FROM THE FRONT

"The beginning is always today."
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Four remaining presidential hopefuls face off at debate

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New Haven residents. His ticket with Michelle Jimenez '28, who is running for vice president, calls for Yale to "respect us."

During the debate, Walker also promoted divesting Yale's endowment from companies like Palantir and Flock Safety, which he called "exploitative and extractive."

Students this year have made similar requests to the Advisory Committee on Investor Responsibility, which makes divestment recommendations to the Yale Corporation, but their pitches have been rejected. University spokesperson Tina Posterli previously wrote to the News "that just because a topic is reviewed by the ACIR, it does not mean the Endowment holds the investment."

When asked by an audience member when he would make the decision to weigh in on divisive issues as YCC president, Walker, who said he assumed the question was in reference to "popular demands among students," such as divestment, defended his position.

"These things that we're saying are controversial are only controversial if you want to be in finance, or if you want to be a consultant, or if you want to go be in D.C. in two years," Walker said. "The job description is to be a public advocate on behalf of a student body.

And I do have experience advocating loud, vocally, publicly for the things that I believe in."

To the same question, Wahedi responded that she would also "stand up for the political issues that you express, you care about," including "divestment from weapons manufacturing."

During the presidential debate, candidate Alex William Chen '28, the current speaker of the YCC Senate, said he has "dared to fight" during his term. He spoke of his achievements in the senate, such as leading a petition against the combination of the International Studies Award and the Student Experience Award into a single summer grant opportunity, which drew over 1,700 signatures.

Paul Park '27, another presidential candidate, said in his opening statement that he asked 243 students on Cross Campus, "What is the YCC?" and that 209 of those students "did not know what the YCC is, or simply said that it was useless." Park said that the YCC should be a bridge between administrators and students, and that it has a problem with trust.

Responding to a question about managing the roughly $1 million budget that the YCC controls, candidates discussed the effectiveness of allocating stipends to students, especially in areas where University funding programs have been cut.

"The YCC has taken upon itself to incorporate too many of these stipends, and that lets the administration let loose and rely on us for those stipend models," Wahedi said. Wahedi added that student leaders should instead push administrators to reverse the types of changes that cause the YCC to allocate stipends.

Recently, the YCC passed a bill to fund stipends for at least 127 students' summer storage costs, after the phaseout of a Yale College program that provided funding for summer storage to low-income students.

While Chen agreed that the stipend model was "broken," he also claimed credit for producing the $12,000 stipend fund to offset students' summer storage costs. Chen said that stipends "should be an incubator for what Yale could take over."

Walker said that providing stipends "absolutely kills the student energy and frustration that exists on campus around these issues" and stands in the way of creating change.

During the debate, Chen asked his fellow candidates: "How are Sahra and JR and, perhaps, Paul, too, actually planning to do this stuff that they're demanding?" Chen said that his campaign was putting forth actionable proposals.

Wahedi responded that, through meetings with administrators in her role as the deputy director of financial policy on the YCC, she has facilitated tangible progress.

Walker said that Chen was missing the "bigger picture."

"It's not just about engaging alumni. It's about engaging workers, students, New Haven community members, and these are people that I have all built relationships with in the organizations that I'm a part of," he said. "I have not been in the YCC the last two years because I've been spending my time working with community members."

Before the presidential debate, the four students running for vice president debated their visions for the role.

Brendan Kaminski '28, a current Saybrook senator and the vice presidential candidate on Chen's ticket, wants to "dare to defy convention."

"I think we have to rethink how we use the YCC as leverage," Kaminski said, adding that he hopes to organize a cross-Ivy League protest on Capitol Hill against federal funding cuts to universities.

Briana Dubon '27, Park's running mate, said that her campaign focuses on transparency and accountability. Dubon said that she wants to restore trust between Yale and New Haven, and she emphasized the need for frequent "digestible updates" of what Yale administrators and YCC leaders are discussing behind the scenes.



William Qian / Staff Photographer
Students running for president, vice president and events director of the Yale College Council promoted their platforms and answered questions at a debate on Sunday evening.

