Today, after 3,600 intense days and nights, I look back with satisfaction, and forward with confidence. I experienced thousands of happy moments, and quite



a few moments of hardship and tension – in which I was mostly alone with myself and my thoughts. In this document I wish, among other things, to share moments from my personal journey – a road that I am very proud to have traveled.

## The President's roles in an age of competition and change

A brief sentence in the TAU Constitution reads: "The President shall be the head of the University, and he constitutes the highest academic and administrative authority at the University." Lacking in detail, this general sentence determines in effect that the head of the system must pour content and meaning into the Constitution's definition. This is especially true of my own presidency, the first to complete two full terms under the new Constitution and structure instituted in 2005, which will be described below.

**Broad outlook:** The Constitution also states that the University's goal is to "promote and develop education, instruction and research in all fields of science and culture." Thus, according to the Constitution, **teaching** and **research** are the University's core activities. But to perform them and excel in them, a much broader view of the University is required. Only an all-embracing outlook of this kind, far beyond the narrow definitions of these two focal missions, will ultimately enable their successful implementation.

**Academic and public visibility:** TAU operates in a most competitive environment, both nationally and globally. This is a major fact to be taken into account in any discussion on the University's current status, and how it should be further developed, upgraded and advanced. To succeed in such a competitive environment, we must apply a **holistic approach**, leading to scientific and public **visibility** and **excellence**. Visibility and excellence are key factors in the competition for government and philanthropic support for new faculty members and for students at all levels.

The President plays a leading role in positioning the University and promoting its visibility and influence in Israeli society, in international academia, among its friends in Israel and worldwide, in local and global

industry and, finally, in the eyes of Israel's government and regulators. The importance of this role grows constantly in the **international arena**, where both research and higher education cross boundaries, becoming more and more global and competitive, as well as on the **national turf** – with the President acting as guard against the politicization of academia and standard bearer of academia's fundamental principles.

**Creativity and venture:** TAU's influence both locally and globally requires creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit at multiple levels: academia, society and within the organization. Like many other institutions, TAU must 'reinvent' itself from time to time, in order to advance its status, relevance and leadership in a constantly changing environment.

The President's mission, as I see it, is to **initiate and lead creativity and entrepreneurship** in all areas, create optimal conditions and fertile ground for their growth and, above all, to promote and facilitate them among all academic personnel, providing room and support for innovative ideas.

Ultimately, a university resembles a small state, with its government and citizens, internal politics and external relations, with plans for growth alongside crises. It is a community of all its faculty and staff – including daily life on campus, Israeli reality and regulation, and our position as a public institution with a government budget – and this community is a significant partner in determining the institution's policy and character. Within this community, the President acts to attain and preserve the balance and nurture research & development activities, study programs and social involvement. Every initiative and idea, once launched, has a life of its own, often taking off in unexpected directions. This is the magic ingredient that makes an institution thrive.

These activities place the President at the heart of the worlds of international philanthropy and investment, in touch with the media and public opinion leaders. This role is especially important because universities are one of society's most significant resources, and yet one of those least understood by this very same society.

## ●●● Summary: New projects and initiatives launched during 2009-2019

### A. Interdisciplinary culture: Removing barriers

- **Establishment of the Sagol School of Neuroscience:** Interdisciplinary teaching and research, nurturing the next generation of brain researchers; a pioneering initiative that accelerated the process of removing barriers between disciplines at TAU.
- **BioMed@TAU:** Hubs of interdisciplinary research around biomedical issues at the School of Medicine.
- **City Center** – The center for the study of cities and urbanism
- **Kiryat Atidim:** Smart cities lab
- **Humanities in Engineering program** (supported by the **Mandel Foundation**): Interdisciplinary undergraduate program for outstanding students, combining engineering with the humanities; to be expanded to the Faculties of Life Sciences and the Exact Sciences.



- **Minducate:** An innovative integration of teaching and learning with research on cognition and the brain.
- **Porter Dead Sea Research Institute for Life under Extreme Conditions:** A TAU hub and physical facility in the Dead Sea region, the lowest place in the world, encouraging interdisciplinary research on the area's diverse features.
- **The Blavatnik Interdisciplinary Cyber Research Center** (supported also by the **Prime Minister's**

**Office**): Brings together many fields of research on campus around the subject of cyber.

- **Establishing a vast range of interdisciplinary institutes, centers and study programs:** The campus community embraces the interdisciplinary approach, transforming it from an abstract idea into an integral part of our organizational culture.

### B. Globalization: Spreading our wings

- **New position: VP International Academic Relations**
- **Positioning TAU International** as a bridge to the world and a home for international students and scholars – of utmost importance in an increasingly global academic and career arena.
- **Presence in India: The Israel-India Forum,** leading to extensive connections in Indian academia and industry.
- **Presence in China:** Establishing the **Israel-China Innovation Forum** and the **XIN Center** for collaboration in nanotechnology and other areas between **Tsinghua University** and TAU, collaboration with **Peking University** on food security, broad network of collaborations throughout China.
- **Presence in Japan and Singapore:** Both academia and industry.
- **Presence in Africa:** Establishing the **Israel-Africa Forum** (following the success of the Israel-India Forum) and initial steps in Africa.
- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center in Chicago:** TAU is the founding international partner of an initiative of the State of Illinois encouraging entrepreneurship in academia, in collaboration with industry.
- **Enhancing international academic relations:** Joint degrees, donor-supported collaborations and international centers of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **Expanding ties with industry** in India (**Tata, TCS, Wipro**) and China (**Alibaba**): Investing in

research on topics of interest to both TAU and the corporations.

## C. Strategic moves inside TAU: Defining who we are

- **Reorganizing the academic structure** – from 125 academic units to 31 schools
- **Rebranding TAU: Pursuing the Unknown...**
- **Strengthening our human capital:** Get-togethers for Deans, TAU NEXT, quantum leap at the Research Authority.
- **New TAU website**
- **New benefit:** TAU credit card.

## D. Entrepreneurship & innovation: Releasing the next big idea

- **Ramot Ltd.**, TAU's technology transfer arm: In recent years Ramot's strength has increased significantly; the position of VP R&D was separated from that of Ramot Chairperson, and a leading figure from industry was appointed to the post.
- **Momentum Fund:** A \$24 million investment fund for the development and commercialization of promising research breakthroughs. The Fund is a pioneering model, managed by **Ramot**; leading investors include the **Tata Group** of India and **Temasek** of Singapore; to date, 25 technologies have been funded.
- **Biomed Tech:** Support for collaborations with hospitals for the development of innovative medical devices that solve problems encountered in the clinic. Targets students from all parts of the TAU campus.
- **SPARK TLV:** Initiative encouraging researchers to develop medications in collaboration with hospitals. The **BLAVATNIK CENTER for Drug Discovery**, working in the same direction, was also established.
- **TAU Online:** Promoting innovation in education, online education and creative thinking about integrating technology into learning and teaching processes.

- **Strengthening ties with industry:** Theoretical research applied in the field.
- **Entrepreneurship Center in partnership with Shenkar:** The Center, the result of winning an innovation and entrepreneurship competition among Israeli universities, will serve students from all faculties who wish to learn about entrepreneurship and realize a passion for providing solutions for various needs through new ventures or intra-organizational entrepreneurship.
- **Launching a merger with Shenkar:** The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- **TAU Ventures:** An incubator enabling undergraduates and alumni to develop their ideas with VC funding support and mentoring.
- **Brainboost:** A network shared by the **Sagol School of Neuroscience** and over 25 neuroscience companies, initiating joint projects, specialization programs for students, business mentoring, hackathons and other events.
- **Israel's first DED (directed energy deposition) 3D printer** in cooperation with the Defense Ministry's Research, Weapons Development and Technology Infrastructure Administration (MAFAT) and the Israel Air Force.
- **Collaboration with Check Point:** After many years of support and joint research, the **Check Point Building** has been built on the TAU campus, initiated by **Gil Shwed**, Chairman of TAU's **Youth University**, and providing a new home for the **Blavatnik School of Computer Science** and the **Youth University** – an ideal interface between the present and future generations of scientists.
- **Collaboration with Broadcom:** In recent years the company supported research at the School of Electrical Engineering and the Blavatnik School of Computer Science, and these relations have led to the construction of the **Susan and Henry Samueli Engineering Building**, a unique model of collaboration between academia and industry – Broadcom's R&D Center combined with labs,

classrooms and offices of the Fleischman Faculty of Engineering.

- **Yandex Initiative for Machine Learning:** An initiative of **Dr. Arkady Volozh**, founder and world CEO of the Russian internet giant Yandex, aiming to raise awareness regarding the importance of artificial intelligence in all areas.



## E. Resource development: Making dreams come true

- **12 new buildings**, some completed and others being planned or constructed: the Porter Building for Environmental Studies; the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History; the Susan and Henry Samuelli Engineering Building; the Raya and Josef Jaglom Auditorium; the Check Point Building; the Roman Abramovich Building of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology; the Smolarz Family Building; the Pouran and Parviz Izak Nazarian Building; the Trauma Studies Building; the Buchmann Building at the Faculty of Law; the Lorry I. Lokey Graduate Center at the Collier School of Management; the Azrieli School of Architecture Building; three new dormitory buildings at Student City; and 40,000 square meters of parking facilities.
- **New research infrastructure:** Enabling research at an international level and significantly enhancing our edge in the competition for outstanding new faculty members – the Dan David Center for Human Evolution and Biohistory Research; the Alfredo Federico Strauss Center

for Computational Neuro-Imaging; the most powerful laser in the Middle East; the Myers Core Facility for Research on Neurodegenerative Diseases; NMR

- **First global campaign for raising one billion dollars in 10 years:** Six years into the campaign we have reached the designated mark of \$600 million. This success will enable new initiatives in the future, fueling the next breakthroughs. To support this ambitious campaign, a broad human and organizational foundation was created by investing in TAU's Development and Public Affairs Division, revamping and expanding Friends Associations and their Boards around the world, instituting the President's Circle for donors of \$1 million, and more.
- **Establishing an Alumni Organization in Israel and overseas:** Building the needed network, cultivating relations with our alumni and launching a campaign for scholarships.

## F. Community & social responsibility: Serving Israeli society

- **Etnachta Public Lecture Series:** Making TAU's worlds of knowledge and research accessible to the public.
- **TAU Impact:** A unique combination of academic studies and social involvement.
- **Online Academic High School:** Making academia accessible to high school students in Israel's central and peripheral regions, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.
- **Supporting our students:** Gender equality, accessibility, minorities, scholarships
- **Intersecting Pathways:** Meetings and dialogue between TAU researchers and the Haredi world; a unique way for bringing the academic and Torah communities closer together.
- **Tikkun Olam:** Assistance provided by our students and researchers to villagers in India and Africa, implementing modern agricultural and water technologies.

## ●●● The backdrop for my election

In 2004 the Planning and Budgeting Committee ('VATAT') of Israel's Council for Higher Education moved to change the constitutions of Israeli universities, introducing a new executive structure – a hierarchic unitary structure that replaced the former dual structure. In the new formation, the President heads the system as its top academic and administrative authority; he leads the search committee for a Rector (in which he holds veto power), and the Rector nominates the Deans of the various faculties in consultation with the President. The President is subordinate to two entities: the Executive Council numbering 13 members, 8 of whom are public figures, responsible for electing the President, monitoring his activities and advising him (but not leading the University in his place!), and the Board of Governors, consisting of hundreds of donors and friends in Israel and overseas. However, this new structure was in one sense 'boobytrapped': it left little authority in the hands of the Board of Governors, which supports TAU financially and promotes its image in the global arena, and which, in the previous setup, had elected the University's Presidents.

