NEWS

"I would rather be governed by the first 2000 people in the Manhattan phone book than the entire faculty of Harvard."
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. '50 AMERICAN POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

With high hopes, Yale continues to invest on Upper Science Hill

BY SARA AGRAWAL
STAFF REPORTER

One corner on campus has experienced a particularly expensive transformation over the past four years.

The University had poured hundreds of millions into the development of Upper Science Hill, with the aim of setting Yale apart in the fields of physics, the applied sciences and engineering. University leaders have consistently emphasized their hopes to place Yale at the forefront of cutting-edge scientific fields like quantum computing.

"The USHD reflects a long-term commitment to securing Yale's leadership in scientific discovery and innovation in order to contribute meaningfully to addressing the world's present and future challenges," Michael Crair, Yale's vice provost for research, wrote in an email to the News, referring to the Upper Science Hill Development project.

In a February interview with the News, Yale President Maurie McInnis identified investing in the physical sciences and engineering as the "top priority" of the University, and in her end-of-year message to the Yale community, she singled out the University's "strides in reimagining Science Hill." When Linda McMahon, the United States' secretary of education, toured Yale in April, she called the construction on Upper Science Hill Construction "incredible."

Yale's 2023–24 financial report stated that out of the University's $614 million in capital spending, which includes "renovations" and "acquisitions and new construction," 12 percent — around $75 million — went into biological and physical sciences. That figure rose to over $190 million — 29 percent of $661 million — in the 2025 fiscal year.

When asked why he thought Yale was investing so heavily in engineering and physical sciences, physics professor Karsten Heeger emphasized the importance of Yale's frontier scholarship in those fields as well as the humanities.

"Yale has always been leading in various fields, including the humanities, for example," Heeger, who is also the director of the Yale Wright Laboratory for experimental nuclear physics, particle physics and astrophysics, said. "Science and engineering and technology is absolutely essential for society and our modern world. If we want to be a leading research university, we have to be cutting-edge in those fields."

The development of Upper Science Hill is a decade-long project that has been planned in two phases. According to Heeger, the first phase, which began in 2022 and broke ground in 2024, is set to be completed this fall. This phase involves the construction of a new Advanced Instrumentation Development Center and replacing an old part of the Wright Lab.

Heeger said that the renovation will bolster the Wright Lab with "state-of-the-art laboratories that will give us the vibration isolation, the environmental control, all of the things that we need, the infrastructure for cutting-edge research." That transformation will provide new research opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students, Heeger added.

The second phase of the Upper Science Hill development project will see the completion of a new Physical Sciences and Engineering Building, or PSEB, Heeger said.

"The idea was to build a building complex that brings together research groups from physics, physical sciences, and the engineering departments and mainly with the focus on quantum science and material science," he said.

Crair wrote that the building complex will foster "cross-disciplinary collaboration."

In total, the building will house around 50 research groups, according to Heeger. Heeger also said that the physics department has made new appointments in quantum science and atomic, molecular and optical physics, but that exact final number "remains to be seen."

The development of Upper Science Hill follows a 2018 report of the University Science Strategy Committee, or USSC, which states that "tomorrow's leaders need a solid grounding in STEM so they can understand the world and shape its future" and outlines investments the University might make to improve STEM at Yale. The report suggested that the University invest in graduate students, advance instrumentation, update core facilities and promote diversity in the STEM pipeline.