Jimenez, Walker's running mate, emphasized her ticket's mission to "demand respect" for all members of the community, including students, workers and New Haveners. She said that she and Walker met through Dwight Hall, an organization of various service groups, and highlighted her commitment to outreach.

Keles, a senator for Silliman College and Wahedi's running mate, said that "he can't promise anything too heavy" because "nothing is given," a phrase he repeated twice. He said that although there are limits to the YCC's power, "that doesn't mean we should stop fighting." He also said that students should feel like they have a "seat at their own table."

Three students running for the events director position emphasized their excitement to seek input from the student body.

Oriana Dunker '29, an events director candidate who is the current secretary for the First-Year College Council, emphasized her focus on "starting with students and ending with what students want."

Bomin Koo '29, another candidate, said that because she grew up in a rural, small town, her goal is to create a "tight knit community and home" for all Yalies.

Alejandra Paez Penaloza '28, a candidate who has served on the YCC events executive board, said that she believes the Yale student body is "more similar than we think." Paez Penaloza said that she is ready to plan realistic events that will include "a little bit of everything from everyone."

Elections for president, vice president and events director will begin on Thursday.

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New Haven delegates weigh candidates in primary

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third term. So I don't predict where delegates are going to go," Vincent Mauro Jr., the chair of New Haven's Democratic Town Committee, said in a phone interview.

Mauro added that because many of New Haven's delegates are elected officials themselves, they will likely "talk to their friends and neighborhoods" and "then make their decision."

New Haven's Democratic Town Committee, or DTC, selects delegates "a little differently" from other Connecticut municipalities, Mauro said.

Democratic delegates in Connecticut are required to be registered party members and to live in the district they would represent, according to the Connecticut Democratic state party rules. Slates of delegates are determined either by their local DTC or by a caucus. The New Haven DTC votes on the city's delegates, but the people nominated are usually "elected town committee members, they are elected alders and they are state delegation members," Mauro said.

The delegates to the May convention include Mayor Justin Elicker, New Haven's two state senators, state representatives, alders, union leaders, city officials and DTC ward co-chairs, according to a list submitted to the city clerk's office.

One delegate, Ward 7 Alder Christine Kim '99, said she plans to speak to her constituents before deciding her vote.

"I'm starting to reach out to my ward because I'm their representative," Kim said, adding that the delegates "haven't heard from all the candidates."

Lamont visited the New Haven DTC on Thursday, April 2, to pitch policy plans and take questions from local Democrats, including many convention delegates. He spent about 45 minutes answering questions, Mauro said. Elliott has not yet visited the New Haven DTC, although Mauro said they hope to schedule him "in the next couple weeks."

"I know he has not attended a lot of DTC meetings," Mauro said of Lamont. "I'm happy he came to New Haven."

Ward 22 Alder Jeanette Morrison, one of the delegates who attended the meeting, said in a phone interview that one of the topics Lamont focused on was increasing funding for special education.

Education funding in general is at the top of her mind, Morrison added.

"My own question always is how do we change the formula that provides generally more money to the schools to be able to really educate our kids," she said, pointing to the state's Education Cost Sharing formula, which allocates money to schools according to their number of students and factors like household income.

The amount prescribed by the formula has remained the same since 2013 without adjustment for inflation, according to the School and State Finance Project, a nonpartisan policy group.

"I feel like Governor Lamont is doing a really good job in trying to partner with our delegation and really addressing the needs of our community," Morrison said. She added that because she had not yet met Elliott, she couldn't "speak to his platform."

Delegate David Weinreb, who is a teacher in Fair Haven, also pointed to education funding as a top concern.

Weinreb said in a phone interview that he feels Lamont "consistently misses the mark" and "doesn't see that there's actually dire need in ensuring that all schools can thrive."

"In this moment," he said, his vote "would be for Rep. Elliott."

Delegate Raymond Jackson, who serves as a DTC co-chair for Ward 21, said over the phone that he was worried about education funding and violence in schools. Jackson said that he did not attend the meeting Lamont visited because he felt Lamont "only came down here to see" if he could "get our support again."

