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"I want to live and feel all the shades, tones and variations of mental and physical experience possible in my life."
THE UNABRIDGED JOURNALS OF SYLVIA PLATH SYLVIA PLATH

Yalies to pack a Bay Area house, seeking start-up investors

BY ANYA GEIST
STAFF REPORTER

This summer, the Yale Entrepreneurial Society will launch its first hacker house in San Francisco to provide 12 undergraduate founders across all classes with the opportunity to work full time on startup projects.

In hacker houses, groups of entrepreneurs live together in shared spaces, working independently on their startups and connecting with nearby founders and donors. According to student entrepreneurs like Leia Ryan '28, Yale has a small startup scene compared to schools like Stanford. Founded by the entrepreneurial society's presidents Ryan and Oliver Hime '28, as well as Nicolas Gertler '27, the house is meant to provide an opportunity for five teams of Yale students to pursue entrepreneurial projects.

"You're in a really high-energy environment, where everyone is dedicating all they have to building their projects," Ryan said. "And you kind of have this compounding effect of motivation and encouragement to just go even harder."

The entrepreneurial society rented a six-bedroom house in Nob Hill, San Francisco, for late May through the end of July. In addition to spending the summer developing their projects, hacker house participants will network with other entrepreneurs and mentors in the Bay Area, Ryan said. In particular, she hopes that the participants will form strong relationships with local venture capitalists who could provide guidance, support and funding for the startup projects.

Ryan noted that the hacker house is mainly sponsored by Raymond Tonsing, the founder of Caffeinated Capital, a venture capital firm.

How hacker houses work

In venture capital, early-stage startups raise money and capital from investors known as venture capitalists. The investors hope their funding will help the startup to scale up quickly and provide big returns on their investment, Gertler explained. While venture capital can promote the rapid growth of startups, it is also a riskier form of investment for investors. In standard private equity finance, entrepreneurs raise money slowly and financiers invest more cautiously, hoping for long-term returns.

Ryan said it was challenging to find investors to sponsor the hacker house itself, which does not provide short-term returns.

"Getting VCs to invest was kind of difficult, but you just have to find the ones that share the vision and share conviction" and "are kind of okay that it's not going to necessarily increase their wealth," Ryan said, referring to venture capitalists.

However, investors could indirectly gain returns farther down the line. If the startups from the hacker house grow, they will seek more investors — likely among the venture capitalists who helped with the hacker house.

That way, the hacker house serves as an incubator for startups, giving entrepreneurs dedicated time to work on their projects while familiarizing them with the "ecosystem" of San Francisco, Ryan said.

"It's distinct from what's offered in New Haven and even New York," Gertler said, "insofar as there's just sort of this mentality that you can build things, you can figure things out. You can really start a generational company there."

Compared to other schools, such as Stanford or MIT, Yale has less infrastructure to support students building startups, Gertler said. While groups like TSAI City offer programs for entrepreneurs, Gertler emphasized that those programs focus on promoting innovation more broadly rather than technical startups specifically.

In general, students at Yale direct their energy toward other professional fields, Gertler said.

"Too many smart people go into consulting and finance. We need more of the smartest minds going into technology and looking to build companies, not necessarily just venture companies, but companies in general," Gertler said. "And there's never been a more exciting time to build a company with AI. The barrier to entry is lower than ever, to build a product, get feedback, to iterate, to expand and grow."

Ryan added that although schools like Stanford support many more student startups, this can make the entrepreneurial environment in those schools "saturated."

Ryan explained that this may make it challenging for founders to find a clear path to growth. It also makes it harder to know which students take their project seriously, she added. At Yale, Ryan said she found it is easy to tell which students care about their startup projects, making it easy to select students for the hacker house.

"There was a very clear line between someone who was serious about it and someone who was not. And also most of the people who applied were serious," Ryan said.

Who is joining the hacker house?

Ryan and Gertler will be among the students living in the hacker house this summer, along with Ariyan Patel '29.

