TAU REVIEW

Tel Aviv University | **2023**

The Future of Biomed Here & Now

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
Pursuing the Unknown

TAU Tallies

Israel's **1st** in **Digital Learning**

395 Researchers among **Global Best**

World's **5th** for **Startup Founders**

TOP 100 International University

Top **21** Film School

ISRAEL: World's **2nd** for **R&D Spending**

13th in Faculty Citation Impact

* More details: https://english.tau.ac.il/international_rankings

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TAU is developing new paths to fighting human disease. The testing ground? TAU's multidisciplinary frameworks—spanning dozens of research groups working with hospitals, HMOs, and industry

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Cover: BLAVATNIK CENTER for Drug Discovery research associates Nanyun Zhang and Michał Kaczmarek working at the Metabolite Medicine Division. Photo: Yoram Reshef

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Israel at 75

TAU Global Campaign
Thanks a Billion!
Big Ideas Made Real

Dear Friends,

Our 2023 magazine is being presented to you against the backdrop of two exciting milestones. One is national— Israel's 75th anniversary, and the other is local—the completion of the University's $1 billion Global Campaign. The development and progress of the State and of TAU are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, and we are immensely proud that so many of Israel's achievements in the areas of tech, health, security, society and the arts originated right here on our campus. Today, thanks to the University's remarkable community of supporters and alumni, TAU is better positioned than ever to advance Israel scientifically, academically and socially.

Among remarkable firsts for Israel are an observatory for quantum space communication, an app to keep seniors safe in the digital sphere, a center for autoimmune diseases, and a leadership program for Israeli mayors. For students we have significantly boosted services at the new TAU Student Success Center and widened inclusivity for the disabled.

Two transformative gifts by donors have enabled the renaming of TAU International as the LOWY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, which will expand study and research collaborations with top universities abroad; and the inauguration of the Dan Launchpad for student startups, which will augment TAU's prominence in Israeli innovation and entrepreneurship.

No matter the topic, our goal at the University is to serve society, and toward that end TAU is building links with hospitals, industry partners, government agencies, NGOs and international organizations. TAU's many friends and supporters in Israel and abroad are key to this effort, for which we are deeply appreciative and grateful.

Regards and enjoy the issue,

A. Porat

Prof. Ariel Porat
President, Tel Aviv University

Toward Un-Hackable Communication

The TAU ground station's robotic telescope

TAU's Center for Quantum Science and Technology has built the first ground station in Israel – and among a few worldwide – for optical and quantum communication with satellites. Experiments will center on proving the feasibility of beaming up and back from space via un-hackable "quantum keys" for encrypted data. Head of the Center, Prof. Yaron Oz, said that the work represents an "important first step towards demonstrating eavesdropping-proof communication using quantum methods."

One of the first tasks of the ground station, which includes an observatory dome and powerful telescope, will be to test communication protocols with a TAU nanosatellite that was launched into space recently for this very purpose. Called TAU-SAT3, it was built at the Center for Nanosatellites and New Space of TAU's Fleischman Faculty of Engineering. The shoe-boxed sized satellite is the third one sent up by TAU in less than two years.

"TAU is joining governments and giant corporations around the world in the race to protect sensitive information by harnessing the power of quantum," said Prof. Oz. "We're at the edge of game-changing technology, and our plan is to follow up on these initial experiments by soon sending up our own TAU quantum satellite."

The Life-to-Death Digital Continuum

What happens to your Facebook profile when you pass away? The fate of our profiles and data which remain online after we die, or our *digital remains*, is of increasing importance as we live more of our lives online. However, policy and social norms have not caught up to the tide of technology.

TAU Buchmann Faculty of Law Professor Michael Birnhack, with Dr. Tal Morse of Hadassah Academic College, researched the emerging social attitudes toward digital remains with a focus on maintenance of public image and posthumous right to privacy.

Diverse focus groups of Israelis showed that most people feel data privacy conditions should stay the same postmortem: public data such as posts and photos should remain available on a given platform, private data such as text conversations should stay private, and data shared only with specific people should continue to be accessible only to those people. Participants' reasoning included good reputation management, consent issues with sharing data, and respect for the dead. Many expressed that even private content which would paint the deceased in a good light should not be shared.

The researchers called the phenomenon of users' desire to maintain their privacy settings the *continuity principle of digital remains*. Their findings were published in the journal *New Media and Society* and were recently presented at an international digital remains workshop hosted at TAU by the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics and the Chief Justice Meir Shamgar Center for Digital Law and Innovation.

Prof. Eran Toch and Dr. Tamir Mendel test their mobile app, Meerkat.

TAU-Developed App Empowers Tech-Savvy Seniors

A mobile application developed by TAU researchers makes it simpler for seniors to navigate smartphones and avoid falling victim to online scams. Recent PhD graduate Dr. Tamir Mendel led the development of the app, Meerkat, based on his doctoral research on the digital behavior of elderly adults, under the supervision of Prof. Eran Toch of the Fleischman Faculty of Engineering. Mendel found that seniors concerned with technological security prefer help from friends and family over experts from tech support services. The app was thus designed to be more intuitive for seniors than existing digital resources.

For example, it guides users to take a screenshot of a page they don't recognize, mark suspicious elements (such as an unknown link), and send their questions to a trusted contact or in-app volunteer. The helper provides personalized directions for resolving the issue. "My goal is to make technology more accessible and inclusive for all demographics because it can improve well-being and reduce loneliness," says Mendel, who is now pursuing postdoctoral research at New York University. The project was funded through a grant from the Blavatnik Interdisciplinary Cyber Research Center, and Meerkat is currently available in the US and Israel through the Google Play Store.

Can Music Help Us Age Better?

Dr. Neta Maimon attached to the portable electrical sensors

Music may be the key to early discovery and treatment of mental decline in elderly adults. An interdisciplinary team of TAU researchers and industry partners devised a low-cost, non-invasive test that uses music to detect cognitive deterioration earlier and more simply than existing techniques.

Dr. Neta Maimon, of TAU's School of Psychological Sciences and Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, co-led the initiative as an employee of the corporation Neurosteer, founded by TAU's Prof. Nathan Intrator.

"Our method can identify issues before symptoms appear, which is the stage when current medicines are the most effective at slowing the progression of Alzheimer's or dementia," explains Maimon, a cellist and musical cognition specialist. "It could improve the quality of life of millions amid increasing longevity and growing elderly populations."

The 12-15 minute test involved attaching portable electrical sensors to the subjects' foreheads to measure brain activity while they listened to music and performed responsive tasks, such as pressing a button when they heard a melody. Results were analyzed by machine learning technology to identify signs of neurological disorders.

The project builds on a series of studies that Maimon conducted as part of her PhD research.

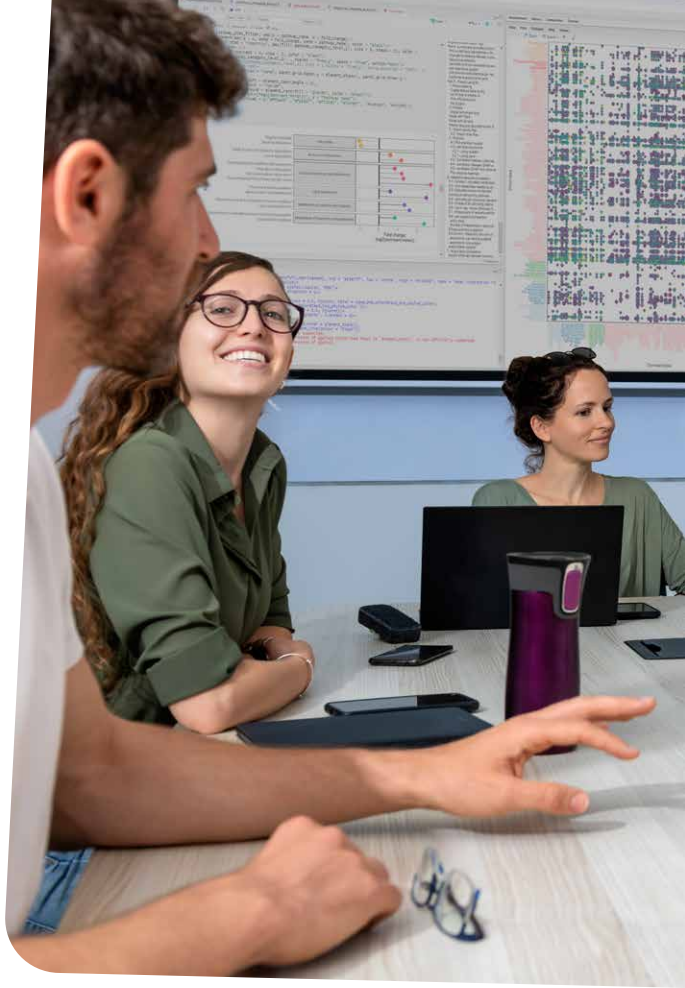
Hope Is Like the Air We Breathe

The role of hope in supporting mental health is not sufficiently understood among relevant professionals, according to Dr. Dorit Redlich Amirav of TAU's Department of Occupational Therapy, Steyer School of Health Professions, Sackler Faculty of Medicine. "Hope is similar to the air we breathe," says Redlich Amirav. "Air is taken for granted in our daily life until we are suffocating and struggling to breathe." Redlich Amirav studies how different groups implement hopeful thinking and improve mental well-being through meaningful occupations. Through her findings, she aspires to help mental health professionals integrate concepts of hope into their research and treatment and, in the long run, provide a longer-lasting and greater impact on each patient's holistic well-being.