In accordance with the new system, the Executive Council, headed by the late **Dov Lautman**, elected a

new President in 2007 – **Prof. Zvi Galil**, at the time Dean of Computer Science at Columbia University. After the Executive Council, then headed by **Dr. Leora Meridor**, expressed dissatisfaction with Prof. Galil's performance, he resigned in 2009. The Board of Governors was not involved in either process and saw this as a severe breach of faith.

At the same time, TAU also experienced a financial earthquake. During the global crisis of 2008 the Executive Council saw fit to sell – contrary to the advice of the Investment Committee – TAU's entire stock portfolio; but since the markets soon recovered, the University lost tens of millions of dollars. The Senate and the Board of Governors regarded this as a grave mistake, and criticism grew louder and louder.

The manner in which Prof. Galil's presidency ended, together with the handling of the stock portfolio, caused a deep rift between the Senate and Board of Governors on one side, and the Executive Council on the other. The entire campus was in turmoil, and I, the newly elected President, landed right in the eye of the storm...



## ●●● A President is born: A few personal words

Throughout the turbulent period described above, and also prior to it, I was an active scientist and faculty member at the Raymond and Beverley Sackler School of Chemistry, and also Chairman of the Israel Science Foundation. Leading a large research group in physical chemistry, I felt that my work was most interesting and rewarding. When the Chair of the Executive Council at the time, Dr. Leora Meridor, asked me to appear before the search committee for a new President, I was not at all certain that I wanted the job. Moreover, I was not convinced that I was the right person for it. I had never headed such a large and complex organization, consisting of thousands of people, with an annual budget of more than two billion shekels. Finally, yielding to the insistent persuasion of friends and colleagues, I appeared before the search committee.

I heard that the committee had elected me as its candidate when I landed in Zurich, Switzerland, on my way to Freiburg, Germany, where I was a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies. Returning to Tel Aviv, I found mayhem. The TAU Senate, asked to ratify the search committee's recommendation, was in an uproar. Many members of the Senate didn't know me

at all, and some regarded me as a representative of the Executive Council, involved in my predecessor's departure. Ultimately, in the secret ballot, I was voted in by a large majority. And so, without any prior preparation, I, a researcher who had never been in the limelight, became a news item.

On the morning of October 22, 2009, I drove to the campus, and parked in the spot reserved for the President. And I still didn't know what exactly I was doing there. I had no way of knowing how hard, complex and challenging the journey would be. I could not possibly fathom the significance of the President's role, nor the scope of the audiences he encounters and impacts upon. More than nine years have passed since that day, and soon I will complete my term as the eighth President of Tel Aviv University. The journey I summarize was unlike any other I have ever experienced, or anything I could have imagined or expected when I took office. And even though I was no longer young at the beginning of the journey, this unique experience has taught me a great deal – about the University, about the world, and mainly about myself.

## ●●● Difficult beginnings: Opening a new path

My first task as President was restoring the collective trust and good faith of personnel throughout TAU and its supervisory bodies. This faith had been severely undermined by the events preceding my election, and I was required to serve as mediator between any number of conflicting parties, most of whom I hardly knew. Up until that time, as a researcher at the Sackler School of Chemistry (not even Head of the School), I had a rather narrow viewpoint, which excluded large and significant parts of the campus.

And so, in my first months as President, I held a long series of introductory meetings – with faculty deans, the Senate, the Board of Governors and the Executive Council, making enormous efforts to help resolve conflicts and reconcile them with one another. At the same time, we had to deal with the complicated financial situation, as well as the resulting anger and disappointment among our friends and Governors. We experienced some frustrating setbacks along the way, but ultimately we were able to bring the rivals to the table and generate a process of recovery and reunification.

There is no doubt that collaboration and understanding among the University's leading bodies is the key to bringing TAU to new heights, and that harmony is an indispensable precondition for continued growth and leadership.

### Changes in the TAU Constitution: Restoring the peace

A major step toward restoring peace, trust and balance to the TAU campus was the establishment of a committee authorized to change the Constitution, which included representatives of the Executive Council, the Board of Governors and TAU faculty.

The committee sat and deliberated until a consensus was reached. Its recommendations restored some of the Board of Governors' power, formerly lost to the Executive Council. And perhaps more important, the decisions reinstated the honor of the Board of Governors by appointing two Board representatives to the Executive Council. Other recommendations increased the Senate's influence in TAU's decision-making procedures.

In this way we created a healing process, gradually leading to harmonious relations. Now we were finally free to address the important missions I had looked forward to – the missions addressed by presidents of universities that are not in a state of crisis...

### All my teachers

During my travels around the globe I met with presidents of quite a few leading academic institutions. I learned about common dilemmas and the search for new directions, as well as possible solutions, some of which we have implemented at TAU. It became quite clear to me that our human resources, our faculty and our students, are on par with those of the world's best institutions. So what was missing? Financial resources, certainly, but also... a certain degree of openness and flexibility. We were determined to generate a meaningful improvement.

### Appointing new chairpersons: Right-hand help

Due to the crisis and damaged image of TAU, it was difficult to find a new Chairperson for the Board of Governors once **Robert (Bobby) Goldberg**, who had led the clash with the Executive Council, stepped down. The search committee, led by the late **Harvey Krueger**, a well-known figure in both the Israeli and American business sectors, offered the position to various philanthropists and Jewish leaders, but met with refusal across the board. In the end, Harvey magnanimously took the job upon himself. Harvey, who helped me a great deal in stabilizing the University, sadly passed away in 2017. (Cont. on p. 14)

## ●●● My supportive environment

On October 22, 2009, I stood in the doorway of the office of the President, which in more than two decades at TAU I had visited just a few times. I did not intend for this place to become my second home for the next ten years. Moreover, being President of TAU had never been a target on my academic roadmap.

At the beginning I felt like a captain standing on the bridge of a huge aircraft carrier, trying to stabilize the great vessel and change its direction with storms raging all around (a common metaphor for such situations, even though I have never been much of a mariner or a sailing fan), the storms of my predecessor's resignation and the financial crisis. Fortunately, on that bridge I found a team of professionals – academic faculty headed by the Rector **Prof. Dany Leviatan**, and administrative staff led by the levelheaded, always sensible Director-General **Mordehai (Moti) Kohn**.

Throughout my presidency I was loyally supported by a wonderful team of people who really cared. The harmony in and around my office was a major factor in enabling the growth and development of TAU. The President's office is the intersection where all campus activities and initiatives meet, and through which they are coordinated and monitored. This nerve center was effectively managed by **Rony Goldstein**, the creative and enterprising Chief of the President's Staff, expertly managing all contacts with the academic and administrative staffs on campus and elsewhere, and always acting as my personal gatekeeper. Beside her were **Naomi Yona**, **Yael Sarfaty** and **Marlene Sacho**, the welcoming faces met by all who entered the office, who amiably and faithfully managed the countless activities and visits and the busy timetables.

Dany and Moti were my first guides in the labyrinths of the presidency, revealing the 'secrets' of the job from their own angles. Dany Leviatan stepped down from the position of Rector only a short time after my appointment; Moti Kohn remained at my side for eight

years, as an advisor, partner and friend. Together we worked to make the campus bloom after a period of little activity. And the campus did in fact awaken and thrive. When Moti retired, **Gady Frank** was appointed Director-General, bringing his experience at the Council for Higher Education and its Planning & Budgeting Committee, and becoming a source of advice and a partner in creative planning processes.

Rector Dany Leviatan was replaced by **Prof. Aron (Rony) Shai**, an expert on the history of China. Together we began to rejuvenate the campus and develop the new strategy and structural changes. Rony served as Rector for one five-year term, and was followed by **Prof. Yaron Oz**, whom I had come to know as a Dean with original ideas and a broad outlook at the Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences. Yaron positioned the Rector's function as responsible for the academic upgrade of TAU, successfully implementing the new strategic plan and the change to a school-based structure. My work with both Rony Shai and Yaron Oz was characterized by a remarkable ongoing dialogue and mutual trust, facilitating effective management and a vast range of initiatives. Fruitful collaborations with Vice Rectors **Prof. Dina Prialnick** and **Prof. Eyal Zisser** engendered the Complementary Studies program, as well as the international programs in Engineering and Liberal Arts.

The close bond, open dialogue, exchange of views and mutual respect within the leading 'triumvirate' of President, Rector and Director-General served as the foundation for the institution's advancement and the preservation of a healthy, productive atmosphere. This bond cannot be taken for granted, and I regard it as a major achievement of my presidency. The calm tone at the top induced a calmness throughout the campus.

Alongside the Director-General I received the support of Vice Director-General for Engineering & Maintenance **Ofer Lugassi**, with whom I could soar on the wings of imagination toward interesting new development

projects; Vice Director-General of Finance **Neri Azogui** who faithfully guarded the TAU budget, and made sure that my tendency to soar did not end in painful downfalls; and Vice Director-General of Strategic Planning and Marketing **Ehud Or**, the man behind the marketing plans for student recruitment, the new TAU branding and website, the *Etnachta* initiative, and more.

**Lea Kagan** and later **Keren Raplansky Elad**, our Legal Advisors, responded to every legal query or complaint in a professional and affable manner, providing instruction with regard to transparency and proper conduct. They represented TAU and guarded its rights and interests in negotiations with business corporations and the formulation of contracts with partners and donors (of which there were many, I am happy to say). **Moshe Goldberg**, the faithful TAU Comptroller, made sure that the University abided by the law, properly and effectively, in all its operations.

I was constantly in touch with TAU spokesperson **Orna Cohen** regarding queries coming in at a rapid (often too rapid) pace from reporters in the various media, on publishing our research and covering events. Orna significantly upgraded and promoted the visibility of TAU, positioning it at the forefront of Israel's academic scene. On campus she initiated *Mivzacampus*, an internal e-newsletter on events, major research prizes and donor projects.

The teamwork of the President and VPs, encompassing the broad arenas of academic relations, philanthropic relations, R&D and the recruitment of researchers, is of the utmost importance for both ongoing activities and future plans. Therefore cooperation and mutual updates are essential. And in fact VPs **Prof. Raanan Rein**, **Prof. Yoav Henis** (preceded by **Prof. Ehud Gazit** and **Prof. Eran Rabani**) and **Amos Elad** worked in full harmony with one another and with me, holding regular meetings (Forum of VPs, Director-General and

Chief of the President's Staff) to exchange views and form an overall picture of the campus at any given point.

The President's office, where all organizational thinking converges, where strategic plans are generated and managerial decisions made, is also the place that directs special projects: flagship projects such as Gender Equality on campus, expanding our international ties, establishing our presence in East Asia, founding the Dead Sea Institute, initiating undergraduate programs in the English language and more. These projects were directly propelled by my office in collaboration with **Prof. Ilana Eli** (and **Prof. Rachel Erhard** before her, on gender issues), **Orly Fromer** (Asia Affairs), **Dr. Gary Sussman** (India and Africa), **Dr. Mira Marcus-Kalish** (special programs in Europe and the Dead Sea Institute) and **Yuval Shraibman** (Thursdays on Campus which preceded *Etnachta*, TAU brand shop and Online Academic High School). The Office's direct involvement in such projects was important, enabling breakthroughs and monitoring their implementation.