Ryan and her cofounder, Riya Bhargava '26, created CORTEX, an operating system that aggregates data for biology labs. Instead of manually copying data from spreadsheets, this new technology would collect all that data in one place, making it easier to create graphs or additional statistics, Ryan said. Currently, Ryan said, CORTEX is working with Keck Mass Spectrometry, a biotechnology lab at the School of Medicine.

"We're kind of considering ourselves almost like a Palantir for biology, in the way that we allow you to create this shared ontology, or shared map of your lab," Ryan said.

Ryan said she is planning to take a leave of absence from Yale next semester to relocate to San Francisco and pursue CORTEX full time. She and Bhagarva aim to rent office space, hire their first three employees, raise an initial round of capital from investors, and build the software version of the app, Ryan added.

Choosing to take a leave of absence was a complicated decision for Ryan, who originally planned to pursue a PhD in cancer biology or computational bioinformatics, she said.

"I just simply don't want to wait that long. And I think that this field is moving so fast, and that I already have so many ideas about how to address problems in it," Ryan said.

Gertler and his cofounder, Lucas Santos '27, are working on an entirely different project. Their startup, called Mylon, is an AI educational assistant, which can summarize, analyze and teach high-level content. Santos, the COO, started working with Gertler, the CEO, in the summer of 2025.



COURTESY OF LEIA RYAN
Twelve Yale students will live together in a hacker house in San Francisco over the summer to focus on building companies while networking with local venture capitalists.

In the spring of 2024, Mylon worked with Yale philosophy professor Luciano Floridi to create the Luciano Floridi Bot.

"We took the manuscripts of his entire academic career and we fed them into an AI agent, such that the AI agent could essentially answer questions based on his literature, or help researchers scan his literature to write a paper based on his work," Gertler said.

Right now, Gertler described Mylon as being in "stealth," meaning he did not want to release what the company is currently working on. However, he said that Mylon is focused on promoting democratized access to academic resources, particularly in an increasingly AI-involved world.

Ariyan Patel '29 is currently working on a product called PATH, which stands for Pretty Amazing Talking Helper, a voice assistant that aids people with impaired vision. The project started when Patel was a junior in high school. With his cofounders, Kush Patel and Ron Sarany, both first years at Stanford, Patel created glasses that used a camera and voice directions to help users navigate objects while walking. However, over time, Patel and his team realized that their users actually had different problems than they anticipated.

"We figured out that the problem was just access to technology in general," Patel said. They created PATH, "a voice assistant that integrates into the apps and software used on a daily basis. It provides you their power entirely hands free."

Over the summer, Patel will live in the hacker house, and his cofounders plan to rent a living space nearby. The team is hoping to develop PATH to be used in common apps like Gmail, Uber and DoorDash. They have already started meeting with a team at Microsoft that works in AI, Patel said, and are hoping to integrate PATH into Microsoft products.

Despite his hopes for PATH and the opportunities available in places like San Francisco, Patel said he was not thinking of taking a leave of absence.

"I really do want to keep going and apply the skills that I've been learning, and also start solving the problems I see around me full time because I love it," Patel said. "But at the same time, on the other hand, I love the friends that I've made here in just these short eight months."

However, Patel said that if he takes a leave of absence, there will be no going back. Right now, he does not feel ready to leave Yale just yet.

Nob Hill, San Francisco, is southeast of the Golden Gate Bridge.

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For Yale's second-year medical students, clinical training is underway

BY EDIS MESIC
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In January, many second-year students at the School of Medicine began their clinical clerkships: a set of four 12-week interdisciplinary training blocks that let students apply their classroom knowledge to real patient care.

Clerkship blocks last from January to December, with each centered around specific themes, including internal medicine and neurology; surgery and emergency medicine; pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology; and primary care and psychiatry. Before the new year, students could submit their preferred order for all four blocks to help shape their studies.

"People go through the blocks in different orders, but eventually we all go through the same general specialties within each of the blocks," Miguel Fuentes MED '28 said in an interview with the News.