In new research published in *Qualitative Health Research*, she investigated the cross-generational transmission of hope. Redlich Amirav cites one of her female participants who was forced by her grandfather to quit school in sixth grade. She felt her hope diminish but stated that her hopeless personal circumstances led her to put more of an emphasis on the importance of education and studying with her own two daughters who both graduated from university. Other participants displayed this particular kind of cross-generational hope. For example, a mother told Redlich Amirav about her father, who was a violinist until the Nazis broke his fingers. The mother internalized this trauma in a negative way, but all four of her own children play instruments and one of them is an opera singer. She inadvertently conveyed how hope and music are intertwined for them and their heritage.

In 2019, Redlich Amirav was appointed director of the Israeli chapter of the International Hope Barometer. She says that it came just in time: hope became a key factor in successfully adapting to the trials and tribulations of the pandemic. During the lockdowns, she says that people found meaning in new ways of interacting; specific trends point to the importance of goal-directed behavior in increasing hope.

Imagining the Future Patient



Biomedical & technological progress is at the tipping point of transforming medicine into a more precise, proactive science capable of defeating human disease

By Sveta Raskin

The 21st century is revolutionizing our approach to healthcare, our understanding of the human body, and our ability to intervene in its most intricate processes. Tel Aviv University researchers are at the forefront of the advancing changes. They are collaborating with Israel's hospitals and industry to compute a patient's future, popularize genetic screenings, develop novel vaccines, and usher in the era of truly personalized treatment.

Transforming Sick Care into Health Care

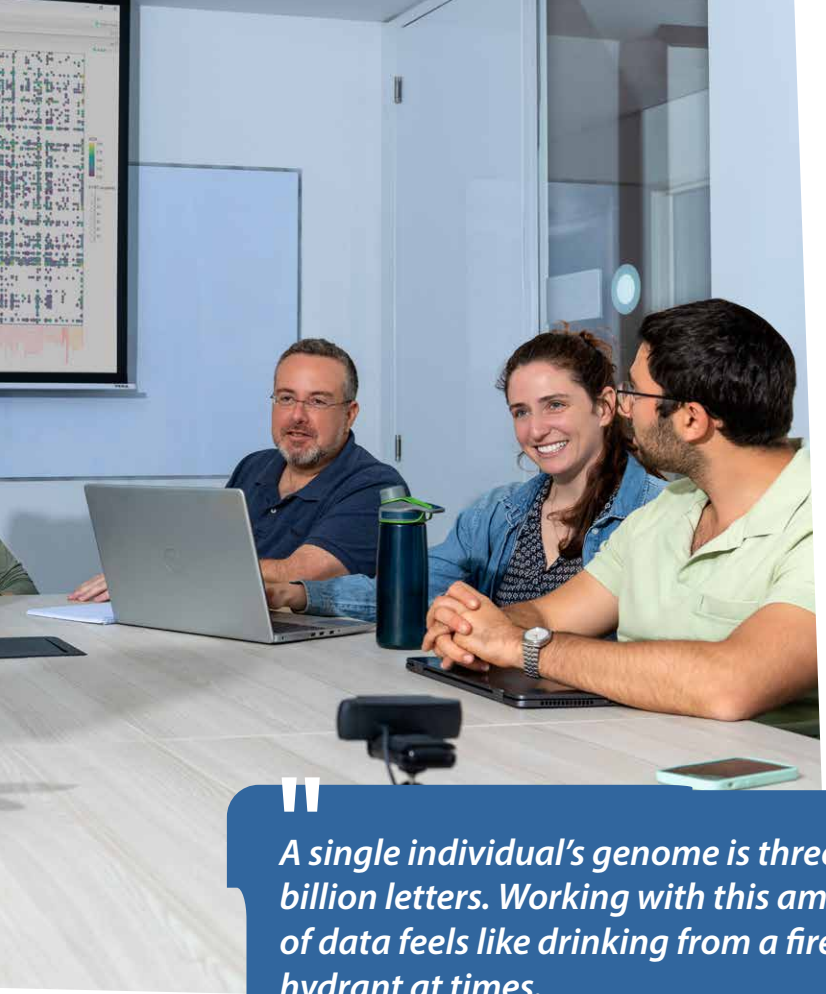
The last decade has seen an explosion in the amount of electronic medical records. Around the world, massive databases containing comprehensive genetic and health information on hundreds of millions of people have been compiled at hospitals, clinics, and data repositories. The revolution in AI is enabling the development of computational tools to accurately analyze this data on an unprecedented scale. At this intersection, the field of bioinformatics, which aims to solve biomedical problems by using computer science tools, is becoming increasingly important in transforming medicine from a reactive to a proactive science.

"It became obvious very fast that analyzing this data would provide fantastic insights to understanding how disease transpires and progresses, and to offer novel approaches to diagnosis, treatment, and prevention," says Ron Shamir, Professor Emeritus of the Blavatnik School of Computer Science at the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences and the founding director of TAU's Edmond J. Safra Center for Bioinformatics and Koret-Berkeley-TAU Initiative in Computational Biology and Bioinformatics. The Edmond J. Safra Center for Bioinformatics brings together all bioinformatics-related research and teaching activities across campus into one multidisciplinary hub, spanning over 50 research groups and 200 students across four faculties.

Navigating the Data Labyrinth

Data is the backbone of all bioinformatics research but it's not an easy work partner—sometimes its sheer amount and complexity are overwhelming. "A single individual's genome is three billion letters. Working with this amount of data feels like drinking from a fire hydrant at times," Shamir says.

To assist TAU researchers in addressing this problem and questions of data privacy and security, TAU recently established the Health Data Science Hub — a joint unit of the Edmond J. Safra Center for



Prof. Elhanan Borenstein (third from right) and the members of his bioinformatics research team (from left): Dror Hadas, MSc; Ella Goldschmidt, MSc; Efrat Muller, PhD; Mor Tsamir, PhD; and Yadid Algavi, MD-PhD.

> ***A single individual's genome is three billion letters. Working with this amount of data feels like drinking from a fire hydrant at times.***

Bioinformatics, TAU's AI & Data Science Center, the Sackler Faculty of Medicine, and the Biomedical Engineering Department.

"The Hub will be the center of knowledge and expertise on the various protocols needed to access large data repositories and will streamline the process for TAU scientists, which will be a great help in facilitating research," explains current Head of Edmond J. Safra Center for Bioinformatics, Prof. Elhanan Borenstein, of the Blavatnik School of Computer Sciences and TAU's medical school.

Physicians of the Future

Another long-term mission of TAU's bioinformatics programs is to educate physicians about the potential of digital medicine. To achieve this, TAU introduced several novel study programs in the 2022-23 academic year. First, a joint Bioinformatics-MD degree, which will arm future doctors with advanced data crunching skills. Another is a Big Data in Healthcare course offered by the Faculty of Medicine in collaboration with a governmental and industry consortium called the "8400 Health Network." The course allows participants, many of whom are practicing physicians, to become acquainted with the opportunities now available to them in the digital healthcare realm. A total of 480 candidates applied for the 80 spots available in the course pilot.

"To advance the future of medicine, we need to broaden the set of tools physicians use to understand a patient's medical situation. Researchers and physicians need to talk to each other," Borenstein explains. To facilitate this, the Edmond J. Safra Center for Bioinformatics spearheads dozens of collaborative projects in clinical bioinformatics with various hospitals, programs, and academic institutions. It awarded 22 grants in the last two years for joint research projects, and an additional five collaborative grants are expected to be awarded in the coming months.

Preventative Genetics

One example of such a collaboration is Prof. Ran Elkon's lab at the Department of Human Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine. Elkon's work centers on understanding the genetic basis of widespread complex diseases, such

Prof. Ran Elkon

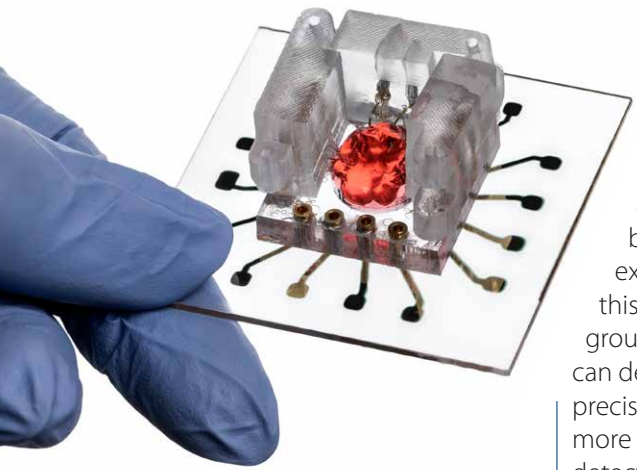
> ***With genetic testing, we can develop more personalized, more precise approaches that will be much more effective for prevention and early detection of the disease.***

as high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and even mental illnesses.

"These diseases are not considered genetic as the term is commonly understood, but it's clear that they have a genetic component, which we call 'predisposition,'" says Elkon. Rather than single-gene mutations, hundreds of small genetic variations influence the risk of contracting such diseases, he explains. "Each individual variant has very little effect on its own; what matters is the collective amount of such 'risk variants' in each individual genome."

The Ethics of Genetics

Prof. Elkon works on trying to solve the genetic inequality dilemma, which has surfaced alongside progress in the field. Of all massive genetic breast cancer studies in the world, 90% were conducted on women of European ancestry, making findings and discoveries relevant mostly to this ethnicity. Elkon and his team were able to show that while in Israel the findings translate well to women of Ashkenazi descent, predictive performance substantively declines for individuals of other ethnicities, such as North African, Ethiopian or Druze. Elkon hopes to help come up with computational tools to successfully transfer the findings cross-ethnically. Together with physicians at the Rabin Medical Center (Beilinson Hospital) and the Clalit HMO, he's heading research on the topic.

