FROM THE FRONT

"Everything is blue."
COLORS HALSEY

Committee to issue grade inflation advice in November

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January that he had asked the committee to advise him on the issue.

"The Committee on Trust gave us important things to think about, but ultimately, it's the Yale College Committee on Teaching, Learning and Advising that's gonna make recommendations that the faculty will consider," Lewis said in an interview with the News after the meeting. "We're not going to just adopt the earlier report wholesale, but instead take its arguments and points of view seriously."

Administrators at peer schools like Columbia, Dartmouth and Princeton have also scrutinized grade inflation last academic year.

Thursday's meeting, which McKinley described as part of "an ongoing faculty conversation" about grading in Yale College, was listed as the first among eight scheduled Yale College faculty meetings for this academic year on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences website. The website called the Thursday meeting an "informal discussion of assessment policies."

Members of the Committee on Teaching, Learning and Advising and the Committee on Trust in Higher Education were also in attendance, according to McKinley.

"The goal is to hear a range of faculty perspectives about grading," McKinley wrote to the News. "It is intended as an opportunity for candid faculty discussion."

The meeting was closed to the press, and attendees exiting the session approached by the News, including Jimenez, declined to comment, with some citing that they were instructed not to speak with reporters.

The next faculty meeting is scheduled for Oct. 1.

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Garrett Curtis / Photography Editor
It is "hard to say" when those recommendations would go into effect, Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis said after a closed-door faculty meeting about grade inflation on Thursday afternoon.

'No news' on Trump talks, McInnis says



Garrett Curtis / Photography Editor
The University's negotiations with the Trump administration are focused on the Yale School of Medicine, University President Maurie McInnis said in a Tuesday interview.

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tiations were prompted by a May letter of findings in which the Justice Department accused the School of Medicine of discriminating against white and Asian applicants. In July, McInnis confirmed that federal investigations had expanded into the College and the Law School.

"We have been providing them data that they have a legal right to request, and we have been informing them about the rigor of our admissions process and how our process works," McInnis said in her first sit-down interview with the News this school year.

Yale has not received findings from the Justice Department about investigations in either the College or the Law School, McInnis said.

When asked if Yale admissions discriminates against white and Asian applicants, she affirmed Yale's compliance with the 2023 Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action, which outlawed race-conscious admissions and led to changes in Yale's admissions processes.

"In 2023, the law changed," McInnis said, "and Yale made a number of changes to its practices of how it does admissions. It in no way considers race as part of the admissions process. We believe that we are following the law and we believe in the rigor of our admissions processes."

She acknowledged, however, the uncertainty on how the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action might be interpreted in a potential future case.

"But there has also not been a court case about admissions in higher education since the change in the law," McInnis said, adding that "none of us know exactly how that is going to be interpreted or what a case is going to look like in front of the Supreme Court."

The News reported in July that Yale had offered two proposals to the federal government, the first of which was rejected. On Tuesday, McInnis declined to comment on Yale's settlement proposals.

"I do not comment on and am not going to comment on any specifics related to our engagement with the Department of Justice, other than to say we are participating in a process that is laid out very clearly in federal law," McInnis said. "What we are engaged in looks very different from what has been reported in the media about many of our peers, whether that is Harvard or Columbia or Brown or Northwestern."

The situations at those universities were "not discussions related to a series of findings," she said. "Each of those schools that earlier were in settlement talks did not have a presentation of findings. They had all their money cut off."

In an August update to Yale affiliates, McInnis wrote that "Yale has continued to provide information to the DOJ regarding our admissions processes as required by law" and that the "current period of uncertainty about the investigations may well continue, and we do not know for how long."

"There is no news to report," McInnis said on Tuesday about the current status of the negotiations. She instead referenced Yale's guiding principles for the negotiations, which were in her statements from the summer as well as on a University webpage answering frequently asked questions.

McInnis said her concerns about protecting research funds go beyond the Justice Department.

She pointed to other federal threats, including an Office of Management and Budget proposal that would politicize the allocation of research grants and a Treasury Department proposal threatening universities' tax-exempt statuses if the administration deems them to be engaging in racial discrimination.

Yale submitted an institutional comment in July detailing the University's "very serious concerns" regarding the OMB proposal, which is set to become policy on Oct. 1.

tory is always waiting for you; it will come to grasp you, take you up in its currents, and throw you back down sometimes in places you will not understand. You cannot know when it is coming for you," Blight said.

In total, 2,977 people died on the day of the Sept. 11 attacks.

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Listeners question Yale approach

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April report.

The conversation drew more than 60 attendees, ranging from interns to education policy experts to Yale alumni. It came five months after the committee, which was commissioned by McInnis last April, released its report. Upon the document's release, McInnis accepted its judgement of Yale's responsibility for the decline in trust.

During her Wednesday conversation with Frederick Hess, the institute's director of education policy studies, McInnis said that declining public trust in universities is a problem she has been aware of for years. However, she said she "knew that so much of our community" did not recognize the trend.

