A Message to the Class of 2024

from Jeremiah Quinlan,
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College will be an opportunity to think big again, to accomplish serious things, and to start your life as an adult and leader.
Perhaps you have already decided that Yale is for you. If you haven’t, you are most likely comparing Yale to some other extremely strong and interesting places. At times, it may seem difficult to distinguish one excellent school from another. If you look closely, though, I think you will see differences in substance and in spirit among your choices.

Yale’s mission is to improve the world today and for future generations through outstanding research and scholarship, education, preservation, and practice. But most universities would describe their purpose with similar language. Yale also has a long tradition of excellence: in research and scholarship, in the quality and breadth of its resources, in the accomplishments of its students and the achievements of its alumni. But many universities profess excellence. What, then, makes this place truly unique? After two decades as a Yale student, alumnus, and staff member, let me suggest this: Yale’s most distinguishing characteristic is the way it embraces a campus-wide spirit of and rather than or.

Yale prepares its graduates to both lead and serve. Students experience the immense scope of a world-class research university and the close-knit community of a liberal arts college. Our faculty are celebrated scholars and dedicated educators. Yalies have an immense range of resources at their fingertips and clear-cut ways to access them. The Yale College academic program demands depth in a chosen area of study and a diversity of intellectual approaches. The University celebrates more than 315 years of tradition and the constant pursuit of innovation. Allow me to expand on a few of the ways this spirit of and shapes the Yale student experience.

Planned & Unexpected

You may arrive at Yale with a clear idea of what you want to study and where you want to spend your time outside of class. Maybe you have an inkling of an idea or none at all. Regardless of your plans, I guarantee you will discover something here that is completely unexpected and delightful. The distributional requirements and shopping period guide you through your time here, but also allow plenty
of room for exploration. As a long-time College Adviser for a group of first-years and sophomores each year, I have seen students fall in love with philosophy, psychology, or anthropology after discovering the discipline for the first time. A student might arrive interested in English but graduate four years later as a biomedical engineer. Even if you follow the general plan that you set out for yourself at Yale, you will always have space for the unexpected to happen. In and out of the classroom, there are countless ways to create new passions while continuing others.

**Research University & Liberal Arts College**

Yale students are simultaneously part of one of the world's most resource-rich universities and members of a small flexible liberal arts college. An emphasis on interdisciplinary study ensures breadth of both subject matter and perspective. You will study science and engineering in state-of-the-art laboratory facilities with renowned faculty and develop solutions to pressing global challenges. You will connect with intellectual colleagues and global policymakers in the social science disciplines, examining political grand strategy, environmental policy, international development, and the psychology of everyday life. You will attend the only Ivy League university with premier professional schools in music, drama, art, and architecture. You will experience the richness of the humanities by studying works of the past and witnessing brilliant and innovative works of art performed and produced by your peers.

**Tradition & Innovation**

Yale is old, but it is not old-fashioned. Our centuries of history enrich the community's shared experience, while challenging each group of incoming students to create the Yale experience anew. The University provides the broadest range of academic and professional disciplines of any of its peers and encourages collaboration among them. For example, you may add to Yale's renowned history of musicianship by taking "Musical Acoustics & Instrument Design," a course that meets in the Center for Engineering Innovation and Design, a 24/7 makerspace and hub for interdisciplinary activity. You may continue the tradition of social responsibility that has been a hallmark of the Yale community for generations by competing for the Thorne Prize, a $25,000 prize awarded annually to the best student-led venture focused on social innovation in health or education. Each new class builds on Yale's established foundation to create something entirely new.

**Diversity & Community**

Two of Yale's core values, diversity and community, reinforce each other in many campus spaces, but they find special meaning in the Residential Colleges. Each College becomes a home away from home, filled with the brightest minds from the most disparate of backgrounds, connecting over a shared identity. Residential Colleges celebrate academic exploration by sponsoring in-house seminars and support Yale's rich extracurricular life by hosting dance rehearsals, political party meetings, intramural sports, and chamber music performances.

