

Office of the President

Prof. Uriel Reichman  
President and Founder



12 May 2019

Prof. Uriel Reichman

### Declaration of the Inception of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya

Yesterday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ceremony that took place at the "Beit Rishonim" garden, next to the old building of the Herzliya Municipality. A short time earlier I drafted the declaration of the inception of the Interdisciplinary Center. The original version of this declaration is hanging, since then, on the wall of the humble waiting room at the entrance to the shack, which has become my office since day one.

At the time of the declaration, the building and renovation work of the run-down army base has not begun, even though we were to open our gates and classrooms in the coming October. I was equipped with three limited assets: First, the permission to establish a law program without being entitled to grant an academic degree. Second, an agreement with the Herzliya Municipality to receive about 25 acres free of charge, an agreement that has been breached as it turned out the Municipality was not the owner of the property and did not have the right to execute its promise. Additionally, I was given the right to use a small office in front of the Municipal building, until recently used by the Herzliya Rabbinate. In this office we registered our first students, but the permission to use this place expired after two months.

I am sure that whomever heard me read out the declaration on that day, even if they had been willing to give me the benefit of the doubt, as someone that has lost touch with reality, was finally convinced that, at best, I was a hallucinatory individual. And these are the declaration's opening words:

"On the day, May 11th, 1994, (1st of Sivan, 5754), we... hereby lay the foundations for a new university in Herzliya." Pay Attention! A university, no less. And it continues "A university which is founded on the "basis of humanity," as stated by Theodor Herzl..." in his book *Altneuland*. Indeed, the principles of humanity, which are an inherent part of the Jewish heritage and are emphasized in the original Zionist philosophy, go hand in hand with our moral conduct and the principles and values we nurture.

The declaration states the future university will "foster freedom of thought, research and personal fulfillment. A university that strives for interdisciplinary training, nurtures scientific and professional excellence, and bestows on its students a broad cultural background and the vision of an international horizon." Indeed, the freedom of thought and personal fulfillment, the Interdisciplinary training and the vision of an international horizon – all form the foundation of our teaching goals.

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya

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We asserted that we are establishing "a university that is committed to the community in which it resides, and to its heritage, will be sensitive to social justice and help to enrich the pre-academic education system." About a thousand of our students volunteer in different activities within the city of Herzliya, helping the needy and teaching at various schools around the city. At the IDC we have several special programs such as the Rabin Social Leadership Program, the Keren Or Program, the Israel@heart leadership program for IDC students from the Ethiopian community and more. Despite the difficulties of a not-publicly funded institution, we provide our students with relatively more scholarships than any other institution in Israel.

The declaration ends with these words: "We hereby declare the inauguration of the Interdisciplinary Center, with the belief that this is the foundation of a house of study, research and education for residents of Israel, the region and for young Diaspora Jews." I already believed then that we will establish an international program based on our Zionist views. Many predicted the International School will be a failure. However, Oudi Recanati believed in the program and together we founded the Raphael Recanati International School, the institution with the highest number of international students studying for a full academic degree in Israel.

One objective has yet to be entirely fulfilled. We called for the future university to "contribute to allaying hostilities in the Middle East by bringing together students of all faiths from across the region and the world, underscore its goals of development and freedom of movement in the cradle of civilization through its teachings and research, and strive to fulfill the values of peace, freedom and dignity." A few days prior to the declaration of the inception of the Interdisciplinary Center, on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1994, the Cairo Agreement was concluded between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, witnessed by the United States, Russia and Egypt. The agreement's objective was to implement the Oslo Process and it provided for a partial withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. The Israel-Jordan peace treaty was signed with the opening of the academic year, on October 1994. These were days of hope. Despite the terrorist attacks that took place then, and with even greater vigor after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin about a year later, and in face of the ongoing cycle of violence – the values of peace, freedom and dignity must continue to guide us. Out of devotion to our mission we are currently building an academic center in Pafos, Cyprus, which will be a place where the future leadership of the Middle East, of all faiths and nationalities, could meet and learn together.

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Realizing the Interdisciplinary Center's vision has been very difficult. There were moments in which I felt as if all of the Israeli Bureaucracy and their legal advisors were against us. It was a tough road, very tough, and we have yet to overcome all our challenges. We managed to stand through our struggles thanks to the support of the first generations of students, their partnership and their faith in our journey. We have succeeded thanks to the first group of professors and lecturers, who believed in our vision, gave up their academic tenure and became an integral part of the pioneering work that changed the face of higher education in Israel. In addition to the above – our friends were the ones to donate and encourage us in the most difficult times.

25 years ago we dared to shape our vision and set our goals. We have achieved most of them and the rest will be achieved soon. Since then we have continued to formulate our outlook and redefine our goals. May the ability to dream and realize these dreams, to act out of loyalty to our academic values, out of our responsibility to educate the future leadership and to protect the existence and the values of the Israeli society - all continue to lead the way of the Interdisciplinary Center for the next 25 years.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "U. Reichman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Uriel Reichman