"I think many faculty on many American campuses, two or three years ago, were not even that aware that we were losing the trust of America," she said.

Affordability, McInnis said, is an area where universities need to improve their communication strategies. Though Yale increased financial aid for undergraduates in January — guaranteeing free tuition for families making under $200,000 annually — many people aren't aware that the University might actually be accessible to them, she said.

For the last several decades, private institutions in particular have been pursuing a "high tuition, high aid model," McInnis said. "I can tell you the American people do not understand that."

She said that "higher education has never figured out how to communicate that," and that while she doesn't yet know the solution, it's something "we've got to fix."

The University is also taking steps to address the committee's recommendation to "streamline bureaucracy," McInnis said.

Yale is taking "a really serious look across all the work we do," she said, in a process they're calling an "operational efficiency exercise" — looking to do work more efficiently and "in a way that drives more of our resources to the work we do of education and research."

Intellectual traditions and a mission

The discussion opened with the topic of Yale's mission statement, which was changed less than two weeks after the report's release. It no longer includes language about "changing the world" or educating "aspiring young leaders," but reads: "Yale's core mission is to create, disseminate, and preserve knowledge through research and teaching."

The new statement matches nearly verbatim the one proposed by the trust committee authors in April.

"For them, it all started with the mission statement. They felt like it was vital to reaffirm that the core mission of a university is to create, disseminate and preserve knowledge through research and teaching," McInnis said, referring to the Trust committee members. "Anything else we do flows from that central, core mission."

After the mission statement was updated on the Yale website, McInnis told the News it was "not a change" and that its language reflects a "core mission" that has long been contained in the faculty handbook.

McInnis also spoke about open dialogue and intellectual diversity on campus. She highlighted campus groups including the Yale Political Union and her own initiatives, including the Center for Civic Thought and the Senior Presidential Fellowship — whose inaugural fellow, David Brooks, attended the event.

Hess then brought up a Buckley Institute report on faculty political diversity that found a greater than 36 to one ratio of Democrats to Republicans, asking McInnis, "is that a problem: yes or no?"

McInnis did not provide a "yes" or "no" response, but said that Buckley's data came from "looking at the publicly available voter registration numbers."

"So how accurate that is or not, I don't know," she said, referring to the Buckley report. "What I am really interested in, for our intellectual community, is a breadth of scholarly approaches, and intellectual traditions alive on our campus."

McInnis' focus on public trust is not limited to her off-campus visits. In a Thursday email to the Yale community — her first University-wide message of the semester — she highlighted Yale's efforts to rebuild public trust and linked a revamped President's Office website, which highlights Yale's progress on implementing the trust committee's recommendations.

Listeners weigh in

Members of the audience expressed varied reactions to the report's recommendations — and McInnis' discussion of them — with many praising Yale's efforts, and some expressing doubts.

Mark Bauerlein, an academic and English professor emeritus at Emory, said McInnis was "very good" on the issue of viewpoint diversity. He said he believes that viewpoint diversity should "be understood in relation to the discipline," rather than "as political orientation in the broader world."

"So, we don't want more Republicans in the English department. We want more people who have a conservative vision of English — its tradition, great books, the status of classics and beauty," Bauerlein said. "That's what you want, viewpoints relative to the understanding of the field, not the understanding of American politics."

Bauerlein also characterized the opening of civics centers "that somewhat have a lot of representation about conservative thought" as a "healthy thing to happen on a college campus."

When the discussion was opened to audience questions, Jenna Storey, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said that while she was a fan of much of the report, she disagreed with the mission statement change.

"The committee claims that they are restoring the original clarity of the mission statement by cutting out language from 2016," Storey said, but "historically speaking, that's just not true. From the beginning, Yale has had a double purpose in their mission statement, it is both about the creation and dissemination and advancement of knowledge and about how they're preparing their graduates to play roles in the world, being future leaders."

She said Yale should think about going forward because "the work in the classroom is shaping more than just minds," and is instead also "shaping character, aspiration, ideals. This is how people experience Yale out there in the world. The graduates are people that are doing things and I think you need to attend to that part."

Sanda Balaban, the executive director of the civic education-focused nonprofit Project Pericles, described the report's recommendations as "very powerful" and said she commends Yale for putting together the report on public trust. At the same time, she said, she believes there needs to be more of an emphasis on civic engagement in higher education.

"I think she nailed what the problem is, which is the lack of public trust. I don't know that she nailed it with the solutions," Balaban said.

She added that she wants to see more focus on "community-engaged civic learning," and emphasized the importance of "graduating students who are committed to the public good and to civic prosperity."

"These should be evolving recommendations," she said.

"I think this was an excellent first draft, and I hope it will continue to evolve and deepen over time. And, yes, I think maybe we need a round two on the mission statement."

Yale political science professor Steven Smith spoke at the American Enterprise Institute on Thursday for its annual Constitution Day Lecture.

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