FROM THE FRONT

Professors laud frank findings

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sions process, a lack of political diversity and grade inflation. It lists 20 recommendations, including reforming financial aid policies, setting public standards for admissions, streamlining bureaucracy and setting a 3.0 mean grade-point average for Yale College.

"This is a serious and admirably honest report, one that the administration and the broader university community need to engage carefully and searchingly," English professor Jonathan Kramnick wrote in a text message to the News. "Its core insight strikes me as exactly right: that restoring public trust depends above all on recommitting to what universities do best, which is to create and share knowledge through rigorous teaching, scholarship, and open intellectual exchange."

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JONATHAN KRAMNICK, ENGLISH PROFESSOR

Mór Szepesi '27, the president of the Yale Political Union, said in a Wednesday phone interview that he has been "following President McInnis' initiatives around ensuring free expression sand free speech." He said that he was "overall pleased" with the committee's report.

Other faculty members generally praised what they described as the report's honest and thoughtful nature.

Political science professor Dan Mattingly '04 GRD '08 called the report "thoughtful and well-considered" and described its conclusions on the decline in public trust as "sobering."

"I think the recommendations should all be taken seriously, and I'm glad that President McInnis is doing so," he wrote in an email to the News.

History professor John Lewis Gaddis also praised the report's candor.

"I'm impressed," Gaddis wrote in an email to the News. "This report speaks straightforwardly in a worthy cause, a tone too rarely heard in the recent past."

Kramnick added that the report's prioritization of Yale's academic mission should be taken seriously at "a moment when so many forces are pulling the university in competing directions."

Some faculty and students drew attention to the report's references to academics.

"There is arguably no greater threat to higher education than the devaluing of teaching and learning," the committee's report reads.

English professor Lloyd Sy wrote in a text message to the News that he hopes to see a classroom where "students are fully present and ideas can be tested openly."

In order to improve engagement in the classroom, the report recommends a default "device-free policy" from which faculty may deviate for "compelling pedagogical, research, or practical reasons," while accommodating "students with documented needs."

Before the report was released on Wednesday, Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis said in an interview that at a recent faculty meeting, professors had unanimously agreed to endorse a more lenient policy than the report's on regulating device usage, which is that professors should have the choice to enforce a "technology-free space."

The Wednesday report from the Committee on Trust in Higher Education also charges faculty members to "create classrooms where open inquiry and intellectual debate thrive," recommending that they establish principles to "ensure that a Yale education does not come with a political litmus test."

Lewis wrote in an email to the News after the report's release that he thought the committee had released "a very thoughtful report with a lot of good analysis and important recommendations."

Szepesi said that he does not think the report sufficiently addresses the fact that "a lot of the censorship that happens happens because students try to police one another."

Guidelines such as the ones suggested in the committee report, Szepesi said, are helpful in "setting out the parameters of a discussion" but cannot promote "cultural rewiring" in the same way that encouraging disagreement through debate can.

"That would be a disservice to Yale, if we reduced the issue to something that can just be solved through a series of guidelines that we outlined," he continued. "I don't think we can reasonably assume that there are a series of words that every professor can say that will, for some reason, solve the issue of trust in higher education."

Global Affairs lecturer Ted Wittenstein '04 LAW '12 wrote in an email to the News that he was "very pleased" about the report and McInnis's support, especially the recommendations on increasing intellectual diversity on campus.

"Regardless of one's own personal political views, everyone benefits from a university community where free, open, respectful, and rigorous debate is a hallmark of the Yale experience, both inside and outside the classroom," Wittenstein wrote. "Trust is earned over time when communities across the country gain confidence that their views and values are represented among our students and scholars."

The committee's recommendation regarding grade inflation — "a 3.0 mean, or some other college-wide standard" — sparked mixed reactions.

Lewis said before the report was released that the Yale College faculty has not "had any voting on anything" like grade caps, which he said he was considering in February after a Harvard committee released a report recommending a 20 percent cap on A grades.

"McInnis has urged the 2026-27 Yale College Committee on Teaching, Learning, and Advising to explore grading issues in Yale College, and I will charge it to do so," Lewis wrote on Wednesday.

Physics professor A. Douglas Stone wrote that he is "delighted" that the committee "took a strong stand" on grades.

"Setting a 3.0 grade pt average is a way of signaling seriousness but I suspect that won't end up being what our new system will be, and I don't think students should panic due to that headline," Stone wrote.

Ali Otuzoglu '27 said that he did not feel strongly about what the average GPA among undergraduates should be, but he emphasized that faculty should "address discrepancies between majors and departments" in grading standards.

Earth and Planetary Sciences professor Michael Oristaglio '74 GRD '74 criticized the recommendation that Yale enforce a mean GPA.

