

FROM THE FRONT

Pair privately talks grade inflation before Buckley event

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her email sharing the report with the Yale community.

“It was really very beneficial today to sit with the president of Yale as well to talk about grade inflation,” McMahon said at the Buckley Institute event in Sheffield-Sterling-Strathcona Hall.

University spokesperson Karen Peart confirmed in an email to the News on Thursday evening that McInnis and McMahon “discussed higher education and workforce development, including affordability and grade inflation.”

At the Buckley event, which was called “The Roadmap to Restoring American Education” and moderated by Buckley Institute Student President Tori Cook ’27, McMahon touted her work reforming education. As secretary, McMahon has called for

eliminating bureaucracy at the Education Department.

Many of the issues with higher education that McMahon spoke about were also identified in the committee’s report, including grade inflation and affordability.

In an interview with the News last month, McInnis praised the Buckley Institute for inviting McMahon to speak at Yale. At a Family Weekend talk in October, McInnis suggested that organizations like the Buckley Institute may have helped Yale avoid targeted federal funding cuts.

McInnis said in an interview last month that she was not “aware of” plans to meet with McMahon. Peart wrote that the secretary’s schedule and meeting with McInnis was only confirmed on Wednesday.

McMahon took part in a “roundtable discussion,” Peart wrote to the News. The spokesperson

declined to share who was at the discussion or what was discussed.

Though McMahon did not specifically discuss the committee’s report at the Buckley event, she outlined several hopes that align with many of the items, including the way professors teach classes at Yale.

“They should challenge those students to think as much as possible,” McMahon said.

The report recommends a mean grade-point average of 3.0 for Yale College and establishing “a device-free policy—no phones, laptops, or tablets—as the default in classroom settings.” McInnis wrote in her email that she directed the Committee on Teaching, Learning and Advising “to confront grade inflation directly within Yale College.”

McMahon also spoke about free expression at universities.

“What we’re looking at relative to the university campuses is to make sure that university cam-

puses are places where there is freedom of thought, freedom of expression. The opportunity to have a good debate, to do it civilly, to make sure that students feel safe on campus,” McMahon said.

However, the secretary also denied that it was the federal government’s explicit role to change culture on campuses.

McMahon also brought up ensuring that students get returns on their investments. She emphasized the need for higher education to direct students towards “successful opportunities for career employment.”

The committee pointed to Yale’s high cost of attendance in its report and recommended that Yale “raise the income limit on the ‘no tuition’ guarantee for undergraduate students.”

In addition to the visit with McInnis and the roundtable discussion, McMahon toured Yale

and described the construction on part of Science Hill, which is set to be a finished new research building in 2030, as “incredible.”

McMahon added that research funding “can also be a tool for the federal government to say ‘a university is not spending this money wisely.’”

Jason Hockenberry, an associate dean of the Yale School of Public Health and a member of the Committee on Trust in Higher Education who was at the event, said he appreciated McMahon’s presence.

“I’m quite impressed that she’s traveling around the country right now,” Hockenberry said in an interview.

McMahon was a member of the Connecticut Board of Education from 2009 to 2010.

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Foreseeing big crowds, concert organizers cap tickets

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emergency services and security,” as well as other “personnel and requirements” in order to ensure that the concert “remains safe and compliant with the City of New Haven’s regulations.”

Peck wrote that the city permit requirements for Spring Fling would be different if attendance reached over 10,000.

Freeman also cited the Spring Fling budget as a factor for capping attendance.

“According to admin, the increase in security elicited by surpassing capacity would be far beyond what our budget could handle,” he wrote.

Freeman said the decision to cap attendance was made by the Yale College dean’s office, the fire marshal, Yale Security and the Yale Police Department, which initially limited capacity to 8,000. However, the committee pushed back against the limit because “there has never been such a thing before,” according to Freeman, and was able to secure an additional 500 slots.

Peck said that they expect all 8,500 people to attend, as opposed to the usual 4,000 to 6,000 attendees.

Registration for guest tickets opened at 7 a.m. last Tuesday morning with approximately 1,200 slots available, and students eager to secure one were met with prolonged loading screens and error messages on Yale Connect due to high traffic.

Graduate student tickets, which were formerly unrestricted, were limited to 1,100 in total.

The new ticketing process was in accordance with a school wide email sent by the Spring Fling Committee on April 6. In an email to the News, the committee cited Yale administrators as the reason for those changes.

“We hope it is clear that most, if not all of these decisions, were made by administration and

not the Spring Fling Committee,” Mateo Felix Castillo ’27, the talent chair of the committee, wrote in the email. “As a committee, we try our hardest to satisfy student interests, and frequently negotiate with admin in order to get better student outcomes, but there are naturally decisions beyond our control.”

Guests were not allowed to attend Spring Fling in 2023 after the concert was relocated due to weather to College Street Music Hall, where it proceeded with a limited capacity of 2,000 on a first-come, first-serve basis for Yale students. Freeman referred to those circumstances of capping attendance as an “exception” since the concert normally takes place on Old Campus.

Freeman said that the amount of tickets allocated to undergraduates, graduates and guests was determined by the funding sources for Spring Fling. He said that the majority of the budget is funded by the student activity fees paid by undergraduates, so the committee prioritized undergraduate tickets.

Freeman said that 800 — 10 percent of the tickets — were initially made available for graduate students, because ten percent of the Spring Fling budget came from the President’s Fund, which partially comes from fees paid by graduate students.

