

# Yale

To: The Yale Community  
From: Donna Dubinsky, Senior Trustee (2016-2018)  
Catharine Hill, Senior Trustee (2018-present)  
Date: August 31, 2018  
Re: 2018 Institutional Assessment

---

In the spring of 2018, Yale's board of trustees undertook an institutional assessment. This process has been conducted approximately every five years since 1998 and serves to further inform the trustees, including the president, about the issues and opportunities facing the university. This cycle, the institutional assessment was more open than in previous years, with more people interviewed, a web form for all members of the Yale community to submit written comments, and the creation of this memorandum to share information on the themes that emerged.

The trustees gathered feedback by interviewing over 100 people, including: the vice presidents; the deans of Yale College, the FAS, and the graduate and professional schools; members of the faculty across the university; key directors and administrators; and more than two dozen students. Trustees also interviewed leaders in the Greater New Haven community, several leaders in higher education nationally, as well as alumni leaders and other volunteers. In addition, information about the institutional assessment and an invitation to submit comments were made available to all members of the Yale community. We received submissions on the webform from 254 alumni, faculty, staff, students, and community members. We briefed President Salovey at the June board meeting about what we heard.

President Salovey and his leadership team have embraced this input and are committed to keeping Yale among the leading universities in the world, while continually reimagining its future and how best to excel as a global university of consequence.

In our interviews, we first sought feedback on the last five years: what went well, and what could have been done better? We then turned to the future in order to garner insights on the university's direction. We summarize the feedback below.

## Looking Back

In looking back over the last five years, many respondents made positive comments about the opening of the new residential colleges and the moves to make Yale more accessible and affordable to those from less affluent backgrounds. (We have increased the number of Pell grant-eligible students in Yale College from 11.6% to 19.7% in just five years and have increased the number of first generation college students from 11.9% to 17.9% in the same time period. Combined with the overall expansion of Yale College, there are now nearly twice as many Pell-eligible and 75% more first-generation undergraduates in each class as compared to five years ago.)

Many people who participated in the assessment had supportive things to say about the proposed investments in science and other aspects of the academic plan being developed and discussed, the restoration of financial equilibrium and prudent budgeting practices, the new decanal structure of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, various building projects, the settling of contracts with our unions, and our partnerships both around the world and with our host city of New Haven. Some specifically identified positives of the last five years also included the significant strengthening of the School of Management during this period, the appointment of strong deans of various schools, and the recent success of so many of our varsity athletic teams.

In terms of shortfalls, many participants in the institutional assessment felt that the Calhoun College renaming question and the campus unrest in the fall of 2015 could have been handled better. Views were divided on the renaming question itself, although many people mentioned that they were pleased with the published principles that they feel will serve Yale and others well going forward.

Both students and faculty were dissatisfied with progress on hiring and retaining a more diverse faculty. More broadly, faculty recruitment and retention were mentioned frequently as challenges.

Many alumni were worried about issues of free expression on campus, with specific concern that self-censorship may compromise an open intellectual environment where all points of view are expressed and debated. These alumni felt that Yale should reaffirm its commitment to the notion of free inquiry, even on controversial subjects, as being at the heart of the university.

## Looking Ahead

We also asked people to comment on Yale's greatest opportunities and challenges going forward. Although we heard many comments about specific schools, departments, and programs, we highlight here those areas that have a broad and strategic focus. We were pleased to observe that the themes identified align closely with the work underway on campus. There was eagerness for Yale to be ambitious in academic planning. Assessment participants urged us to have a bold vision and "dream big" about Yale's future, especially with respect to the impact Yale can have on the world. The current academic plan was supported: major investments in selected areas of science and engineering including data science and computer science; building expertise in data-driven policy-relevant social sciences; bringing the humanities together and encouraging interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching campus-wide; and increasing the influence of the arts throughout Yale.

There was particular interest in our moving thoughtfully but efficiently in implementing the strategy for science and engineering campus-wide, with defined milestones and an achievable resource plan.

A theme that was articulated clearly is that the excellence of Yale depends on the excellence of our faculty. Many participants provided helpful suggestions about ways to attract, recruit, and retain the very best scholars and educators. The importance of increasing the diversity of our faculty was reinforced, and we were encouraged to examine how we can do better in both

recruitment and retention. The need to address the challenges of dual-career couples was cited as one of the more important aspects of faculty development that would benefit from fresh thinking.

Many of those interviewed were enthusiastic about opportunities to work across schools and departments, and noted that Yale is particularly well-suited to encourage these collaborations. There is wide-spread confidence that boundary-crossing research and teaching will have particular impact. We must continue to identify and reduce structural barriers that inhibit cross-disciplinary activities.

Many members of the Yale community were concerned about the atmosphere on campus going forward. There was strong consensus that we need to be both a welcoming university that values diversity, equity, and inclusion and a university that does not compromise with respect to encouraging diverse viewpoints, open inquiry, and free expression. Many interviewees suggested that we consider how to strengthen the communication of our values on these issues.

On the national level, there is a growing need to make visible the contributions of our country's leading universities, whether through our scholarship and research, practice and service, fantastic collections, or the education of future leaders for all aspects of society throughout the world. Yale should be part of significant national conversations about access, innovation, and service. We should continue to improve our ability to communicate effectively our vision to the world and within our own campus community.

Finally, for the last 25 years Yale has worked diligently to be an active and engaged citizen and partner in and with the City of New Haven. We must sustain our commitment in the years ahead for both the city and the university to thrive. Similarly, at present, the State of Connecticut is facing significant challenges. Many participants in the institutional assessment expressed the hope that Yale will be an engaged citizen of the state as well, and that our expertise and efforts can become part of the solution.

The trustees would like to thank those who participated in the institutional assessment, whether by providing thoughtful feedback in the interviews and in the written comments, or by providing staff assistance to the trustees.