Students engage with diverse and supportive communities of peers, faculty, and staff in spaces that complement the Residential Colleges. The four cultural centers—the Afro-American Cultural Center, the Asian American Cultural Center, La Casa Cultural, and the Native American Cultural Center—are truly unique among Yale's peer institutions.

Dedicated upper-level students serve as Cultural Center Peer Liaisons, connecting first-years to the wide array of resources and inclusive events at the centers. The centers share a two-pronged mission to create a supportive space for students of shared identity and culture, and to share that culture with the entire university community.

Yale's Office of LGBTQ Resources, the Yale Women's Center, the Chaplain's Office, and more than a dozen religious centers share in this mission, combining a space to grow with and learn from one's peers and an opportunity to celebrate diversity within and among Yale's countless communities.
The Class of 2024: Creating Yale for a New Generation

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you will enter Yale at an exciting moment in the University’s history.

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of three landmark events that indelibly changed Yale: the first women enrolling in Yale College, the creation of Yale’s African American Studies major, and the establishment of Yale’s Afro-American Cultural Center—the first of its kind in the Ivy League. All three were essential turning points in Yale’s history and allowed undergraduates to benefit from an immeasurably richer variety of scholarship and student experiences. With each new incoming class, I see our continual progress in educating students from an even more diverse collection of backgrounds and identities, preparing them for a lifetime of leadership and service in a rapidly-changing world.

For generations, Yale graduates have set out to make the world better. By joining our community, you will enter a dynamic and ongoing conversation about what it means to be an engaged citizen at Yale and in the larger world. Our students have a proud legacy of activism that spans decades, and Yale student leaders have been powerful catalysts for change and growth. The trailblazing first women of Yale College, for example, advocated for and achieved meaningful changes across the university before making outstanding contributions in their professions and communities after graduating. I look to the Class of 2024 to continue the work Yale’s President Peter Salovey has charged our community with pursuing: “Yale must always move forward. Our campus is a place of growth and opportunity, a test-bed of change and a model for society. Together, we will lead the way toward a stronger Yale—and a stronger world.”

This fall, you and your classmates will have the privilege of serving as pioneers in two new campus collaboration spaces—the Schwarzman Center and the Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking. Both were deliberately designed to bring Yale students together to address the world’s most significant challenges. In these spaces and in many others, your class will define a new campus culture and establish new traditions. You will set the tone for a new Yale.
The Choice and Change Ahead of You

Many years ago, Yale’s former president Kingman Brewster wrote that selecting future Yale students was “a combination of looking for those who would make the most of the extraordinary resources assembled here… those with a zest to stretch the limits of their talents, and those with an outstanding public motivation” – in other words, applicants with a concern for something larger than themselves. Although Yale has changed in countless ways, our goals remain the same today.

If you choose to join us, you will not just graduate from a good college with a good education and good prospects for success in the world. By choosing Yale, you choose to change your life. Living and studying and succeeding here, among the most talented students in the world, will permanently transform what you can accomplish and the people with whom you will aspire to serve and lead.

Through our selection process we strive to bring together the widest possible array of talents, aspirations, backgrounds, outlooks, and capacities among the world’s best prepared students. We do this while honoring the unique context that forges each individual’s identity. The Yale experience then challenges each individual to deconstruct the elements of that identity, to examine them carefully, to compare them with the vast diversity of identities in our community, and to reconstruct them into a new person empowered to make an impact through scholarship, service, public engagement, and leadership.

As you consider your future, ask yourself the following: Do you want and instead of or? Do you aspire to be part of the next generation of leaders, creating new knowledge to address persistent questions?

Are you excited by the prospect of shaping the character of an institution older than America at one of its most transformative moments? Do you have a global outlook, a leader’s sense of purpose, and a belief that the future is for the bold?

If so, join us here at Yale.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Quinlan

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