NEWS

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ARISTOTLE ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHER

Generations of volunteers celebrate 140 years of Dwight Hall

BY ARIA LYNN-SKOV
STAFF REPORTER

When Neil Richardson was a middle schooler in Fair Haven, he met then-Yale undergraduate John Allcott III '67 through a Dwight Hall mentorship program. Allcott, he recalled, would take him to the YMCA and Branford College's Harkness Tower.

Fifty years later, with the help of Yale's director of community relations at the Office of New Haven Affairs, he decided to look up his old friend. Richardson soon got in touch with Allcott, now a doctor in Oregon, and the pair talk frequently, having revived their friendship after half a century.

Richardson, a former juvenile judicial marshal and decorated member of the New Haven community, and Allcott's sister Elinor were among the Dwight Hall affiliates gathered on Old Campus Friday evening to celebrate 140 years of the public service center's contributions to Yale, New Haven and the world.

At the celebration, student leaders and member groups received awards, and two Yale leaders, Director of Public School Partnerships Claudia Merson and longtime Yale administrator Henry "Sam" Chauncey '57, were honored for their decades of service and contributions to New Haven. In a speech during the event, Yale President Maurie McInnis praised Dwight Hall's legacy and impact on the world.

"I would argue that when we think about Yale, we should also think about Dwight Hall. Because this organization encapsulates something that is so essential about Yale," McInnis said in her speech. "Dwight Hall encapsulates that the pursuit of knowledge can include public service."

She described the University's founding charter as "a declaration that the search for knowledge that students partake in here would prepare them for the work that they would go on to do after graduation."

Before the event began, attendees mingled while a student jazz band played in the background. Chauncey sat on the edge of the stage with two longtime friends, John Wilhelm '67 and David Warren DIV '70 ARC '70.

Warren, who served as president of Ohio Wesleyan University from 1984 to 1993 and head of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities after that, was deeply involved with Dwight Hall both as a student and following his graduation.

Wilhelm is a labor organizer who was president of the UNITE HERE union from 2004 to 2012. After graduating from the University, he was a union leader at Yale. Later this month, the corner of College and Elm streets will be named "Wilhelm Corner" in his honor by New Haven.

"No one has done more to bring Yale and the New Haven community together than this man," Wilhelm said about Chauncey. "He laid the groundwork that others picked up."

Chauncey, who received the Leadership Legacy Award from Dwight Hall, worked in the Yale administration for decades. As a special assistant to then-Yale president Alfred Whitney Griswold — who graduated Yale College in 1929 and earned a Ph.D. from Yale in 1933 — he was "tasked to reconceive the relationship of the University to its host city," Dwight Hall Executive Director Peter Cramlish said. "He did this by creating the Office of Volunteer Services in 1960, and hired Herb Cahoon to be its first director, based in Dwight Hall.

When he spoke after receiving his award, Chauncey praised his fellow honoree of the evening: "Nobody in this room admires Claudia Merson more than I do," he said.

Madeline Negrón, superintendent of New Haven Public Schools, introduced Merson at the event. When Merson began at Yale in 1995, Negrón said, "She didn't just take a job at Yale. She took on a mission."

"To truly understand our community, she insisted on substitute teaching in all New Haven public schools in a single year," Negrón recalled, praising her commitment to what Merson calls "doing the necessary seat time to build genuine, respectful relationships."

Merson has always curated "real possibilities for students," Negron said, from founding the early scholar program at Yale to reaching thousands of students by expanding Pathways to Science, which seeks to provide STEM access for middle and high school students.

"Over her decades as director of Public School Partnerships at Yale's Office of New Haven and State Affairs, Claudia has become the glue holding our most meaningful partnerships with Yale together," Negrón said. "Claudia once noted that before building these pathways, we had a thousand flowers and no garden. Claudia, you built that garden, you know how to connect all the dots, how to open doors, create bridges and ensure your students know they belong in every room they walk into."

Chauncey and Merson both received standing ovations during the event.

Dean of the School of Engineering Jeffrey Brock '92 said he was excited to be honoring Merson, who he knows through her work to "support our faculty in their grant writing and other efforts to have their research be meaningful to the local community." He also emphasized the importance of Dwight Hall's mission in relation to the School of Engineering.

