

FAS Senate

AN ELECTED BODY OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
YALE UNIVERSITY

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Results of 2021-22 Faculty Focus Groups on Endowment Spending Priorities

Yale FAS/SEAS Faculty Senate Budget Committee

Chairs: Gerald Jaynes, Valerie Horsley

Members: Hélène Landemore, Larry Samuelson, Jason Stanley, Dara Strolovitch, Jing Yan, and Alessandro Gomez

Purpose: This is a revised version of the Spending Priorities Report composed by the 21-22 Budget Committee, which was chaired by Gerald Jaynes and Paul North. The aim of the current document is to communicate to the Deans of FAS, SEAS, the divisional Deans, and the Provost FAS/SEAS faculty views on spending from the newly expanded endowment. The faculty concurred on two main recommendations. 1. Emend the funding structure and the decision-making process. Funding decisions should be made locally whenever possible, and a standing faculty committee should advise the Dean of FAS on both routine and extraordinary spending decisions. 2. Redress the deficits in programs, faculty life, graduate life, and other areas, created by a decade of budget austerity.

Background: The endowment increased by approximately one-quarter over the past 4 years, and based on the 5.25% spending rule, a large amount of new funds is available to the community for yearly use.

At the request of the Senate Executive committee, the Budget Committee in 2021-22 constituted an ad hoc committee to gather faculty input on spending priorities for the new Endowment income. Members of the ad hoc committee were solicited from all divisions. The final committee membership was: Gerald Jaynes, Economics, African American Studies; Paul North, German; Phil Gorski, Sociology; Gregory Huber, Political Science; Ian Quinn, Music; Greta LaFleur, American Studies; Helen Caines, Physics; Holly Rushmeier, Computer Science; Priyamvada Natarajan, Physics, Astronomy; Dara Strolovitch, Political Science, WGSS, American Studies.

Between Dec 13, 2021 and Jan 27, 2022, the committee met in 10 separate meetings with chairs and program and center directors across the school, all in all talking to about 35 FAS (and SEAS) unit leaders. We asked what needs are not being met and what areas should be grown in their units and in larger areas of the FAS and SEAS. These representatives of FAS and SEAS units made many specific requests, some of which we list below. We only included items that were raised by more than one leader. At the same time, representatives across the divisions and in vastly different fields made three general recommendations about Yale's fiscal atmosphere. We include specific comments from our interviews in Appendix I. Below, we provide general and specific recommendations from these interviews.

Structural/Decision-Making Recommendations:

1. **Form a standing budget advisory committee** made up of FAS/SEAS faculty to review and recommend spending decisions with the Deans and Provost. This ensures faculty input on decisions that directly affect their ability to research, teach, and serve.
2. The University should **adopt a more rational structure of funding**, so that funds for FAS and SEAS, including those from Yale College, are administered by the FAS and SEAS Deans.
3. Linked to this issue is a widespread conviction that **as funds are unified under a FAS and SEAS budget, a percentage of them should be seated even more locally**, in the budgets of divisional deans and chairs, so that those who know the needs of specific areas can be those who decide. Secondly, Unit directors agreed that, broadly speaking, **Yale should lead rather than follow in important areas such as recruitment and retention, graduate stipends, and teaching loads**. On this topic, there was agreement that several **centers and programs that are highly productive and central to faculty activity remain underfunded**. The Whitney Humanities Center is a prime example. We recommend taking an active stance to generously fund busy, highly networked programs rather than allowing them to languish.
4. **Funds for research, teaching, travel, conference production, and other projects should be generous, well-advertised and made accessible** without excessive hoop jumping. These barriers not only make faculty and staff work inefficient but also gives the impression of mistrust of the faculty by leadership.

Program Recommendations:

These specific recommendations from the focus group discussions present spending initiatives that can be accomplished in the short run. There was a general sense that more than a decade of austerity has left the faculty and its units unable to carry out Yale's mission effectively.

We list FAS and SEAS spending priorities in four broad categories: 1) FAS and SEAS Departments and Programs; 2) Faculty Well-being, Recruitment & Retention; 3) Graduate Student Well-being, and Recruitment, and 4) "Other," which contains important priorities.

