



The Dean's Panel in Sprague Hall

Report on Yale Alumni Assembly Nov 21-22, 2019

Held on the Thursday and Friday preceding the last home football game of the season the Alumni Assembly annually attracts about 500 delegates representing Yale College classes, the graduate and professional schools, regional and international Yale Clubs, and class agents for the Alumni Fund to learn more about the Yale of today, visions for the future, and innovative approaches to alumni activities.

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the admission of women to Yale College and buttons with the logo "LUX ET FEMINA" were passed out during registration at Rose Alumni Hall.

Centering on the theme “Cultivating Leadership-Advancing Yale’s Mission” there was a wide choice of lectures by administration, faculty, panels, and workshops. Barb and I attended all the sessions together giving us lots to talk about. Shuttle buses were available to ferry us around campus.

All of the speakers were asked to submit a five-word description of their leadership style with which to start off their presentations. Delegates were also invited to participate. I have to admit to some skepticism about this project but found myself impressed by what some people can do with five words. As you can tell from this document being succinct is not one of my strengths. [Here is a link to a collection of leadership “statements” submitted.](#)

Thursday started off with President Salovey’s observing, “...The world needs people who love learning and who believe in using human ingenuity to improve lives...” as he moderated a panel of Yale deans:

Indy Burke (Forestry and Environmental Science): “... the most important issues facing society relate to our environment ... We want students to lead us to a sustainable future. I’m a big believer in collaborative leadership. You are not an effective leader unless you engage with all the stakeholders... It can be a frustrating experience. No matter what happens, somebody loses.”

Kerwin Charles (School of Management) maintained that while action is the key to leadership it must be paired with empathy and thoughtfulness about the impact on people’s lives. Student work must meet a standard of excellence and face a constant challenging of ideas resulting in “... a culture

where a diversity of views is encouraged. Our alumni are as likely to work at an investment bank and they are to lead a museum.”

Marvin Chun (Yale College) spoke to “...resilience...one of the most important values a Yale education can instill...” Chun feels that awareness of faculty and alumni leaders attracts students to Yale, “...They see these mentors and they aspire to be like them...”

Tamar Gendler (Arts and Sciences Faculty) reported that upon her appointment she thought as a philosopher, “All I needed to do was formulate ideas in a way that made logical sense... (but as a dean) ...It was immediately clear that people matter more.” She described new programs supporting leadership development aimed at faculty as well as students. Here are links to [Scholars as Leaders \(SAL2\)](#) and the [Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning](#).”

The fascinating second panel of the day discussed the leadership journeys of two alumna and the transformative power of sports. Chaired by Vicky Chu (Yale Athletic Director) it featured Virginia Gilder YC’80 and Lisa Brummel YC’81 who (along with former Microsoft executive Dawn Trudeau) have owned and managed the WNBA Seattle Storm since 2008. Ms. Brummel was a basketball star at Yale selected as most valuable player in each of her four seasons, with 1361 career points to her credit while also playing softball, track, field hockey and volleyball. After Yale she earned an MBA at UCLA, joined Microsoft in 1989 and became executive Vice President in charge of Human Resources. As a freshman in 1973, Virginia Gilder was one of nineteen members of the Yale women’s crew who marched into the

office of the Director of Women's Athletics stripping off their sweats to stand naked revealing "Title IX" emblazoned on their chests and backs as their captain read a protest statement about the inadequate facilities and lack of showers for the women's crew at the Derby boat house. Their story is [nicely retold in this 2012 article from ESPN magazine.](#)

[Here is the original NYT report.](#)

Ms. Gilder was selected for the 1980 Olympic rowing team which, unfortunately for her, was the year the United States boycotted the Moscow games. Gilder won a silver medal in quadruple sculls with coxswain in the 1984 summer Olympics. An entrepreneur, Ms. Gilder has started several businesses and non-profits, including Washington Works, dedicated to altering the lives of women on public assistance, and Gilder Office for Growth, an investment firm. Ms. Gilder and her father Richard YC'54 were major donors for the new [Gilder Boat House which opened in 2000.](#)

