

The Dorothy de Rothschild Open University Campus

The Open University was founded in the early 1970s following a decision of the Government of Israel, and on the basis of a proposal by the Rothschild Foundation that also accepted responsibility for its establishment. It was decided to locate the University in Ramat Aviv, together with the Center for Educational Technology. As the University grew and developed, the site could no longer meet the institution's expanding needs. Temporary structures were added to overcome the shortage, increasing the overall area to about 8,000 m² of floor space and more space was rented outside of the Ramat Aviv campus. These measures provided only a partial solution to the space shortage. The growth of the University, its expansion in personnel and equipment, and increasing new needs created pressure to seek a fundamental and comprehensive solution within the confines of a single campus.

For 13 years, the University faced severe obstacles in its attempt to obtain a permit for construction and expansion in Ramat Aviv. Ultimately, it was decided to seek an alternative that would provide ample space and also meet the University's future growth needs. Following an extensive appraisal, the city of Raanana was selected to house the University campus and at the end of 1995 an agreement was signed with the Raanana municipality.

The Open University attaches special importance to the aesthetics of the area. Ada Karmi-Melamede, one of Israel's foremost architects, was chosen to design the new campus. It is an architectural work of art, with a green, lush garden that crosses the entire campus, providing an internal cityscape and landscape in the heart of the residential area in which it is located.

The Dorothy de Rothschild Open University campus, with a total area of 54 dunams, is planned to meet the University's needs for decades to come. Twelve buildings can be built on the campus, providing a total area of 70,000 m². The campus will be built in stages according to changing needs. Four buildings were built in the first stage: the Academic building, the Plaza building, the Technologies building and the Library. The buildings, on 7 dunams with about 42,000 m² of floor space, include offices, a library, two large lecture halls, classrooms and laboratories, as well as an energy center, a warehouse, a work area and service tunnels, two cafeterias, a visitors' center, broadcast studios, a synagogue and a fitness center. The University moved to these buildings, at the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year. The remaining area includes a parking lot, access roads and an impressive university botanical garden.

The Open University invested significant efforts to prevent ecological damage to the surrounding environment, and to minimize inconvenience to the residents of the area. The campus will operate on electricity rather than on diesel oil. Its buildings will block the traffic noise of the near-by highway from reaching the residents of the area, and the University parking lots, located on the eastern side of the campus, are adjacent to the highway and away from the residential neighborhood. On its part, the Raanana municipality built a service road to the east of the campus, enabling motor access to and from the highway. Since most campus activities take place during the day, traffic to and from the campus is the reverse of the residents' travel direction both in the morning and in the evening.



The Open University and the Raanana municipality share the belief that the University's new home in Raanana will benefit the city's residents, will contribute to reinforcing the city's image as a university town with high quality education, and will enrich the city's cultural life.

The University was happy to agree to the municipality's request to collaborate with the local education system in developing novel initiatives for the benefit of the city's pupils and teachers. We are already involved in such activities in many schools across the country, including those in Raanana. The University's sophisticated computerized library and the synagogue, both located on the Dorothy de Rothschild campus, will be open to Raanana residents and the University will serve as a potential employer for academics, computer and technology personnel, graphic designers, administrative personnel and others residing in the city.

The move to Raanana

The move of the warehouse and distribution center from Herzlia to Raanana in March spearheaded the project; the units in Ramat Aviv and Afeka moved in September. Overall, the move of the University to its new campus in Raanana was completed successfully, despite the difficulties, and we are currently experiencing a period of acclimatization which involves various adjustments and changes.

Preparations for the move

Preparations for the move to Raanana took place simultaneously with the completion of the first stage of construction of the new campus. Over many weeks, this complex project demanded considerable efforts on the part of some of the staff, in addition to their regular responsibilities. A task force was established which was responsible for planning and executing the move according to the directives of the Steering Committee. In addition, a forum including one representative from each university department and unit was created to coordinate the activities of the task force with each department.

In preparation for the move, a meeting was held with all Open University department heads and the architect, who presented her design concept, and with an organizational consultant who discussed the effects of organizational change and relocation on employees and on the entire system. Discussions were also held with department heads to identify needs stemming from the move and the specific problems of the various units, and to examine expected changes in each department. Measures were also taken to help employees deal with the change on a personal level. To

execute the move, the university contracted a mover, a firm responsible for transferring the computer infrastructure, a specialist in packing, and a company to assist in disconnecting the hundreds of personal computers and installing them in Raanana.

Technological infrastructure on the new campus

Constructing the technological infrastructure on the new Raanana campus required a concerted effort by all involved, particularly as the moving date approached. On one hand, the infrastructure had to be prepared so as not to interfere with the work when we moved, and on the other hand, we needed to continue to maintain the infrastructure in Ramat Aviv to ensure ongoing work as long as the site continued to operate.

The design of the new network in Raanana took into consideration the system's capacity to grow along with the Open University in the years to come, and the ability to integrate future technological components (an IP-based telephone network, more extensive wireless communication, secure video transmission, etc.) and to implement an up-to-date security scheme, as well as advanced network management capabilities. New servers were purchased to replace servers that were not worth transferring and some of the communication lines were upgraded to support the volume of communication traffic at the new site.

Coping with change

In the months preceding the move, the University took preparatory measures on all levels: employee, department, management and overall system. Activities addressing means of coping with the upcoming change were held: general seminars, individual work with department heads and employees; and the appointment of a contact person to handle employee inquiries. Meetings were held with employees to answer all questions and concerns related to the move and to convey the complexity of the project and the expected difficulties. Human resource aspects were addressed through meetings and guidance for those university units with specific and complex problems, such as the library.

The issue of public transportation to and from the campus was of great concern to employees. To answer this concern, meetings were held with managers of the Egged and Dan bus companies and with the Train Authority. A team was set up to examine improved bus routes and frequency that included representatives of Egged, the Raanana municipality and the Open University. One of the solutions found is a privately-run bus service that collects employees from various locations in Tel Aviv and transports them to and from Raanana.