In my closest circle, at home, I am fortunate to have as a partner and friend my wife **Pirchiya (Fleurette) Klafter**. **Pirchiya** went through it all with me, sharing moments of gratification and pleasure, as well as times of crisis. She aided and encouraged me and was a great help in establishing and maintaining the important ties with TAU's friends and supporters. My son, **Dan Klafter**, granddaughters **Ophir** and **Adva**, daughter, **Dr. Einat Klafter**, and her partner **Ariel David** have been a source of advice, speaking from their own viewpoints and especially from their experience at TAU, and also... an important source of constructive criticism and naches.

I am deeply grateful to all those who assisted and supported me! Without your help and commitment we could not have achieved so much.

Through Harvey I met **Dr. Giora Yaron**, a pioneer of Israel's high-tech industry, who was elected Chair of the Executive Council in place of Dr. Leora Meridor. Giora contributed considerably to our connections with industry, as well as the upgrade of Ramot, TAU's technology transfer company, before stepping down in December 2018. He was replaced by **Eli Gelman**, until recently CEO of Amdocs. **Prof. Jacob A. Frenkel** has headed the Board of Governors since 2013, and we greatly benefit from his stewardship and vast connections with political and economic leaders worldwide.

## Journeys of conciliation: Regaining the trust of our Friends

While I worked to restore harmony on campus, I also traveled worldwide for a series of conciliation visits to many TAU Friends Associations that were also greatly dissatisfied with the University's conduct. Some associations had ceased their activity altogether, and we had to recruit new leadership. It took considerable efforts, but gradually we were able to rebuild our relations with many of our representatives around the globe and bring them back into our fold. On my trips I met many faithful leaders of TAU Friends Associations, such as **Polly Mizrahi de Deutsch** (Argentina), **Judge Barbara Seal** (Canada), **Prof. François Heilbronn** (France), **Jon Gurkoff**, **William (Billy) Cohen** and **Richard Sincere** (USA), **Vivien Zimmet** and **Victor Wayne** (Australia) – all of them powerful anchors of loyalty, stability and cooperation.

Today, nine years after the crisis, we can confidently say that the ties with our friends around the globe are warm, stable and supportive. The circle of TAU supporters has expanded significantly, and new Friends Associations were formed. TAU has become a strong international brand, translating into an impressive leap in philanthropic resources and enabling the University's continued development at the forefront of Israeli academia.

## Strength from within: A loan from TAU faculty

Working toward TAU's financial recovery, and wishing to unite the faculty in this mission, I asked the academic faculty union for a loan – in the form of a temporary cut in the salaries of faculty members. Their consent and the understanding that we all share a common purpose, allowed us to launch a process of recovery – first of all by improving our competitive edge with better faculty recruitment packages. This was the signal for a new beginning. I believe that this specific step contributed to the unification of our faculty and sparked new hope for the future. For this I am grateful to the academic faculty and their union.

## The 3 i's

About seven months after I took office, in May 2010, the first Board of Governors meeting of my presidency took place. This was my opportunity to present the strategy which I believed would make our university stronger. I called it the 3 i's – **international, interdisciplinary, interactive**. To my great satisfaction, the entire TAU community joined me in raising these three banners. And indeed, nowadays TAU enjoys greater international presence and a highly valued interdisciplinary culture, as well as fruitful interactions with industry, the voluntary sector and the general public. Today I would perhaps also add a 4<sup>th</sup> i to the list – **innovation!**

## ●●● Drive for recruitment: Accomplishments mirror faculty excellence

Taking office, I knew that a sizeable recruitment of excellent new faculty members was essential for recovery, for raising spirits on campus and for a breakthrough in our competitive environment. I also understood that in order to attract young researchers from the world's top research institutions, we would have to offer them optimal conditions, both personally and professionally, including a research environment that is as close as possible to the one they had left behind. I felt that in our highly competitive surroundings, we must take the lead!

### **Goal: More faculty members, greater competitive advantage**

In the years that preceded my presidency, TAU underwent a painful cutback process supervised by the Planning and Budgeting Committee – including significant reductions in academic personnel, courses and new construction on campus. During these hard times, known as 'the lost decade of Israeli academia,' the number of tenured TAU faculty members dropped by about 27%, from 1,300 to 960, due to two

complementary moves: increasing the numbers of those opting for early retirement, while cutting down the recruitment of new faculty members. On average, only 15 faculty members were brought in every year, compared to 40-50 in subsequent years. Instead of improving facilities and expanding its infrastructures, the University forced painful budget reductions upon its academic units. At the same time, competition against other Israeli institutions for the best researchers grew fierce, and the crisis of 2008/9 proved quite detrimental to TAU's appeal.

In 2010 TAU launched a massive new drive to once again fill the ranks of its faculty. From 2010 to 2019 we recruited about 420 new researchers who received support in the total sum of **\$88 million**, largely from philanthropic sources. Funds invested in experimental scientists who require research labs were naturally greater – an average of \$420,000 per researcher. Altogether, more than **170 modern and well-equipped new labs** were established.

Our growing fundraising success enabled us to compete for the best candidates pursued by all universities.



Today, attracting the finest researchers, TAU is able to provide them with all the resources needed for world-leading research.



## Feeling at home

New faculty members want to feel at home. They need a place that supports and embraces them. To this end we have established a comprehensive, friendly absorption system and process, providing support in every aspect and responding to all questions and needs. In addition, we prepared a guide containing all instructions and information on employment terms, rights and obligations of academic faculty members; we improved the procedures for building and equipping new labs, and carefully follow their construction; we conduct an ongoing dialogue with new researchers; and the President and VP of R&D visit the labs of all new recruits annually to learn about and further improve the absorption process. In this way the process is constantly upgraded, under the supervision of VP of R&D **Prof. Yoav Henis**.

At Millie Phillips Student City, a student dormitory complex, we have allocated apartments at convenient rental rates for newly arrived faculty members. These apartments also serve visiting researchers who participate in academic collaborations, workshops and conferences at TAU. With the project currently

undergoing expansion, we intend to increase the number of units for new faculty and visitors.

And one more important benefit: we established a preschool facility for the children of our younger faculty members. A home indeed!

## Caesarea Conference

In 2010 we launched a new initiative for our incoming recruits: just before the beginning of the academic year they are all invited to a two-day get-together off campus where they become acquainted with one another and with the senior management. TAU officials from all divisions, including the President, Rector and Director-General, provide comprehensive information, telling the newcomers what they can expect of the institution they have just joined, and what is expected of them.

The social aspect of this gathering is also significant, serving as a unique opportunity for participants from many different disciplines to exchange information and ideas – a first taste of our interdisciplinary culture. In fact, several inspiring collaborations have already been formed at the conference, including a groundbreaking mingling of genetics with the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and an unusual connection between art historians and botanists to determine the accuracy of plant species in paintings.

In this way the conference serves as a catalyst for encounters between researchers from all parts of our campus, highlighting the **importance of removing the barriers between the various disciplines**, to enable boundary-breaking research.

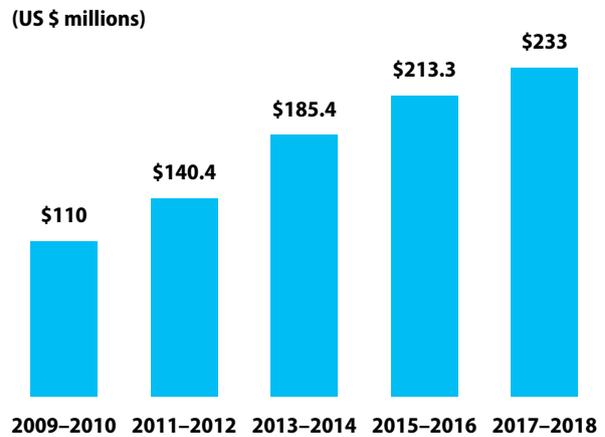
The office of the VP of R&D monitors the absorption of our new recruits, answering their questions and solving any problems that may arise. During their first two years at TAU, they may participate in various workshops to improve their managerial skills. Topics include: managing a laboratory, how to effectively interview candidates, time management and more. These workshops help researchers as they move up from being group members to heading their own research groups.

## Quantum leap at the Research Authority

TAU's Research Authority, under the leadership of **Lea Pais**, is a driving force in enabling our researchers to obtain research grants. Realizing this we decided, in the early days of my presidency, to boost the Authority's capabilities by providing it with more funds and personnel. Placing special emphasis on the prestigious programs of the European Union, we brought in ten experts who support researchers throughout the application process – from preparing an effective research proposal to passing the EU's rigorous review processes. Funds for recruiting outstanding researchers and building their labs were also increased significantly. Donations for research institutes, formerly given in the form of endowment funds, were turned into expendable funds – providing researchers with much greater freedom in today's challenging marketplace.

The results were soon apparent: since the launch of the EU's Horizon 2020 program for promoting research, TAU researchers have won funding for 112 projects, at the total sum of €110 million. In 63 of these projects, the funding was awarded as prestigious ERC grants from the European Research Council. Following the recent 2018 announcement of ERC grants for young researchers TAU ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in Europe (and of course 1<sup>st</sup> in Israel!), among all universities and research institutions awarded such grants. The only institutions to rank higher are CNRS in France, the Max Planck Institute in Germany and Cambridge University in the UK. Our success in obtaining European grants, together with the Rector's insistence on submitting proposals to research foundations, have substantially increased incoming research funds, generating a greater volume and higher quality of research at TAU.

The consistent and impressive rise in research funds is quite apparent over the last decade:



The increase in research grants obtained by our researchers directly impacts the budget which TAU receives from the government's Planning and Budgeting Committee. In fact, this year, we received the highest budget from this source among all Israeli universities. A remarkable achievement!



## ●●● Interdisciplinary culture: Removing barriers

My growing acquaintance with more and more research disciplines across campus reinforced my belief that TAU's greatest strength lies in its multidisciplinary nature. We are Israel's largest university, with the greatest number of academic fields. Looking through an interdisciplinary lens, it became clear that connections should be made between various areas of research – such as film and cognition, neuroscience and music, robotics and education, computer science and just about any other discipline, management and entrepreneurship, the humanities and the 'hard' sciences, the social sciences and the environment, and more. And so we set out to remove barriers between disciplines that may, at first glance, seem very distant from one another. Because when people meet people the magic happens. The spark is kindled...

### Sagol School of Neuroscience and the Brain@TAU event

TAU has known various interdisciplinary collaborations through the years. For example, the **Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences**, a pioneering initiative of **Dame Shirley Porter**, was interdisciplinary in both definition and essence from day one. But during my presidency a broader tradition of high-potential interdisciplinary initiatives was established, arising from the campus itself, taking shape in labs and academic units and through University-wide dialogue. We supported and encouraged this trend. The first of these welcome enterprises was the **Sagol School of Neuroscience**.

It all began when several faculty members from the field of neuroscience asked me to promote the field at TAU. At that point, however, none of us knew how many active brain researchers there actually were on our campus. To find out, we organized **Brain@TAU**, an event inviting all researchers involved in this area to briefly present their work. To our great surprise, about 70 researchers showed up for the event, hailing from all parts of the campus: medicine, physics, psychology, life sciences, the humanities and more. We realized that we had a great research strength in our hands. Recognizing the substantial potential revealed in the successful event, we decided to establish a school of

neuroscience. TAU friend **Sami Sagol**, hearing about the new initiative, contacted me and offered funding and support. This was the beginning of the **Sagol School of Neuroscience**, which has since made quite a name for itself in brain studies, demonstrating how a creative idea can grow to become a well-known brand.