The decision to begin clerkships halfway through the second year of studies reflects a recent trend across medical schools to shorten the pre-clerkship period and accelerate the start of formal clinical training. While many schools still follow the traditional two-year pre-clerkship format, a year-and-a-half period before clerkships is becoming more common, with a small fraction of schools even shortening studies to a single year.

During clinical clerkships, students transition from the classroom to the hospital or clinic and have the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in their studies under the supervision of staff members and physicians.

According to Fuentes, students can be assigned to a variety of sites ranging from as close as Yale New Haven Hospital to as far as Greenwich, Connecticut.



KIMBERLY ANGELES / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Since clinical clerkships began in January, second-year students reflected on their transition to a variety of clinical environments after just a year and a half in the classroom at the School of Medicine.

Fuentes explained that this variety of medical exposure can have its advantages and downsides.

On the one hand, students have the opportunity to learn from a wide array of resident and attending physicians. On the other hand, the training experience can vary widely by assigned site, with some prioritizing the learning experience more than others.

While the system is not perfectly standardized, Fuentes said that, over the year of training, things tend to "average out" to provide each student with a comparable experience.

For MD-PhD students like Alan Cooper MED '32, clinical clerkships operate on a slightly extended schedule. While MD students complete all four core clerkship blocks over a year, Cooper said MD-PhD students complete two blocks before pursuing their PhDs and then return for the final two after four or more years of research.

Cooper added that clerkships can have their fair share of challenges. In his case, beginning with the pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology block — where students cycle through new environments like the labor and delivery floor or inpatient gynecology each week — has been a learning experience.

"I think the pace is challenging because with each shift change, you're getting a new team, a new attending physician, new diseases to study, new protocols. It can be a little jarring," Cooper told the News.

Despite the brisk pace of clerkships, Stacy Ahn MED '28 shared that the most meaningful part of her experience has been interacting with patients and seeing the information in her studies come to life.

"This is why I'm studying so hard. This is why I'm working so hard to make these patients better, and just being able to be part of that is really meaningful and a good reminder that being in this profession is truly a privilege," Ahn said.

Fuentes has also found that his time with patients has had a profound impact on his medical journey. He has appreciated the process of connecting with patients and becoming someone to whom they feel comfortable talking.

Through clerkships, Fuentes said he feels that he is developing a "personality" as the doctor he will become.

Cooper also expressed that clerkships have given him the space to discover which fields of medicine interest him. He stated that his experiences in the operating room, outpatient clinics and inpatient medicine have given him a better idea of what direction he hopes to pursue in his future career.

Clinical clerkships follow 18 months in the pre-clerkship phase, during which students complete integrated courses, participate in interactive clinical workshops and pursue research and other extracurricular activities.

Looking back on her pre-clerkship experience, Ahn emphasized the flexibility of the Yale System of Medical Education, which encourages self-directed learning while also differing from the more structured nature of clerkships, where students follow the hospital or clinic schedule. Ahn said the shift in students' ownership over their schedules can be an adjustment, but for her, it preserved the core value of self-directed learning.

"Day to day, you are interacting with your attendings, residents, and patients, and you're the one telling yourself: 'Okay, I need to learn this in order for me to better understand this patient and to feel like I can contribute to my team,'" Ahn said.

Ahn said that, as someone who took two gap years before beginning medical school, she valued the time to be a student again. Getting to know each of her peers' diverse passions and backgrounds during pre-clerkship has been a highlight for her, she added.

While the clerkship period is fully dedicated to clinical training, students also have chances to gain hands-on clinical experience during pre-clerkship.

While operating on a busy schedule, Fuentes shared that his time before clerkships was also a moment to practice finding a balance in his time management. In his case, outside of classes, Fuentes recalls volunteering at the HAVEN Free Clinic, leading two ESL programs, pursuing research, rock climbing and finding time to visit his girlfriend and family.

Fuentes believes that pre-clerkship gave him the space to organize his activities meaningfully.

"I think what I'm most proud of is learning how to manage so many things at once, and learning to slow things down so that I can fit so many things into my schedule," Fuentes said.

The School of Medicine was founded in 1810 as the Medical Institution of Yale College.

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