FROM THE FRONT

"I'm waiting for it, that green light, I want it"
LORDE GREEN LIGHT

Distancing herself from Yale's sparing as faculty assess strategy

McINNIS FROM PAGE 1

herself largely refrained from commenting on Trump and his clashes with universities. The month before Trump was elected president, McInnis adopted a report from the Committee on Institutional Voice that advised Yale leaders to limit their public statements on "matters of public, social, or political significance," except in "rare cases."

Professors recently interviewed by the News generally agreed that managing persistent threats from the federal government has been a critical part of her tenure as president. Many of them praised McInnis' response to Trump because Yale has avoided the cuts many of its peers have faced. Some, however, said they wished McInnis had emerged as a more public defender of higher education.

"I wouldn't have said before the, you know, recent years, you know, that it was the job of the president to lobby or to organize lobbying of the administration, but she's been successful at that," Paul Freedman, a history professor, said in a phone interview. "It pains me a little that the president should have to spend so much time dealing with Washington."

When asked whether she has met with members of the Trump administration, McInnis told a News reporter, "I don't know what you mean by members of the Trump administration."

"I have met with many lawmakers, many elected officials, and some people who are in a variety of the governmental agencies," she added. McInnis clarified that she has not met with anyone who works in the White House.

McInnis has regularly traveled to Washington, D.C., to "defend and speak to Yale's mission," she previously told the News. Over the summer, administrators solicited student statements to help in the University's lobbying push, and Yale has sponsored students' meetings with members of Congress.

"What keeps me up at night is always making sure that we can protect the work that we do here — the work that we do in patient care and research and the delivery of the educational opportunities for our students," McInnis said on Wednesday.

In February, Republican Rep. Mike Lawler of New York posted a photo with McInnis at his office in Washington, D.C.

"I was glad to meet with Yale President Maurie McInnis to discuss strengthening higher education and better aligning it with today's workforce needs," Lawler wrote on X. "Preparing students for success is critical to our country's economic future."

For some professors, McInnis' behind-the-scenes approach in Washington has been a positive trademark of her presidency.

Jing Yan, a molecular, cellular and developmental biology professor, said he has not interacted much with McInnis but mentioned "an open info session to all faculty," where McInnis described working to convince alumni and policymakers on Capitol Hill about "the importance of education and the contribution of Yale to education and beyond." He wrote to the News that the University's efforts to avoid cuts "somehow works" but did not know how.

Leslie Brisman, an English professor, said he thought it was "initially so disappointing" that McInnis and other university leaders did not "get together and collectively resist" what he refers to as "the outrageous assault of the Trump administration on academic freedom."

However, Brisman has come to appreciate McInnis' approach.

"It became clear that universities could do better with individualized 'deals,' however loathsome," Brisman wrote to the News. "So it is very much to President McInnis' credit that Yale has so far gotten off relatively easy."

James Berger, who teaches American studies, said in a phone interview that elite institutions with resources like Yale should "stand up" and that University presidents should be "at the barricades."

"How she handles the endowment donors, you know, dealing with the intricacies of dealing with a Trump administration, the best way to do that is to just be really clear on what higher education is about and stand up for it," Berger said.

Daniel HoSang, a professor in the American Studies department who is the president of Yale's chapter of the American Association of University Professors, said in a phone interview that "there's a set of faculty who are not displeased" by McInnis' focus on "institutional preservation." Yet he shared concerns that many faculty "feel very much on their own" in standing up against the Trump administration's crackdown on universities.

"They're having to individually navigate hazards about whether their research will be attacked, whether they'll face censure — the issues in the world, whether they'll be addressed," HoSang said. "I think it's been demoralizing, and I say that about the climate, not about President McInnis."

In response to concerns that faculty members have felt on their own in standing up to the Trump administration, University spokesperson Karen Peart pointed to the Committee on Institutional Voice's report as an explanation for why McInnis has not made more public statements.

"The president accepted the committee's recommendations, and she considers these recommendations when making decisions on speaking on behalf of the university," Peart wrote.

McInnis announced her acceptance of the committee's recommendations on Oct. 30, 2024.

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Christinia Lee / Senior Photographer
Some faculty have commended University President Maurie McInnis for keeping Yale out of the Trump administration's crosshairs, but she said in an interview on Wednesday that she doesn't think she deserves "either credit or blame."

Talks go on as mayor nears budget deadline

CONTRIBUTION FROM PAGE 1

ident for New Haven affairs and University properties — over Zoom on Wednesday. Callahan oversaw talks in 2021.

"We're getting to a good place," Fernandez said in a Wednesday interview. "Whether or not we get to a good place by Saturday, I don't know."

He said that Yale and New Haven have to reach an agreement where both parties "feel like they won."

"Sometimes a deadline helps get you there. And sometimes a deadline can be a little arbitrary, and maybe you need a little extra time," Fernandez added. "If you ask me, 'Is this something that's going to get settled in June?' I would say, 'No, I think we'll get it done before then.'"

In addition to Yale's annual payment, Fernandez said he is renegotiating an agreement in which the University temporarily offsets the lost tax revenue of properties it purchases — which are thus removed from the city's tax rolls — with payments that decrease over time.

