State Association overlooked

By MARLENE HERMAN
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Martin Raffel’s column “Rutgers case demonstrates anti-Semitism is in the eye of the beholder” (Oct. 30) should have included references to the role that the state’s Jewish federations and the NJ State Association of Jewish Federations played in response not only to the 2011 event forming the basis of the ZOA complaint, but also to the recent opening of that case by the U.S. Department of Education.

The federations were right in the middle of the fray in 2011 with a presence and with promotional efforts that helped get our community members to the protest lines and standing together with Hillel and Rutgers University students the evening of the event.

During the pendency of the case, the federations and State Association participated in a number of conversations with several nationally prominent Jewish organizations to strategize a united approach to the events at Rutgers that evening and the ZOA complaint.

In addition, we had many conversations with then-Rutgers President Richard McCormick and his leadership team, which resulted in the formation of an Advisory Committee on Jewish Student Life that included federation representatives and members from Rutgers Hillel, Rutgers Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, and Rutgers Chabad.

The federations and State Association leadership have had several meetings with Rutgers President Robert Barchi and are involved in continuing discussions with his legal counsel, John Hoffman, to ensure that Rutgers remains a welcoming and safe place for not only Jewish students, but for all students.

President Barchi responded, following the tragic attack on congregants at the Tree of Life synagogue, to a State Association letter of appreciation for his comments, which speaks much of the ongoing relationship between Rutgers and the federations: “I remain committed to working closely with you and your colleagues on these difficult issues.”

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