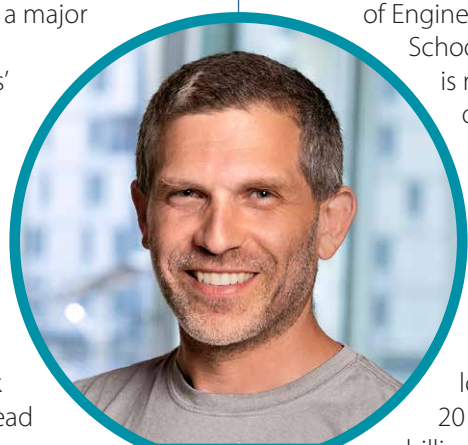


Organ-on-a-Chip model

Elkon's lab team recently completed a project on identifying women with an elevated genetic predisposition to breast cancer and showed that findings are applicable in Israel. Elkon is now working with Israel's largest HMO, Clalit, to launch a clinical study for identifying such women among Clalit's clients and offering them a more personalized breast cancer screening strategy.

The likelihood of developing breast cancer is 16 times higher for women in the top 1% genetic risk group compared to those in a low-risk group. However, today in the developed world, healthcare providers offer identical screening recommendations and coverage for women on both ends of the spectrum, Elkon explains. "We are trying to change this one-size-fits-all strategy on the ground. With genetic testing, we can develop more personalized, more precise approaches that will be much more effective for prevention and early detection of the disease," he says.

Elkon also places a major focus on teaching 'predictive genetics' in his genetics classes for TAU medical students. "Genetic screening will become common practice, similar to routine blood work and other widespread check-ups, and future physicians need to be aware of this. Early detection has a major effect on prognosis and survival," he explains.



Dr. Ben Maoz

Treatment Personalization

Prevention is the ideal alternative, but what can be done about treatment when disease does occur? On the other side of campus, in his cutting-edge lab at the Susan and Henry Samueli Engineering Building, Dr. Ben Maoz of the Fleischman Faculty of Engineering and the Sagol School of Neuroscience is revolutionizing drug development and treatment personalization.

"The drug development process hasn't changed in 70 years. It takes a lot of time – about 20 years and $2 billion to develop an FDA-approved medication. And even then, once the drug has been approved, it is not optimal for about 75% of the people taking it, because we all have unique physiologies," he explains.

Dr. Adi Barzel (center) with Dr. Erik Shifrut and Dr. Anat Globerson Levin at their lab in the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (Ichilov Hospital)

Maoz is developing the 'Organs-on-a-Chip' technology that circumvents the traditional need for animal drug trials and lets researchers test new medication on something much more similar to humans than rodents—human organ models made of lab-grown cells.

"It's a process that takes up to four months overall. We can turn a person's skin cell into an undifferentiated stem cell and, from there, into a cell of any organ we want," Maoz explains. Once the researchers have the desired tissue with the specific DNA content they cast it into lego-like units which can be interconnected to mimic the complex physiological system of a specific patient. There is no limit on how many times this can be replicated for multiple trial-and-error runs.

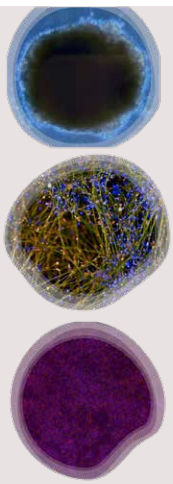
> ***Gene therapy is no longer a dream, it is a reality.***

"Parallel trials are especially important when there are multiple treatment options and, without personalized data, we just don't know which one will work better. In the case of diseases such as cancer, that is crucial information," he says.

Recently, in a move that exceeded expectations, the FDA approved the Organ-on-a-Chip approach to serve as a complementary tool for drug development, eliminating the unconditional need for animal trials. "This is a major step forward — it opens the door for expediting drug development and making it much more efficient and personalized."

Maoz's lab currently collaborates with numerous scientists and hospitals in Israel and around the world, as well as three pharmaceutical companies that wish to use the TAU technology to test their drugs for toxicity and efficacy.

While many improvements are still needed, Maoz is certain the technology is here to stay. As for scalability, he says insurance companies will understand that channeling resources into focused, personalized testing and optimal solutions, instead of spending money on ineffective treatments and procedures, is a better and more financially viable strategy. "In the future, patients will arrive, create 'mini-me's-on-a-chip' in fully robotic laboratories, and get an optimal drug for their condition," Maoz concludes.



Harvesting Stem Cells

Recognizing the increasing demand for cellular material derived from stem cells, and addressing the lack of such facilities in Israel, TAU recently established the **Stem Cell Core Lab for Regenerative Medicine**, a multidisciplinary initiative of the Faculties of Medicine, Engineering, and Life Sciences; the Sagol Center for Regenerative Medicine; and TAU's Vice President for R&D.

The lab plans to serve dozens of research groups across the TAU campus, as well as from other Israeli research institutions and commercial companies. Research based on stem cell technology advances exciting scientific breakthroughs in precision medicine and the lab is there "to help it reach stages of early clinical evaluation."

Photo: Stem cell differentiation stages

Gene Therapy for All

In gene therapy, the "one-size-fits-all" approach often works and may even be the preferred option, says Dr. Adi Barzel from the School of Neurobiology, Biochemistry & Biophysics at the George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences.

"The COVID vaccines, several cancer therapy drugs, and therapies for rare diseases, which are all already FDA-approved and used on the market, are examples of generic gene therapies that work for most," he explains.

Barzel's team works on engineering the cells of the human immune system so that they can better combat cancer, infections, and autoimmune diseases. Last year, in a world first, they succeeded in using the gene-editing technology CRISPR to engineer type-B white blood cells with antibodies to successfully fight the HIV virus.

"For this specific drug it will take another 5 to 6 years before we get to clinical trials — these technologies take time to mature, but gene therapy is no longer a dream, it is a reality," Barzel states.

Barzel envisions that similar to the COVID vaccine, the HIV medication would need no personal adjustment, and ideally be available "in vials at your neighborhood clinic" and affordable to all.

He predicts that in 10 years we will see many more treatments based on genome editing, gene therapy, and immunotherapy in the fields of rare diseases, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. "We will also see many more vaccines based on the wonderful mRNA technology [the tech behind the novel COVID vaccines]. I believe all current vaccines will become mRNA-based. In addition, we will see the development of vaccines against diseases for which we currently have none, such as HIV and different types of cancer. This will take more work, but it is super exciting."

To significantly boost the development of these therapies and make a real-world impact, Barzel heads his lab's collaboration with the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center as part of the joint Dotan Center for Advanced Therapies. "This collaboration is crucial for our ability to take our ideas from the bench to the bedside," he explains. The partnership fast-tracks the process of working with patient samples, allowing the researchers to get efficient results quickly and establishing an atmosphere of cooperation that translates into real progress in the clinic.

Metabolomics – A New Frontier

Even the simplest blood tests of today – which monitor about 20 substances in our body – have powerful predictive and diagnostic power. For example, high cholesterol suggests possible heart trouble, and abnormal glucose could indicate pre-diabetes. Now imagine that routine and low-cost bloodwork could check for *thousands of compounds* all at once, as well as calculate the balance between them. Such a real-time status check would provide doctors with unparalleled knowledge for diagnosing patients, and for creating personalized profiles for the most effective treatment of disease.

We are entering such an era at TAU's new Metabolite Medicine Division at the BLAVATNIK CENTER for Drug Discovery. This suite of labs is the most advanced at an Israeli university for the emerging science of metabolomics – the study of small molecules called metabolites that our bodies produce every second of our lives as part of ongoing cell processes. Sometimes, all that is required is to identify the *one metabolite culprit* that is throwing the body off balance.

Using state-of-the-art equipment, scientists will be able to identify specific metabolic signatures in laboratory and patient cell culture samples, learn about their mechanisms of action, and develop AI-aided data analysis tools. The ultimate aim of the Metabolite Medicine Division is to connect promising university discoveries with Israeli hospitals for clinical samples and testing, and with the pharma industry for creating or repurposing drugs.

Liron Shazifi and his father at Liron's TAU graduation

Dor Dougma

> ***TzavTA gave me the guidance and direction I needed, and now I can do it on my own.***

Giving Every Student the Opportunity to Study

A TAU program offers students with disabilities alternatives to inaccessible admissions requirements

By Ruth Fertig

For recent TAU graduate Liron Shazifi, navigating the higher education system wasn't easy due to his cerebral palsy. Indeed, Liron didn't even consider getting a degree until he discovered TAU's TzavTA program—the only one of its kind in the country that offers students with disabilities or neurodiverse needs the opportunity, resources, and tools to be accepted and fully integrated into their chosen study track.

Liron finished his studies in Education and Humanities last year and hopes to go on to work with other disabled students to help them realize their potential. Unfortunately, this potential is often stopped in its tracks because university acceptance involves requirements that are inaccessible to those with certain disabilities.

Together at TAU

A play on a Hebrew word for "together" with Tel Aviv's initials incorporated, TzavTA is a year-long program that provides classes on navigating the academic environment, group counseling, and one-on-one academic advisors. Students also begin taking classes in their major and are admitted by a special committee based on their success.

Though TzavTA does require a high school diploma, it does not reject lower grades since they often do not reflect disabled students' actual abilities.

Paving His Own Path

Dor Dougma is a recent graduate of the TzavTA preparatory year and a current TAU student. Dor, who is on the autism spectrum, studies Political Science and Communications because he hopes to become a politician. He loves that TAU has introduced him to people who challenge him and how his classes help him understand the world, especially the political world, more clearly.

