

FAITH & VALUES

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY WADE SPEES/STAFF

Jewish students, many wearing shirts with "The College of Charleston" in Hebrew, gather in front of the Jewish Studies Center at the college on a recent Wednesday evening for their weekly meet-to-eat event. They walked to the Mellow Mushroom restaurant on King Street.

In touch with JEWISH LIFE

Growing C of C program attracts students in city where Judaism has flourished for three centuries

BY JENNIFER BERRY HAWES
Of The Post and Courier Staff

On its face, the record-setting number of Jewish students attending the College of Charleston doesn't make sense.

The Holy City is, by far, a predominantly Christian town. Its Jewish community is fairly small. The city grapples with a history of slavery and ongoing racial disparities. It's home to only three synagogues and hardly makes it easy for anyone to keep kosher.

Yet, this year, 500 to 700 Jewish students are enrolled at the college, more than 5 percent of its overall student body and twice as many as five years ago.

It's partly because Charleston and its Jewish residents have enjoyed a graceful 300-year history of tolerance and mutual success. The city made it clear early on that Jews were welcome here. In turn, Charleston once was the home to the country's largest Jewish population and is the birthplace of Reform Judaism in America.

That's the setting for the college's



Citadel cadet Eric Mattoon (right) joins College of Charleston students, including Rachael Vosk (second from right), for the Jewish Student Union's weekly meet-to-eat event. More than 500 Jewish students are enrolled at the college this fall, spurring growth for the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program.

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