

FROM THE FRONT

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
A TALE OF TWO CITIES CHARLES DICKENS

New budget pressures at play in city’s hopes for Yale contribution

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of mind as city leaders race to renegotiate the University’s voluntary contribution before Mayor Justin Elicker has to present his proposed budget to the Board of Alders on March 1.

If negotiations do not result in changes to the payment plan, the city will receive only \$16 million from the University in the 2027 fiscal year, which is around \$8 million less than what Yale has been paying New Haven each year since 2021.

Federal cuts to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are slated to leave locals in the bottom 25 percent income bracket losing an average of \$1,100 a year, according to a study by DataHaven. And with the endowment tax set to cost Yale about \$300 million each year alone, the University has made moves to cut costs, including by reducing administrative staff and shrinking budgets across schools and divisions.

Mayor Justin Elicker said in a phone interview that he believes Yale has “the capacity to give more,” and called public engagement with the issue “fantastic.”

Elicker said that federal cuts are “having an impact on a variety of things in our city,” pointing to the federal government’s move not to extend certain Affordable Care Act subsidies. The state has “stepped up and helped in certain cases,” Elicker said, but federal funding cuts make it “more important than ever that we see the University invest in the city that it calls home.”

Elicker acknowledged that the impending endowment tax hike has “had some impact” on the city’s conversations with Yale. The tax, which will come into effect in July, is a dramatic increase from the previous 1.4 percent tax on Yale’s endowment investment returns.

While Yale has “immense capacity,” they also have “significant, maybe higher expenses” because of the tax, Elicker said. He added that “for the federal government, that’s a drop in the bucket, but for Yale and the city, that’s a lot of money.”

The state has tried to step in to fill the gap in federal funding, but legislators have emphasized that the state has limited capacity to offset the full extent of the cuts.

At the first meeting of this year’s legislative session, state legislators elected to extend Connecticut’s Emergency State

Response Fund until the end of the 2027 fiscal year. The fund was instituted to “quickly respond to millions of dollars in ongoing cuts toward essential services that are being made by President Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans,” according to a press release from Gov. Ned Lamont’s SOM ’80 office in early February.

The state is “essentially keeping the lights on while everything else around them is falling apart,” New Haven Rep. Roland Lemar said in a phone interview before the start of the legislative session on Feb. 4. “We can’t fix it all,” he added.

Tyisha Walker-Myers, the president of the New Haven Board of Alders and chief steward of Local 35, the Yale service and maintenance staff union, said in an interview that if federal funding cuts leave New Haven families struggling, Yale has a responsibility to pitch in.

“It’s different when someone can’t buy food for their three children because they lost money when a large corporation has money just sitting there,” Walker-Myers said. “If New Haven got all the money that they were due, we would be able to do a whole bunch of amazing things.”

In January, Walker-Myers joined other union leaders, clergy members and state officials in calling on Yale to up its annual voluntary contribution to \$110 million. The number would be a steep increase from the \$16 million it is currently slated to pay in the 2027 fiscal year. Yale has paid about \$23 million a year to the city since the current six-year voluntary contribution agreement was reached in 2021.

That agreement is set to expire in June 2027, and the city is negotiating a new sum for the coming years.

“Yale obviously will always do more for its students than people who aren’t its students, and that makes sense. That’s how any university would work. But I think when you share the same city and are such a dominant force in the same city, you have a responsibility to uplift everyone and make sure that your actions positively impact all New Haveners,” Alder Elias Theodore ’27, who represents the downtown ward including much of Yale’s campus, said in an interview.

Theodore argued that Yale’s investment into New Haven would benefit both parties, and emphasized the potential serious consequences of funding constraints for New Haven.

“It’s really upsetting to think about what that might look like,”

Theodore said. “It’ll look like things that are understaffed being even more understaffed. It might look like, you know, cuts to the programs which I think often go first which are social welfare related, climate related, mental health related, which are so important.”

Sean Matteson, Elicker’s chief of staff, acknowledged the influence of the endowment tax hike on voluntary contribution negotiations. As of Tuesday, New Haven was “in conversation” with Yale, he said, although he also gestured to the city’s impending budget deadline.