Brummel and Gilder offered many thoughts about college athletics, professional sports, and business. Both reflected that college sports had been a transformational experience for them, learning how to deal with people - teammates, coaches, administration - and how to cope with the challenge and power of failure. Regarding their careers as team owners they explained that the WNBA started out in 1997 as an auxiliary to the NBA to try and fill the teams' arena commitments over the summer months. Today, of 12 teams in the league, 5 teams are still owned by NBA teams, while 2 are owned by casinos. Women's sports, they noted, do not receive the public support and media attention given to male athletes and teams. They feel this is still "baked into our society," which they hope to

change pointing out that “... while less than 1% of corporate sponsorships go to women’s sports (which receive less than 5% of media coverage) ...women make 80% of buying decisions in households.” Brummel and Gilder wanted to keep the Storm in Seattle in part to provide role models for girls and women. They stressed, however, that their ownership is “... a business and not a hobby. The team and the league have to be profitable to be sustainable.”

Professional sports is dependent on attendance and media coverage. “... We are the least deep-pocketed team and have to watch our accounting but we are the most entrepreneurial management in promoting our team and players while maintaining a commitment to a platform supporting social justice. Our team is different but not because we are women. We are thrilled that Storm games have become family events and continually seek to expand our market and attract more men and women as fans.

Regarding lessons learned in the course of working together the two stressed, “...knowing how to ask questions and challenge assumptions while recognizing you share the same goal...understanding the core of our belief that makes us think we can succeed... clarity of articulation is needed to understand and resolve differences...inoculate yourself against predictable failure .. not blaming yourself to the point that you are disabled... recognize how much risk you can afford to take...and that an idea can be abandoned...”

Over lunch at Jonathan Edwards we met Gordy '49 and Joan Meyers from Philadelphia. Gordy told us he left Yale to serve in WWII and returned to graduate with '49. Gordy is very active in mentoring programs. George Chen '77, a computer

scientist from California whom we had met two years ago, along with Eric Fleischman '83, an immigration lawyer from Hartford CT, rounded out our table. The dining room staff were impressively gracious in making us feel welcome.

In the afternoon we had the option of attending two of ten different lectures or going on tours of the new Yale Science Building, the Sterling Library, the Center for Engineering Innovation and Design ,or the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning.

Barb and I heard an excellent presentation by Heidi Brooks, a senior lecturer in organizational behavior and interpersonal dynamics for the past 15 years at YSOM, who spoke about the “Power of Everyday Leadership.” She spoke of needing to be emotionally intelligent, staying connected to your core values, listening to new ideas from younger people, being spacious while staying focused, the tension of creativity and innovation, the need for a shared belief that the team is safe for personal expression where members can state what they believe without having to put on a “work face.” Ms. Brooks pointed out the importance of recognizing “the gap between aspirations and where we really are” and understanding that “identifying failure gives you a chance to address it.” She contrasted the differences between short term vs. long term perspectives as the choice between “do it fast or do it right.” My takeaway message was a quote from Maya Angelou, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Later in the afternoon we were very impressed by Beverly Gage '94, Professor of American History and Director of the Grand Strategy Program, speaking on “Key Challenges Facing US

Leadership in a Changing World . Grand Strategy was started in 2000 and endowed in 2006 by Nicholas Brady '52 and Charles Johnson '54. At its core is a two semester course open to 36 selected undergraduates and graduate students (170 applied in 2017). The concept of the Grand Strategy Program is to encourage a comprehensive “think big” approach to the entire range of challenges facing US policy makers including : domestic politics, foreign relations , economics , global leadership, military conflict, human rights, social issues and movements, health concerns, the environment, climate sustainability, and the impact of technological change with the objective of creating a vision as to “What kind of world do we want to see?...The question then becomes how to match up large ends with limited means?” Gage suggested that we may need to consider creating new concepts to replace tired assumptions and old institutional forms like the “nation-state.” Gage noted there are changing generational sensitivities observing that most of the current Yale freshman and sophomores were born in the 21st Century and virtually none of the undergraduate body have any personal knowledge of events of the 20th Century. Responding to a question about the current administration Dr. Gage said that although President Trump’s policies are often characterized as chaotic there are certain underlying identifiable features:

1. Rejection of assumptions that previously guided American policy
2. Stepping back from rhetorical and real world commitments as world policeman

3. Rejection of globalism in commerce and trade
4. Consolidation of foreign policy to the Executive Branch and the National Security Council
5. Decimation of the State Department and the Foreign Service
6. Encouraging political polarization and institutional dysfunction in the Congress

Gage noted that there has always been conflicting political movements in the US and felt that government institutions and the country will survive.

