Kibbutzim College partners with NY college

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03/06/2013

Private liberal arts college in Staten Island joins ranks with Tel Aviv college sharing philosophy of civic engagement.

Kibbutzim College of Education in Tel Aviv recently signed a partnership agreement with Wagner College, a private liberal arts institution located in Staten Island, New York.

A member of of Kibbutzim College’s advisory board initiated the relationship between the two institutions, Kibbutzim College President Zipi Libman told The Jerusalem Post last week.

"He came to me and said, ‘I know your twin college and its president is my friend,’” Libman said. "I knew it’s not a huge college and I knew it was very good for us: We wanted a college which shared our mission and was similar to us in size."

Wagner College has approximately 2,400 students.

Kibbutzim College, located in north Tel Aviv’s Ramat Aviv neighborhood, has approximately 3,300 degree students and 2,200 certificate studies students.

Wagner College President Richard Guarasci, who was visiting Israel with other representatives of the school last week, said his first meeting with Libman in New York City a few months ago was an immediate success.

"It was like meeting your cousin, and you both loved all the same relatives,” he said.

Libman and Guarasci said their institutions shared the same philosophy, which mostly revolves around innovative teaching methods and a central civic element of student involvement with the local community.

Kibbutzim College students are required to complete community service as part of their degree. Wagner, which has some 2,200 students, incorporates hands-on fieldwork involving the diverse New York City population in its various curriculums.

“Both these schools do cutting-edge work, they are joyful but serious places, they are not just destination schools,” Guarasci told the Post. “There is so much symmetry here.”

Kibbutzim and Wagner’s partnership is expected to include significant research collaboration, a book launch, common seminars on various issues and student interactions first via Skype and, later, through exchange programs.

“I think we can learn from Wagner College’s many years of experience and from the many years that they are
involved in community work, as they are older than us,” Libman said. “We strongly believe in cooperation and learning from each other.”

“What I’d love to take from here is the kibbutz heritage,” Guarasci said. “This commitment to humanism, to passion and that whole legacy of building a state is very real here.”

He said he hoped the collaboration would help “strengthen and deepen best practices” and increase students’ “cultural and international competence.”