FAS and SEAS Departments, Programs, and Centers

1. Chairs universally agreed that many department and program operating budgets are grossly inadequate to cover academic and research activities such as funding conferences,

speaker series, and student activities, participating in equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts and even buying furniture. Departments need pre-committed discretionary funds to pursue project(s) beyond just keeping their units going. (See point 2 of this report)

- a. Yale should institutionalize a pass-through to departments that is some multiple of the # of faculty (plus GS/PD) with a generous minimum budget for small units and units without endowments.

2. At a time of growth of administrative positions elsewhere in the University, the numbers of staff directly supporting the research and teaching of faculty in departments and programs have atrophied over the past decades. Current funding levels and structure of ITS support in the FAS and SEAS, for example, make it difficult for faculty to access support for teaching, research, and events. This limits our efficiency, diminishes the professional online presence of Yale, and generally makes it difficult to fulfill the university's mission. Another example is the lack of local support for Facilities, which causes delays in renovations and other projects, preventing departments and programs to work at their maximal efficiency. Previously at Yale and currently at some peer institutions – and at Yale's own law school – faculty assistants are provided to clusters of 15-20 faculty members.

- a. Staff assistance for faculty should return to pre-Great Recession levels.

3. Given increased workloads and responsibilities, Chair compensation is too low (and varies inequitably) especially given that departmental work continues into the summer months. Less wealthy institutions provide chairs 1 to 2 ninths, or a flat amount between \$25-30K.

- a. Raise chairs supplementary compensation to 2/9 salary
- b. Chairs should receive a research assistant or research funds to help keep their research going.

4. While Yale has committed to filling vacant positions and increasing FAS and SEAS faculty numbers, the number of full-time faculty needs to increase to match the increase in the size of the undergraduate student body.

- a. Yale should increase faculty searches and fill vacant FAS and SEAS lines even more aggressively.
- b. Yale should address long-term issues requiring more FAS and SEAS slots.

5. Underfunded and overworked programs and centers should be assessed and funded or added to a capital campaign for an endowment. Ideally, there would be a mechanism publicly known for taking a thriving project and getting rolling funding assigned to it.

- a. **Whitney Humanities Center.** Massively underfunded for what it does and what it should do. Real competitive fellowships for faculty members, more external fellows and post-docs, especially mid-career fellows (a successful program previously funded by Mellon). The consensus is that the WHC should be as well supported for the Humanities as the MacMillan is for the Social Sciences, and this will require access to donors.

b. **Yale Prison Education Initiative (YPEI).** This initiative is supported by faculty from all divisions, who feel that Yale is not sufficiently supporting the initiative either monetarily or in terms of pedagogical resources.

c. **ARCHAIA.** A program with a good track record of pedagogical and scholarly projects. Needs funds for sending students of the ancient worlds to do site and archival research.

d. **Translation Initiative.** Expand and fund generously.

e. **Art programming.** Integrate art-making and art-makers into the life of the FAS and SEAS. Cross-fertilization between practitioners and scholars is mutually beneficial. Artists, filmmakers, photographers, writers, and other creatives are to the Humanities and Social Sciences what industry is to the sciences, a source, and a destination.

f. **Society of Fellows.** Unit directors uniformly agree that Yale is lacking a society of fellows type program to bring the most promising recent PhDs to Yale for 2-4 years. This is a career making and enhancing opportunity, not an opportunity for teaching labor. We suggest 10 fellows who do interdisciplinary work, distributed across departments in a fair manner.

Faculty Well-Being, Recruitment & Retention

1. Compensation: The university has made important progress in redressing the comparative losses in ladder faculty salary competitiveness (especially with respect to recruitment and retention of faculty with outside offers, but it can be even more aggressive in eliminating remaining gaps. These issues are compounded by a steep rise in the cost of living, especially housing, in the New Haven area, even as housing assistance has not increased since the program was introduced.

a. Set a competitive and generous floor for salaries, research packages, and housing assistance in offers that reflects the wealth of an institution committed to being a leader not a follower in recruiting and retaining a world-class faculty.

b. Revisit the raise structure to set more equitable internal salary gaps among faculty.

c. Review the current cut-off for university retirement contributions and adjust total life benefit upward to meet current needs.

d. Increase the Yale death benefit, which is currently too low for dignified end of life services.

e. Review and decrease cost of health benefits.

