

Getting back to the dream

IDC leadership program to teach principles of liberal democracy, political Zionism

• By BEN HARTMAN

A program at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, will bring together 25 of the country's best and brightest students in August in an effort to train the next generation of leaders in the principles of liberal democracy and the ideas that constitute the foundation of the state.

The Tikvah Program in Political Leadership at the IDC's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy will provide the 25 university students with room, board and a \$2,000 stipend to spend the month in discussions with some of Israel's leading teachers and public intellectuals,

including Hebrew University professors Ruth Gavison and Yehezkel Dror, IDC Dean Amnon Rubinstein and Tel Aviv University professors Asa Kasher and Dan Ben-David. Tentative participants include former Supreme Court president Aharon Barak, King's College London professor Ephraim Karsh and Jewish Agency chairman Natan Sharansky.

The project is being supported by the Tikvah Fund in New York.

Program coordinator and IDC professor Alisa Rubin Peled told *The Jerusalem Post* on Tuesday that the project hopes to address a feeling that Israeli politicians have forsak-

en the vision of the state's founders.

"The basic idea behind the program is that it's obvious that we have a leadership problem in Israel, and our idea is that to change our system, you need to understand the political condition of Israel and the Jewish people," she said.

The program will "look at Jewish political thought and organization and the principles of the original Zionist thinkers," through an examination of the documents they wrote, said Rubin Peled, who heads the IDC's Argov Fellows Program in Leadership and Diplomacy.

"If we want to fix things, we need to look at what our big

ideas were. It doesn't seem like the politicians are thinking about the big ideas. We need to get back to these ideas, and figure out: What's our vision? What or who do we want to be? What does it mean to be a good citizen? We'll really be going back to the original big ideas," Rubin Peled said.

Students and professors will discuss the principles of liberal democracy and will examine in-depth one domestic policy issue and one foreign policy issue.

The foreign issue will be Israeli policies and the rules of warfare, a choice Rubin Peled said was made largely due to the UN's Goldstone Report on the 2009 Gaza War.

The domestic focus will be on the current economic policies in Israel, in particular the issues of privatization and market reforms, and an examination of social issues.

Rubin Peled said the domestic section will focus on the Arab and haredi sectors in depth, and will include the participation of Taub Center Director Prof. Ben-David, who has performed extensive research on the effect the education system has had and will continue to have on the national economy.

Even though the program has a focus on "Jewish-Zionist" ideals, Rubin Peled said it is open to all sectors of society, including the Orthodox and

Arabs. Organizers have received nominations for a number of Arab students, she said. Applications have been submitted for students in many different fields, and not just from political science students as they expected.

Stanford University professor Peter Berkowitz, co-director of the program, said it will seek to teach students the principles of liberal democracy and liberal education, while also discussing arguments made by those who question whether a state that defines itself as Jewish can be considered a democracy.

"One of the key aims of the program is to expose students to the controversy of how Israel

reconciles its Jewish character and its liberal character. We want very much to expose students to the different issues and to examine both the arguments in favor and both the arguments that are critical," he said.

An understanding of the arguments against a policy or a system is essential to understanding the system itself, Berkowitz said.

While the organizers of the Tikvah Program "believe in liberal education and believe that yes, Israel is a liberal democratic and Jewish state," they feel it is important to show students all sides of the argument for and against the Jewish state as a democratic state, he said.

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