FROM THE FRONT

"I keep turning over new leaves, and spoiling them, as I used to spoil my copy-books; and I make so many beginnings there never will be an end."
LOUISA MAY ALCOTT LITTLE WOMEN

Two newly departing deans will fill Yale College posts

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on Sunday that the fact that three more deans will step down was also "just a coincidence."

Santiago, Ployd and Coppett were all in their first terms as dean — Santiago in her second year and Ployd and Coppett in their third. Galindo is in her fourth year as dean, Francis in his eighth and Mahurin in her 12th.

Lewis said last month that the role of residential college dean comes with fewer long-term career possibilities than an assistant professorship, a role from which faculty members can be promoted to more senior positions. While some residential college deans stay in the role for three or four terms — spanning nine or 12 years — he added that most tenures last only a term or two.

"Being a dean is a great sort of entry-level job," Lewis said on Wednesday. "We would love to keep every dean for around six to nine years and then let them go. But sometimes something comes up and you're in your third year and it's great or sometimes you love being dean so long, you stay for 12 years. There's nothing wrong with that."

Timothy Dwight students praised Mahurin, who has served 12 years as Timothy Dwight dean.

"Having someone so established was a great resource. And I'm just a little bit concerned about someone getting accustomed to the job while I'm getting accustomed to college," Suraj Shah '29 said. "It was just really surprising seeing three deans choosing to take a different job."

Raymond Ellis '29 said Mahurin "has been a very big part of what makes TD so special."

Unlike the other two deans who announced their departures on Friday, Galindo will no longer serve as a Yale administrator after this year. Galindo wrote in a Sunday statement to the News that her "time as dean of Branford has been some of the most profoundly meaningful of my life."

"What I feel more than anything right now is immense gratitude," she wrote in her Friday email to students. "I have had the privilege and honor of walking alongside you for several years, and I hope you will take it from me: I know first-hand how immensely powerful you each are."

Johann Ortiz Castillo '26 characterized Galindo as a "really compassionate person" and a "community pillar," and said that he was "very sad to see her go." He recounted that, during Galindo's first meeting with his class after they moved in first year, "she knew my name. I had never interacted with her."

He added that he thinks the six deans leaving this semester seemed to be "kind of a big number."

"I think it's very telling that they're probably not happy with the University and how they're dealing with politics," Ortiz Castillo speculated.

Lewis told the News last month that Yale College is working on altering its advising system in the coming years, "to where your main adviser will be a residential college dean." Course advice will primarily come from residential college deans as opposed to college advisers, Lewis added.

None of the six departing deans responded to an inquiry asking for their thoughts on those changes to Yale College advising.

Francis, the Hopper dean, and Mahurin, the Timothy Dwight dean, will begin in their new roles on July 1, according to a Friday email that Lewis sent to his colleagues. They will replace current Yale College interim chief of staff Abby Douglas and Risa Sodi GRD '95, the associate dean of academic affairs, respectively.

Lewis said that after he learned earlier this semester that Douglas and Sodi would not continue in their roles this fall, his office "advertised the roles to everyone with an assistant dean–level position in Yale College in early March."

Mahurin and Francis applied for those roles and were interviewed between late March and early April, according to Lewis.

On LinkedIn, a posting for Mahurin's future job dates to about three weeks ago, and a posting for Francis's role has existed for two weeks.

"As Chief of Staff, Dean Francis will run my office and will be closely in touch with all branches of Yale College and other university offices," Lewis wrote in the Friday email. "He will also assist Pam Schirmeister, Deputy Dean of Yale College, on various academic initiatives."

Phineas Scovel '28, a Hopper student, said he did not know Francis very well, but said he was surprised by his departure from the college. Scovel said he thought the trend of departing deans was "kind of indicative that there's changes in the administration."

"Maybe he should figure out why they're all leaving if he says it's a coincidence," he said of Lewis.

On Sunday, Mahurin wrote to the News about her excitement that her new role will allow her to approach advising both as a strategist and through one-on-one meetings with students.

"I will miss TD, my home for 12 years!" she wrote. "I do plan to be an active and engaged member of the college fellowship going forward."

After working at Yale for "36 glorious years," Sodi wrote on Sunday, she decided to leave the post that Mahurin will soon fill because the "timing was right," and because she wanted to join her husband in his retirement.

Lewis said last week — before the three latest dean departures were announced — that his office hopes to conclude the searches for new residential college deans in May.

"We will be bringing some candidates to campus to meet the heads and, if the students are available, the students, but it will mostly be around exam time," Lewis said. "So students may be a little bit busy."

Yale has 14 residential colleges.