For Dor, TzavTA was a crucial stepping stone to beginning his career. "I don't want special treatment or hand-holding. TzavTA gave me the guidance and direction I needed, and now I can do it on my own."

Struggling to Expand

According to director Prof. Navah Ratzon, who also heads the Stanley Steyer School of Health Professions, TzavTA can accommodate twelve students per year, but usually only draws between five to ten participants. This is partially because it has almost no budget at all, let alone one for marketing: the program receives free office services from the Occupational Therapy Department and students pay only a nominal fee; most staff are volunteers.

TzavTA has helped around 40 students become full-fledged degree candidates and continues to offer some support throughout their studies. Dor notes that the staff's door is always open if he needs help, and he is still in touch with friends from his cohort. "It's a very challenging program," says Liron, "but it is accepting of everyone and is truly valuable for anyone who is worried about having trouble in their degree."

TAU's Lowy International School Launches Meaningful Careers

"These are people I'll invite to my wedding": Students share their journeys through the School into diverse fields from diplomacy to tech

By Ruth Fertig

Tel Aviv University is a rising star on the global stage, continually expanding its international community and extending its geographical reach. Now, a major gift from Sir Frank Lowy will enable TAU's International School, newly dubbed THE LOWY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL Dedicated to the Memory of Shirley Lowy, to bring more students and researchers fully into the limelight.

Lowy's game-changing contribution will allow the School to more effectively equip its students with the knowledge, connections, and opportunities to reach the highest levels of their fields thanks to a new building and many new programs for scholars and students alike.

A TAU education provides experiences and interpersonal connections not available anywhere else. Let's meet some of the students whose stories illustrate the diverse backgrounds and ambitions of Lowy School attendees.

Yibrah Tsegay

Yibrah: Rebuilding My Country

For some students, attending TAU has provided both a haven from and a path to improving their home country. Yibrah Tsegay is a Security and Diplomacy MA student from Tigray in Northern Ethiopia, a region that was embroiled in conflict during his studies.

He has been unable to return home for some time, but is hoping to put what he's learned to use when he does.

"As someone from a war zone, I want to apply my diplomacy studies when I return after the war to help the local government with reconstruction."

Yibrah was drawn to the Lowy International School's program because it provided an up-close view of how security and diplomacy are effectively utilized on the ground. He and his classmates visited contested areas, spoke to relevant stakeholders, and saw how policies and theory affect real people—a type of experiential learning difficult to find in any other country.

Scholarships and Funds

The Lowy Scholarship Fund for outstanding international students at all degree levels will bring learners from diverse walks of life to campus. Other impact-strengthening developments include a Guest Professors fund, new pro-social curricula, and double the number of admissions spots for international students.

Beyond his program, Yibrah also felt a kinship with Israel in part because of its Ethiopian Jewish community: seeing and hearing his own language around Tel Aviv put him at ease in this new country.

Takayuki: Forging My Own Path

TAU is an ideal place for students who want to strike out on their own, such as Sofaer Global MBA student Takayuki Doi, the program's very first Japanese student. Hailing from a town where few people had any familiarity at all with Israel, Takayuki came to Tel Aviv based on its startup reputation in hope of building something of his own.

The Student Body Nearing its 50th year of top-quality instruction, TAU's Lowy International School offers over 20 degrees in English and 15 short-term and online programs to students from over 100 countries, with over 2,000 students coming from abroad to campus each year. To date, over 25,000 international student alumni worldwide have become "ambassadors" of the University and Israel in their home countries.

Takayuki Doi

Once at the Lowy International School, Takayuki found that many people were interested in his perspective as someone from Japan, but he had to learn to communicate his views in new ways.

"Everyone in Israel is very direct, while I speak in the 'Japanese way', which is more roundabout. So people don't always understand what I'm saying at first. But, I still feel that Israel and Japan are very similar because we both value community and collective responsibility".

Takayuki is still studying, but he has already accepted a job at an Israeli fintech startup in addition to making moves to start his own business. He also acts as an unofficial program spokesman to other aspiring Japanese entrepreneurs who are interested in Tel Aviv University.

Garrett: Following My Passion

Garrett Khoury is a perfect example of how TAU's myriad opportunities for students to branch out academically can lead them into a fulfilling and prestigious career. He now works at media giant TikTok in the global security department, where he helped build the Intelligence team from the ground up.

Garrett Khoury

Garrett, who is of Lebanese-American descent, put his passion for history to work by majoring in Middle Eastern Studies for his BA at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. During his program he studied abroad in Jerusalem and fell in love with Israel. Wanting to return, he enrolled in TAU's International Masters in Conflict Resolution and Mediation program in particular because it allowed interdisciplinary study.

"I was able to dabble in subjects with which I had no experience that ended up changing my worldview. That was really rewarding."

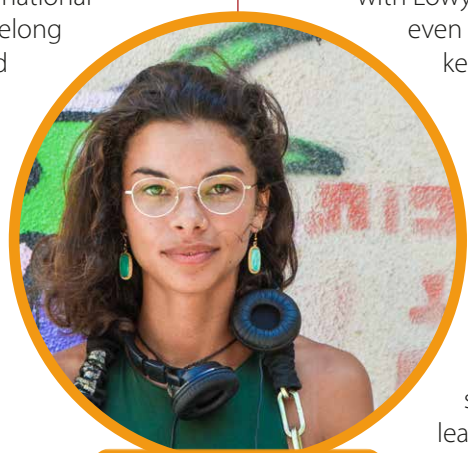
At the Lowy International School, he made lifelong friends and enjoyed the fascinating conversations he had with professors. "The friends I made at TAU are the people I'm going to invite to my wedding."

Garrett went on to work in international travel security and later corporate security with Lockheed Martin before TikTok approached him to help create the Intelligence team to support global security.

Djamilia: Exploring My Interests

The Lowy International School is not only for students wishing to expand their professional prospects. For those who are still searching, it allows them to explore new interests and become driven, academically-minded individuals who continue to pursue knowledge through research and higher education. Brazilian-German TAU graduate Djamilia Prange de Oliveira was one such academic wanderer who had not yet found a specific area of interest when she came to TAU.

Djamilia was no stranger to exploration, having worked as a flight attendant and a journalist before TAU, but she did not love going to school. However, after flying in to Tel Aviv on a job, she fell in love with the city and reached out to the Lowy School's Liberal Arts Program director, who helped her get funding to pursue a degree at the School and became something of a mentor. Djamilia continues to speak with Lowy staff today and even helps out with marketing.



Djamilia Prange de Oliveira

Once at TAU, Djamilia discovered a fascination with religion that was fostered through the interdisciplinary nature of the School, where she was able to learn about Kabbalah, Christianity, and religious intolerance. Today she is still studying religion through a Global History MA in Berlin.

"I loved that I could study lots of different things at TAU. For the first time I felt like there were no limits."

New Building With completion planned for April 2025, the certified-green building for the Lowy International School will serve as a hub for visiting researchers, delegations, and the entire international community on campus.

Strengthening Israel from the Local Level Up

In a pioneering initiative for Israel, TAU's Bloomberg-Sagol Center for City Leadership is training mayors from across the country

By Elianna Bar-El

Inspired by the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, a vanguard, one-year program at TAU's Bloomberg-Sagol Center for City Leadership aims to help mayors of cities across Israel – north and south, large and small – to deliver better and more equitable public services to residents, strengthen social bonds, and deepen ties to the global community of innovative city leaders. Significant thought was given to diversify the program's participants so that all sectors are represented: Jews, Arabs, Druze, women and men, secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox, from both rural and urban areas.

Israel has 257 cities and towns with mayors. Each annual class of the leadership program will accommodate 20 participants, each of whom will invite two key members of their municipal team to attend as well. The intensive executive education and training program will equip them with the tools and skills needed to enhance residents' quality of life.

Local Leadership at Its Best

Israel Gal, the mayor of Kiryat Ono, is known for his open-door policy and unwavering assistance in stepping in and helping wherever necessary. He was recently awarded the highest honor from Magen David Adom (Israel's national emergency services) for his ceaseless work to benefit the health of Israeli citizens during the pandemic.

Israel Gal, Mayor of Kiryat Ono

Gal is turning the once sleepy town of Kiryat Ono into an economically independent and commercially vibrant city with much to offer. He whole-heartedly agrees that the program is exactly what mayors need to make a true impact.

"Kiryat Ono has undergone a leap forward in recent years and the number of residents has increased significantly. TAU is the place where I can make sure that I have the appropriate tools and most comprehensive knowledge to meet the needs of a large and progressive city," he said. "For me, the program is designed to prepare cities for national and international development and stimulate the vision to provide better services …We have the power to influence governance in Israel with the help of peer learning and joint development."

Oshrat Gani Gonen, Head of the South Sharon Regional Council

Oshrat Gani Gonen, Head of the South Sharon Regional Council, feels the program has already had a positive influence on her capabilities and output, and is thrilled to be able to initiate more innovation in local government. Gani Gonen has worked

Israeli mayors at the inauguration of TAU's Bloomberg-Sagol Center for City Leadership

> ***The program is exactly what mayors need to make a true impact.***

in the fields of community service, municipality management, and human resources for decades.

"So far, the program has improved my managerial negotiations and ability to assess priorities and organizational processes," she said. "The parallel course for senior city executives is very important in establishing a uniform language for connecting and synchronizing between the heads of local authorities and their top managers."

Making an Impact and Leading Effectively

"Israel's local authorities have a much greater impact on citizens' lifestyles and welfare than the central government," said Prof. Ariel Porat, TAU President. "The quality of sanitation, transportation, welfare, education, and health services mostly depends on the local authority's performance. The City Leadership Center aims to improve the management of local authorities in Israel, thereby enhancing the quality of life of Israelis throughout the country."