"I'm also vocal that engineering will see itself in the role of service that the University promulgates through Dwight Hall," Brock told the News before the event. "So fundamentally I think that part of what should instill trust in higher education is the service mission of our students and service mission of what we teach, and I think engineering should be represented in that message."

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JACK ENNIS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Former and current Dwight Hall affiliates celebrated 140 years since the center was founded. University President Maurie McInnis addressed attendees at the event, highlighting the relationship between public service and a liberal arts education.

SOM alumni meet across the globe for 50th anniversary

BY GILLIAN PEIHE FENG
STAFF REPORTERS



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The alumni-led initiative will bring School of Management alumni to a series of regional gatherings around the world throughout the school year.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of its founding in 1976, the Yale School of Management has launched "50 Cheers for 50 Years," a series of at least 50 alumni gatherings taking place across the globe between August 2026 and June 2027.

According to the SOM's official website, these alumni gatherings consist of "informal events" hosted in alumni's local communities with the goal of being "intentionally intimate and community-driven."

As of Oct. 4, the initiative has already held its first two alumni gatherings: the first in Toronto, hosted by Vipan Nikore SOM '06 on Sept. 10, and the second in New Orleans, La., hosted by Shannon English, an associate director of alumni engagement at the SOM, last Thursday.

"At this point, I'd describe the initiative as having more than a dozen gatherings in various stages of planning, with more being added as alumni continue to express interest in hosting," English wrote in an email to the News.

English added that planned locations so far include American cities such as Scottsdale, Ariz., St. Louis, Mo., San Francisco, Calif., and Washington, D.C., as well as international locations in several countries including Japan, Germany, Canada and Romania.

Kathleen Cartiera, the director of alumni engagement at the SOM, told the News in a Zoom interview that the initiative stemmed partly from the school's efforts to engage with its global alumni community.

"How do we really celebrate that and encompass our global footprint, if you will?" Cartiera said, describing the idea behind holding a series of regional alumni gatherings, on top of the school's annual reunion weekend in New Haven.

Cartiera acknowledged the difficulty of engaging alumni scattered across the world, given that they are in different stages of their careers and may face budgetary constraints.

"This initiative really is working hard to bridge that gap as best as we can," Cartiera said.

In an email to the News, Nikore, who hosted the Toronto gathering, wrote that around 25 alumni attended his event.

"'50 Cheers for 50 Years' gives us all a moment to reflect upon an incredible experience that the school offered us," Nikore wrote. "I think the initiative is great for the school, because it means that every alumni this year is taking a moment to reflect upon their experience at Yale SOM - which certainly can only help with alumni engagement."

The New Orleans alumni event last Thursday, hosted by English, was held in an oyster bar and had eight alumni in attendance.

"There wasn't a formal program or agenda - aside from a 'cheers' to SOM!" English wrote in an email to the News. "I wanted it to feel more like getting together with old friends and making new ones rather than attending a traditional anniversary event with formulated programming."

Dorothy Liu SOM '92 is planning to host an alumni gathering, as part of the "50 Cheers for 50 Years" initiative, in Seattle. In a Zoom interview with the News, Liu said that the event is tentatively scheduled for mid-November.

Liu said that one of the highlights of regional alumni reunions for her is that they allow people to develop connections with alumni beyond their own classes.

"My hope for my event is that I will create a space for people across all the decades of classes to connect," Liu said. "The things that brought us there in 1988 are just as relevant for the people who are coming in for the class of 2028."

Liu and Nikore also reflected on how the School of Management has changed since their time as students there.

"Back then the school was a relatively younger school, only 30 years old, and reaching 50 years I feel puts us in a much more mature category," Nikore wrote. "I feel that back then we were a young innovative school building a new kind of curriculum (which we actually were doing with Dean Podolny then), and that now we have the wisdom while also maintaining that innovative spirit."

Joel Podolny was dean of the School of Management between 2005 and 2008. He is "widely credited" with transforming the school's curriculum.

Liu recalled a time when the School of Management was only around 15 years old, when "there was even a question of whether school should even exist," as she put it.

"To know that we are now 50 years old is an incredible thing," Liu said. "I feel like SOM has become the school that I thought I was going to, and that we're delivering on the promise that the founders had in the 1970s, and that's pretty cool."

The Edward P. Evans Hall, where the Yale School of Management is now located, was opened in 2014.

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