Calling attention to something new on the horizon Prof. Gage reported that George Soros and Charles Koch normally thought of as polar opposites on the liberal to conservative spectrum have recently joined forces in funding a new think tank "The Quincy Center" seeking to make the case for more restraint in U.S. foreign policy.



Thursday evening there was an outstanding dinner at the Lanman Center, a basketball/ indoor track facility attached to Payne Whitney, where we enjoyed reconnecting with fellow 65'ers Chip Seward, who represents the Yale Club of Washington, DC, and Bob Wiznia, who is a class agent for the Alumni Fund and was my roommate during our first year of med school. Five Alumni were awarded the Yale Medal in honor of their many years of outstanding service to Yale.

Friday morning offered multiple sessions designed to support alumni in their volunteer efforts engaging with their community, maintaining contact, and planning events. We heard Tony Lavelly '64 and Sam Francis '64 share their

impressive class website experience and a report from two members of the class of 1994 whose 25th reunion in June was the most well attended in Yale history.

The feature event of the morning was President Salovey's annual update on the University. (I have included some information Salovey presented during his quarterly conference call with alumni delegates on 11/19 in addition to a 12/16 Yale Daily News Article about admissions.)

Salovey opened by paraphrasing Yale's mission statement emphasizing the university's commitment to "...creating leaders for the world and all sections of society and to creating new knowledge to share with the world and benefit society... "

Salovey observed "...The University consists of multiple constituencies, none of which are monolithic. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni have many viewpoints. It is difficult to align people behind a vision and to agree with a direction despite disagreeing about the specifics of how to get there... Students want change now while they are here. The faculty are resistant to change and like to plan years ahead..."

"Yale is committed to academic freedom and free expression. There is a diverse range of courses. More courses are being taught by faculty who disagree with each other and debate in front of students. Students need to see that opposing faculty can articulate opposing views but still be colleagues and perhaps friends."

Yale currently offers 83 majors and 53 PhD programs. There is ongoing debate as to whether Yale should offer academic

minors. Yale offers dual majors but no minors. In the past the feeling has been that minors would restrict the boundaries of students' education to a more limited field. Nonetheless, Yale has recently taken some steps toward establishing academic minors. Two years ago an advanced language certificate program was initiated. A certificate is awarded for completion of four advanced (L5) level courses in a foreign language. In 2019 a Certificate in Statistics and Data science was approved consisting of 6 course including a prerequisite.

The university is encouraging interdepartmental collaborations. Science and Engineering faculties have established 5 multidisciplinary areas: data and computer science, neuroscience, inflammation science, planetary solutions, quantum science and engineering hopefully positioning Yale for the possibility of breakthrough discoveries. The Yale Quantum Institute now has 150 faculty members representing multiple disciplines. Salovey informed us that current developments in quantum computing are based on fundamental research performed at Yale.

The new Yale Science Building has been completed and opened on Science Hill. The next project will be renovation of the Kline Biology Tower.

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/10/30/yale-science-building-opens-signaling-new-era-science-hill>

Salovey explained that new discoveries in science and engineering alone are not enough to change public policy. There must be collaboration for impact, engaging the world through empirical policy relevant research. Leading in this effort will be two new Yale initiatives. The Jackson School for

Global Affairs (replacing the Jackson Institute) will open in 2022 as will the new building for the Tobin Center for Economic Policy. Both will promote data-driven discussions of public policy.

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/04/06/university-launches-yale-jackson-school-global-affairs>

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/08/21/yale-names-inaugural-executive-director-tobin-center-economic-policy>

Salovey stressed the importance of Yale's museums and collections to scholarship and the inter- relationships between art, architecture, music, and drama to the humanities. Yale is developing cross-school faculty appointments.