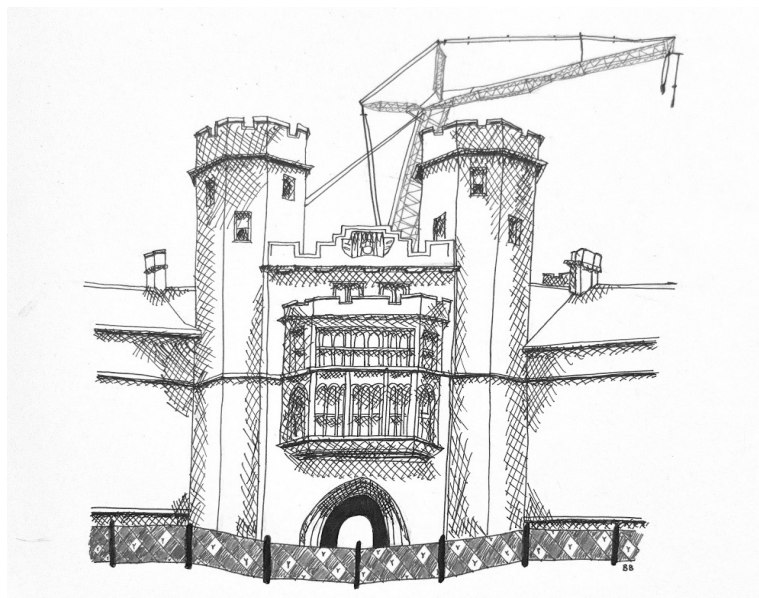
The report also emphasized that the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, or SEAS, would play a vital role in the future of science at Yale and "must be fully integrated into the fabric of the University."

In 2022, following another report from a SEAS strategic planning committee in 2021, the University announced major investments in applied sciences and engineering and the separation of SEAS faculty from the Faculty of Arts and Science.

A focus on quantum

Quantum science has been one of the focuses of Yale's investments in engineering and applied science. The field, which studies the smallest units within atoms that act both as particles and as waves, is used both in physics and in computing and was one of the "five ideas of priority investment" highlighted in the 2018 USSC report.

Speaking about the research in Wright Lab, Heeger said that "quantum science is intrinsic to all what we do."



BEATRICE BARILLA / STAFF ILLUSTRATOR

The University has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the development of Upper Science Hill, which University leaders say will significantly improve research opportunities at Yale. The first phase is set to be completed this fall.

Shaun Pexton '26, the co-president of Yale Undergraduate Quantum Computing, called quantum the "shining beacon of Yale engineering" in an interview with the News.

Pexton said that he's noticed growing attention around quantum during his time at Yale as the "race" of quantum technology has made its way into "political conversations" and as Yale has gained recognition as a place where "a lot of cool stuff is happening."

In her end-of-year message, President McInnis said that the new facilities on Science Hill will "supercharge quantum science at Yale." The Yale Quantum Institute will be relocated from Hillhouse Avenue to the PSEB, according to its website.

In the message, President McInnis also mentioned professor Michel Devoret, who won a Nobel Prize in 2025 for his work in quantum physics, and QuantumCT, a nonprofit launched in 2022 by Crair and Pamir Alpay, the interim provost of the University of Connecticut.

McInnis' wrote in the end-of-year message that through quantum technology, "we will make our home state more attractive to start-ups" and "create a talented workforce in this area."

When asked why he thought the University was heavily investing in and promoting quantum, Pexton said that technological development, especially in AI and quantum, have become indicators of a university's advancement.

"Yale wants to be at the forefront, and they are at the forefront," Pexton said.

The construction on Upper Science Hill is located at 268 to 280 Whitney Ave.

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Departing seniors praise community within Yale's religious groups

BY HANNAH LIU
STAFF REPORTER

Just after his last Directed Studies final exam his first year, Sammy Rosenberg '26 walked into the lobby of the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life and sat down in a barber chair.

A senior friend of his at the center thought it would be funny to finally cut Rosenberg's hair in the middle of the empty building that night, as a nearby security guard watched and laughed.

"Throughout the year, we had kind of always made comments and jokingly said he was gonna give me a haircut in Slifka," Rosenberg said in a phone interview with the News. "We were like, 'No, that was never gonna happen.' Then a few days before finals were over — he was a senior graduate — he was like, "No, Sammy, we're gonna do this.' It was kind of just a ridiculous thing that happened."

Now a graduating senior, Rosenberg's memories of the impromptu haircut and the role faith communities have played in fostering fellowship and community over the last four years remain.

