2017 Class/Action Report:

A Report on Socioeconomic Class as Experienced by Students at Yale Law School

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Yale Law School

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Letter from the Report Authors

September 2017

To the YLS Community:

In his commencement address to the Class of 2015, Professor Daniel Markovits noted that at Yale Law School, “as many students come from households in the top one percent as from the entire bottom half of the income distribution.” In this, YLS is not unique. Back in January 2017, a study from the Equality of Opportunity Project went viral. It revealed that, rather than serving as engines of socio-economic mobility, colleges and universities in the United States, particularly our most “elite,” selective institutions, exacerbate income inequality by overwhelmingly excluding students outside of the upper classes.

Generations of law students from low-income and other backgrounds underrepresented in the legal profession have arrived here to be told the same: don’t worry, you deserve to be here. While intended as a comfort, this was alienating to hear for at least one of us, being among the 6% of the student body who identified as working class. If there are no mistakes in the admissions process, what does that mean about aspiring lawyers from similar backgrounds whose admission may have effectively been determined by their circumstances at birth?

Perhaps the results of the survey of class demographics at YLS were shocking when they first came out in 2013, but they were not by the time we re-conducted the survey three years later with a new student body. Nonetheless, the data collected in this project is just a small step in what is sure to be a long process. We hope the results are interesting, thought-provoking, and useful. We hope future classes of students keep asking questions and that the administration takes on the burden of collecting and sharing data. We hope, if this information moves you, that it stays with you through your time at YLS, to your role as an alum, to your membership in the legal profession and anywhere else you can foster change.

Thanks for reading.

Alda & Helen
I. Executive Summary

In Spring 2012, a group of YLS students became concerned with what they perceived to be a lack of awareness regarding socioeconomic diversity and its impact on the student experience. Led by Chase Sackett ’14 and Grant Damon ’14, the students committed to conducting a survey and preparing a report (the “2013 Report”) on socioeconomic class demographics and dynamics among the student body. That report, released March 2013, outlined three goals: (1) identifying student perspectives, attitudes, and concerns regarding class issues at YLS; (2) raising awareness of class issues among the YLS community; and (3) developing recommendations for positive change. A copy of the 2013 Report is attached as Appendix B. This report arises from the student response to the 2013 Report.

Partly inspired by the 2013 Report, three YLS students from low-income backgrounds who were the first in their families to attend professional school formed a student organization in Fall 2014 for self-identified “First Generation Professionals,” in order to support students from low-income families or who otherwise lacked experience and connections in the legal profession (“FGP”). The group now has over 140 student members on its listserv.

Part of FGP’s agenda for the 2015-2016 year included a repeat survey of the student body in accordance with the 2013 Report recommendation to collect data about students’ socioeconomic status every three to four years (Appendix B, pg. 2).

Selected Findings

- **Class Demographics.** Only 16% of YLS students identify as lower/working class or lower middle class. Based on estimated average household income during childhood, the median income bracket for YLS students is between $101,000 - $150,000. 18% of YLS students grew up in the top in the top 1% and 44% in top 5%. Students identifying as lower/working class tended to be more racially/ethnically diverse than students identifying as upper class. Students identifying as black or African-American tended to be more socioeconomically diverse than other groups of students and the student body as a whole. The vast majority (91%) of YLS students have at least one parent with a college degree or higher.

- **Other Student Demographics.** The vast majority of students use loans to pay for their YLS education (76%) with a majority of students also relying on grants (58%) and/or personal savings (51%). 50% of YLS students use parents’ or another relative’s support to pay some portion of their educational expenses while 11% indicated that they could not borrow from anyone in the case of an emergency. 23% of students identifying as lower/working class support dependents while at YLS. YLS students tend to come from suburban communities.

1 http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2013/03/28/study-finds-class-affects-law-school-experience/
and a plurality are from the Northeast (34%). 39% of YLS students graduated from
some Ivy league school.

- **Class Background Affects Student Experiences.** A significant majority of students at YLS
  (77%) felt that class and socioeconomic status affected their experience at the law school,
especially those students identifying as lower/working class (83%), lower middle class (87%),
or middle-class (86%). Lower/working class students were more likely (75%) than other
students to think that the YLS budget is not sufficient for their cost of living expenses for the
academic year. Upper class students were far less likely (14%) than other students to feel as
if financial needs played a role in their decisions to pursue activities at YLS such as RA
positions, Coker Fellowships, and TA or TF positions. Lower/working class students were
more likely than other students to feel that financial needs heavily affected their decisions
about summer jobs (84%) and about post-graduate employment (83%).