Lamont's campaign did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Delegate Laura Cahn, a local environmental advocate, wrote in an email that she was away during Lamont's visit. She has encouraged the governor's campaign staff to support several environmental bills, including one about transparency in pesticide reporting, she wrote.

Cahn added that she is a "big fan" of Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz '83 and that she supports State Treasurer Erick Russell. Both are up for reelection this year.

The first governor of the state of Connecticut was Jonathan Trumbull, who served from 1769 to 1783. Trumbull is the namesake of Yale's Trumbull College.

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Voting to decide new trustee now open to graduates

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is "particularly grateful" for the trustees' counsel.

"Higher education is succeeding in its mission much more than the headlines would suggest," Singer said in his video. "Times will always change, and there will be new challenges socially, politically, financially and pedagogically. So I like to focus on guiding principles, and one of the important principles is trust. Yale and higher education should continue to foster trust between the public and academia."

Singer "arrived at Yale as a Pell Grant student from Appalachian Pennsylvania with only $500 in his pocket," his candidate statement said.

In his statement, Singer credited mentors at Yale who taught him how to write scientific research papers and led him to pursue Yale's joint medical and doctorate degree program.

Singer founded four medical companies, and he is one of over 200 entrepreneurs-in-residence at Yale, a group of experts who can be "sounding boards" for Yalies considering founding or working on a startup, according to the program's website. He is also on an advisory board at the School of Medicine.

He said "compassion" is another principle that should be important to Yale.

"We should also use scholarship to improve the welfare of animals and the health of the planet," Singer said, tying the principles to the Yale for Humanity Campaign, with which he worked.

Singer is the co-founder and director of Cartesian Therapeutics, which develops cell therapies for immune diseases.

In her video, Silver noted her interactions with faculty as one of the major reasons she thinks Yale is unique.

"We are in a moment when people are asking questions about the value of higher education and the value of publicly funded research, but I believe they have never been more important," Silver said in her video.

Silver said she helped lead an "extensive" transformation of Arizona State University, which she described in her statement as "changing the funding model for public institutions of higher education, fostering economic development in Arizona, and spearheading international partnerships."

After her time at Arizona State, Silver was an advisor to Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano. When Napolitano was named President Barack Obama's secretary of homeland security, Silver went with her to Washington, D.C., and led the department's international affairs office. She also served as an advisor to Columbia University's vice provost before her time at Arizona State.

Currently, Silver is the president and CEO of Lincoln Center, which houses organizations including the Juilliard School and the New York City Ballet. She was previously the CEO of the Henry Luce Foundation, whose namesake was a Yale alumnus and journalist. The foundation manages scholarships and grants for democracy and ethics

At Yale, Silver played rugby, skied and danced, she said in her statement.

The winning candidate will replace Carlos Moreno, whose six-year term is ending. When Moreno was elected in 2020, the election process looked different.

In 2021, the Corporation did away with the alumni petitioning process, which allowed alumni to appear on the ballot if they gathered signatures from 3 percent of the alumni eligible to vote. Now, the candidates are picked by the Yale Alumni Fellow Nominating Committee.

In a statement at the time, the Corporation cited groups pushing single issues during elections as the reason for the switch.

"Two groups have used this path in recent years to advance candidates with platforms promoting specific policy goals," the statement from the board reads.

In 2022, two alumni mounted a lawsuit against the change, which the Connecticut Supreme Court declined to hear in March after it was unsuccessfully argued in the state's district and appellate courts.

"When I'm voting for president, I know what Donald Trump and Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are thinking and I know how I should engage my vote accordingly. We're going to be voting for one of two candidates who are handpicked for us by the Yale Alumni Committee," Ashe, a plaintiff in the lawsuit, said.

The 2021 trustee announcement noted that the alumni petition process was used infrequently and that candidates were usually selected by the committee.

McInnis recently announced that two new successor trustees, media executive Derek Chang '89 and private investment firm head Philippe Costeletos '87, will begin their roles in July.

Voting in the alumni fellow election is open until 11:59 p.m. on May 17.

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