2. Research and travel funds are often inadequate and often below peer institutions.

a. Increase research funds for junior faculty, especially in the humanities.

- b. Set standards allowing faculty research funds to be banked to save for large projects and make renewals of research funding automatic when and where appropriate.
 - c. Increase FAS and SEAS research and conference travel funds so that they are enough to cover travel and lodging and provide 2 guaranteed trips/year (as of now 1 trip for junior faculty is funded). Furthermore, the per diems for hotels are often lower than conference rates at meetings or reasonable accommodations at research sites.
 - d. Provide annual funding for non-ladder instructional faculty to cover expenses to participate in research, conferences, and other professional development activities.
 - e. Innovate a set of funded research opportunities within Yale. The centers, WHC and MacMillan can be given funding for competitive fellowships for ladder and instructive faculty for a semester without teaching, beyond the triennial leaves. A Society of Fellows, if instituted, could include faculty members, whose university obligations are reduced in kind.
 - f. Reduce/eliminate graduate student tuition paid by faculty from research funds.
3. Leaves: Yale's faculty leave policies are very generous, but Yale makes it unnecessarily difficult to take a full year of leave, which can interfere with scholarly innovations and productivity.
- a. Relax restrictions on full-year leaves by allowing faculty to take a full year at half pay, by allowing external funding to add to triennial leaves, and by allowing banking of half-year leaves. Another solution would be to allow faculty to teach virtually from the place where they are taking a semester leave (so faculty can travel for an entire year, which some fields require for productive research time).
 - b. Have more top-up funding available for external fellowships that do not reach full salary.
4. Assess pay scales and standards for instructional faculty annually and in accordance with principles of equity.
5. Increase Yale's tuition benefit for faculty children to attend college.

Graduate Student Well-Being & Recruitment

1. Address the tension between university objectives to shape graduate student population to realistic job prospects and having enough graduate students to assist in teaching undergraduate classes. A post-doc program that allows some grad students to finish their dissertations and get teaching experience would ease the tension. Some internal funding of graduate students during their initial 2 to 3 years would alleviate severe TF shortages in the sciences and enhance diversity recruiting because such recruitment would become a departmental decision not dependent on individual faculty members' research budgets.

- a. Actively and regularly raise graduate student stipends to avoid recent lags behind some of Yale's competitor and peer institutions.
 - b. Provide funding for some science graduate students during their initial years to offset drops in federal funding.
- 2. Graduate student life is as affected by global events and trends as faculty life. More flexibility should be built into the educational path to help in confronting them.
 - a. Robust investment in expanding mental health services for graduate students
 - b. More assistance, such as tutoring and writing assistance, for first generation undergraduate students
 - c. Official time to degree should be distinguished from actual time to degree, so that leaves can be taken more frequently that stop the PhD clock.
 - d. Establish "bridge funding" possibilities for students between the PhD and the first academic job. The Alumni fellowships are a model for this kind of program. Many suggested a program or a network to keep or send out Yale PhDs, on a competitive basis, for a 1–2-year postdoc. This is not only a bridge to a first job but gives a significant leg up on research that contributes to the students academic profile.
- 3. Eliminate COVID paybacks. With the new endowment spending, departments should not be responsible for COVID extensions for graduate students.

Other

- 1. Responsibility towards people not enrolled: New Haven is the university's home. It is also its audience and a fertile ground for artists, activists, thinkers, poets, businesspeople, not to mention immigrant communities and the poor, all of whom
 - a. Increase contributions to the City of New Haven.
 - b. Course equivalents for faculty doing communitarian work in the city, including but not exclusively Yale Prison Education Initiative.
- 2. New initiatives.
 - a. Open a Scholars at Risk Chapter and utilize faculty networks to identify potential candidates for semester and year-long stays.