"Would any Yale department be content if an outside visiting committee reviewed the faculty and gave the department a solid 'B' grade? Probably not," he wrote in an email to the News. "If Yale's select and truly exceptional faculty would not be happy being rated 'B', why would they imagine that Yale's select and truly exceptional students would be happy with that rating."

William Zhu '29 said in an interview that he thought the implementation of a mean 3.0 GPA would be "counterintuitive."

Because Yale's rigorous admissions process "filters for the best of the best students," Zhu said, he thought it made sense that the average Yale undergraduate GPA would be high. He added that the "job market's already very competitive," and posited that "grade inflation definitely can be fought, or at least thought about in a more constructive way."

Sociology professor Julia Adams and history professor Beverly Gage '94 co-chaired the Committee on Trust in Higher Education.

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Ellie Park / Senior Photographer
After University President Maurie McInnis shared the report of the Committee on Trust in Higher Education, some faculty members and students said they appreciated its candor. Reactions to some of the report's many proposals were mixed.

Trump takes Elicker, Lamont to court



Tim Tai
On Monday, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against New Haven, arguing that the city's "sanctuary policies" violate federal law. The city has signed onto five lawsuits against the federal government since President Donald Trump began his second term.

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Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota. Amid that operation, Trump threatened to cut funds to states with "sanctuary cities," which Elicker rebuked at the time.

In August, ICE carried out Operation Broken Trust, a four-day operation in Connecticut that the agency said resulted in the arrest of 65 immigrants.

For the past year and a half, Elicker has consistently antagonized the Trump administration, taking a rhetorical approach that highlights a sharp contrast between what he describes as New Haven's values and the president's.

Along with New Haven and Elicker, the suit names Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont SOM '80 and Attorney General William Tong as defendants.

In addition to its suit against New Haven, the Department of Justice complaint targeted Connecticut for its enforcement of the Trust Act, a 2013 law that limited communication with federal immigration enforcement and compliance with ICE detainer requests outside of certain cases. Amendments in 2019 and 2025 expanded the scope of the policy.

The lawsuit also takes issue with a statement on immigration that Tong released last month, which says that Connecticut's policy is to "respect, honor and protect immigrants and immigrant families in compliance with state and federal law."

The Justice Department alleges that the March statement and the Trust Act each stand "as an obstacle to the accomplishment and execution of the full purposes and objective of Congress."

A spokesperson for the attorney general did not say whether Tong released that policy guidance knowing a federal lawsuit was imminent. The spokesperson, Janice Yu, wrote in an email that Tong's office was "aware that the Department of Justice had brought unsuccessful challenges against other jurisdictions but would note that Connecticut also received a letter from DOJ in 2017 confirming that Connecticut was in compliance. Nothing in law has changed that would alter that 2017 DOJ determination."

The mayor's spokesperson, Lenny Speiller, wrote in an email that Elicker, Tong and their staff have "been in conversation" about the lawsuit.

"Once the parties are served, the city and the state will determine the best legal defense," Speiller wrote.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro called the lawsuit "politically motivated" in a statement emailed by a spokesperson.

New Haven is "not a 'sanctuary jurisdiction,'" she said. "The description has no legal meaning. Our state and local laws reflect a longstanding constitutional principle that the federal government cannot commandeer local officials to carry out its inhumane enforcement agenda."

Tabitha Sookdeo ENV '26, the executive director of the statewide immigrant advocacy group Connecticut Students for a Dream, said she was confident that the attorney general's office would be able to defend the Trust Act, but worried the lawsuit might discourage state lawmakers from advancing bills in the ongoing legislative session that would further protect immigrants.

"When fellow immigrants and people impacted by detention see these types of lawsuits coming down the line, unfortunately, it's just like one more thing, right? It's one more thing to have to worry about," Sookdeo said. "Does this mean that there might be a similar pattern of what happened in Minneapolis, that we might see increased enforcement activity here in Connecticut? I certainly hope not."

Glenn Formica, a New Haven-based immigration lawyer, called the lawsuit "frivolous" and said he did not anticipate that it would yield a temporary injunction as it moves through the state court system. Formica pointed to a federal statute establishing that states and localities can, but are not required to, form agreements to communicate or cooperate with federal immigration enforcement.

"I just don't think that this lawsuit is going to change anything," Formica said in a phone interview. "I don't think it's going to have a chilling effect on policymakers. I don't think it's going to cause people to stay home in fear. I think, if anything, it's going to trigger indignation, and frankly, probably more protections."

He echoed Sookdeo's concern that the lawsuit could be a pretext to a targeted enforcement crackdown in Connecticut, but said that an effort of this kind would be a "profoundly stupid move" given the fallout the administration faced after Operation Metro Surge.

The Department of Justice currently does not have a permanent attorney general.

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