Unlike centers and institutes in other research institutions, the Sagol School emphasizes interdisciplinary teaching and research, seeking to train the future generation of brain researchers. Based on this concept, the School offers comprehensive curricula with an emphasis on brain research, from undergraduate to PhD studies, in a range of interdisciplinary combinations: biology with biomedical engineering, or with psychology, computer science, linguistics, physics – you name it. The demand for these unique programs is high and constantly growing.

Interdisciplinary to the core, the Sagol School does not belong to any of TAU's nine Faculties. Instead, it serves as a fertile meeting ground for researchers from seven different Faculties. Today it is clear to all that the Sagol School of Neuroscience manifests the enormous power of the interdisciplinary approach in academia. In fact, it paved the way for quite a number of other interdisciplinary initiatives throughout our campus.

### @TAU

The **Brain@TAU** event became an effective model for establishing interdisciplinary communities and centers at TAU. Calls for such events have brought together researchers involved in the many facets of urban studies (**City Center**), artificial intelligence (**AI Day on Campus**), **healthy aging** and more, followed by growing multidisciplinary activity around each topic. I hope and believe that TAU will continue to nurture such initiatives, constantly buzzing and pulsating both above and below the surface all over our campus.

## BioMed@TAU

As part of our ongoing efforts to remove barriers and bring together different approaches and disciplines, several biomedical research hubs were established at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine – rallying researchers from different areas around a common challenge. Constantly evolving, this welcome initiative already includes:

- 12 hubs focusing on issues such as pain, rare diseases, infectious diseases, aging, microorganisms, immunity and infection
- 850 researchers, physicians and students representing five faculties on campus and nine hospitals affiliated with TAU
- A new initiative launched this year in which the Faculties of Medicine and Life Sciences have joined forces with the Schools of Neuroscience and Psychological Sciences to recruit research students for biomedical research

## City Center – The center for the study of cities and urbanism

For most of the world's population, the city is the center of life and activity. Consequently, urbanism has become the focus of extensive study, comprising numerous, highly diverse yet closely interwoven disciplines: architecture, urban planning, transportation, education, public health, technology, environment, law and more. Just like the Sagol School of Neuroscience, the City Center initiative materialized following an event that gathered researchers involved in urbanism from all over campus. Many participants met for the first time at this event, and once again we saw how, when people meet people, the potential is enormous. The City Center initiative established research ties with TAU's **Smart Cities and Digital Life collaborations with Stanford** supported by the **Koret Foundation**, as well as with similar centers worldwide, such as the one at the University of Chicago. An additional activity is an annual international conference on urbanism, held at TAU.

## Kiryat Atidim – Smart city lab (CityZone)

A major interdisciplinary urbanism project is being carried out at **Kiryat Atidim**, a high-tech and business park established by TAU, northeast of our campus, back in 1972. In the early 2000s the **Tel Aviv Municipality** joined the park as a full partner. Comprising 11 buildings on a total area of about 80 dunam (20 acres), with a built area of approximately 250,000 square meters, Kiryat Atidim serves as an urbanism lab for several interdisciplinary centers at TAU: **City Center**, **Smart Cities**, and the **Shlomo Shmeltzer Institute for Smart Transportation**.



## Undergraduate Humanities in Engineering program, initiative of the Mandel Foundation

In another interdisciplinary project, the Faculty of Engineering launched in 2016 the **Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Program for Humanities in Engineering** – the first study track in Israel to integrate philosophy, ethics, history and literature into an undergraduate program in Engineering. Aiming to promote critical thinking and human perspectives within the new generation of Israel's innovation leaders, the program has roused a great deal of interest among both students and high-tech companies seeking engineers with soft skills. So far 20-25 outstanding students have taken part in the program each year, and in light of its considerable success we intend to add 50 more from the Faculties of Exact Sciences and Life Sciences with additional generous support from the Mandel Foundation.

## **Minducate**

This creative initiative from **TAU Online–Innovative Learning Center** and the **Sagol School of Neuroscience** combines for the first time two areas that are closely linked to one another: education and neuroscience & cognition. Researchers from a range of disciplines work together to find answers to fundamental questions such as “What is learning and how does it occur in the brain,” proposing to improve teaching and learning processes through knowledge and tools from neuroscience. **Minducate** offers two-year scholarships to outstanding PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers from a wide range of disciplines – starting with brain and cognition research, through psychology, linguistics and education, all the way to computer science, engineering and more. The initiative intends to break the paradigms of traditional teaching and learning, and implement new educational approaches, more in line with today’s technological environment. The Center receives substantial support from **Dr. Garry Rayant and Dr. Kathy Fields-Rayant** from the US, as well as from the **Walanpatrias Foundation**.

## **Porter Dead Sea Research Institute for Life under Extreme Conditions**

The Dead Sea Research Institute is located at the lowest place on earth, in a region where environmental conditions are uniquely harsh. The goal of the Institute is to gain lessons from nature on the adaptation to extreme conditions of flora, fauna and humankind, especially today, when the whole world is faced with the consequences of climate change. The Institute was initiated by **Dr. Mira Marcus-Kalish**, in collaboration with the **Tamar Regional Council**, and is supported by the **Porter Foundation**. It brings together many different disciplines of research, from the geosciences and environmental studies through the study of cultures, archaeology and religion, all the way to the study of plants, animals and the microbiome.

## Interdisciplinary riches

It is important to note that the significant increase in the number of interdisciplinary centers and initiatives was made possible by the substantial rise in research-targeted philanthropic support. Among the initiatives established in **recent years** (in alphabetical order):

- SYLVAN ADAMS SPORTS INSTITUTE
- AUFZIEN CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE & NEURODEGENERATION
- BLAVATNIK CENTER FOR DRUG DISCOVERY
- BLAVATNIK INTERDISCIPLINARY CYBER RESEARCH CENTER
- CHAOUL CENTER FOR NANOSCALE SYSTEMS
- COLLER INSTITUTE OF VENTURE AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
- CUKIER, GOLDSTEIN-GOREN CENTER FOR MIND, COGNITION AND LANGUAGE (THE MILA CENTER)
- DAN DAVID CENTER FOR HUMAN EVOLUTION AND BIOHISTORY RESEARCH
- VARDA AND BOAZ DOTAN RESEARCH CENTER IN HEMATO-ONCOLOGY
- JACOB A. FRENKEL AND MORTIMER B. ZUCKERMAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ECONOMICS
- HOGEG BLOCKCHAIN RESEARCH INSTITUTE
- KORET FOUNDATION TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY – BAY AREA COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE
- MANNA CENTER FOR PLANT BIOSCIENCES
- BORIS MINTS INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC POLICY SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES
- MOSHE MIRILASHVILI INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED WATER STUDIES
- MILES S. NADAL HOME FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- MILES S. NADAL INSTITUTE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- PORTER DEAD SEA RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR LIFE UNDER EXTREME CONDITIONS
- PRAJS-DRIMMER INSTITUTE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTI-DEGENERATIVE DRUGS
- MARK RATNER INSTITUTE FOR SINGLE MOLECULE CHEMISTRY
- RAYMOND AND BEVERLY SACKLER CENTER FOR COMPUTATIONAL MOLECULAR AND MATERIALS SCIENCE IN HONOR OF PRESIDENT JOSEPH KLAFTER
- EDMOND J. SAFRA CENTER FOR BIOINFORMATICS
- EDMOND J. SAFRA CENTER FOR ETHICS
- SAGOL CENTER FOR REGENERATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGY
- SHLOMO SHMELTZER INSTITUTE FOR SMART TRANSPORTATION
- SHMUNIS FAMILY ANTHROPOLOGY INSTITUTE
- RAYA STRAUSS CENTER FOR FAMILY BUSINESS RESEARCH
- WHITMAN FAMILY CENTER FOR COEXISTENCE
- ZIMIN INSTITUTE FOR ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS ADVANCING BETTER LIVES
- CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE UNITED STATES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM
- ACADEMIC INSTITUTE FOR STRUCTURAL REFORMS
- INSTITUTE FOR LAW AND PHILANTHROPY
- INSTITUTE FOR PROMOTING DIALOGUE THROUGH MUSIC
- HEALTHY AGING CENTER-IN-THE-MAKING
- CITY CENTER – TAU RESEARCH CENTER FOR CITIES AND URBANISM
- TAU DATA SCIENCE CENTER
- CENTER FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY
- CENTER FOR LIGHT-MATTER INTERACTION

TAU's growing, constantly developing interdisciplinary culture is also becoming a meaningful consideration in the recruitment of new faculty members. Beyond the tradition of recruitment by discipline – according to faculties and schools – we opened our gates to candidates who have specialized in more than one area, sometimes tailoring special joint appointments for one candidate in two faculties. Moreover, TAU's interdisciplinary culture has become a significant factor for the candidates themselves, enhancing our competitive edge compared to other institutions.

## ●●● Globalization: Spreading our wings

Globalization is an integral part of our lives today. The internet, together with the possibility of flying practically anywhere, expose us all to other cultures and new ideas. This is especially true in the realms of academia and research: international collaborations, meetings of minds and the exchange of ideas with institutions in distant lands are a crucial engine for any fruitful academic activity. During my presidency this realization drove us to initiate several moves that developed and strengthened TAU's ties with the world.



### **New position: VP of International Academic Relations**

When we amended the Constitution at the beginning of my presidency, we created an option for appointing more VPs – in addition to the existing positions of VP of R&D and VP of Resource Development. One such position was filled immediately: **Prof. Raanan Rein** became the first **VP International Academic Relations**. Under his direction, TAU's international relations were upgraded significantly – far beyond the customary collaborations between researchers – creating extensive initiatives with academic institutions, as well as a constant flow of mutual visits expanding the circles of collaboration. Some of these partnerships grew to become joint degrees.

### **TAU International**

One important aspect of globalization is taking in international students, PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers. When I took office, TAU had an **Overseas Program** that enabled students to come to TAU for a semester or year abroad. Striving to expand this activity we established **TAU International** – our International School – inviting students from all over the world to obtain a degree at TAU, or study here for shorter periods of time. The School, headed by **Prof. Raanan Rein** and directed by **Maureen Meyer Adiri** is our one-stop shop for recruiting students from overseas and providing them with comprehensive information and services. Today students from around the world can study here in 17 different programs conducted in English: 15 master's programs (compared to only 2 in 2009) and two undergraduate programs (Liberal Arts and Electrical Engineering). About 2,500 international students annually participate in a range of TAU International programs: studies for degrees, PhD, summer courses and diploma programs. In addition, TAU International provides guidance to students and researchers who come to us for advanced degrees or post-doctoral research.

### **Eastward ho! – Paving the way**

Israeli scientists of my generation, myself included, traditionally developed academic relations with research institutions in North America or Europe. But since then, the global academic map has changed, with countries in the East claiming a central position.

About seven years ago, realizing that we must penetrate the rising economies of the East – especially the two greatest powers, **China and India**, and to some extent **Japan** as well – we set ourselves a **strategic goal: turning to the East**, and forming ties with universities in these countries, with the purpose of eventually reaching the business and industrial sectors as well. We believed that in this way we could learn about the challenges faced by the enormous populations of Asia, and develop solutions for these problems based on our own know-how. We also felt it was important to include students from the East in our study programs, thereby enriching the campus community.

