FROM THE FRONT

"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity."
ALBERT EINSTEIN PHYSICIST

Top foreign source of donations: tiny English Channel island

DONATIONS FROM PAGE 1

licans have claimed that elite universities are influenced by foreign actors, especially China.

"We have put a number of measures in place in order to ensure that there shouldn't be any concern from the foreign funding that we receive," Yale University President Maurie McInnis said in an interview last Wednesday. "We have a research security and integrity office that reviews everything that would be in that bucket of space. And then we also have a gift and grant review committee that reviews any potential funding."

Tina Posterli, a Yale spokesperson, wrote that Yale would "under no circumstances" allow foreign donors or researchers to influence Yale research, cause Yale to violate its academic principles or undermine "objectivity and integrity" of scholarship at Yale.

Yale's single largest foreign funding source is Guernsey, a self-governing British Crown dependency of roughly 65,000 people that sits in the English Channel and functions as a prominent offshore financial center. According to the portal, Yale received $446 million from Guernsey, nearly $53 million more than it received from China — its second-largest foreign source at approximately $393 million.

Because Guernsey offers low tax rates and strong financial privacy, donors elsewhere sometimes base their foundations there, making it difficult to trace the ultimate source of funds.

Ian Oxnevad, who researches counter-terrorism and money laundering and writes for the National Association of Scholars, said Guernsey is a "tax haven and secrecy haven" which attracts corporations and the ultra-wealthy.

"That money could be coming from anywhere," Oxnevad told the News. "That could be Putin, that could have been bin Laden back in the day. I mean that could be anybody."

Lars Erik Schonander, a fellow at the Foundation for American Innovation who has researched education and national security, said the money tied to Guernsey is likely from donors concealing their true countries of origin.

"Yale has not received funds from the sources named, nor would it ever knowingly accept funds from these or similarly situated sources that would potentially violate U.S. sanctions," Tina Posterli, a University spokesperson, wrote in an email to the News, responding to a question about Russian President Vladimir Putin and the dead al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden.

McInnis said the University has declined certain funding opportunities on its own initiative.

"We have turned down a number of opportunities because they did raise our own concern," McInnis said. "So we work really hard to ensure that there could not be, and could not even be perceived to be, any risk to any of the funding that we have taken."

McInnis added that "most of our funding has come from our own alumni who just happen to be international and live in other places."

Yale has more than 130,000 living alumni, according to the Yale Alumni Magazine — nearly twice the entire population of Guernsey. A search for Yale alums living in Guernsey in the Yale Alumni Directory reveals only two names.

Posterli told the News that the University "generally does not publicly comment on donor identities or gift information."

"As part of Yale's foreign gift and contract reporting, Yale does provide donor names on a confidential basis to the Department of Education," Posterli added.

The portal is a step in the right direction towards more disclosure, Oxnevad and Schonander said.

In 2020, during the first Trump administration, the Education Department investigated Yale for allegedly failing to report foreign funding in compliance with federal law, part of a sweeping series of probes into prominent universities that together uncovered $6.5 billion in previously undisclosed funds.

University spokesperson Karen Peart wrote to the News at the time that Yale failed to appropriately disclose the funding it receives from foreign sources.

Posterli told the News on Tuesday that since the 2020 investigation, the University "has worked diligently to develop and maintain an effective compliance program for reporting foreign gifts and contracts as required under federal law."

In 2025, the University's Office of Federal and State Relations engaged with the DETERRENT Act, a federal bill "related to disclosures of gifts and contracts," according to federal filings, though it is unclear whether Yale advocated for or against the legislation. The bill would lower the threshold for reporting foreign funding from most countries from $250,000 to $50,000, and to $0 for donations from Russia, China and other "countries of concern."

When asked about the DETERRENT Act in October, Peart did not provide an answer about how Yale viewed the bill.

The American Council on Education, a higher education lobbying group which Yale is a part of, opposed the DETERRENT Act. The bill passed the House of Representatives but has not yet passed the Senate.

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Hegseth calls elite universities 'woke'

MILITARY FROM PAGE 1

stand the changes in the Department's policy and remains deeply committed to educating leaders who serve our nation."

Brandon Colas GRD '29, an active-duty service member and graduate student in political science, said the fellowships are a "finishing school" for high-ranking officers who could be promoted to general.

"It's not gonna crush the military, but I think it's unfortunate because universities are doing stuff that the military just doesn't do in house and for good reason," Colas said about the; changes. He added that universities like Yale help conduct "cutting edge data science" research that the military would not normally do.

Colas said his military boss told him that he would likely be able to finish his program of study, in which he researches Army recruitment data.

In a memo to a superior officer outlining his work at Yale, which Colas provided to the News, he wrote that Yale has provided access to resources like unique commercial datasets that are usually unavailable to other universities due to cost and that the military does not currently use.

In addition to the fellowships, Yale has active-duty graduate students — like Colas — throughout its schools. Yale also has a Marine Corps visiting fellow at the Jackson School, who researches and takes classes at Yale, and a colonel who is a visiting fellow at the MacMillan Center.

Yale has about 130 undergraduates enrolled in its Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or ROTC, program, according to Yale's military affairs liaison, Holly Hermes.

Hegseth said Ivy League universities are "woke" and do not reflect the Defense Department's values.

