

October 2021

Dear Admissions Officer,

I am well aware that this your “busy season,” with thousands of young people seeking admission to your institution of higher education. You will likely receive several applications referencing a “BBYO experience” and, as BBYO’s CEO, I want to share with you what that means as it relates to the applicants you are considering.

BBYO is a faith-based movement of tens of thousands of Jewish teens from over 60 countries. Through BBYO, teens gain leadership skills as they focus on projects that strengthen communities, help people in need, and promote individual learning and growth. We use a leadership model rooted in “experiential democracy,” where members gain skills in planning, diplomacy, and problem solving. While teens are guided by caring adults, they are very much in control of their own destiny and learn about success and failure in a way that builds character and confidence.

This year more than ever, BBYO focused its training on “problem solving through dialogue.” It is clear that our society needs leaders who are willing to listen to each other if they are going to be able to address the major challenges facing the next generation. BBYO teens are trained to proactively solve problems—rather than waiting for others to do so for them—through curiosity, collaboration, and understanding.

I believe this approach will serve college campuses well. Higher education is where new ideas are born, and understanding is fostered. Building communities that are tolerant, caring, and inquisitive are critical for this to occur; these are the very values of BBYO and represent why I think our participants will be invaluable members of your campus community.

Like BBYO, I am sure you are preparing to address the mental health crisis that is playing out among young people, one that has only been exacerbated since the pandemic began. To address this, BBYO teen leaders launched a Mental Health Task Force to raise awareness, break stigmas, and offer peer counseling to empower teens to support one another. One of the great quotes I received from a teen, which I think represents the feelings and approach of so many others in BBYO, reads:

“One year ago, I was drowning in my anxiety. BBYO was my saving grace, the place I was understood and accepted. Now I’m taking it upon myself to pay it forward and create that place where any teen facing a mental health challenge can be understood, accepted, and supported.”
—Lior K., BBYO teen leader

Thank you for taking the time to better understand BBYO and its participants. While I certainly can’t vouch for every applicant you review, I can say with confidence that a BBYO leader is the kind of student you want on your campus. Should you have any questions about BBYO or about a specific applicant, please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-857-6580 or mgrossman@bbyo.org.

Sincerely,



Matthew Grossman
Chief Executive Officer