Our success in these activities exceeded our expectations. Today we are well-connected in the academic, industrial and social spheres of both China and India, and TAU's standing in the East grows constantly stronger. This is evidenced by the willingness of great industrial leaders, such as **Ratan Tata**, Chairman and Founder of the Indian Tata Group (2017), **Jack Ma**, Founder of Alibaba (2018), and **Dilip Shanghvi**, Founder of the Indian giant Sun Pharmaceuticals, (2019) to visit us, discuss possible collaborations and receive Honorary Doctorates from Tel Aviv University. Awarding Honorary Doctorates to prominent figures from China and India has highlighted these countries as targets for collaborations in ways similar to our activities in the West.

For our students, researchers and graduates, these new ties open doors to an unknown world, exposing them to new cultures, approaches and challenges, presenting different modes of thinking and enabling us to bring advanced knowledge and technology to millions of people. I also believe that by solidifying our position and expanding our involvement in the East we promote Israel's foreign relations, marking our country as a desirable destination for students from eastern countries.

Our new presence in India and China has raised the awareness of our faculty members regarding the possibilities offered by these countries, increasing their interest in collaborations and student exchange programs. Today both countries have been added to the list of targets for establishing connections, and no longer appear as distant and alien as before.

### **India**

About a year before I became President of TAU, the VP at the time, **Dr. Gary Sussman**, established the **India-Israel Forum**: an annual meeting of men and women from academia and business in both countries, which takes place alternately in Delhi and Tel Aviv, and addresses a range of challenges – from cyber and artificial intelligence to water and smart agriculture, developments in the Middle East and more. Over the years the Forum has become a significant institution in the relations between India and Israel, and today it is

attended by some of India's largest corporations. Gary, 'our man in India,' has utilized the Forum to extend our ties in both academia and industry, including relations with companies like Wipro, TCS and Tata Industries.

Striving to leave our mark on the huge subcontinent, we initiate various ties and initiatives with diverse partners, with 'presence' as the key word. Thus, we have adopted **Thapar University**, a private institution in the northern state of Punjab. We upgrade their study programs and host students and faculty members, and recently we have also opened a joint degree in Engineering and Life Sciences. Fruitful ties have also been established with **BITS** (the Birla Institute of Technology and Science) at Pilani in Rajasthan, and **KCT** (Kumaraguru College of Technology) in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, as well as the Indian Institutes of Technology in Mumbai and Madras (**IIT B**, **IIT M**), and other institutions.

## **Tikkun Olam**

One of the greatest challenges of the modern age is supplying humanity with enough food, water and energy, while protecting the environment and adhering to the principles of sustainability. A crucial aspect of this mission is responding to the needs of the poorest communities in remote rural regions. TAU students and researchers apply the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam by utilizing their knowledge in Indian and African villages, as they work alongside the villagers. Our researchers believe that in this way they can lay the foundation for Israeli technologies to bring critical solutions to vast areas and even whole countries in the future. The initiatives are funded by the **Boris Mints Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions to Global Challenges** at TAU's Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences, the **Tata Trusts** and additional philanthropic sources.

## China and Southeast Asia

Under the leadership of **Orly Fromer** we embarked upon our 'adventure' in China. TAU established a vast network in Asia to develop both academic and business relations.

On the academic side, TAU has signed agreements with dozens of leading universities in Asia. In 2013 we launched the **XIN Center** in partnership with **Tsinghua University** – China's 'MIT', for innovation in nanotechnology and other areas. At **Shandong University** we established the **Center for Jewish History**, and in the city of Weifang we are establishing the **Food Security Research Institute** in collaboration with **Peking University**.

On the business side, TAU has initiated **CIIF – the China-Israel Innovation Forum**, together with Tsinghua University and **Ronnie Chan**, as well as a center for academic/business activities in Shenzhen. TAU hosts delegations of government officials and business people for short study programs and recruits investors for the startups of TAU faculty and alumni entrepreneurs and for TAU Ventures. In Shanghai we are involved in the development of an industrial park.

Over the past two years we expanded our academic and business activities in Japan as well. We promote teaching and research collaborations with academic institutions and have raised a total sum of \$30m from Japanese investors for TAU Ventures and for startups emerging from TAU.

About 30 students from **Singapore** have been coming to TAU every year for the past 8 years for a full semester of studies at the Coller School of Management, combined with internships at Israeli startup companies. Recently we also expanded our research ties with Singapore in the field of cyber and other areas.

## Africa

Initial steps, led by **Dr. Gary Sussman**, have been taken in Africa as well. Here we also applied the concept of a Forum, establishing the **Africa-Israel Forum**, which convened at TAU in 2017 and in Nigeria in 2018. We intend to turn TAU into a major interface between the needs of the great African continent and our own

special world of entrepreneurship and research, by building models similar to those we established in India: conducting on-site research by implementing Israeli agricultural, water and energy technologies together with African partners. Several research proposals have already been submitted for funding. In addition, the **Boris Mints Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions to Global Challenges** leads extensive activities in Kenya together with ICIPE (International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology), with support from the Gates Foundation.

In the teaching arena, TAU is targeting African students through its international Manna Center MSc Program in Food Safety and Security, and additionally offers courses through its Summer Institute on topics such as desert agriculture, nutrition and public health.

## New entrepreneurship and innovation center in Chicago (Discovery Partners Institute, DPI)

TAU recently joined three elite academic institutions in Illinois – the **University of Illinois**, the **University of Chicago** and **Northwestern University** – in establishing an entrepreneurship and innovation center in Chicago, supported by the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago. The center will focus on building and encouraging new ventures in a range of areas that are currently at the forefront of science and society and connecting them with sources of funding. TAU brings to this partnership an international reputation and prominent expertise in the fields of entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Donor-supported collaborations: A fruitful investment

A number of research collaborations with institutions overseas have been forged thanks to donations from TAU friends who, feeling a deep connection to both our University and an academic institution in their own country, wish to nurture collaborations in specific fields of research, as well as the ties between the two institutions in general. Collaborations formed in this way include: a program for joint PhD students in Astrophysics

with **Harvard** and **UC Berkeley** funded by **Raymond z"l and Beverly Sackler**, a Bioinformatics program with **UC Berkeley (Koret Foundation)**, a Nanotechnology initiative with **Northwestern (Roman Abramovich)**, a Digital Technologies program with **Stanford (Koret Foundation)** and Engineering with **UC Irvine (Prof. Henry Samueli)**, and additional collaborations with the **University of Toronto** and **Monash University** in Australia (with assistance of the **Australian Friends of TAU**). These dedicated donations have proved an effective tool for collaboration, which we should further develop through our Friends Associations worldwide. Such investments in promoting collaborations usually lead to personal acquaintance between researchers, creating preferred venues for advanced studies for our students.

## Connections, connections everywhere

The job of a university president involves many long journeys to destinations around the world. This can be rather exhausting, but I always regarded my flights and the encounters created in long hours inside a 'flying tin can' as opportunities – opportunities for making connections. And in fact, some of the people I met during my travels, on land or in the air, have visited my office from time to time, to propose new plans or think together about ideas – some of which were actually implemented on our campus...

## Joint degrees

TAU has further enhanced its academic ties with institutions overseas through joint academic degrees (in addition to the existing Kellogg-Recanati Management Program and the joint programs of TAU's Buchmann Faculty of Law with Northwestern and Berkeley):

- **Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, India:** A BSc at Thapar and an MSc in Engineering and the Life Sciences at TAU
- **Columbia University, New York:** We are currently developing a four-year undergraduate program, in which students will study at TAU for the first two years and at Columbia for the remaining two years. At the end of their studies they will receive two diplomas, one from each university.

## ●●● Strategic moves inside TAU: Defining who we are

About halfway through my presidency, in 2013, when TAU was finally on the right track, we realized that in order to upgrade our academic status and create a strong, stable and confident institution that knows exactly where it is going, we must make several deep strategic changes in the University's structure and branding.

The idea was raised in meetings of the Executive Council, and the challenging process received assistance from external consultants: **Shaldor Strategy Consulting** helped us upgrade the academic structure, and a team guided by **Atara Bieler** provided strategic and creative services for the rebranding process. None of these moves was easy. Substantial changes to TAU's historical structure and branding went against the natural inertia, and met with considerable opposition throughout the campus. I am very proud to say that TAU withstood the difficulties, emerging even stronger than it was before. To my understanding, we are the only institution in Israel ever to reinvent itself in terms of academic structure and branding.

### Reorganizing the academic structure & establishing schools

Our first move addressed the issue of efficiency: We set out to reorganize TAU's academic units. After a year of hard work, Shaldor submitted its recommendations, based on the tradition of British academia: dividing the campus into four segments: Medicine & Life Sciences; Engineering & Exact Sciences; Social Sciences, Law & Management; and Humanities & Arts. In other words, four independently-run colleges.

In May 2014, the committee in charge of adapting these recommendations to our specific situation at TAU, headed by **Prof. Ariel Porat**, handed me the **Porat Report** – which I regard as a transformational document that will impact TAU for many years to come. The report stirred up animated discussions at the Senate and throughout the academic ranks. After many disputes and debates, the Senate finally endorsed a deep structural change: The division into four colleges was replaced by a structure based on schools that incorporate smaller units within them.

Now came the stage of implementation. The committee appointed for this purpose, headed by **Prof. Yoav Henis**, faced quite a number of complex challenges. Many faculty members, especially those in the smaller units marked for integration under schools, felt that we were breaking the 'laws of nature' no less. This engendered quite a bit of opposition, necessitating extensive learning and prolonged dialogues with the heads of these units. One example that illustrates the complexity of the change is the three-way fusion of the Porter School of Environmental Studies with the Departments of Geography and Earth Sciences, under the title Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, within the Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences. Rector **Prof. Yaron Oz** contributed significantly to the implementation of the new structure, expertly facilitating its progression.

By the end of the process, the number of academic units had been reduced from 125 at the beginning, to 31 schools. The fusion of smaller units strengthened interdisciplinary connections and supported more effective procedures for selecting new faculty members. Under the direction of Rector Yaron Oz clearer criteria were also set for academic advancement and tenure. The superstructure of nine faculties was maintained.

### Rebranding

Another strategic move was rebranding Tel Aviv University and creating a powerful, attractive, easily identifiable super-brand. The sensitive process was led by **Vice Director-General for Strategic Planning and Marketing, Ehud Or**. We outsourced the strategic and creative aspects, held numerous meetings with teams across campus, and conducted in-depth surveys and interviews to reach the ultimate definition: What is TAU for its personnel? And what would represent us most accurately, both in Israel and around the world?

### Pursuing the Unknown...

The first challenge in the rebranding process was elucidating the identity of TAU, which was often perceived as a collection or 'supermarket' of disciplines. The leading concept was defined as 'It's what we don't

know that drives us' – inspired by detective stories in which the protagonist seeks the solution to a mystery. The slogan ultimately chosen powerfully conveys the spirit of TAU across campus: 'Pursuing the Unknown...'



TAU's new logo consists of three circles, each conveying a different aspect of the University's spirit and the process of research. We did, however, make sure that the TAU tradition was preserved: the old logo was kept within one of the circles. Graphically, the new logo stands out as unique in the academic world. In this it enhances our visibility, and anyone who sees it identifies it immediately. In addition, the three circles allow considerable flexibility and numerous design options for different purposes and various units, permitting free expression for faculties. Thus, for example, the new logo goes well with the new tagline, mirroring the three dots at the end of the slogan: Pursuing the Unknown...