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Rick Scott slams Yale for YPU's inviting Hasan Piker

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political union's Tuesday debate on the resolution "End the American Empire." He has previously faced criticism about past remarks including a suggestion that the United States "deserved" the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and statements minimizing sexual violence during the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Israel.

"This is WILD. I spoke at the Yale Political Union last year on why we need to buy made in America products. Now, they are hosting a guy who said I should be killed," Scott wrote in a post on X. "Yale receives billions from the federal government—President Trump and Congress need to IMMEDIATELY revoke it. An elite private university that hosts an antisemite who says a Senator should be killed, capitalists should be killed, and the U.S. deserved 9/11, shouldn't get ONE CENT from taxpayers."

The University has not had its federal funding revoked as part of targeted pressure from the Trump administration, though many faculty members have lamented the impact of the administration's broad cuts to research funding. Many of Yale's peer institutions have faced punitive funding cuts under Trump, and in 2025 the University spent 1.2 million — far more than in previous years — on lobbying efforts.

Yale President Maurie McInnis in October floated the possibility that the political union's culture of open debate had contributed to Yale's avoidance of targeted federal funding cuts. She and Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis met with leaders of the group last month.

Asked about Scott's comments, Yale spokesperson Tina Posterli wrote in a statement to the News: "Yale treats statements advocating violence with the utmost seriousness and condemns any form of hate or discrimination. The university also seeks to balance these concerns with a longstanding commitment to free expression as a fundamental value and a shared responsibility — including for student-run organizations, which issue their own invitations to speakers independent of the university."

Yale Political Union President Mór Szepesi '27 emphasized in an interview with the News that the union does not endorse the speakers it chooses to host.

"We bring in speakers so that we can challenge them on their assumptions and the arguments that they make in this world," Szepesi said. "The fact that a student organization's regular Tuesday debate has become discourse in the national media and has been commented on by prominent politicians and journalists speaks to the idea that our organization, the Yale Political Union, is one that is a central part of not just the Yale experience, but of Yale's unique university experience at large."

"We just bring in someone who's vocal and has influence," Szepesi said. "And Hasan Piker most definitely is vocal and has influence and has a lot to comment on in terms of the specific issues in today's politics today's day and age."

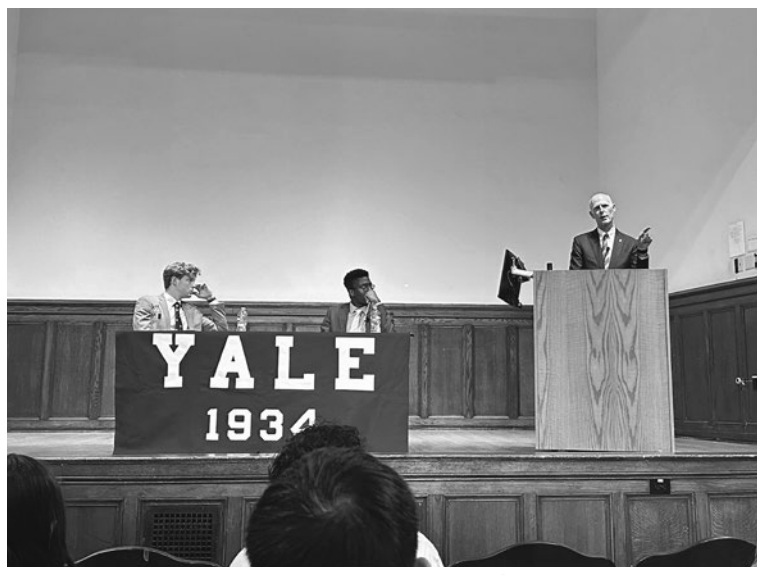
Szepesi said the political union aims for a "balanced guest list" and does "mass outreach" to potential speakers. He said the group does not go through any vetting process with the Yale administration before confirming its speakers.

For Kaustuv Mohanty '29, Piker's value as a speaker on campus comes from his impact among younger audiences as a digital creator through the streaming platform Twitch. That allows the political union to spotlight the influence of "contemporary voices" alongside "traditional academic" ones, Mohanty added.

"In terms of Yale's values, I think that inviting someone does not immediately endorse their actions or what they believe, but rather, invites an opportunity for valuable debates and engagement," Mohanty wrote to the News.

Avi Rao '27, the Yale Political Union's speaker, said in an interview that a week before every debate, he and the floor leaders of the left and the right send out a debate framing which encompasses what the resolution means and what it means to either affirm or negate it. Then, through a process of pitching and workshopping speeches, Rao said, the group's leaders can ensure that the debate is concentrated on the topic instead of a controversy that surrounds the speaker who has been invited.