Former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, who visited TAU to kick off the program, said: "The Bloomberg-Sagol Center builds on all the work Bloomberg Philanthropies is doing to help local leaders around the world innovate, lead effectively, and share ideas for tackling complex problems. "This inaugural class brings together a dynamic group of mayors from across Israel. We're looking forward to working with them, and to seeing the results in their cities and beyond."

Mike Bloomberg speaking at the launch of the Center

> ***This inaugural class brings together a dynamic group of mayors from across Israel.***

A Big First

The Center was established at TAU's Coller School of Management and is led by Prof. Moshe Zviran, former Dean of the School, who serves as the Head of the Center and the Academic Director of the Program. The mayors will conclude the year with additional training and networking hosted by Bloomberg Philanthropies and Harvard University in New York City and Boston.

Cofounder of the Bloomberg-Sagol Center and TAU Governor Yossi Sagol, who is Chairman of Sagol Holdings Corporation, began working with Bloomberg Philanthropies in 2018 to develop the Israel-based program in order to strengthen the country from the local level up.

"Mayors serve on the frontlines of leadership for the citizens of Israel, and they manage the most important matters for them. Through learning and training at the Bloomberg-Sagol Center, city leaders will be exposed to the best and latest management practices in the business world and will be able to apply their newly gained skills in local leadership," Sagol said.

"Doing so, we hope, will support bold public innovation and create more effective city halls. Our partnership with Mike Bloomberg is very exciting and will undoubtedly strengthen the leadership of the local authorities across Israel."

Dr. Lior Birger (on the right, 4th row from the top) and her class on their 2022 trip to Berlin

The Secret Sauce of Academic Growth

Post-doc researchers propel cross-pollination of ideas around the globe

By Sveta Raskin

How do universities worldwide expand academic ties, develop new research approaches, and tap into emerging ideas? One of the best ways to achieve these goals is to attract a talented and diverse group of recent PhD graduates for post-doctoral positions, which have long been considered as powerful engines for growth.

The main purpose of a post-doc is to develop the professional and academic skills of new PhDs, while providing them a "home" under the mentorship of an experienced researcher. The skills, experience and networking ties the young researchers gain at this stage can be key in helping them secure tenure-track faculty positions in the future. At the same time, the innovative ideas the researchers develop and pursue, and the academic ties they provide, position the hosting institution ahead of the curve in terms of academic progress.

Recognizing the importance of supporting post-doc researchers, foundations and private donors have established fellowship programs offering sponsored positions in various disciplines and creating a pool of talented young scientists and thinkers at the world's top universities.

Tapping into the Expertise Network

Dr. Joshua Barrow is a post-doc scholar supported by the binational US-Israel Zuckerman STEM Leadership Program. He holds a joint appointment at Tel Aviv University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, working at the intersection of nuclear and particle physics research.

"In the field of particle physics specifically, collaborative work proves absolutely necessary. The experiments we build to study the

Dr. Joshua Barrow hooking up cables for a new experiment at the MicroBooNE data acquisition subsystem

most fundamental properties of matter—our colliders, accelerators, and detectors—are gigantic machines that require a team effort deep with cooperative knowledge. We bounce ideas off a lot of people and expertise is distributed throughout our large networks," he says.

Originally from Tennessee, Barrow "caught the research bug" in college, when he decided that physics was the optimal discipline that combined "philosophy, logic, and the ultimate question of how things work in the universe." He works with Prof. Or Hen at MIT and with Dr. Adi Ashkenazi at TAU's Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy. "These professors were interested in working together. I aligned with both of their research interests and provided a bridge between principal investigators in both countries," he explains.

Barrow, who started his Zuckerman Fellowship in the fall of 2021, met his fellow Zuckerman Scholars in Israel from other fields and universities. "Meeting like-minded people allows us to fast-track the development of ideas and cross-pollinate them across disciplines," he muses.

Barrow, who hopes to continue working at national laboratories or as a university professor, plans to continue collaboration with TAU into the future, wherever he lands professionally. "The problems we're trying to solve at TAU are interesting, and the undergraduate students are very bright."

Discovering the Local Perspective

Post-doctoral exchange is no less vital in social sciences than in hard sciences. Dr. Lior Birger is a Bloomfield post-doc researcher at TAU's Bob Shapell School of Social Work. She researches best practices in working with displaced populations, refugees, and asylum seekers. As part of her PhD research, Birger conducted fieldwork in Germany, where she initiated contact with the Alice Salomon University (ASH) School of Social Work in Berlin. Thanks to this connection, Birger and her colleague at the Bob Shapell School, Dr. Nora Korin-Langer, later created two joint courses in migration between ASH and TAU.

"Our students, both graduate and undergrad, Jews and Arabs, get to learn about forced migration and meet displaced populations on the ground in both countries, which helps them broaden their horizons and grasp the problem as a global issue, while providing different perspectives on the challenges of social exclusion and marginalization," Birger says. The courses include a two-day preparation in Tel Aviv and then a week in Berlin.

The number of post-doc fellows at TAU has risen 25 percent over the last five years to 477 fellows in 2022.

In September 2022, Birger started another post-doc position in Sussex, UK. "The post-doc is a critical phase for all scholars, but for women, especially. Women and mothers face more intense challenges that require additional flexibility and compromises," she says. "Programs providing post-doc fellowships alleviate some of the financial burdens on young researchers and allow them to develop independently—providing flexibility and much-needed support at this challenging stage," she concludes.

Nurturing Ties

Prof. Ralf Metzler, the current Chair for Theoretical Physics at the University of Potsdam, Germany, arrived in Israel in 1998 for his post-doc at TAU after connecting with chemistry professor and formemr TAU President Joseph Klafter at a seminar.

"Post-doc positions prevent you from steaming in your own juice. The best post-docs are the ones where you get really different perspectives, both in science and society," he says.

Prof. Ralf Metzler

Metzler spent two and a half years at TAU, where he met some of his "best friends in science." He continues his collaboration with Israeli scientists today, and even hopes to come back to Israel to work sometime.

"I've become an advocate for Israel—I love the place," he says. Metzler transfers his admiration of Israel to his students, many of whom come from countries such as China and Iran. "I hope that they go back changed, in a way," he concludes.

Moving Forward

Boosting the number of post-doctoral positions on campus has been one of TAU's organizational priorities. The number of post-doc fellows at TAU has risen 25 percent over the last five years to 477 fellows in 2022.

"In contrast to science in the US and Europe, Israeli science traditionally relied on PhD students and not on post-docs," explains Prof. Yossi Yovel, Head of TAU's Sagol School of Neuroscience and senior lecturer at the Wise Faculty of Life Sciences, who is always on the lookout for strong post-docs.

"In the past few years, however, we are observing a change in this pattern, with more and more Israeli and international candidates looking to do their post-doc fellowship in Israel. The value and contribution of a strong post-doc can be instrumental in propelling progress at TAU, and in Israel in general," he adds.

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Celebration:

TAU Successfully Concludes 10-Year Global Campaign

Our international community of change-makers stepped up to meet the challenge of raising $1 billion – the first fundraising target of this size ever set by an Israeli university. Over 400 donors from 21 countries transformed the campus, preparing the University for exciting developments ahead!

Putting Students Front & Center

Thanks to the establishment of **92 undergraduate scholarship funds**, thousands of students who lack financial resources are gaining a world-class education and a head-start toward field-leading careers. Of these funds, **14** are aimed specifically at expanding diversity in the student body, as well as welcoming young people from Israel's geographic and socioeconomic periphery. The University launched **24** teaching programs, also in partnership with top schools abroad such as Columbia University. A massive influx of funding is enabling a **doubling** of the international student body from over **100** countries, as well as new opportunities for students to develop their own **startups**.

Building Up the Campus

Throughout the last decade, there was unprecedented structural growth and renovation. **40** new buildings, wings, floors, lobbies, auditoriums, classrooms and other facilities have elevated the architectural and human environment. **10** dedicated equipment and lab funds are keeping TAU at the cutting edge of science, and outdoor projects such as plazas and gardens are ensuring the preservation and enjoyment of TAU's open, green spaces.

Advancing Path-Defining Research

In a vote of confidence for the future of Israeli science, TAU's supporters founded **42** research centers and institutes, **5** schools and departments, and **83** research funds. Emphasis was also placed on nurturing the next generation of academic and industrial leaders with **35** new funds for master's, doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. Over the last 10 years, Campaign funding also supported the recruitment of **618** new faculty members, bringing the most talented researchers to TAU, countering brain drain, and increasing faculty diversity.

Connecting the University with the Community

From free legal clinics for refugees to "University Days" for visiting schoolchildren, and from hospital partnerships to startup accelerators, TAU harnessed the Global Campaign to expand ties with the wider community. The University's program to embed social activism into the curriculum, "TAU Impact," holds **80** workshops for social engagement in collaboration with over **100** NGOs and other institutional partners, and TAU students volunteer **65,000** hours of community service each year.

TAU Global Campaign
Thanks a Billion!
Big Ideas Made Real

Colton Center and Hospitals Will Tackle Autoimmune Diseases

Autoimmune diseases include over 100 illnesses and conditions, among them lupus, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease and psoriasis. Now, to better understand this class of diseases, TAU has established Israel's first multidisciplinary framework – the new Colton Center for Autoimmunity – to deepen understanding of causes and to develop improved early diagnostics and treatments. The Center, directed by Prof. Uri Nevo of TAU's Fleischman Faculty of Engineering, will collaborate with Israel's medical centers and health services, as well as selected scientists from other academic institutions, to enable big data analytics of medical

Stewart and Judith Colton

information and biological samples from patients. The data will help clarify the reasons for the onset and recurrent flareups of autoimmune diseases. Multidisciplinary research teams will bring together scientists from medicine, computer science, engineering, biology, statistics, mathematics and psychology.