Alexandra Daum, Yale’s associate vice president for New Haven affairs and University properties, wrote in a text message to the News that a statement she made in January “is still the latest on this topic.”

“We value our close partnership with New Haven,” Daum wrote in the statement. “Looking ahead, while it is premature to discuss specifics aspects, we are optimistic that a mutually beneficial solution will be finalized in the coming months.”

In a December interview, University President Maurie McInnis said that the endowment tax hike “factors into everything.”

Grace O’Grady ’28, a former co-director of Yale’s FOCUS on New Haven orientation program, advocated for more involvement from parties outside of Yale administration and the New Haven government, such as members of Yale’s student body.

“I would also, just in general, be interested in seeing more people who are a part of unions, and also more students being integrated into the process of this discussion,” O’Grady said in an interview.

O’Grady said she is skeptical that Yale’s current budget tightening would prevent it from meeting the \$110 million demand from union leaders.

“I do think that there is ability to get much closer to this number than Yale makes it seem,” O’Grady said.

The University’s voluntary payment to New Haven dates back to the 1990s, after then-mayor John Daniels encouraged state legislators to shoot down a proposal from State Representative Pat Dillon SPH ’98 to tax University buildings not used for educational purposes, according to an article in the New Haven Independent.

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U.S. cites deals to drop race-based project

PROJECT FROM PAGE 1

webpage, whose text was captured by an internet archive and removed by last March, detailed diversity initiatives at the school and said that in 2020 the school announced “increased its engagement with the PhD Project, an organization focused on increasing diversity in the PhD pipeline, by organizing a school information session with four faculty and a current student.”

The webpage said that the “underrepresentation of Black people and other minorities in the pinnacles of leadership is a disgrace” and that the School of Management was “not exempt from this failing,” promising greater efforts to welcome people from diverse backgrounds to campus.

Spokespeople for Yale and the School of Management declined to comment on the Education Department’s announcement.

President Donald Trump has focused on dismantling diversity initiatives — commonly known as diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI — since taking office last year. In February last year, the Department of Education published a letter outlining the administration’s interpretation of civil rights law and threatened to cancel federal funding for universities that maintained race-based programs.

The Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights last March opened an investigation into 45 universities, including Yale, related to institutions’ partnerships with the PhD Project. The office alleged that the PhD Project “limits eligibility based on the race of participants.”

The civil rights office claimed in March that Yale and the 44 other universities were “allegedly engaging in race-exclusionary practices” in violation of federal antidiscrimination laws.

“The PhD Project remains focused on our mission to expand the pool of workplace talent by developing business school faculty who inspire, mentor, and support tomorrow’s leaders,” Audrey Wayne, a spokesperson for the organization, wrote in a statement to the News on Friday. “Our vision is to create a broader talent pipeline of current and future business leaders who are committed to excellence and to each other, through networking, mentorship, and unique events.”

The PhD Project’s application for membership has been open to any U.S. citizen or permanent resident since “early 2025,” according to the organization’s website. The PhD Project was founded in 1994.

When asked whether Yale had severed ties with the program, Wayne referred the News to Yale for comment.

A spokesperson for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which also appeared on Thursday’s list of universities that had broken ties with the PhD Project after facing the Education Department investigation, told the News that schools including MIT had paid “a fee to participate in conferences or other opportunities” with the project, apparently triggering the inquiry.

“As a result of the nominal fee it paid, MIT was permitted to send representatives to staff tables at university fairs held by the PhD Project, where MIT representatives were available to answer questions about one of its Ph.D. programs,” Kimberly Allen, the spokesperson, wrote to the News on Sunday. She added that MIT had resolved the complaint “about a week ago” without admitting to wrongdoing.

The News could not verify what Yale’s partnership with the PhD Project entailed or whether it reached a resolution with the government.

Reached for comment, an Education Department spokesperson did not elaborate on the reasons for the investigation and instead referred the News to a March 2025 press release, which does not specify the nature of the 45 universities’ relationships with the PhD Project.

