

YALE AND NEW HAVEN

“Normal is not something to aspire to, it’s something to get away from.”
JODIE FOSTER ’85 AMERICAN ACTRESS

After increased pledge, seniors split on whether Yale pays city enough

BY CHANTAL EULENSTEIN
STAFF REPORTER

Beginning next fiscal year, Yale will boost its annual payment to New Haven. Graduating seniors differ on whether they think the increased contribution is appropriate.

Two months ago, University President Maurie McInnis and New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker announced an updated town-gown agreement that will see the University give its home city more than \$230 million over the next seven years. A survey conducted by the News found that a plurality of graduating seniors — just under 50 percent of 147 respondents — feels that Yale’s new voluntary contribution is either “too little” or “somewhat little.”

Elicker said in March that the deal “represents the largest voluntary payment” from any American university to a municipality. Yale will pay New Haven \$29.9 million in the next fiscal year, and contributions will increase to \$33.6 million by 2033. These sums represent a substantial increase from the previous agreement, under which Yale paid some \$23 or \$24 million annually.

The new payment schedule followed months of negotiations between Yale and New Haven, and the agreement was announced as the class of 2026 looked ahead to graduation. Just over 44 percent of senior respondents said that the new commitment is “appropriate,” and nearly 11 percent said it was “too much” or “somewhat much.”

“I think it’s important for Yale to give back to the city it is built in,” Estelle Balsirow ’26 wrote in an email to the News, adding that the survey results suggest that “a lot of seniors agree with that sentiment.”

Other seniors were taken aback by the proportion of their classmates who felt that Yale’s contribution to New Haven was excessive.

“I found it surprising that nearly 11 percent of people thought that Yale was giving too much money to New Haven,” Colin Kim ’26 wrote in a text to the News. “Yale as an academic institution siphons so many resources like land from the



MARTIN PERALTA / HEAD PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

The University announced that it would boost its yearly payments to New Haven in March. Some surveyed members of the class of 2026 said the contribution was too much, while others emphasized the importance of supporting the city they came to call home.

surrounding area, so I personally feel like the school should give more to rehabilitate the structural harms that it has caused to the city.”

Yale owns over 850 acres in New Haven, according to CT Insider. Thanks to its status as a nonprofit, the University does not pay property taxes on any buildings that are used for academic purposes. That exemption is protected by an 1834 agreement between Yale and Connecticut.

Efforts to push Yale to increase its payment ramped up in the months before the new deal was announced. In January, leaders of Yale’s Local 33, 34 and 35 unions joined city leaders and activists to demand

that Yale up its annual contribution to \$110 million. And in early March, nearly 500 people attended an online “solidarity summit” organized by New Haven Rising in which speakers denounced Yale for not contributing more.

The University is New Haven’s second-largest taxpayer. The new town-gown agreement preserves an existing arrangement in which Yale makes payments equivalent to full property taxes for three years after purchasing a property for academic use, before reducing those payments by 10 percent each year.

New initiatives announced alongside the updated agreement in March include a

fund to support local nonprofits and a commitment to exploring the possibility of using vacant University land to address Connecticut’s affordable housing crisis.

Some seniors believe that Yale’s volunteer contribution to New Haven could increase further.

“I’m wondering what determines whether Yale is giving ‘too much,’” Kim wrote, “since I personally think that the quality of education that Yale provides would not suffer at all from the school giving more money to New Haven. In the end, isn’t that all that matters for answering the question of whether Yale pays New Haven ‘too much’ or ‘too little’?”

For some seniors, attending Yale meant becoming a New Haven resident — which means that their alma mater needs to give back.

“I hope that a stronger relationship from this agreement will form for both Yalies who call New Haven a temporary home and residents who will live here with their families for years to come,” Balsirow wrote.

In the University’s first voluntary contribution agreement, signed in 1990, Yale pledged to give around \$1.5 million to the city each year.

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Wooster Square and walkability encourage seniors to stay in New Haven

BY TAJRIAN KHAN
STAFF REPORTER

As seniors prepare to leave Yale’s campus and enter the workforce, a handful of them are choosing to remain in the Elm City next year.

In a survey sent out to the class of 2026 by the News, 13 out of 115 respondents who said they will remain in the United States — or 11.3 percent — said they plan to live in Connecticut.

According to data published by Yale’s Office of Career Strategy, around 12 percent of the class of 2025 stayed in Connecticut, compared to an average of 14 percent in the years since 2016.

Rory Bricca ’26 says he hopes to stay in New Haven next year to teach music lessons at the Neighborhood Music School, as well as audition for choirs at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music and work on his own compositions.

Bricca was born at the Yale New Haven Hospital and lived in Hamden until he was 10 years old, when his family moved to Tucson, Arizona. But he has “fond memories” of New Haven, he said, “especially East Rock and Wooster Square.”

About a month ago, Bricca said he had a “gut feeling” that he wanted to stay in New Haven.

“I’m hoping to just have a year where I can stay in this area and stay connected to the rela-

tionships I’ve built,” he said.

Bricca is also excited by New Haven’s performing arts scene.

“Nowhere else in the world could I be going to a friend’s musical or theater performance every week,” he said. “That’s just super fun.”

Victor Nguyen ’26 plans to stay in New Haven next year to continue his research at a Yale School of Medicine neuroscience lab.

“My current lab aligns with my research goals, and I didn’t want to have to start back at square one in a new location,” Nguyen said.

At the same time, he thinks New Haven offers a “nice contrast” to his hometown of Fort Smith, Arkansas. When applying to colleges, he said he

wanted to move to a city with a “fast living pace.” he is excited to spend at least one more year in New Haven after four years at Yale.

Jae-Hee Bae ’26 grew up in Dayton, Ohio, and first came to the east coast as a Yale student four years ago. But now that New Haven feels “comfortable and familiar,” she said, she is not ready to leave.

“I think there’s a consensus that people want to leave New Haven after graduation,” Bae said. “But when you’re graduating, there’s a lot of change that happens and having some constant really relieves the pressure of all that change.”

She loves that New Haven is “more pedestrian-friendly”

than suburban Ohio and that residents are engaged in their communities.

“I like that there are a lot of protests that happen on the Green, and there are a lot of events like the 5Ks and the Cherry Blossom Festival,” Bae said. “It shows that organizers really care about making it feel like home.”

Like Nguyen, Bae is staying next year to work on mRNA research at the Yale School of Medicine’s Neugebauer Lab and apply to medical schools in the meantime. Many Yale students take a “gap year” before applying to medical school, and for those interested, research opportunities at Yale are “straightforward,” Bae said.

“I feel comfortable knowing a handful of my friends are staying here,” Bae added. “I’m super excited to stay involved with a community that I’ve developed a relationship with.”

Gia Cook ’26 will be working as a Woodbridge Fellow at Yale’s Office of Public Affairs and Communications.

“I’m super-duper excited to be in New Haven,” Cook said.

Originally from a suburb of Detroit, Cook said she lived in the “same little yellow house in the same street” her entire life until she came to Yale.

“It’s been incredible living here, I don’t really have any dislikes,” Cook said, adding that she appreciated being “somewhere walkable” and having “access to such vibrant nightlife.”

Yale University has been the largest employer of graduating students every year since 2016, when the Office of Career Strategy started publishing data on postgraduate plans.



DANIEL ZHAO

Enticed by everything from fond memories to unique opportunities for research and music, seniors hailing from hometowns across the country say they will pursue career and educational opportunities in Yale’s home city.

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