The Center's establishment was enabled by a generous donation from TAU Governors Judith and Stewart Colton, who have been supporting TAU for almost four decades. It is the fourth such center founded by the Colton family, joining three autoimmune centers already operating in the USA – at Yale University, University of Pennsylvania and NYU. In addition to its multidisciplinary clinical research, the new Center will encourage experimental and theoretical studies in immunology and conduct workshops and conferences jointly with the other Colton Centers.

TAU President Prof. Ariel Porat (left) and TAU Honorary Doctor and Governor Sir Frank Lowy

Launching the Lowy International School

TAU held an event to honor benefactor and friend Sir Frank Lowy and his late wife Shirley Lowy

Governors and friends of TAU, along with top University officials, were among the guests at an elegant dinner marking Sir Frank Lowy's generous gift to the newly-named LOWY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL Dedicated to the Memory of Shirley Lowy. The night's presentations showcased the impact Lowy's contribution will have on the University's international students and global presence.

TAU President Prof. Ariel Porat and Lowy himself spoke about Lowy's eventful life, his decades-long friendship with TAU and Israel, and the special bond shared between him and his beloved late wife, Shirley. Porat explained how Lowy, a Holocaust survivor, built one of the largest businesses in Australia with his family, and how his love for Israel drove him to fund several important causes including TAU's Center for Combating Pandemics.

Lowy told the story of how Shirley wished to study all her life and how, at 45, she finally attended university and got a degree in anthropology. Shirley believed wholeheartedly in the importance of education. "I hope to make sure that the memory of my late wife will be kept alive, and here it will be *l'olam tamid* ('forever and ever')," said Lowy.

At the end of the night, attendees were treated to a musical performance of classic Israeli songs by students of TAU's Buchmann School of Music. Lowy was also gifted a shirt signed by dozens of Lowy International School students to remind him of all the lives he is touching from around the world every day.

Beautiful Plaza Honors Vicky and Joseph Safra Family

TAU recently unveiled the Vicky and Joseph Safra Lobby & Entrance Plaza, the flagship facility of the new Lorry Lokey Building at the Coller School of Management. This expansive plaza serves as the building's primary entrance and is traversed by thousands of students, faculty, and industry professionals daily. It comprises 260 square meters of indoor space featuring an eye-catching spiral staircase that leads to the upper floors, as well as an 800 square meter outdoor area. Situated in a highly visible, prominent location, the Lobby & Entrance Plaza also serves as a busy pedestrian passageway connecting between the campus entrance and the centrally-located Jacob and Shoshana Schreiber Square on the one side, and Music, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Law, on the other.

2023 Board of Governors: Projects

- Irving and Joyce Abramowitz Family Chair in Business Policy and Ethics
- The Human Embrace: Cohn Program for Israeli-Arab Inclusion in the Humanities
- Coller Terrace
- Institute for Integrative Psychedelics Research Founded by Jeremy Coller, David B. Katzin, MD-PhD, and Dr. Dmitry Repin
- Colton Center for Autoimmunity
- Irwin Cotler Institute – Democracy • Human Rights • Justice
- Dan Launchpad for Startups
- Elia Family Eye Research Fund
- Helen and Stanley Grosman Place Donated by Rita and Harry Perelberg
- Naomi Prawer Kadar MD-PhD Research Fellowships
- Walter Kastelan Periphery Scholarship Fund
- Peter Kraus, MD, Nanomedicine Floor
- Sally and Ben Nemenyi Auditorium

Dan Launchpad: Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship

TAU ranks 7th in the world – and first outside the United States – for producing successful, VC-backed company founders. As part of its drive to cultivate the next generation, TAU has set up a campus-wide entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem that spans activities ranging from academic classes and experiential learning to venture capital investments. Now, thanks to a generous donation by Swiss entrepreneur and philanthropist Dan Holzmann, TAU is further expanding these activities to boost startup initiatives that are initiated by its students as well as by young TAU alumni. The Dan Launchpad will provide support to selected high-potential ventures, offering them a comprehensive range of services.

"The Dan Launchpad provides the missing link in TAU's current ecosystem," says its Head, Prof. Moshe Zviran, who is also TAU's Chief Entrepreneurship and Innovation Officer and former Dean of the Coller School of Management. "Within 4 years, the Launchpad is expected to support 30 initiatives annually, enabling start-up founders to engage with business development specialists, mentors, investors and industry stakeholders – ultimately aiding the transition from early-stage to venture-funded projects."

"The Launchpad goes beyond classic startup acceleration," says its Executive Director, Dr. Eyal Benjamin. "It will allow each team to reach its full potential by customizing the support needed, offering state-of-the-art venture development methods, and providing mentoring by a broad network of industry veterans."

Wide Therapy, a child guidance app founded in 2021 by TAU business students alumni Roni Singler and Rinat Hitelman, is one of the first ventures that has been admitted to the Dan Launchpad. "We are lucky," says Roni, the startup's CEO. "The unique support and facilitation we are receiving is perfectly matched with our needs."

Mr. Fred Chaoul

> ***My philanthropy isn't just about money. It's about empowering people and society for the benefit of the greater good.***

Sharing Success to Promote Success

Fred "Mr. Nano" Chaoul explains why he supports TAU among his global philanthropic causes

By Julie Steigerwald-Levi

TAU Governor and Honorary Doctor Mr. Fred Chaoul's legacy of philanthropy began decades ago as one of the world's foremost leather manufacturers, and it persists today, after his retirement. He is a longstanding benefactor of Jewish organizations in Argentina and Israel. The Argentina-based company he founded, FONSECA, was also well-known for its local social responsibility programs.

For more than 30 years, Mr. Chaoul's generous support of TAU & the University's Argentinean Friends has provided a significant boost to Israeli academia, science, and technology. His longtime involvement at TAU includes serving as a TAU Global

Campaign Cabinet Member. As an early champion of nanoscience, his continued support for the discipline has played a central role in TAU's vision of forging a world-leading nano-research hub in Israel.

TAU Review spoke to Mr. Chaoul about his connection to TAU and Israel and his long-held passion for giving back.

How do Israel and philanthropy play a role in your life?

My relationship with Israel began after my parents and I escaped from my birthplace, Bulgaria, during World War II and the Holocaust. We fled through Turkey and Cyprus before arriving to pre-state Israel. After living in Israel and Europe, I eventually settled in Argentina where I first became involved in fundraising for Israel through Keren Hayesod in Buenos Aires. My next step was that I really wanted to do something to support education in Israel and Argentina.

You are now known as 'Mr. Nano' here on campus. How and why did you become involved with TAU?

As soon as I learned about Tel Aviv University, I immediately funded student scholarships. From there, my support grew to research in life sciences, engineering, and nanoscience. For one project, I backed the Marko and Lucie Chaoul Chair in Nano-Photonics, in honor of my parents.

Additionally, around the 1990s and early 2000s, it became apparent that there was an issue of "brain drain," or retaining Israeli faculty who faced more lucrative job offers outside the country. I met with some researchers affected by the matter and contributed to a fundraising campaign for competitive fellowships in the life sciences to encourage local talent to take faculty positions at TAU instead of at top institutions abroad, like Harvard or Yale.

In what led to my flagship project at the University, former TAU President Itamar Rabinovich introduced me to the discipline of nanoscience. I met with researchers in the field and was very interested in creating a center to advance what I saw as a burgeoning field that could revolutionize science and technology. My support for nano through the years has included the gift that established the Chaoul Center for Nanoscale Materials and Systems in 2006. Going forward, I'm certain the contributions of the Center and nano research at TAU will improve lives, with applications for everything from medicine to clean fuels.

An early champion of nanoscience, Fred Chaol's continued support for the discipline has played a central role in TAU's vision of forging a leading nano-research hub in Israel.

What is unique about TAU that motivates your support?

Throughout my decades of involvement at TAU, I've always had a special connection with the professors. I'm drawn to the research and feel in my element when discussing their work and envisioning the potential.

My children, Marcela and Alejandro Chaoul, recently became Board members along with my wife's children Marisa and Alex Gandsas. We hope to see them continue supporting the next generation of TAU students and faculty. They are already getting involved: my son joined me at the last Governors' meeting. He has a PhD in Far Eastern Religion and Philosophy and is a scholarly thinker, and we had warm and meaningful encounters with a number of professors. He and I now share the same sense of closeness with them.

How does your support for TAU fit into your broader philanthropic vision?

My philanthropy for the Jewish community was instilled in me by my father, for whom it was very important. If someone comes to me and says, 'I'm not doing well,' I want to try to help him. My philanthropy isn't just about money. It's about empowering people and society for the benefit of the greater good.

In Argentina especially, there are large economic gaps between the rich and poor. My support, here and in Israel, is largely based on the principle of sharing success and lending a helping hand to those in need.

For instance, at one point when I was running FONSECA, we had about 1,000 workers in our factory—many of whom were illiterate. My daughter Marcela was working with me at the time and, upon her suggestion, we built a school within the factory so the workers could create more opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities.

In Argentina, I support the community in many ways including through senior homes, synagogues, community centers, and education. This ties into my overall philosophy of philanthropy, which is aimed at strengthening the local fiber of society and global Jewry.

Merav Lebel Vine

Saving Endangered Species, One Plant at a Time

TAU PhD candidate and Winnikow Fellow Merav Lebel Vine dedicates her life to conserving Israel's native flora

By Ruth Fertig

Israeli population growth, climate change and urban development are shrinking habitats for local plants and animals. At the same time, conservation efforts of researchers, nature park workers, farmers, and concerned citizens aim to preserve plant biodiversity and endangered plant species.

