NEWS

"One bad apple don't / Spoil the whole bunch, girl"
ONE BAD APPLE THE OSMONDS

McInnis talks investigations, trustees and Yale's 325th anniversary

BY ARIA LYNN-SKOV
STAFF REPORTER

Yale President Maurie McInnis sat down with the News on Wednesday, about halfway through a semester marked by scrutiny of University policy — both from the federal government and from the Yale community.

Three of Yale's schools are under investigation for alleged admissions discrimination by the Department of Justice, and administrators have come under fire from a broad coalition of faculty and students who demand shared governance and academic freedom protections. McInnis was caught on a hot mic last weekend discussing that coalition, called "Democratize Yale," with Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis. She also said during that conversation that "trustees are exhausting."

McInnis said this week that it would have been more accurate to say that the meetings are exhausting. She also discussed Yale's 325th anniversary — and an 1828 report on Yale College academics, which she said was a pivotal moment in Yale's history.

McInnis downplays Justice Department discussions

Yale is negotiating with the Trump administration over an investigation into the School of Medicine's admissions practices. The findings in that inquiry were released by the Department of Justice in May, which was the first news of a yearlong investigation into the school that began in April 2025.

McInnis said on Wednesday that investigations into Yale College and Law School began approximately at the same time as the School of Medicine investigation. The University has received "no additional findings" since the medical school letter, McInnis said on Wednesday.

The president also said she does not know all the details on data the Justice Department has requested, but that no individual student names "would be ever identified" in information given to the government.

On Wednesday, McInnis challenged the use of the term "settlement" and said she would describe Yale not as being in "talks" or "conversations" with the federal government.

"Talks is not a word I would use to describe it either," she said. "I wouldn't describe it as conversation, either. I would describe it as clarifications on data that they have received."

In a July message to the Yale community where McInnis broke her silence on the admissions investigations, she wrote that "federal law provides a process for the parties to engage in seeking a voluntary resolution" and that "Yale is currently engaged in this process of talking and listening."

When asked if a settlement could have implications beyond the medical school, McInnis said "one part of a university is all of the university." Yale College and Yale Law School are also under Justice Department investigation for admissions practices but have not received findings.

After news broke of Yale's negotiations with the Trump administration over the summer, faculty, students and alumni expressed concerns about the impacts of a potential settlement. Yale submitted a second proposal in July after its first was rejected, and the status of a potential settlement remains unclear. McInnis has not confirmed or commented on Yale's proposals.

She also confirmed that Richmond-based law firm McGuireWoods, which negotiated the University of Virginia's deal with the Trump administration, is representing the University. She did not say why Yale hired the firm, which is one of multiple who McInnis said represent Yale.

McInnis says trustee meetings are exhausting — 'and they should be'

During the conversation with Lewis that was caught on hot mic, McInnis said, "trustees are exhausting," adding, "although it will be better without Josh. I can already tell." Two trustees named Joshua recently concluded their terms: Joshua Steiner '87 this summer and Joshua Bekenstein '80 in 2025.

In a Sunday statement, McInnis said she "very much" regrets her remarks.

"It would have been more accurate to say trustee meetings are exhausting," she said in the Wednesday interview. "They are, and they should be. Meetings are rigorous, we have really important work to do. We start early in the morning, we continue until late at night, and it involves really hard questions and really hard conversations about really important topics."



GARRETT CURTIS / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR
Yale President Maurie McInnis said Justice Department inquiries into the College and Law School began around the same time as the one into the School of Medicine, which launched in April 2025. Only the medical school has received findings from the department.

She declined to specify which Josh she was referring to when speaking with Lewis.

"It is not appropriate for me to engage in that conversation," she said.

The trustees said they had "full confidence" in McInnis in a Monday statement, and that the board and McInnis remain committed to working together.

Yale's board of trustees are the University's highest governing body, and oversee significant financial policy changes such as altering the endowment spending rate. The trustees "have an obligation to ensure that Yale is stronger when they leave it than when they started their work," McInnis said on Wednesday.

"I love that what they bring to our meetings is hard questioning. Their advice and counsel inevitably deepens my thinking and my understanding of the work we need to do at Yale, and I am so deeply grateful to each one of them," McInnis said. "I look forward to the meetings because they are so indispensable. By the same token, I am exhausted when they are over."

During the hot-mic conversation with Lewis, McInnis also spoke about student organizers with Democratize Yale who approached her at an event the previous day, referring to one as "pissed off."

McInnis did not say whether or not she would apologize to the student she referred to as "pissed off," but said she regrets the words she used to describe her interaction with the student.

"I can imagine that she approached me because of her passion and love and care for Yale. That is something that we share, a passion and commitment to Yale," she said. "I love Yale, I want to protect Yale."

Students have criticized the way she spoke about the student. When asked if she frequently speaks about students in this manner in private, McInnis reiterated that she regrets her words and referred to her Sunday statement.

