



2025 JELF Alumni Engagement Update

Why we built JELF's Alumni Engagement role

This year, we took a hard look at our alumni universe and the opportunity in front of us. JELF currently has **1,349** active alumni—a powerful community of people whose lives were directly shaped by JELF's interest-free loans when it mattered most. But the data makes one thing clear: alumni philanthropy is still far from fully activated, and growing it will require intentional, sustained relationship-building.

Across all active alumni:

- 353 alumni are current or recent past donors (about 26% of the alumni file)
- 996 are not yet donors (about 74%)

That gap is exactly why this new alumni position matters: it's the bridge between “we helped you once” and “you now want to pay it forward.”

2025 Highlights:

1) Alumni giving in 2025 was meaningful — but still leaves runway to grow

- 110 alumni made a gift
- Alumni gave a total of \$125,480
- The median 2025 alumni gift was \$360
- The average 2025 alumni gift was \$1,141 (pulled upward by a smaller number of larger gifts)

What this tells us: Alumni giving is real and valuable already—but it's concentrated among a relatively small group. With a dedicated alumni staff position, we can expand participation and deepen consistency.

2) We gained new alumni donors — and also saw an unfortunate lapse

- 19 alumni gave for the first time (new donors)
- 68 alumni lapsed (they gave in 2023 and/or 2024 but not in 2025)
- Among alumni who gave in 2024, about 68% also gave in 2025 (retention)

What we can conclude from this: The “lapsed” number is a huge opportunity. People who gave recently are the most cost-effective group to renew—and a dedicated alumni position allows for structured outreach, stewardship, and follow-through so we aren’t constantly rebuilding the same donor base.

3) New donors in 2025 skewed toward more recent graduates

Among the 19 new 2025 donors, we looked at loan years as a proxy for “graduation/loan era.” Most new donors came from the 2010s:

- 10 of 19 new donors were from the 2010–2019 loan-era cohort
- The remaining new donors spanned the 1990s and 2000s

What this tells us: Even young professional’s—often the hardest segment to convert—are responsive. With the right cultivation, messaging, and consistency, there’s clear growth potential amongst this alumni group.

4) The strongest driver of alumni giving is “time since payoff”

This is the single most important segmentation insight we learned this year.

Across the alumni file, giving propensity increases dramatically the longer someone has been paid in full. Donor participation rises from single digits among newly paid-off alumni to nearly half among the longest-paid-off cohorts.

Donor rate by “years since payoff” (payoff year known):

- 1–5 years: ~8%
- 6–10 years: ~25%
- 11–15 years: ~35%
- 16–20 years: ~36%

- 21–30 years: ~35%
- 31+ years: ~47%

And when we look at 2025 giving specifically, the same pattern holds:

- 31+ years since payoff: ~20% gave in 2025
- 1–5 years since payoff: ~4% gave in 2025

Conclusion: Alumni giving is not random. It follows a predictable lifecycle, also predicated on JELF doing proper stewardship. A dedicated alumni position lets us build a strategy aligned to that lifecycle rather than relying on broad, generic asks.

5) Age also correlates with giving — and helps us focus limited outreach time

Among alumni with birthdate data, 2025 giving participation begins to increase notably in older age bands, especially around 60+.

- Median age of 2025 alumni donors: 56
- The 60–64 age band had one of the strongest participation rates (~22%)

Why this matters: This role can focus time where participation is most likely—while also building cultivation strategies for younger alumni that will pay off over time.

What your support will enable next:

This year’s data gives us a clear roadmap, and the new alumni position makes it executable.

With dedicated alumni staffing, we can:

1. Prevent avoidable lapse
 - Prioritize the 68 lapsed alumni donors with tailored re-engagement
 - Build consistent stewardship so retention improves year-over-year
2. Grow the alumni donor base intentionally
 - Convert non-donors through a sequenced approach (not one-time blasts)
 - Expand first-time giving beyond the 19 new donors gained this year

3. Build a lifecycle-driven alumni strategy
 - Segment outreach by time since payoff and age
 - Align tone and ask levels to where someone is in their journey
4. Strengthen community and connection
 - Increase alumni engagement touchpoints that aren't only transactional asks
 - Create repeatable systems for communications, volunteer pathways, and giving

Hiring Update:

We're actively moving the hiring process forward and plan to hire a new employee in 2026. The team is currently interviewing **three strong candidates**, all of whom have advanced to **Round 2** interviews. We'll continue to keep you posted as the process progresses and look forward to sharing an update once we're closer to a final decision.

2025 Summary:

In 2025 we saw clear evidence that alumni giving can grow—and that without dedicated staffing we're leaving dollars (and relationships) on the table.

- 110 alumni donors gave \$125,480 in 2025
 - 2024: 117 donors (\$91,481)
 - 2023: 121 donors (\$97,426)
 - 2022: 118 donors (\$81,928)
- We acquired 19 new alumni donors (but had 68 recent alumni donors lapsed)
- Strongest predictors of giving are years since payoff and age

This new alumni position is designed to translate those insights into sustained growth: improving retention, increasing participation, and building alumni into a long-term pillar of support for the next generation of Jewish students.