One such researcher is Merav Lebel Vine, a PhD candidate in Dr. Yuval Sapir's lab at Tel Aviv University's School of Plant Sciences and Food Security, Wise Faculty of Life Sciences. Lebel Vine is a passionate conservationist. Her research focuses on reintroducing endangered native plants to new habitats in the hope of keeping them from going extinct as their natural habitats are overtaken by urban sprawl, agriculture, and the effects of global warming.

"There are very few natural sites left," she says. "Plants that are at risk for extinction are coming closer to the brink, and those that are native to Israel simply don't exist anywhere else."

Lebel Vine's research is partially supported by the Silvia Winnikow Fellowship Fund for Environmental Research, allocated through TAU's Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences as part of PlanNet Zero, its Climate Crisis Initiative. The Fellowship is awarded each year to graduate degree-level students who are advancing climate change solutions, especially those that could affect Israel's future.

The Efforts of Many

In speaking on her work, Lebel Vine highlights how much conservation relies on collaboration. She is able to do her reintroduction research thanks to local farmers and the youth village Hakfar Hayarok who dedicate areas of their properties to her endangered plants for growth and observation. Her lab receives seeds from the Israeli Gene Bank, and much of her plant mapping data comes from non-professionals who simply care enough to look for endangered plants and report findings in their free time.

One of the most important resources helping to advance this conservation work is grants and scholarships such as the Winnikow Fellowship. The research funded by the Fellowship is crucial at this moment considering the rapidly-growing effects of climate change.

"When I first started in this field, climate change was only beginning to enter the discussion," says Lebel Vine. "Now, it is an inevitability." Her reintroduction efforts require not only finding undeveloped land, but trying to predict which habitats will become inhospitable in the near and distant future because of rising temperatures.

Women Sustaining Women

The Sylvia Winnikow Fellowship Fund for Environmental Research was inaugurated by Australian donors Peter Smaller and his wife Elaine in 2008 in honor of Peter's mother, Sylvia Smaller-Winnikow, in cooperation with KKL-JNF.

Says Peter Smaller, "Sylvia Smaller became a member of the TAU Board of Governors when she made *aliyah* from Cape Town in 1976. She was a great Zionist, having first visited Israel in 1951. Elaine and I decided to honor her passion for the University, in her lifetime, by creating the Fellowship Fund for Environmental Research in her name. We delight in meeting the recipients on our visits to the University."

Lebel Vine says, "Unfortunately, I can't just be a student—I work at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and I have two children and a home to manage, so this fellowship helps me dedicate more time to my research."

Lebel Vine plans to continue working in conservation for as long as she can. She says that though the work is becoming ever more difficult, biodiversity is important in and of itself. "Without all the different plant life we have, the world would be a less interesting and lonelier place."

Introducing the Student Success Center

Student services get a welcome refresh

By Elianna Bar-El

Until today, TAU's Student Services Division has been dedicated to providing students with a vital range of services including financial aid, academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring, career guidance, and psychological support. With our increasingly networked world and today's expectations of a more seamless and hands-on experience when seeking services, TAU is reinventing the Division as a much broader and expanded Student Success Center.

Prof. Drorit Neumann getting to know some of her TAU students

Israeli students have unique challenges that are atypical to their counterparts in, for example, America and Europe. In particular, Israeli students tend to begin their higher education studies 4-6 years later than other university students around the world because of the compulsory army service that starts at age 18. Added to this delay to their career trajectory are a number of responsibilities that students, now in their early-to-mid 20s, must assume, such as holding down 1-2 jobs to pay for their tuition and living, or even to help support family. Many students also perform military reserve duty which affects their annual school schedules. For many, it's a challenging balancing act.

Prof. Drorit Neumann, who has been serving as Dean of the Student Success Center since October 2021, says the ultimate goal of the Center is to "enhance the student experience by providing a streamlined, holistic support framework, one that is not entirely focused on students in need, but more so on every student, in general. These are Israel's most precious resources – future leaders, educators, and innovators – and the Center is a conduit for ensuring everyone can successfully complete their degrees and pursue their professional dreams with as much support and guidance as possible," Neumann says.

TAU's entire student body of 30,000 students is eligible for assistance, with 8,000 students per year receiving need- or merit-based financial aid. Through the Student Success Center, 15,000 hours of tutoring are available to any student who needs it, including designated support for students doing army reserve duty and those with learning disabilities. Additionally, students have access to subsidized psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment hours.

The new Center is envisioned as a one-stop-shop for every aspect of the student campus experience – from before students even enroll through to graduation: Helping students choose their academic direction and study program; assistance in the admission process; identifying and supporting students with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders; facilitating academic and personal mentoring; offering career guidance and job placement services in cooperation with the faculties, and much more.

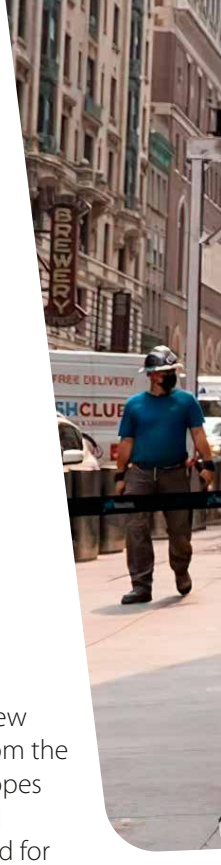
A key new feature is the Center's wide range of proactive student retention activities. The Center also operates a ground-breaking initiative that embeds social activism into the teaching curriculum, called TAU Impact.

"Our goal is to offer an accessible space for students. On the one hand, our Student Success Center provides a package of services. On the other, it empowers students to be socially-involved citizens in Israeli society with a thriving career. This is what success means to us," concludes Prof. Neumann.

The TAU Alumnus Super-Driving the Future

Mobileye CEO and trailblazing technologist Prof. Amnon Shashua sits down with *TAU Review* to discuss what fuels his work and philanthropy

By Julie Steigerwald-Levi



As an undergraduate at TAU in computer science and math, Prof. Amnon Shashua first cultivated his skills in the discipline of scientific thinking.

This approach to problem-solving was foundational to his subsequent academic career and meteoric rise as the CEO and founder of Mobileye. The driver-assist and autonomous-driving technology company is recognized as one of Israel's biggest high-tech success stories. Its $15.3 billion acquisition by Intel in 2017 remains the largest ever for an Israeli tech company.

Alongside Mobileye, Shashua helms several other businesses based on artificial intelligence (AI) technology, including OrCam, which develops 'smart' assistive devices for the visually impaired; Israel's first digital bank, One Zero; and AI21 Labs, which raised $64 million in 2022 to augment human writing with its AI systems for computer-generated text.

TAU Alumnus to Benefactor

Parallel to his zeal for advancing technology, Shashua is passionate about advancing society. To date, he and his family have donated about $60 million to philanthropic causes, including scholarships at TAU.

Together with his wife, Anat, and three grown children, Shashua seeks to promote economic opportunity and movement toward high-tech among Israel's underrepresented populations. These include the country's ultra-Orthodox, Israeli-Arabs, women in STEM, and periphery communities.

"The biggest challenge we have worldwide, not just in Israel, is the widening wealth gap which threatens to cause social unrest and disorder," he says of the impetus behind his giving. "Scholarships at TAU are part of promoting the economic success of Israel—academia plays a very strong role in this success," he adds.

> ***Scholarships at TAU are part of promoting the economic success of Israel—academia plays a very strong role in this success.***

In another example of their philanthropic contributions, the Shashua family established a $35 million fund to aid some 2,000 new small businesses that suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Shashua hopes the so-called WE-19 program will further help even the playing field for new generations of entrepreneurs and innovators.

AI: Full Throttle Ahead

Sitting at the intersection of academia and the business world, Shashua has a prime vantage point when it comes to the future of AI.

"It's easy for a human to have common sense, but hard to program it into a machine," he explains. "Now it's starting to happen."

He sees three primary areas where AI is expected to make leaps and bounds in the next five years: pattern recognition and sensing, or understanding the world through sensors; decision-making that affects the actions of others; and natural-language understanding which uses advanced software to enable computers to comprehend and respond to human text or speech.

When it comes to sensing and decision-making, autonomous driving is one example of AI's progress.

Prof. Amnon Shashua with a vehicle from his driving-tech company Mobileye

> ***AI's ability to sense the world will change everything we know about mobility.***

"AI's ability to sense the world will change everything we know about mobility," Shashua says. "With autonomous vehicles, cars will become safer. There will be fewer cars on the roads, and lower costs in transporting people."

Scientist at the Core

Shashua explains that his businesses are an expansion of his work as a professor of computer science at Hebrew University.

"I thought it would be nice to build startups because then you can solve bigger problems at a larger scale than in academia," he says. "I never imagined it'd grow into something as big as it did."

While he wears many professional hats, Shashua maintains an underlying passion for research. "Even though I'm responsible for some 4,000 employees among all my businesses, I'm a scientist at my core," he says.

Shashua continues to teach, too. Once a week, he hosts his advanced degree students for sandwiches and research sessions at his Mobileye offices in Jerusalem. "Staying in academia keeps me sharp," he adds, smiling.

Mobileye, the driver-assist and autonomous-driving technology company, is recognized as one of Israel's biggest high-tech success stories.

Scholarly Foundations

From an early age, Shashua planned to pursue a scientific trajectory. "Becoming an entrepreneur surprised me," he explains.