"We're not having a discussion. We're not having some sort of moderated event where the guest just gets to say what they think," Rao said. "We have a debate where three people on one side and three people on another side discuss and debate what we should do about this topic."



Sara Agrawal / Contributing Photographer
Sen. Rick Scott wrote Friday that Yale should lose its federal funding due to the Yale Political Union's invitation of Hasan Piker, an online political commentator who suggested on a stream that Scott should be killed and is scheduled to speak Tuesday.

Trent Page '28, a member of the union's Party of the Left, told the News that "having Hasan is great for Yale's campus." Page added that "it is very disingenuous to try and cancel" Piker when right-wing figures are "dominating our political sphere" and saying "much more inflammatory things" than him.

Carlos Perez '29, a member of the union's Conservative Party and the president of Turning Point USA's new chapter at Yale, told the News that while he values the YPU's commitment to "ideological diversity," he believes that the debate with Piker is a "very different" situation because of Piker's rhetoric, "which isn't just inflammatory, but is blatantly violent."

"It's language that is very antithetical to the mission of Yale University in terms of promoting an environment of free speech grounded in mutual respect, in pursuit of the good," Perez said. "And ultimately, it's really just anti-American."

When Rick Scott spoke at a Yale Political Union debate in October, the resolution "Buy American" passed by a single vote, 39–38.

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English department forced to reduce writing sections

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section enrollment for English 1014 and English 1015, "Literature Seminars," from 14 to 15.

Wilkinson wrote that his office, which oversees the Teaching Resource Advisory Committee, reduced the number of sections in English courses "based on information on student numbers and past enrollments, and to meet teaching needs in a very constrained budget environment."

Wilkinson added that "English was then able to choose where to distribute those reductions" and that the department then "prioritized areas, like creative writing, where student demand has increased substantially in recent years."

Mohamed, however, wrote that his department wasn't given much choice.

"I would characterize it differently than Dean Wilkinson has done," he wrote. "We were given a reduced allocation across the board, with reductions in expository writing and creative writing. This significantly constrained the degree of choice that we could exercise."

Faculty and students slammed the reductions, expressing concerns about fewer students being able to receive personalized attention in the affected courses.

English senior lecturer Heather Klemann, who co-directs English 1014, wrote in an email to the News that demand for the program has remained consistent or increased over recent years. If 17 sections is the final number for the fall, she added, "we will need to get the message out to deans to encourage first-year students to consider taking 1014 in the spring."

While Wilkinson wrote that programs are still finalizing their fall course offerings and that sections may be added over the coming weeks and the summer, Mohamed told the News that the current offerings for the introductory writing courses are "pretty much final for the fall."

"I would've hoped those making these decisions would have placed more value on undergraduate student learning," Klemann wrote. "Yale students are incredible; they deserve as much."

According to Yale Course Search, 497 students have been enrolled in 45 sections of English 1014 this academic year, averaging around 11 students per section. The 14-person cap for each section has been meant to avoid under-enrolled courses after add/drop period and "target a class size of 12," according to Klemann.

Wilkinson wrote that the increased section size of 15 is "still well within Yale College expectations, in order to allow for individualized attention." He cited the handbook for directors of undergraduate studies, which caps writing seminars at 20 students, with sections led by graduate students capped at 15 students.

English senior lecturer Kim Shirkhani, who directs English 1020, wrote in an email to the News that any significant expansion of section size would make it more difficult to conduct the course's "signature" writing workshop, which is known for "featuring only a few students at a time," Shirkhani added. The student cap for English 1020 has not changed, but the number of sections is dropping by three from last fall to the coming one.

"Given that we're not fully meeting the demand for 1020 seats as it is, with more students coming and fewer sections being offered next year I worry about that math," she wrote.

Ishani Singh '29, who took English 1014 last fall, wrote in an email to the News that the "intimacy" of the course allowed her to improve her writing skills and better connect with her professor and seminar peers.

"I fear that with larger section sizes, it will be hard to discuss topics deeply, and the course loses its meaning and goal," she wrote.

Stella Duran Gonzalez '29, who also took English 1014, wrote in a text message that the program is a "great class" for first years and non-English majors to explore writing and topical interests.

"Cutting offerings would make writing less accessible to those who aren't in the humanities," she wrote. "My fear is that these really valuable learning opportunities and spaces to make friends and express yourself will instead be replaced by extremely large lecture style classes, where making friends and expressing yourself can be difficult and daunting."

Wilkinson wrote that introductory writing courses are offered across Yale College's curriculum "by a variety of departments and programs including English." Many courses will still allow students to fulfill their writing distributional requirements, he added.

English was the seventh most popular major at Yale in fall 2024, according to a University fact sheet.

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