Yale and Cornell were the only two Ivy League universities under investigation. Cornell was not on Thursday’s list of schools who have signed “resolution agreements” with the Office for Civil Rights.

In the press release on Thursday, the Education Department said it was continuing to negotiate with the 14 schools under investigation that had not agreed to end partnerships with the PhD Project.

“We are hopeful that other institutions with similarly discriminatory practices will follow suit, paving the way for a future where we reject judging individuals by the color of their skin and once again embrace the principles of merit, excellence, and opportunity,” Secretary of Education Linda McMahon is quoted as saying in the Thursday release.

Trump and McMahon have attempted to shrink the department’s Office for Civil Rights and curtail its reach since taking office. The White House is attempting to eliminate the Education Department as a whole.

The Yale School of Management was founded in 1976.

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Next top football coach named a week after Reno left

FOOTBALL FROM PAGE 1

“It is an honor to return to Yale Football,” Cahill said in a statement included in a Yale Athletics press release. “This legendary program has a proud history built on academic excellence, sportsmanship, and competitive success, and I look forward to

working every day to build upon that foundation.”

Cahill’s position as the Joel E. Smilow ’54 head coach of football will mark his second stint with the Bulldogs. He spent 10 years as an assistant coach for Yale before taking the head coach position at Lehigh in 2023.

“We’re absolutely thrilled to welcome Kevin back home to

the Yale Bowl,” Athletic Director Vicky Chun said in the press release. “From his formative years under Coach Reno’s mentorship to his outstanding success at Lehigh, highlighted by being named the nation’s top FCS coach as the Eddie Robinson Award winner, Kevin has consistently built and supported

strong, values-driven programs grounded in character and culture.”

In his first stint at Yale, Cahill served as a special teams coordinator and wide receivers coach from 2012 to 2013, before being elevated to passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach from 2014 to 2017. In 2018, Reno promoted Cahill once more to be assistant head coach and offensive coordinator, while still maintaining his role as quarterbacks coach.

As one of the lead offensive coaches for the Bulldogs, Cahill played a large role in the development of two Yale legends, Kurt Rawlings ’20 and Nolan Grooms ’24, who each won Ivy League Player of the Year honors. Now, he inherits a star quarterback in Dante Reno ’28 — Tony Reno’s son, who, as a sophomore, was ranked the second best passer in the league last season.

“I have known Kevin for 12 years, ever since he joined Yale on my dad’s first staff,” Dante Reno wrote in a message to the News. “He is a great coach and an even better person. He knows the ins and outs of how our program works and the way it runs. He will bring the culture we have sustained ever since Coach Reno got here. The way he turned Lehigh around that fast was tremendous to see.”

After 10 years with the Bulldogs, Cahill accepted the head coaching position with Lehigh

in December 2022. In his three years at the helm of the Mountain Hawks, Cahill was responsible for leading the program through a complete turnaround after multiple losing seasons.

During his tenure, Lehigh won two Patriot League championships and the program’s first playoff victory since 2011. This past year, Cahill led the team to a 12–1 record and was presented with the Eddie Robinson Award for the FCS coach of the year.

Now, Cahill will be stepping into a different type of role. At Yale, he will not be tasked with the revitalization of a once-great program. Instead, Cahill will be handed the reins of a team coming off a historic season that saw both a conference championship and the first playoff win in school history.

“We are very excited to meet Coach Cahill and get to work,” linebacker Phoenix Grant ’27 said in a phone interview. “He’s obviously had a lot of success both at Yale and Lehigh, but most importantly, I know he had a great relationship with Coach Reno. With the unfortunate situation, I think Coach Cahill will do a great job building on the great program and culture Coach Reno built here.”

Cahill will be the 35th head coach in program history.

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Liza Kaufman / Photography Editor
Less than a week after longtime Yale head coach Tony Reno announced he would step down due to health concerns, Lehigh University’s Kevin Cahill, a former assistant coach for the Bulldogs, was named as his successor.