Shashua grew up in the Tel Aviv area. In high school, he studied in a program for gifted students in computer science. His academic journey began at Tel Aviv University in 1982, a week after his discharge from the IDF's Armored Corps, where he'd recently served in the First Lebanon War.

"The tools I acquired through my math studies at the university really captivated me," says Shashua of his time at TAU.

He then earned a master's degree in computer science from the Weizmann Institute of Science and completed his PhD and postdoctoral training in fields related to brain and computational sciences at MIT.

For his pioneering contributions, Shashua has earned numerous accolades, most recently the 2023 Israel Lifetime Achievement Prize and the 2020 Dan David Prize headquartered at TAU.

For students aspiring to become innovators and entrepreneurs, he encourages them to "take the tough courses, take the long road, and enjoy the journey not just the destination."

Alumni Advisory Committee: Spotlight

Itay Goren, alumnus of TAU's Buchmann Faculty of Law and Berglas School of Economics, and of the Kellogg-Recanati International Executive MBA Program at TAU's Coller School of Management, serves as a member of the TAU Alumni Organization's Advisory Committee.

His company, Buligo Capital Partners, is an international real estate investment firm that went public in September 2021.

"I got into real estate investing through the Tel Aviv University Career Development Center during the third year of my undergraduate studies (in 2001!). It was a "placement for life" which obviously had a crucial impact on my career path. Besides that, the networking opportunities at TAU made all the difference. I was introduced to my company's cofounder, my partner and right-hand woman to this day, Rivka Kompel, by the alumni association of the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University because of my Kellogg-Recanati master's degree.

Equally important, I was also introduced to my two founding partners, Ilan Tamir and Eyal Shlimak, who supported me and helped me establish the company, through another Kellogg-Recanati program alum. Rivka, Ilan, and Eyal are pillars in my professional and private life, and meeting with them is thanks to my studies at Tel Aviv University."

Meet TAU Alumnus Asaf Shiloni

Asaf Shiloni is the CEO of Kadimastem and an alumnus of Tel Aviv University's Coller School of Management. He has more than 20 years of executive management experience in biotech/life sciences, a deep knowledge of the market, and an extensive background in stem cells, cell therapy, cytokines, immunology, immune therapy and cancer assays and therapies. Kadimastem is a clinical stage biotechnology company, with a unique platform for cell therapy that enables the production of off-the-shelf, cell-based products for the treatment of unmet medical needs.

Documentarist Yariv Mozer Presents New Take on Eichmann

Yariv Mozer, film director and alumnus of the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television at TAU's David and Yolanda Katz Faculty of the Arts, has sold his documentary, *The Devil's Confession: The Lost Eichmann Tapes*, to Amazon Prime.

During Mozer's film studies at TAU (2000-2004), he was exposed to the documentary The Specialist, Portrait of a Modern Criminal, which draws from 350 hours of rare footage recorded during the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. The trial also inspired the controversial book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem, Report on the Banality of Evil*, written by Hannah Arendt. Both the book and film offer a one-sided view of Eichmann, greatly minimizing the horrors he executed by portraying him as a simple clerk who simply obeyed the orders he was given. However, Mozer dug deeper, finding deep-seated counterpoints to this theory, spurring him to make his own documentary and bring pertinent information and awareness to the spotlight.

TAU Alumnae Continue to Break Glass Ceilings

This last summer, Col. Yael Grossman, alumna of TAU's Blavatnik School of Computer Science, Fleischman Faculty of Engineering and Constantiner School of Education, finished her assignment as commander of the IDF's Center of Computing and Information Systems, and was appointed commander of the Lotem Technology Division – in charge of defending the military's infrastructure from cyber attacks. Col. Grossman is the second woman to ever serve as commander of Lotem.

TAU Handover in Top Job at EL AL

Dina Ben Tal, alumna of Tel Aviv University's Coller School of Management, was appointed CEO of EL AL. She is the first woman in this position. Ben Tal replaced Avigal Soreq, alumnus of TAU's Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences and Coller School of Management, who left EL AL to become President and CEO of Delek US Holdings, Inc.

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The Dan David Prize Announces 2023 Recipients

The Dan David Prize, which was redesigned in 2021 to focus on historical disciplines, is the largest history prize in the world. The 2023 winners include nine emerging scholars and practitioners whose work illuminates the past in bold and creative ways. Each of the winners—who work in Kenya, Ireland, Denmark, Israel, Canada, and the United States—will receive $300,000 in recognition of their breakthrough achievements in the study of the past and to support their future endeavors. Among this year's recipients:

Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers is Chancellor's Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work focuses on women's economic and legal relationships to slavery in the transatlantic world.

A professor of European history at the University of Copenhagen, **Ana Antic** is a social and cultural historian whose research focuses on the relationship between politics, violence, and psychiatry in twentieth century Europe.

Chao Tayiana Maina is a public historian and founder of the non-profit organization, African Digital Heritage. She centers her work on African histories within digital spaces, using technology to unearth previously hidden historical narratives.

The Dan David Prize, endowed by the Dan David Foundation and headquartered at Tel Aviv University, was first established in 2001 by the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Dan David, to reward innovative and interdisciplinary work that contributes to humanity.

TAU's First MedTech Hackathon Gets Inventive

TAU's first competition for medical innovation, the MedTech Hackathon, was organized by four entrepreneurial students from medicine and engineering, and included 200 students who participated alongside 120 mentors and 30 judges from Israel's medical and high-tech spheres. TAU students from medicine, engineering, computer science, bioinformatics, neuroscience, and management worked together in 34 interdisciplinary teams for over 40 hours to come up with practical solutions to critical issues as defined by selected Israeli organizations and hospitals. Challenges included providing remote healthcare for the physically challenged, and making the operating room safer.

The prize-winning team "OReye" won for "Making the Operating Room Safer."

Israel's First Hypoxic Hotel for Athletes

The Sylvan Adams Sports Institute at Tel Aviv University has opened the first "hypoxic hotel" in the country. From the outside, it looks like a typical Tel Aviv boutique hotel, but once inside, it is anything but. Its unique environment simulates low oxygen levels at high-altitude conditions of up to 5,000 meters. Staying in the hotel stimulates the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen in the body, thereby improving the aerobic abilities of athletes. Exposure is said to improve performance for endurance athletes in the fields of running, cycling, swimming, climbing, and Iron Man competitions. For example, alpinists can prepare there for extreme treks like Everest, enabling their bodies to adapt to high-altitude conditions before leaving for their destination.

Three TAU Professors Win Israel Prize

Prof. Yoram Dinstein, President of TAU from 1991 to 1999, has won the 2023 Israel Prize for legal research. Prof. Dinstein was recognized as one of the founding fathers of the field of international law in Israel. He served as Rector of TAU from 1980 to 1985 and as Dean of the Buchmann Faculty of Law from 1978 to1980, among numerous other academic, national and international leadership roles.

Prof. Emanuel Peled of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Chemistry has won the 2023 Israel Prize for chemistry research. He was recognized for his pioneering work in lithium batteries and fuel cells that has influenced the energy field all over the world. Among his many distinctions, Prof. Peled is the recipient of the Israel Chemical Society Outstanding Scientist Award for 2016 and a Fellow of the International Society of Electrochemistry.

Prof. Avital Gasith of the School of Zoology has won the 2023 Israel Prize for environmental sciences and sustainability research. The prize was awarded for his pioneering work in the protection of nature in Israel, especially freshwater aquatic systems, and his active civic involvement in promoting conservation. He was former Head of the Environmental Studies Master's Program at the Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences.

TAU Art Gallery Opens Two Shows

The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery at TAU's David and Yolanda Katz Faculty of the Arts welcomes art connoisseurs to two new exhibits: "In the Mind's Eye" and "Drawing Art History."

In the Mind's Eye is based on a dialogue between artists and TAU researchers working in diverse fields such as neuroscience, psychology, zoology, astrophysics, and more.

In the Drawing Art History exhibit, the interplay of vision and cognition is examined through drawings made by art historians as a tool of academic research. Newly discovered drawings of the founder of art history in Israel, Moshe Barasch, are displayed here for the first time.

The new exhibits: "In the Mind's Eye" and "Drawing Art History"

Bioengineering Students Develop Healing Games

The University's groundbreaking community outreach program, TAU Impact, is designed to embed civic involvement in the University's teaching curriculum. In a TAU Impact course held for the second year with the Reut Rehabilitation Center, students from the Department of Biomedical Engineering set out to assist patients who suffered from strokes. The goal was to create interactive games to motivate the patients in their rehabilitation process. The Reut staff emphasized the need for technological tools that would improve stroke patients' fine motor function and skills. The students implemented the material learned in their engineering courses and the results were a success. The projects were developed and integrated by Reut into its occupational therapy treatments.

Students presenting their TAU Impact projects

Tel Aviv University Lay Leadership Worldwide

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Argentinean Friends of Tel Aviv University

AUSTRALIA
Clive Donner, President
Australian Friends of Tel Aviv University (WA)
Rosie Potaznik, President
Australian Friends of Tel Aviv University (Victoria)
Jenny Hillman, President
Australian Friends of Tel Aviv University
(New South Wales)

AUSTRIA
Dr. Bernhard Ramsauer, President
Austrian Friends of Tel Aviv University

BRAZIL
David Ades, President
Brazilian Friends of Tel Aviv University
Renée Cohen Zaide
Brazilian Friends of Tel Aviv University Rio de Janeiro
Dr. Mario Gurvitz Cardoni
Brazilian Friends of Tel Aviv University
Porto Alegre

CANADA
Ariela Cotler, National President
Tel Aviv University Canada
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Josh Cummings, Regional Chair
Ottawa, Quebec and Atlantic Canada

ECUADOR
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