While Yale is a largely secular campus, faith plays an important role in many students' lives. Overseen by the Chaplain's Office, Yale's various independent religious groups — from the Yale Buddhist Student Community to Yale Students for Christ — encompass a wide spectrum of both student-led community and staff-facilitated programming.

"I think their role is to provide that place to be with people of a similar background or belief," Harry Gold '26, another graduating Jewish student at Yale, said in a phone interview about religious organizations on campus. "For me, Slifka has been a place to hang out in a variety of different ways, whether it be religious or otherwise."

The News spoke with eight seniors involved in religious groups about how spaces ranging from the Slifka Center and Christian Union Lux's ministry house to Buddhist shrine rooms and Hindu prayer rooms have offered welcoming spaces free from pre-professional or competitive mindsets.

A community free from competition

Graduating seniors from these groups overwhelmingly highlighted their communities as safe spaces of genuine connection rather than competition or academic maneuvering.

Phoenix Boggs '26, president of the Yale Buddhist Student Community, found that the organization provided an inclusive space to become spiritually connected to her peers in a way distinctly different from some other extracurricular groups at Yale.

"I think that because the Yale Buddhist Student Community is obviously the farthest thing from a pre-professional organization, there's a sense of really ready connection there that has nothing to do with networking," Boggs said in a phone interview with the News.

Sophia Davis '26, a member of Yale Students for Christ, also emphasized that Yale's Christian community has provided for her a sense of home.

"When you're connected on such a deep level of something as all these core beliefs, all these central parts of yourself such as faith, it's very unifying — rather than audition or performance based sort of things," Davis said in a phone interview.

Christian life at Yale consists of various ministries and groups, including Christian Union Lux, Yale Students for Christ, United in Christ's Walk, Chi Alpha, Athletes in Action and Saint Thomas More — Yale's Catholic center and chapel. Despite the different spaces, these groups also host interministry events including worship nights and meals.

"I had never felt a love like that before from people who didn't even know me at the time," Stella Choi '26, said when asked over the phone about her first experience with United in Christ's Walk. "They were so excited to welcome me into their community, and I think that really stood out about campus ministries that I didn't really feel from other non-religious organizations."

Spaces for non-religious students to participate

Many of Yale's religious organizations are open to all students who are interested in learning or exploring the faith.

"The Buddhist community is a little bit interesting because different from the other religious communities, a lot of people are going just to learn meditation and might not actually identify with the religion," Emily Cheung '26, a former president of the Yale Buddhist Student Community, said over the phone. "Probably less than a quarter of people actually identify as Buddhists. It's nice to meet people who are very different from me who are going through some sort of struggle and are just trying to look for ways to help themselves."

Dinesh Bojja '26, co-president of the Yale Hindu Students Organization, highlighted Diwali and Holi celebrations as examples of large events where many non-spiritual students engage in and experience Hindu cultural and religious practices. Bojja recalled hundreds of students present at the Omni Hotel this past year for Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

"The celebration that we do on campus is truly a reflection of that light and kind of community that we're building on campus," Bojja said in a phone interview. "We make it open to any student who's interested, so often, there are people who aren't part of the Hindu community who are there to support their friends or just because they're interested."

A place to slow down

Besides the supportive peers, seniors said Yale's religious groups have also provided them with spaces to slow down and focus on the faith that matters to them.

"Being part of the HSO feels like a second home to me because I think it offers a lot of comfort," Bojja said, referring to the Hindu Students Organization. "The Hindu prayer room is a place I go whenever I need a moment of respite, and I'm glad that space is open for everyone on campus."

In addition to the Hindu prayer room, other religious spaces on campus include the Buddhist shrine, Saint Thomas More's chapel, Christian Union Lux's ministry house, the Slifka Center and the Musalla Muslim prayer room on Old Campus.