Changing the logo also met with a great deal of opposition all over the campus, and even off campus. Many felt that this was a kind of 'betrayal' of a longstanding tradition. But we were adamant, believing that the new logo would upgrade our image. In our eyes this was not disloyalty to the past, but rather renewal which reflects the present and points toward the future. The implementation process required a great deal of persistence and in-depth dialogue with many people, both on and off campus. I invited some of the most adamant opponents to personal meetings and explained my position. But all along I felt certain that a change well-grounded in a strong, valid concept would ultimately be embraced. Today it is quite clear to all that the new branding, all elements included, has become part of our lives.

## Strengthening our human capital

### Deans get together

Following the Caesarea Conference for new faculty members we established another tradition: get-

together for deans. Twice a year we bring together the deans of all TAU faculties for a social gathering combined with brainstorming and open dialogue at a pleasant off-campus location, as a means of promoting a team spirit and establishing a consensus on focal issues.

### TAU NEXT

The TAU NEXT Forum for the development of managerial strategies, attended by both administrative and academic senior personnel, is an initiative of the TAU management. The Forum serves as a timeout for TAU leaders, giving them an opportunity to look closely at the organizational environment, so that they may lead important processes in unison. Convening for the first time at the Dead Sea in December 2018, the Forum was attended by faculty deans, heads of schools and heads of administrative divisions, as well as the President, Rector, Director-General and their deputies – totaling about 80 participants in all. Discussions focused on the challenges faced today by academia in general and TAU in particular, such as changes in the employment

## The daycare center

Many of the young researchers we wish to bring to TAU are young parents, and to dedicate themselves to their academic work, some need a reliable, easily accessible daycare center for their children. In the early days of my presidency several candidates and new faculty members approached me on this matter, and I was happy to tackle the task. In fact, I saw it as a kind of litmus test for my influence and ability to change things on campus. "If I can't build a daycare center, I won't be able to do anything here," I thought. "It's not an expensive project, and it depends only on the goodwill of the University." And so we built an excellent daycare center, serving our academic faculty, administrative personnel and students. I have no doubt that the daycare center weighs in our favor when researchers deliberate whether to join TAU.

market, innovative teaching methods and more. The Forum will continue to meet at the University level, in order to keep in touch, learn about new developments and lead together.

### **New concepts in our libraries**

In the past libraries were temples of silence. Many of us still remember how we had to leave our bags outside, and every whisper would bring on reproof from the librarian... But the libraries of today are changing. Gradually they are becoming vibrant hubs of study for the students, with special spaces for group discussions,

R&D teamwork, computer lessons and more. TAU libraries lead this trend, implementing some pioneering approaches: they renovate and upgrade their facilities, launch digital services suitable for modern academic activity, and promote soft skills that will serve the students throughout their professional lives.

To date, several libraries have been refurbished, while others are undergoing renovation. The Brender-Moss Library for Social Sciences, Management and Education is **open around the clock during exam season** – as a place where students studying for exams can meet and hold discussions.

## ●●● Prizes for our own

TAU gives out several prestigious international awards, and many of our researchers win external prizes. But we feel that TAU researchers also deserve recognition and support from within. In order to promote competitive research excellence, we launched two special awards:

- **The Kadar Family Award for Outstanding Research** was established in 2015 by the **Naomi Foundation** in memory of **Dr. Naomi Praver Kadar**, and is granted to groundbreaking researchers with outstanding achievements in research and teaching. The Award is conferred annually during the BOG Meeting, upon two well-established and two younger researchers from all faculties across campus.
- **The Breakthrough Innovative Research Grants**, also awarded on a competitive basis, were launched by TAU in 2018, with matching funds from **Schmidt Futures**. Every year grants are awarded to 4-5 exceptionally innovative and creative projects in order to boost 'out of the box' research in its early stages.

## ●●● Entrepreneurship & innovation: Releasing the next big idea

Can a person be led to identify the 'next big thing'? Can one be nurtured to become curious and critical, to break new ground? Can an individual be trained to stick with an idea, stay determined and adamantly persist in realizing it, even when numerous obstacles stand in the way? **I believe the answer is yes.** And here again we see an important facet of the University's role: guiding and supporting researchers and students who wish to transform their research into real products.

### Ramot Ltd.

Ramot Ltd., TAU's technology transfer arm headed by CEO **Shlomo Nimrodi**, works to promote ideas and patents and bring them to actual fruition in industry. At present Ramot is responsible for about 200 active license agreements, including contracts with approximately 60 companies born in the labs of TAU. Thanks to Ramot's support, TAU ranks 10<sup>th</sup> outside the US, 43<sup>rd</sup> in the world and 1<sup>st</sup> in Israel for the number of patents registered in the US.

To further extend our presence in innovation and entrepreneurship we initiated several groundbreaking steps:

### Momentum Fund

Established in 2013 within the framework of Ramot, the **Momentum Fund** is a large investment fund of \$24m, backed by various investors and corporations, including international giants such as the Tata Group of India and Tamasek of Singapore. The Fund's goal is to support the development of ideas still in their early stages, in order to bring them to maturity and commercialization. The funds are distributed by a committee that chooses the projects with the highest potential for commercialization. The Momentum Fund was established as a direct result of our relations with India, developed through the India-Israel Forum, and serves as an excellent example of the importance of international ties for the university.

### Biomed Tech

Launched in 2014, Biomed Tech is a project connecting hospital physicians with students on the TAU campus.

The doctors present problems they have encountered in their practice, mostly associated with medical devices, and the students conduct brainstorming sessions in search of solutions. Ideas raised in this way have served as a basis for the founding of several young companies in the field of medical devices.



### SPARK TLV

The **SPARK TLV-Center for Translational Medicine** drug development initiative was launched in 2017, based on the proposal of a consulting company from overseas, recommended by **Dr. Giora Yaron**. The initiative, which is the only one of its kind in Israel, is designed to encourage researchers in Medicine and the Life Sciences to go one step beyond their academic papers and try to develop and/or improve upon drugs based on their research, in collaboration with hospitals. To this end the initiative offers researchers guidance from top figures in industry and academia, as well as financial support. SPARK TLV is currently funded by TAU's own resources (President's Fund), and we are now working to obtain external funding to expand its activity. In addition, the Israel Innovation Authority is considering turning it into a national initiative.

### TAU Online–Innovative Learning Center

**TAU Online–Innovative Learning Center** was established by **Yuval Shraibman**, an expert in the development and implementation of advanced learning and teaching programs, with an emphasis

on the greatest challenge of education in the current age: personalized learning. This challenge has many facets: making academia accessible to capable teens from any place and any population in Israel; revitalizing the classroom learning experience by using innovative digital tools; and introducing new teaching and learning methods that will transform students' lives. The Center's activities include: the flagship program Academic Cities, allowing high school students in Israel's periphery to take TAU's online courses and receive academic credit points; conferences and competitions for EdTech companies; and the production of online MOOC courses for different types of learners in Israel and worldwide. Recently the Center moved into its spacious new home, complete with a modern, well-equipped production studio, in the just completed **Pouran and Parviz Izak Nazarian Building**.

### Strengthening ties with industry

We encourage ties between our various faculties and relevant companies in Israel and around the globe, understanding that the bond between industry and science is close and natural, and that it is our task to prepare our students for their future paths outside the academic world. From experience we know that industry can present scientists with problems that lead

to new, productive directions of research, and even enrich the theoretical side of scientific research. Our ties with industry have generated a range of projects, including the **Check Point Building** that will house the Blavatnik School of Computer Science and the Youth University, and the **Susan and Henry Samueli Engineering Building**, supported by Broadcom VP **Dr. Shlomo Markel** who also chairs Ramot, TAU's technology transfer arm, and the Samueli Foundation.

### Entrepreneurship Center

After winning 2<sup>nd</sup> place in a call issued by the Planning & Budgeting Committee ('VATAT') in 2018, we began creating an **Entrepreneurship Center** jointly with **Shenkar College**. The Center will serve as an umbrella for all ventures proposed by students from all over campus, as well as TAU alumni, enhancing TAU's culture of entrepreneurship. It will provide enterprising students and alumni with backing and a supportive ecosystem for their initiatives in all areas: learning and teaching, technology, social issues and more. The project has been welcomed with great enthusiasm by all parties, including about 200 TAU alumni and 175 faculty members from all faculties, who are willing to serve as mentors for new entrepreneurs. New TAU students will be exposed right from the start to the



option of choosing an entrepreneurship track with our encouragement and support. In the coming academic year (2019-2020) entrepreneurship studies will be incorporated into the curricula of all faculties, and participants will be able to experience the process of establishing a startup, or implementing intra-organizational ventures, in response to real needs they have identified.

### **Launching a merger with Shenkar: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts**

In 2018 we decided to launch a merger between TAU and **Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art** – a true multidimensional win-win initiative. Shenkar brings to TAU two important future-oriented disciplines that complement our own multidisciplinary wealth: their design expertise augments the Arts, and their work in materials & polymers adds an important tier to our new Materials Science and Engineering Department. Moreover, design is much more than a field of study – it represents a worldview and way of thinking that are central to today's innovation and entrepreneurship. Integrating Shenkar into TAU will also enable the development of new double majors, combining theoretical design studies with the Humanities, Social Sciences, Arts and even Exact Sciences and Life Sciences.

### **TAU Ventures**

In 2018 we launched **TAU Ventures** – an accelerator/incubator offering comprehensive support to undergraduates, alumni and members of the community who wish to develop innovative ideas (in such cases the intellectual property belongs to the student/alumnus, unlike the research of graduate students and faculty members, which belongs to the University). For this purpose, we renovated a complex of 1,000 square meters – a one-stop shop where young entrepreneurs can obtain business planning and mentoring services along with financial seeding for developing their ideas. TAU Ventures had been a longtime dream of mine until it finally materialized, and now it has become a magnet for investors, mentors and other individuals and organizations that regard TAU as a goldmine of innovative ideas.

The location of this startup incubator is the **Miles S. Nadal Home for Technological Innovation and Entrepreneurship**, occupying a whole floor of the **Joseph Meyerhoff Building**.

### **Lahav Executive Education**

The **Lahav** executive education programs offered by the **Coller School of Management** attract delegations from China, India, South America and other places worldwide, who come here to learn about innovation and entrepreneurship and then establish entrepreneurial ecosystems in their own countries.

## ●●● Resource development: Making dreams come true

The greater part of the academic, social and physical initiatives I have described in this document emerged from the fertile ground created by philanthropic activities. Our substantial leap over the past decade is based mostly on philanthropic funding, together with investments from industry. The government support allocated to TAU as a public institution covers the University's basic needs, such as salaries and maintenance. Any other development must rely on philanthropy, and therefore we work tirelessly to nurture TAU's ties with its friends around the globe. The challenge we face is very great indeed, as competition among Israeli universities for the hearts and funds of donors, most of whom are Jews residing in various countries, is fierce. Creativity and a broad outlook are of the essence, and they have brought success and growth to TAU.

### Goal: More donations

TAU's former VP for Resource Development, the late **Yehiel Ben-Zvi**, who had built the University's global fundraising network in its early years, passed away in April 2010, about six months after the beginning of my presidency. Initially I thought I would take the mission of fundraising upon myself, appointing envoys or representatives who would travel around the world, visit Friends Associations and solicit donations. It was **Harvey Krueger**, the new chairman of the Board of Governors at the time, who enlightened me: Fundraising at TAU must be headed by a professional, experienced fundraiser. And so we went headhunting and ultimately appointed **Amos Elad**, a professional with a background in social responsibility, fundraising and non-profit management, as TAU's VP for Resource Development.