Salovey continued, "...In its mission to produce leaders for a better world Yale needs to attract the very best students to its campus. Yale students come from 120 countries and every walk of life. As much as Yale transforms students Yale is transformed by its students... Yale should be a force for social mobility. In many parts of the world social mobility is not possible."

He noted that international students are fearful of animosity possibly being directed against them. The administration feels that educational quality is improved by the presence of international students on campus.

The administration is well aware of the tensions between the US and China and protecting against intellectual theft and espionage.

Salovey stated, "There is no 'classified' research being done at Yale. All work is designed to be published."

With addition of the new residential colleges enrollment is up by 15% to 6200. Yale currently accepts 6% of applicants. 53% of all undergraduates receive financial aid. The number of Pell grants and first-generational college students has doubled from 6 years ago. (According to the Yale Daily News in the Class of 2022 there were 284 students - 17% of the class - who were the first in their family to attend college and 311 students who received Pell grants). Yale has raised the threshold of family income for full financial support from \$55,000 to \$75,000. 80% of last year's graduates had no debt.

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/12/16/nearly-800-early-action-applicants-admitted-class-2024>

<https://news.yale.edu/2018/09/06/yale-welcomes-record-number-of-first-gen-students>

In the future, the University hopes to be able to increase financial support for students in the grad schools, the nursing school, and the school of public health.

Regarding relations with New Haven:

Salovey reported that Yale has (since 2011 - ed.) provided \$5,000,000 in college scholarships to New Haven high school students who achieve a B average, a 90% attendance record, and plan to attend college in CT. 1700 New Haven public school students are involved in on campus educational

projects. Additionally, Yale sponsors reading and music outreach programs.

Yale pays \$12,000,000 to the City of New Haven annually in lieu of taxes. Additionally, Yale pays \$5,000,000 a year in taxes on the commercial properties the University owns.

Yale is the largest employer in New Haven, with 14,000 faculty and staff.

The medical center continues to grow with a 236% increase in clinical services over the past 11 years.

President Salovey's vision of Yale's mission is "...empower ground breaking discoveries that will bring light and truth to a world desperately in need of it..."

Following Salovey's address was a panel discussion by three members of the Yale Board:

Joshua Bekenstein '80 - cochairman of Bain capital

Kate Walsh'77 - president and CEO of Boston Medical Center and Boston Medical Health Net Plan

Michael Warren'90 - global managing director of Albright Stonebridge Group

who shared their personal stories, their leadership insights and their experience being alumni fellows/trustees.

The action moved to the Omni Hotel for lunch, featuring an address by Nathaniel Nickerson, Vice President for Communications, who explained Yale's current public relations and social media programs, followed by presentation

of the Yale Jefferson Awards for Public Service, the Alumni Fund Chairman's awards, and the YAA leadership awards.

<https://news.yale.edu/2019/11/20/three-yalies-win-yale-jefferson-awards-public-service>

<https://alumni.yale.edu/news/outstanding-volunteers-recognized-yaa-leadership-awards>

<https://giving.yale.edu/news/yale-alumni-fund-honors-volunteers>

Friday afternoon we attended a session on Digital Strategies for Alumni Leaders which involved a level of social media and platforms above my pay grade.

Friday evening, we joined old friends for dinner at Consiglio's in Wooster Square.

Saturday, we took our CT grandchildren and their parents to "The Game." Assigned to Lot D we parked behind the baseball stadium next to a large tent where the Afro-American Cultural Association at Yale was hosting a tailgate for hundreds of students and alums from both Yale and Harvard. We enjoyed having the chance to get to know Kassem Lucas '94, Ed Poteat '94 and his wife Takara Rooks who were parked opposite us and cordially invited us to share their company and their outstanding picnic.

By the fourth quarter the kids were cold, the game seemed unquestionably out of reach, and we left the Bowl. You know the rest of the story. We didn't hear the score until later that night.

As in the two previous Assemblies we have been privileged to attend everyone we encountered was friendly and engaging and we learned a lot. My term as class delegate ends this summer. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity.

The next conference call with President Salovey is in Feb.

Bob Hammond

P.S. The halftime climate change protest during “The Game” (see below)