"The Ivy League and similar institutions have gorged themselves on a trust fund of American taxpayer dollars, only to become factories of anti-American resentment and military disdain," Hegseth said in the X video. "They've taken our best and brightest, the men and women who have pledged their lives to this nation, and subjected them to a curriculum of contempt."

Colas told the News that he has not done any research he considers "woke" at Yale, and that his research was applicable to the Army's mission.

"Ultimately, I'm doing this to benefit the Army. That's the only reason they're paying my salary and paying this ridiculous tuition," Colas said.

Hegseth attended Princeton as an undergraduate, in the class of 2003, and graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 2013.

Peart wrote that Yale has a long history of faculty research on national security and global affairs and has educated students who aspire to careers in the military.

"Yale faculty also conduct scientific and engineering research relevant to the Pentagon's mission," Peart wrote. "Yale is proud of its faculty, students, and alumni who contribute to our national security and our country's global standing."

Yale largely avoided direct attacks from the Trump administration in the first year of the president's second term. The University has faced investigations into antisemitism and cooperation with an allegedly race-based program for business school students.

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Faculty committee to produce statement by end of 2026

COMMITTEE FROM PAGE 1

a statement on "the principles that guide the academic freedom of Yale faculty" by the end of the 2026 calendar year, alongside a summary report.

"Despite the phrase 'academic freedom' being invoked frequently, we have not as a community of faculty had a chance to dive deeply into how this phrase is understood and to what end," incoming committee chair Gregory Huber, a political science professor, wrote in a Thursday email to the News.

Strobel contacted him "a couple of weeks ago" regarding the committee, Huber wrote. The committee includes faculty members from across Yale, including Jennifer Herdt, the Divinity School's senior associate dean of faculty affairs, and Anoka Faruqee '94, the School of Art's associate dean.

Last month, the Yale chapter of the American Association of University Professors launched a campaign calling on Yale to bolster its formal commitments to academic freedom. Faculty members wrote postcards to University President McInnis at the launch event, expressing their personal commitment to the issue.

The AAUP chapter's website proposed revisions to the faculty handbook, with measures including an explicit definition of "academic freedom" and ensured faculty consultation for handbook revisions.

"For more than a year, President McInnis and I have sought to understand how best to steward academic freedom, a fundamental tenet of universities and one we are unequivocally committed to at Yale," Strobel wrote in a Thursday email to the News. He did not respond to questions about whether the committee was formed in response to the AAUP's campaign or the postcards addressed to McInnis.

Daniel HoSang, the chapter's president and a professor of American Studies, provided a press release from the chapter in which he is quoted as saying, "We welcome the administration's recognition that academic freedom is the lifeblood of the university."

"The committee will consult broadly with the faculty across all Yale schools, with the exact details of that process to be worked out when we begin meeting as a committee after spring break," Huber wrote, noting that he hopes to "leverage the expertise and diversity of the committee" and "broader faculty."

The release includes a statement from Amy Kapczynski LAW '03, a Law School professor and member of the AAUP chapter's Executive Committee, stating that "faculty need action, not statements."

"Protecting academic freedom requires clear, enforceable protections and procedures, including processes through which alleged infringements on academic freedom can be adjudicated by faculty peers," her statement said.

Jeff Wickersham, an associate professor of medicine, is quoted in the release critiquing the timeline of the committee's efforts and the gap between recommendations and concrete protections.

Wickersham noted that the committee members seem "to have been appointed directly by the Provost and its membership," and does not include "non-ladder faculty or assistant professors—groups that are among those most vulnerable to threats to academic freedom," according to the AAUP's press release.

Strobel described the committee as an "effort led by faculty for faculty, reflecting our belief that academic freedom should be stewarded in partnership with those who practice it," with faculty members from across disciplines bringing varying experiences of academic freedom.

John Cohn, the executive director at the Law School's Center for Academic Freedom and Free Speech, said in a Thursday interview that "every institution in the country needs to do a close look at its protections for free speech on campus and for academic freedom."



Tim Tai

The office of University Provost Scott Storbel announced on its website this week that a new nine-member faculty committee will produce a statement on academic freedom by the end of 2026. A faculty group has been pushing for more formal protections.

Cohn served as a panelist at the AAUP's academic freedom campaign launch event last month. He said that while the Law School center has "no formal relationship with" the faculty group, academic freedom is central to the center and the AAUP's respective missions.

He expects to find "common ground" with the AAUP in future years.

"I'm certain that sometimes we'll disagree on the margins too, but on this big picture question of, can Yale University do better, I think we would both say the answer is yes," Cohn said.

He cited a 2023 federal court case, in which Cohn said the University argued that "the promises it makes with respect to academic freedom in faculty handbooks are too general to confer specific, legally binding protections."

"Since they went to court to win on that grounds, now they need to look internally and commit to protections that will be binding, and this committee, I think, is a solid first step in that direction," Cohn said, praising Yale leaders for their willingness "to be reflective" and "open minded" about improvements.

Among the committee's members are Keith Whittington GRD '95 — a law professor and the faculty director of the Center for Academic Freedom and Free Speech — and Robert Post LAW '77 — a Sterling professor of law and panelist at the AAUP's campaign launch event.

"Our charge is to act as an independent body on behalf of the larger faculty," Huber wrote, when asked about the committee's independence. He noted that the committee could call on "the president or provost as needed" for "particular insight" at the committee's discretion.

Huber directs the Behavioral Research Lab at Yale's Institution for Social and Policy Studies.

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