The period for graduate student registration ran April 8 through 12, but an additional 300 tickets leftover from unclaimed undergraduate tickets were made available last Friday morning, capping graduate student attendance at 1,100.

Freeman said the committee added 500 tickets from the remaining ones left in the undergraduate pool to the guest limit, but the 1,700 guest tickets still sold out on Tuesday, the day of release.

“The inability of Yale Connect to handle said high volume was unanticipated by the commit-



Baala Shakya

Considering the popularity of Zara Larsson, administrators expect thousands of more people than usual to attend the concert.

tee, as we were under the impression that the issues regarding site traffic and bandwidth would be addressed in advance, since administration was aware of the registration process,” Freeman wrote in an email to the News.

Felix said that additional server power was acquired from CampusGroups, the Yale Connect vendor, and the issue with Yale Connect was resolved around 11 a.m.

“We announced that the issue had been fixed shortly after on our Instagram, but did not want to email the student body out of concern that increased traffic would break the website once more,” Felix wrote.

In a phone interview, Kamile Makselyte ’27 said she happened to see the Instagram announce-

ment four minutes after it was uploaded and was able to get a guest ticket for her brother around 11:30 a.m.

She said she thought the registration process was a “little funky.”

She initially experienced issues registering for a guest when she logged on to Yale Connect earlier that morning. She said she hadn’t realized that the ticket registration opened at 7 a.m., which she said was “an egregious time for tickets to drop.”

Felix said the committee received many complaints from students.

At 7:40 a.m., the committee sent an email notifying students of the technical issues, but Makselyte said she thought they would have solved the problem by the time she logged on around 8:40 a.m.

Caroline Sloper ’28 also experienced issues registering for a guest ticket.

In a text message to the News, she wrote that she was “very excited” to see the lineup and planned to bring her sister who is also a “big fan” of the artists.

Sloper wrote that she kept trying to register for a guest ticket “periodically” throughout the day until she succeeded around 11:30 a.m.

However, both Makselyte and Sloper said they experienced no issues registering for their own tickets the week before.

Spring Fling will take place on April 25.

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Trustees’ political tilts draw scrutiny from left and right

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during the 2024 election cycle, 2025 off-year elections and the 2026 midterm elections. Former Vice President Kamala Harris, during her 2024 campaign for president, received around \$500,000 from Yale’s trustees, the filings show.

“The lack of political diversity on the Yale Corporation is unfortunately not a surprise,” Lauren Noble ’11, the founder and executive director of the Buckley Institute, wrote to the News. “We are confident that Yale, with its incredible resources, can identify at least one conservative within its network of over 130,000 alumni to serve as a trustee.”

The Buckley Institute published a report in February on the trustees’ political donations, party membership and political work. The report claimed that the Corporation had a “partisan bias” toward Democrats.

A handful of the current trustees have worked for Democratic presidential administrations.

William Kennard LAW ’81, who now works with an investment firm he co-founded, served as the Federal Communications Commission chairman under President Bill Clinton and as ambassador to the European Union under President Barack Obama. Joshua Steiner ’87 was chief of staff of the Treasury Department in the Clinton Administration. Neal Wolin ’83 LAW ’88 also served in Obama’s Treasury Department as the deputy secretary and as the acting secretary for a month.

While Noble criticized what she sees as lackluster political diversity on the Corporation, she said she was encouraged by University President Maurie McInnis’ recent remarks praising the Buckley Institute’s choice to invite Education Secretary Linda McMa-

hon to speak at an event. Noble wrote that she believes McInnis “is beginning to look for a cure to this institutional affliction.”

A new report from the Committee on Trust in Higher Education, which McInnis shared with the Yale community on Wednesday, calls for the University to “build trust with the trustees” and proposes a faculty liaison to the board.

“We also recommend that the Board of Trustees include, at all times, experienced scholars and academic leaders among its members,” the report says. “Trustees drawn exclusively from business and finance, however capable, will inevitably require the administration to translate between institutional decisions and academic consequences.”

Two candidates for Yale College Council president, who also attended an Endowment Justice Collective rally last week, both pointed out that the Corporation’s

composition skews towards backgrounds in finance and hedge funds.

“It’s frustrating that a board of 17 undemocratically elected trustees that are in positions to make decisions on behalf of this institution have their own interests and values that don’t align with the values of our community,” candidate John Robert Walker ’28 said, noting that he believes trustees are more concerned with the University’s financial well-being than ethical investment.

“It’s disheartening in some ways that it’s an unelected body, people with very specific backgrounds,” Alex William Chen ’28, another candidate, said.

In 2021, the Corporation eliminated the petitioning process for alumni trustee elections. The process had allowed alumni to petition for a place on the ballot if they could get signatures from three percent of alumni eligible to vote. Now, the Alumni Fellow Nominat-

ing Committee selects the candidates that appear on the ballot.

The removal of the petitioning process drew pushback from alumni and students at the time. Noble said the decision “signaled an unhealthy fear of dissenting viewpoints.”

In 2021, the Board of Trustees published a statement that said part of the reason for the change was that petition candidates often focused on “promoting specific policy goals,” which the Corporation said was inconsistent with good governance.

The Connecticut Supreme Court recently declined to hear a lawsuit brought by alumni demanding to reinstate the petition process.

The governor and lieutenant governor of Connecticut are both ex officio members of the Yale Corporation.

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