"Campus is really busy, and it's very chaotic here. Everyone's always hustling and bustling, trying to move on to the next thing and things can be kind of superficial or vain at times," Cheung said. "There's something very slow paced about Buddhism itself and about the people who try to practice Buddhism."

Nabil Rahman '26, who was the president of the Muslim Students Association, wrote in a text message to the News that having access to resources and Muslim communities at Yale has strengthened his faith.

Rahman highlighted Ramadan celebrations at Yale as a time of community and reflection that has been particularly meaningful to him. During the month, residential colleges and many student groups host various Iftar meals around campus. Yale also provides Suhoor packs for students to take home and eat before dawn.

"If you ask any Muslim at Yale, they will tell you Ramadan is their favorite time of the school year, because aside from the fasting and worship, Ramadan is a time of community," Rahman wrote. "It's hard to find this level of community anywhere else, the way everyone comes together on campus and contributes to the festivities."

Gold and Rosenberg, as students who spend a lot of time at the Slifka Center, also said Slifka's ability to bring together students of all different Jewish sects and backgrounds.

In addition to its kosher dining hall, which accepts dining hall meal swipes and is open to all students, the Slifka Center offers daily prayer services, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Shabbat services, as well as collective Shabbat dinner on Friday evenings. The center is also frequently used by students as a place to study, rest or hang out with friends.

Rosenberg, an Orthodox Jewish senior, recalled fond memories singing Shabbat songs with friends after Shabbat dinner and playing board games in friends' suites.

"It's a place where you really get Jews interested and invested in building and supporting Jewish life at a time in their life when there's a lot of latitude to kind of do whatever you want," Rosenberg said. "Choosing to be there is a very active decision, that this is a place they want to be and something they want to be investing their time in."

Religious growth, staff support and resources

Seniors said that faith communities are essential in informing and shaping their daily religious wellbeing and knowledge. Between guest speakers, events and religious services, seniors described Yale's groups as places of intentionality and spiritual formation.

From Slifka's Shabbat services to Muslim Iftar meals during Ramadan and Buddhist meditation sessions, students learn more about their religion and are supported by various religious staff as well.

Joshua Zhang '26, a student in Yale Students for Christ and the Christian a capella group Living Water at Yale, mentioned retreats as a way to escape Yale's busy lifestyle and consider important questions about his life.

"I think both of the groups I'm in have been really formative in many ways," Zhang said in a phone interview. "They've allowed me to understand more deeply what it means to be a Christian, and when I call myself that, what that really entails and how I can align my life more fully with those values in the worldview that I believe in."

Zhang will be a campus ministry intern next year for Yale Students for Christ, giving back to the community that helped shape his faith at Yale. He will work closely with the ministry's staff members, who act as mentors and help facilitate spaces for spiritual growth on campus.

Other students pointed to their religious organization's chaplains and staff as well as people instrumental in students' lives. Rahman, for example, mentioned Yale's Muslim Chaplain as someone who has played an instrumental role in his life.

"I immediately felt at home on campus because of the Muslim community," Rahman said in a phone interview. "I think a lot of that is attributed to the environment, atmosphere and community that has been created by our chaplain, who's been at Yale for over 18 years. He's just really cultivated an environment where anyone regardless of your level of religiosity can go in, feel welcome, and explore who you are as a Muslim."

Cheung also praised her Buddhist chaplain, who coordinates a lot of the meditation teachings and Buddhist programming.

"I think that the most important factor in strengthening my relationship with my faith has been the wonderful Sumi Kim, our Buddhist chaplain, who is a really stellar part of the faith network that people have available to them at Yale," Cheung said.

Rosenberg said he thinks connections with religious groups in college carry meaning beyond graduation.

"You're there because of the sort of thing you want to create in that place, like a certain sort of meaning and substance," Rosenberg said. "And you will carry that on and build some sort of community along these lines after you leave Yale as well."

Catholicism was the most represented religion at Yale between the classes of 2023 and 2026, according to a Chaplain's Office webpage. .

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