At that point, as we started down the new path, annual donations to TAU totaled around \$40m, somewhat less than other large Israeli universities. Our first task was bringing donors and friends back into our fold, expanding the circle of benefactors, and finding our own creative philanthropic channels. To this end we embarked upon a global journey of conciliation, traveling from one TAU Friends Association to another, as the Israeli poet Leah Goldberg wrote in her popular

song: "From city to city, from country to country, I roam with my song and my music box..."

### Approaching \$100 million a year!

Over the years, through committed fieldwork and long hours of travel, we were able to restore the faith of our friends in Tel Aviv University, and establish strong bonds with new donors. The Development and Public Affairs Division, headed by **Amos Elad** and directed by **Yael Regev**, was reinforced and upgraded, bolstering TAU's relations with its supporters worldwide. Our Friends Associations grew larger and stronger, fundraising events were upgraded, and the President's Circle was established for our major donors. The incoming flow of donations grew, as did the contributed sums. **Today we are well on our way to an annual fundraising total of \$100m!**

### Gifts to TAU over the last decade:

(US \$ millions)



The first large gift I received overseas came from **Len Blavatnik**: I asked him for a very substantial sum, and he gave it immediately, in full. Mr. Blavatnik had donated to TAU before, and our School of Computer Science bears his name. But for us, this large new donation was an historical milestone. It proved that we can and should aim high! Since then Mr. Blavatnik has been involved in a range of activities on our campus: computer science, cyber, drug discovery, student film production and faculty recruitment. I call his extensive contribution the 'Len Effect.'

Since then we have received quite a number of gifts in the tens of millions of dollars. **Jeremy Collier** of London pledged the largest donation to date from a single donor for the **School of Management**, thereby giving it his name. This required sensitive mediation with the **Recanati family**, sponsors of the Faculty of Management and its Recanati Building for decades. Ultimately an understanding was reached, preserving our friendship with all parties. **Leon Recanati** showed a truly gracious spirit by attending the BOG event in which Collier's donation was announced, and even continued to contribute to the upgrade of the building.

In the same year American film producer **Steve Tisch** gave generously to the **Steve Tisch School of Film and Television**. Israeli industrialist **Sami Sagol** and his wife **Tova** continued to provide substantial gifts, enabling the establishment of the **Sagol School of Neuroscience** and the more recent **Sagol Center for Regenerative Biotechnology** that will reside in the new nanotechnology building. The **Porter family** generously supported the **Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences** and **Raymond z"l and Beverly Sackler** continued to support the sciences at TAU. **Sylvan Adams** founded the **Sylvan Adams Sports Institute**; the **Dotan family** established the **Varda and Boaz Research Center for Hemato-Oncology**; the **Claire Maratier Estate** supported the arts, humanities and sciences; and **Yehuda Naftali** has endowed the **Yehuda Naftali Botanic Garden**. **Morris Kahn** gave to the project for 3D printing of malignant tumors that bears his name.

The University also received transformative funding from foundations that have given multi-year support for research, teaching and scholarships: **Meitar Family Foundation, Edmond J. Safra Foundation, Posen Foundation, Dan David Foundation, Porter Foundation, Wolfson Foundation and Wolfson Family Charitable Trust, Mortimer B. Zuckerman Foundation, Yuri Milner Foundation, Koret Foundation, Adelis Foundation, Legacy Foundation, Lester Crown Foundation and Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.**

In addition, over the last decade, a number of benefactors provided outstanding assistance in

launching new study frameworks and programs, among them the **Zvi Yavetz School of Historical Studies** established by **Marc and Eva Besen**; the **Dan Department of Communication**, dedicated by **Aubrey and Marla Dan**, and its **Practical Journalism Track** supported by the **Dan David Foundation**; the **Parasol Foundation International LLM Program**; the **Yandex Machine Learning Initiative** founded by **Arkady Volozh**; and the **Manna Center Program for Food Safety and Security** open to both Israeli and international students.

## An unforgettable moment

I recall a particularly emotional moment during the 2016 BOG: Standing in Schreiber Square in the center of the campus, I could see a large poster announcing the inauguration of the Collier School of Management on one side, and a placard declaring the founding of the Steve Tisch School for Film and Television on the other. I thought to myself: "Here we are, celebrating in one event two important achievements, reflecting the philanthropic leap that is enabling TAU's academic upgrade." I felt enormous elation and satisfaction. I knew we had done it!

## Construction & development: 12 new buildings

When I became President, TAU was in a virtual glacial state regarding any kind of new construction. There were few new buildings, labs or offices, which are so important to our ongoing competition for new faculty members. I decided to place special emphasis on construction and raise funds with this goal in mind. I believe that new construction fills the campus with an upbeat atmosphere of growth and renewal, while creating more infrastructures for expanding research and improving education. With the help of **Ofer Lugassi**, Vice Director-General for Engineering

& Maintenance, we 'plowed' the campus grounds and raised many buildings.

Cranes and hardhats can be seen across the campus, symbolizing the dramatic expansion and upgrading of research and study facilities in the sciences, humanities and arts. All in all, 12 donor-funded buildings have either been opened, are under construction, or are being planned, for a total of 59,660 square meters of built space. In addition, the University is building 38,600 square meters of parking garages, as well as 3 more dormitory buildings totaling 15,000 additional square meters at the Student City housing complex named for **Millie Phillips**. The complex, which was built to increase affordable housing in a city known for high rental prices, includes the **Chella and Moise Safra Building** and **Laura Schwarz-Kipp Building** donated by **Karl-Heinz z"l and Hannelore Kipp** and their family.



Starting on the eastern edge of the campus, the iconic **Porter Building for Environmental Studies** serves as a model for sustainable architecture, while the publicly acclaimed **Steinhardt Museum of Natural History** – Israel National Center for Biodiversity Studies, with its striking 'Ark' façade, has already welcomed tens of thousands of visitors in its first year. These two buildings, together with the newly dedicated **Yehuda Naftali Botanic Garden**, research zoo and Institute for Cereal Crops Improvement form what we call TAU's Ecological Campus.

Moving westward, starting in the south of our campus, several buildings have arisen or are in the process of

being built. The **Susan and Henry Samueli Engineering Building** will add 4,500 square meters to the Fleischman Faculty of Engineering while housing the R&D center of chip giant Broadcom, thereby creating for the first time in Israel a joint physical facility for academia and the high tech industry. The **Raya and Josef Jaglom Auditorium**, built as an elegant home for the Board of Governors, hosts conferences, lectures and special events. The giant, glittering **Check Point Building**, adjoining Check Point Road, will house TAU's Youth University and Blavatnik School of Computer Science and bring together within one building high-achieving youngsters from all sectors of society and world-leading computer scientists. The state-of-the-art **Roman Abramovich Building for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology**, designed through an international architectural competition, will be an innovative and complex laboratory building containing clean rooms and highly advanced equipment. At the northernmost tip of the campus, the **Smolarz Family Building** will provide critically needed teaching labs for Life Sciences.

In the western half of the campus, the modern and refined **Pouran and Parviz Izak Nazarian Building** provides a home for the NGO, Citizen's Empowerment Center in Israel (CECI), as well as for TAU Online—Innovative Learning Center, which now has new technological capabilities for addressing the University's future teaching challenges. The planned **Trauma Studies Building** will house research, teaching and clinical facilities for PTSD; and the planned **Buchmann Building** will provide a new entrance and vitally needed space for the Buchmann Faculty of Law.

Finally, close to the main, Einstein St. entrance of the campus, two buildings will soon be constructed. The first is the ultra-modern **Lorry I. Lokey Graduate Center** for executive management education and research. The second is the **Azrieli School of Architecture Building**, which is holding a design competition and will provide a permanent, spacious home for TAU's David Azrieli School of Architecture. Moreover, to connect the school to the wider public, a commercial, cultural and recreational area will be constructed next to the building, where students' final projects will be exhibited.

## New research infrastructure: Enabling even better research

As part of the physical development of our campus we also built and upgraded a range of research facilities. Among them are advanced labs at the **Dan David Center for Human Evolution and Biohistory Research** and the **Shmunis Family Anthropology Institute**, intended to facilitate the biological study of ancient populations in the Land of Israel from three different perspectives – the evolution of modern humans, biohistory and Darwinian medicine; the **Alfredo Federico Strauss Center for Computational Neuro-Imaging** – the world’s best fMRI to date, allowing scanning of the human brain; the **most powerful laser in the Middle East**, supported by the Zuckerman STEM Leadership program and the **Wolfson Foundation**; the **Myers Core Facility for Research on Neurodegenerative Diseases**; the **Zebra Fish Center** offering the use of zebra fish as model animals; and an **NMR** system.

## Billion-dollar Global Campaign

Our confidence in our abilities grew, and in 2013 we launched our first **campaign**, setting a goal that was unprecedented at TAU: **raising 1 billion dollars in 10 years** (in the form of pledges for donations). Since then, six years have gone by, and I am proud to say that we have already raised \$600 million and are confidently advancing toward our target. The campaign is led by **Dafna Meitar Nechmad**, a TAU alumna who generously donates, together with her family, to various important projects on campus. Some of our most prominent donors have also joined this initiative, forming the Campaign Cabinet which promotes high-priority projects.



An especially impressive achievement is the rise in philanthropic donations from our friends in Israel. This accomplishment has great significance, providing a response to frequent queries from our international donors: “Why don’t Israelis who have accumulated capital join us in supporting projects in Israel?”

TAU does in fact enjoy the philanthropic support of Israelis, perhaps more so than any other academic institution in the country. This is the outcome of the efforts of the TAU Israeli Friends Association, supervised by the Development and Public Affairs Division. The activities of our Israeli Friends expose Israeli society to TAU’s social and research endeavors. Their events draw a large and constantly growing audience of donors to the Academic Business Club, fundraising evenings and various performances. The Association is headed by **Amnon Dick**, who replaced **Amos Shapira** when the latter was elected President of the University of Haifa. Amnon works together with Executive Director **Adi Olmert**, who replaced **Sigal Adar**, now the CEO of the Friends of the Yitzhak Shamir Medical Center. It certainly looks like we have succeeded. The Israeli Friends’ activities provide a springboard for the continued positioning of TAU in Israeli society.

The many steps we have taken, described in this document, significantly enhanced TAU’s appeal to both new and longstanding friends, bringing with it growing financial support. To our great gratification we discovered that as donations rise and research activities expand, we become increasingly attractive to donors.

Today we find ourselves in an entirely new with regard to public affairs and resource development: our visibility is higher, we have become a target for philanthropists in

search of naming opportunities, and the incoming flow of donations is growing constantly. At the bottom line, annual donations have doubled from about \$40m when I took office to \$82m in 2018. This significant addition to our budget gives us a great deal of freedom, enabling us to build and renew buildings, recruit outstanding faculty members, advance new and innovative teaching and research programs, or in four simple words: make dreams come true.

## Establishing the Alumni Organization

The custom of involving alumni in the activities of their alma mater has never quite taken root in Israeli culture. A few groups, like the alumni of the Faculties of Engineering and Management, have been able to recruit some graduates, but their activity remains limited. In 2016, aiming to generate a real change, I allocated funds for the establishment of the **TAU Alumni Organization** – the first in Israel in its broad scope and aspirations. Under the leadership of Executive Director **Sigalit Ben Hayoun**, about 70,000 of TAU's 192,000 graduates have joined the organization. The Alumni Organization holds many events, some of which focus on inspiring TAU alumni with guest speakers, such as Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba, while others encourage networking and exposure to corporations. Ties with alumni are also maintained through a newsletter and alumni meetings overseas. This year the Organization launched its first fundraising campaign, focusing on funds for scholarships and seeking to enhance its members' pride and commitment in order to increase donations for needy students.