In December, Elicker said he was "cautiously optimistic" that negotiations would wrap before March 1.

Asked Wednesday if his feelings had shifted, he said only that "it's right around the corner. So, we'll see."

In March 2021 — eight months before Yale and New Haven arrived at a deal — Elicker presented two budgets to the Board of Alders. One planned for an increase in Yale's voluntary contribution. The other, called the "Crisis Budget," envisioned city spending without additional help from Yale; it proposed raising taxes by nearly 8 percent and shutting down a library, a senior center and a fire station.

Neither Fernandez nor the mayor's spokesperson confirmed whether or not Elicker plans to present two budgets again this Friday.

How much?

Last month, leaders of Yale's UNITE HERE unions stood alongside politicians at a Martin Luther King Jr. Day rally held outside Sheffield-Sterling-Strathcona Hall to demand the University increase its annual payment to $110 million for the next fiscal year — over four times Yale's contribution in recent years.

UNITE HERE Local 34 spokesperson Ian Dunn told the News that the $110 million figure is meant to compensate for the property taxes Yale would have paid in the most recent fiscal year if it were not a tax-exempt nonprofit, subtracting the $16 million contribution under the current agreement and more than $100 million in state funds intended to offset the lost property tax revenue.

"It's not a retroactive repayment," Dunn said in a phone interview. "$106 million only accounts for what we lost in the last fiscal year; it doesn't make up for past gaps in contribution from the University."

Asked where the additional $4 million came from, Dunn said there was "no exact formula" for calculating what Yale owes New Haven, but that this is the "best estimate" for the next fiscal year.

Daum wrote in an email to the News on Feb. 17 that Yale "values its close partnership with New Haven" and that Yale's voluntary financial contribution to the city — around $23 or $24 million under the 2021 deal, before the upcoming scheduled drop-off — is "the most significant commitment to a local community made by any higher education institution across the country."



Daniel Zhao

When asked last week if he supported the unions' demand for an $110 million, Elicker did not make the demand himself but he said he would welcome the amount.

"I completely endorse Yale giving New Haven $110 million," he said.

But David Schleicher, a professor of urban law at Yale Law School, is skeptical.

"I mean, they can ask for whatever they want. But, no, that's not even within a country mile of being in the ballpark of being anywhere close to being feasible or reasonable," Schleicher wrote in an email.

Board of Alders President Tyisha Walker-Myers — who is the chief steward of Local 35, the union of Yale's dining and facilities workers — continues to back the $110 million demand.

Speaking earlier this month, she urged Yale to "do the right thing and be our partner," emphasizing that increased money from Yale would be essential in New Haven's attempt to offset federal cuts to programs like SNAP and Medicaid.

"The Trump administration is not just affecting New Haven; this is affecting y'all too. I would think it would be best to help your neighbors," she said.

Yale has tightened its own budget and taken steps to shrink its workforce in anticipation of an increased federal endowment tax that is expected to cost roughly $300 million each year.

Asked Wednesday whether the University planned to increase its yearly contribution to New Haven, McInnis did not answer the question. She instead pointed to Yale's other financial commitments to the city — including a $10 million teacher fellowship program; New Haven Promise, which as of mid-2023 had helped over 1,000 New Haveners earn bachelor's degrees; and the Center for Inclusive Growth.

"The voluntary contribution is merely additional money that we are investing in the city's budget," McInnis said.

For Elicker, the fungible lump sum is critical.

"It's important for Yale to make a financial payment to the city and to respect the city enough to understand what's the most appropriate way to use those funds," he said.

Elicker proposed a $703.7 million general fund budget for the city on Feb. 28 last year.

Asher Boiskin and Nellie Kenney contributed reporting.

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Literary magazine will also scale back online presence

FESTIVAL FROM PAGE 1

In the Instagram announcement, O'Rourke said that due to funding reductions, the journal will also prioritize its quarterly print and reduce online publishing in order to maintain free access to its online page. She said the quarterly print edition, Poem of the Week series and Shakespeare and Company interviews will continue to be published on their website, along with "occasional online pieces."

O'Rourke said that the festival will return in the spring of 2027.

"Pausing allows us to fundraise and secure the support necessary to underwrite the festival over the next five years," she wrote.

O'Rourke was appointed executive editor of the magazine in 2019, and under her leadership, The Yale Review launched a new website in May 2021, which replaced the placeholder webpage the journal had for the previous two years. The updated website featured their print issue as well as exclusive online content.

In an editor's note published for the website's launch, O'Rourke said that "the challenge of ushering The Yale Review into the 21st century" with online publication is what garnered her interest in the journal.

In her email to the News, O'Rourke remarked on the "rapid growth" The Yale Review has undergone since she became executive editor.

"I'm grateful for the strong support of the university's humanities leadership," she wrote to the News. "I remain hopeful that Yale can see investment in The Yale Review as investment in exactly the kind of rigorous public intellectual life the university aspires to model for the country."

The literary journal was renamed The Yale Review in 1892, according to its website.

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