Yale at 325: Learning a lesson from 1828

Last Friday, Yale celebrated its 325th anniversary. Looking back on over three centuries of the University, McInnis said she thinks "very hard" about significant and pivotal moments in Yale's history.

"I think we are in one today that resembles one 200 years ago, when a scientific revolution then was pressing on the question of what should a Yale education be like?" she said, pointing to a 19th-century Yale report on course instruction in the College.

The 1828 report came as colleges including Amherst had begun shifting away from the classical curriculum. Yale faculty at the time advocated for classical education and denounced programs for professional preparation. McInnis said that report "firmly defined what a liberal arts education was."

"They said the purpose of expanding your intellectual capacities is to form the discipline and the furniture of the mind. The furniture of the mind in 1828 for Yale was grounded in learning Greek and Latin and studying the classics," she said. "I would say we're in another similar scientific revolution, where we need to ask the question, what is the purpose of a Yale education?"

Rev. Jeremiah Day, who graduated Yale College in 1795, was president of the University when the 1828 report was released.

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Local Yemeni cafe boom boosted by competition and coffee culture

BY EMILEE RICE
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Yemeni cafes are popping up across New Haven as part of a nationwide boom.

Arwa Yemeni Coffee opened on Orange Street last December, followed by M2 Mocha on Ashmun Street in May. Two more cafes — Qahwah House and Jabal Coffee — are planning to open in the next year. The owners of two local coffee shops and a Yemeni scholar attributed the growth to a spirit of competition between Yemeni entrepreneurs and coffee's prominence in their country's culture.

"I think coffee's more than just drinking something," Valeed Hussain, one of Arwa's owners, said. "Coffee is something that brings people together."

The drink has deep roots in Yemen's history. According to popular legend, commercial coffee arrived in the country after the leader of a 14th century Sufi order — an organized spiritual lineage — brought the beverage from Ethiopia. Beginning in the 15th century, coffee was the primary export from the southeast Yemeni port city Mocha.

Hussain said that in Yemen, cafes fill a role that bars play in other countries. Drinking culture is less central in Yemen and neighboring regions, so people there gather in coffee shops, sometimes staying until 4 a.m instead of going out to clubs and bars, according to Hussain.

Hussain said he and his brother wanted to bring that kind of space to the United States. Arwa and M2 Mocha are both open on weekdays until 10 p.m., and Arwa keeps its doors open until midnight on weekends.

Waleed Aljahmi, the owner of M2 Mocha, said he anticipates that competition among the cafes in New Haven will only increase their business. Despite being competitors, Arab cafe owners support and are close to one another, according to Aljahmi.

"We are like family," Aljahmi said.

Yemenis with means have "always been competing with each other," Muhammad Aziz, a senior lecturer of Arabic at Yale and a board member of the National Yemeni Arab American Association, said.

Hussain said he was surprised to see how much the community embraced him after he opened Arwa.

"Being in the community, working with Yale, working with other companies that want to do events, was very, very influential for us," Hussain said.

Both Aljahmi and Aziz pointed to the success of the coffee chain Starbucks as a factor that has motivated Yemeni investors to get involved in the cafe business.

"It's like gas. Nobody can move with no coffee," Aljahmi said.

The year 2025 saw a 50 percent increase in Yemeni cafes run by six major chains across the United States. Arwa Coffee, Qahwah House and Jabal Coffee are all part of large chains, while M2 Mocha is not a franchise.

Hussain, who is Pakistani, said he was not planning on opening a cafe until he was closer to retirement, but was inspired to bring Arwa to New Haven after going to a Texas location while visiting family. After visiting an empty storefront at 335 Orange St., he decided he "had to do something" and secured a lease for the property.

Aziz said he frequents the Arwa location on Orange Street, and that despite its Pakistani ownership, the cafe has been able to stay true to the style of Yemeni cafes and the taste of Yemeni coffee.

Aljahmi said that he opened M2 Mocha with Yale students in mind. The cafe, which is steps away from the Yale Health Center, offers a discount to Yale students and faculty and has a separate room in the back for students to study. The space can also be used for club meetings or celebrations, according to Aljahmi.

Conflicts in the Middle East over the last few years have complicated shipments of Yemeni coffee to the United States, stemming in part from Houthi attacks on the Red Sea.

According to Aljahmi, shipments from Yemen now have to be taken by truck to Oman and then shipped out of an Omani port, which raises the cost of shipping. Aljahmi said he would never get coffee beans from another country because Yemeni beans "are the best in the world."

The word for mocha, a popular type of latte, originates from Mocha, Yemen, which was once a major export hub for coffee.

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ETHAN SULLIVAN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Two Yemeni cafes have opened in New Haven in the past year, and two more are set to open in the coming months. Some new enterprises stay open late, mimicking at a smaller scale the social cafe culture of Yemen.