## All my sons and daughters

For a long time the campus map lay on my desk, with the nine Faculties and the Dean of Students Office clearly marked, to always remind me that resources should be channeled to all parts of the campus. Only in this way, I thought, will TAU be able to position itself at the forefront of research and social engagement, forge international collaborations and enjoy a spirit of sharing and comradeship.

## How we discovered the Gallery and found a home for our Visitors Center

Before I became President, I knew very little about the **Genia Schreiber University Gallery** on campus... probably because its activity was low key. Following a new relationship established with well-known art collector **Igal Ahouvi**, a series of exhibitions from his collections was held at the Gallery, drawing large crowds and revealing the great potential of its exhibition halls. The relations with Ahouvi ended but, under the auspices of the Katz Faculty of the Arts and in collaboration with the Theater Arts Department, the Gallery continues to hold interesting exhibitions, some combined with theater performances. Yes, we have a gallery! An active gallery, open to the public. In my last year as President we even decided to establish the **Yehiel Ben-Zvi Visitors Center** at the Gallery, inviting thousands of TAU visitors to begin their campus tour with a taste of "how we started and where we are today" in our fascinating, never-ending journey in pursuit of the unknown... This goes together with the realization of another dream: making the interwoven worlds of art, theater and music accessible to the campus community and the general public.

True, we were unable to meet all the needs of all schools and faculties, but we certainly did open up new possibilities for recruiting researchers, creating new programs and launching new construction that were sorely missing.

I am proud of the fact that **all faculties** benefited from our success in the philanthropic arena and were included in the plans for developing the campus.

## ●●● Community and social responsibility: Serving Israeli society

TAU has a long tradition of extensive social responsibility activities, especially through the Dean of Students, offering a broad range of programs for assisting students and for volunteering in the community. When I took office, I felt that we should expand our endeavors, invite the public onto our campus, and expose science and culture lovers from all over Israel to the vast, highly diverse knowledge accumulated at the University.

### The community comes to the campus

To open our campus for evening activities we first created 'Thursdays on Campus,' a weekly program that included lectures, a farmers' market and interactive experiences for families. But this program encountered difficulties and was ultimately closed down. In its place, in 2015, we launched *Etnachta* (meaning 'a breather' in Aramaic) – a monthly series offering TED-style lectures by faculty members, alongside films and displays, which focuses on a different topic every year: children's books, well known music albums, and this year "the time tunnel from the past toward the unknown." Etnachta has proven most popular, with tickets to the 1,200 seats of the Smolarz Auditorium selling out quickly

every month. Today Etnachta is a familiar and well-regarded name both in the community around us and among TAU personnel.

Another community event is Science Night, an annual initiative of the European Union in which scientific institutions from all over Europe (and beyond) simultaneously take part. Every year Science Night brings to our campus about 15,000 people, mostly families, to view scientific demonstrations and listen to explanations from our researchers.

### Students go out to the community

Nurturing Israel's future leadership, we believe that it is our duty, especially as a public institution, to encourage students to contribute to our society and community.

**TAU Impact** is the first program in Israel, and perhaps in the world, that promotes social responsibility by combining high-level theoretical courses with practical work in the community related to the topic of the course. Soon participation in these courses will become mandatory for all TAU undergraduates, and at its peak the program is expected to serve 50,000 beneficiaries. This program also benefits from philanthropic support.

## New entry in the Israeli museum landscape

After years of planning and building, Tel Aviv University opened its beautiful **Steinhardt Museum of Natural History** to broad scientific, critical and public acclaim. Serving also as the Israel National Center for Biodiversity Studies, the Museum showcases a fascinating selection of specimens from among TAU's 5 million+ collection, and pursues research and training at advanced labs. A centerpiece of the Museum is the **Dan David Center for Human Evolution and Biohistory Research**, which studies evolutionary, medical and historical aspects of early man. The Center perpetuates the legacy of its namesake, the late **Dan David**, a major TAU benefactor who had a passion for anthropology and the origins of humankind. The key to TAU's technological ability to study evolutionary history is the advanced equipment of the **Shmunis Family Anthropology Institute**.



## Online Academic High School

In September 2018 an innovative program went live – TAU's **Academic High School**, conceived and run by TAU Online–Innovative Learning Center and supported by the Ministry of Education together with donors. The program makes higher education accessible to all high school students in Israel, with an emphasis on those from the country's geographic and social peripheries. The initiative was launched following a comprehensive effort that included meetings with mayors and school principals across the country.



In the program's framework, high school students, assisted by their teachers, take TAU online courses and, after passing the exams, receive academic credits that remain valid for a full decade. Any student passing three online courses with a minimum grade of 85 will be exempt from university entrance exams (SAT style 'psychometric tests'), contingent on each faculty's requirements. The possibility of academic studies will become tangible, and students will feel that the dream of higher education is within their reach. High school teachers have also shown considerable interest in the new program, and so TAU Online together with the Ministry of Education have launched a special training program.

**Dimona** was the first city to take up the challenge, declaring itself a 'TAU Academic City.' TAU management traveled to Dimona, the University's flags flew high in the streets, and three local high schools joined the

venture. Recently the **Tamar Regional Council** also joined the initiative. In addition, throughout Israel, about **160 high schools** have joined up and declared themselves Academic High Schools.

## Supporting our students

The TAU management maintains warm and friendly relations and organizational collaborations with the TAU Student Union. The President periodically meets with the Union's leaders and grants their requests as much as possible. The Student Union has contributed significantly to the advancement of various initiatives, including the University's new branding and the establishment of the Entrepreneurship Center.

Through the Dean of Students, TAU continues to provide students with a listening ear and a helping hand. Services include tutoring, mentoring, psychological therapy, career counseling and financial assistance. From 2010 to 2018, TAU set up 130 dedicated funds for student scholarships at \$100,000 or more per fund. Annual aid to needy students rose from \$5.1 million in 2009-10 to \$6.9 million in 2017-18.

When Operation Protective Edge began in Gaza in 2014, we were the first Israeli university to announce that it would support students on reserve combat duty by providing them with tuition scholarships in the following academic year. Our successful campaign to raise funds for this purpose served as an example for other institutions in the country.

## Gender equality

To help and advance our female students and faculty members, we created the position of the President's Gender Equality Advisor. The first to take on this role was **Prof. Rachel Erhard**, and the current advisor is **Prof. Ilana Eli**. The Advisor is responsible for organizing workshops for female PhD candidates; awarding scholarships to young women researchers who wish to pursue post-doctoral work overseas, in order to make this decision easier for their families; and bestowing travel grants on young mothers from among our PhD student population who wish to take their infants along to international conferences.

In addition, TAU has supported the expansion of the **Girls Think Science** program, designed to rouse interest in science, math and technology among girls in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The program invites schoolgirls from all over Israel to visit labs and hear explanations from women researchers and PhD students who inspire them and serve as role models.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility for people with disabilities has been improved throughout the campus,

funded by the **Nathan, Anne, Kim and Julian Geller Family Foundation's Accessible Campus Project** and other resources. In addition, we built the **Mia and Mile Pinkas Accessible Learning Center**, offering advanced equipment for students with hearing or visual impairments, such as hearing aids and a PC with a special keyboard. Another program operating on campus is **Dror**, facilitating the integration of students at the high end of the autism spectrum.

### **Minorities**

The mission to increase the number of Israeli Arab students on campus is of the highest priority at TAU. Extensive resources, often donor-supported, are channeled toward recruiting and retaining these students, and providing them with career placement. The newest initiative in this area is the **Israeli Arab Career Pathways Fund** supported by the **Neubauer Family Foundation**, which aims to significantly increase the number of Israeli Arab PhD graduates in STEM fields.

In addition, the Dean of Students operated the **Kahanoff Retention Initiative for Israeli-Arab Students** to battle the disproportionately higher university drop-out rates of this group. The Initiative provided a broad-based, comprehensive and holistic support system that addressed academic, emotional, social and financial difficulties.

### **Fellowships for graduate students**

Master's and doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers are the beating heart of every leading university, and most of them hold key positions

in research and teaching. With this in mind, many foundations and private donors have donated generous sums for advanced degree fellowships at TAU. The largest were contributed by the **Mortimer B. Zuckerman STEM Leadership Program** and **Yuri Milner's 70 for 70 initiative**. Thirty more major fellowship funds for advanced degrees were established by additional donors, bringing the total disbursed to master's, doctoral and post-doctoral students to \$4.6 million in 2017-18. This is up from \$3 million in 2009-10.

### **The Haredi sector**

Responding to the government's call to expand higher education opportunities for Ultra-Orthodox students – a call that is compatible with TAU's general mission of increasing diversity on campus, we launched the pilot **Trailblazers** program for Haredi law students. Unlike other Israeli institutions, TAU does not offer gender-separated programs, which contradict the academic principles of freedom and openness. Instead Haredi students are integrated in regular classes, in which students of both genders study side by side. In light of the initial success we are now extending the program to other faculties.

In addition, TAU has established a unique program called **Intersecting Pathways** in which our researchers meet with a group of rabbis from the Haredi sector. TAU believes that, by facilitating encounters between the intellectual and scholarly elites of both communities for joint study and dialogue on ethical-moral issues arising from scientific progress, it can reconnect these worlds and allow them to cross-fertilize. Operating under the auspices of TAU's Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, the project has shown much success thus far. Dozens of study and discussion sessions have been held on diverse topics relating to scientific-technological development and the challenges and dilemmas that they raise. A forum of over 80 leading scientists, scholars, rabbis and dayanim have taken part in activities thus far and have forged deep interpersonal relationships. I see great importance in continuing this original program for connecting TAU with the Haredi sector, and hope that it will be expanded.

## ●●● Concluding words

During my 10-year journey I launched and encouraged initiatives, tried to generate change and think differently, and most of all I endeavored to be inclusive. Every person on campus can be an agent of change and initiative, a seed of collaboration among ourselves and beyond. Only in this way will TAU continue to soar.

“Nothing in this world exists alone. Everything is connected to everything else.”

**Buddha**



## ●●● Thanks

I am greatly indebted to the public leaders, faculty members, members of the Executive Council and Board of Governors, personnel in Israel and overseas, deans, heads of units and administrative directors, as well as the Unions of TAU Senior Faculty, Junior Faculty and Administrative Staff, who assisted and stood by me for the last ten years. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart, and wish to specifically mention the three Chairpersons of TAU's Board of Governors – Robert Goldberg, the late Harvey Krueger and Jacob A. Frenkel; the Chairpersons of the Executive Council – Leora

Meridor, Giora Yaron and Eli Gelman; the three Rectors – Dany Leviatan, Aron Shai and Yaron Oz; the Directors-General – Moti Kohn and Gady Frank and their deputies and teams; the VPs – Raanan Rein, Yoav Henis and Amos Elad and their teams; Orna Cohen, Orly Fromer, Mira Marcus-Kalish; and my own indefatigable team – Rony Goldstein, Naomi Yona, Yael Sarfaty, Marlene Sacho and Sharon Ziv-Kafri. Thanks also to Rava Eleasari, her team and Michal Alexander for their help in preparing this publication.