- **YLS Students Do Not Think the Student Body or the Faculty Are Understanding of Class
  Difference.** The majority of YLS students (62%) disagreed with the statement that “YLS
students are understanding of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.” A plurality of
students (48%) disagreed with the statement that “YLS faculty are understanding of people
from all socioeconomic backgrounds,” while many students (30%) neither disagreed nor
agreed with that statement. Lower/working class and lower middle-class students were
more likely (61% and 62% respectively) than other students to disagree with the statement
that the faculty were not understanding of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Recommendations**

Based on both the results of the survey and the narrative responses students provided, the Report
Authors worked with the 2016-2017 FGP Board to suggest several recommendations to the YLS
administration. These recommendations are laid out in detail at the end of the report, but largely
concern the accessibility of the law school to students from low-income backgrounds, both through
recruiting and financial aid, the alleviation of the financial burdens unequally felt by students from such
backgrounds, and efforts to promote the inclusion of such students through greater transparency,
faculty socioeconomic diversity, and sensitivity from both faculty and the student body.

**II. Methodology**

In Spring 2016, the survey design team prepared survey questions, attached as Appendix A, based on,
and in some cases identical to, the questions from the 2013 Report. As in the 2013 Report, the team
intentionally chose not to define “socioeconomic status” or “class” in the survey. The team administered
the survey through Qualtrics and collected anonymous responses. The test-run of the “live” survey went
out to a small group of students beginning on February 29, 2016 for feedback on technical issues only.
The survey was then distributed to the entire student body beginning March 5, 2016 through emails to
the school listserv (the “Wall”) and remained open for responses until March 16, 2016. To incentivize
student responses, FGP raffled boxes of girl-scout cookies and free meals with professors.
The timing of the survey administration provides important context for the responses. First, the survey went live shortly after the Yale Public Interest Initiative’s annual auction, a fundraiser for public interest fellowships where students bid for gift certificates, meals cooked by other students, dinners with faculty members, and other experiential and tangible items. Many narrative responses discuss the auction, some admittedly because of its topicality. Second, conversations about diversity and inclusion, including socioeconomic diversity, were particularly active at the law school during Spring 2016 as a result of the work of the 2015-2016 Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. Moreover, FGP’s own growth and advocacy on behalf of low-income students may have influenced students’ perception of class-related differences and issues since the 2013 Report.

Note on the Data Presented

The majority of survey questions were optional in order to encourage responses and give respondents the freedom to provide as much or as little information as they wanted. The number of overall respondents to a question is included at the bottom of each figure. The survey design team was particularly concerned with the risk of de-anonymizing students based on their responses. Therefore, where data is cross-tabulated with an identity category (e.g., gender or degree type) other than self-identified class status, categories with fewer than 15 respondents are omitted. Emphasis has been added to quotes from narrative responses for ease of reading and in some cases narratives have been edited for length or clarity only. Because of this, the full text of all narrative responses, with no identifying information, will be made available to the YLS student body on the FGP web page that houses this report.

Please note when reviewing the data that for some questions it was clear from narrative responses that survey takers misunderstood the questions with “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” response options. Therefore, some respondents who replied “disagree” likely meant to respond “agree” and vice versa.

Finally, please note that in some cases respondents could select multiple options so the percentages will add up to over 100%. The fact that all percentages are rounded will also create some minor rounding errors.

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2 [https://law.yale.edu/student-life/diversity-inclusion](https://law.yale.edu/student-life/diversity-inclusion).
III. Demographic Responses

Comparisons to Student Body

Ultimately, 422 students started the survey and responded to at least one question. 370 students completed the survey, representing approximately 57% of the YLS student body. Of the 420 respondents who provided degree year and type (Appendix A, Q. 1), 38% were 1Ls, 32% were 2Ls, 25% were 3Ls, and 4% were non-JD students, including LLMs, JSDs, and PhDs. As in the 2013 Report, slightly more respondents identified as women (56%) than men (46%) although women composed 48% of the law school student body. While J.D. students identifying as white (66%) appeared to be over-represented in our survey compared with the general J.D. student body (60%), the percentages of respondents of color tended to match the demographics of the student body. 16% of student respondents identified as LGBT. 9% of respondents identified as international students. 22% of respondents held degrees in addition to a bachelor’s degree.

Class Demographics

To determine a respondent’s socioeconomic status, we requested both their self-identification (Appendix A, Q. 11) and estimate of their household’s average income during their childhood years (Appendix A, Q. 14). Unlike the 2013 Report, where 50% of students identified as upper-middle class, the 2016 survey found that 42% of students identified as upper-middle class. 6% of students identified as lower/working class, compared to 4% in the 2013.

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3 Student population from YLS Admissions website at https://www.law.yale.edu/about-yale-law-school/glance/fast-facts, as of May 29, 2016, a few months after the survey was taken.
4 Id.
5 Yale Law School 2015 Standard 509 Information Report, available at https://www.law.yale.edu/system/files/area/department/admissions/document/std509inforeport.pdf. For example, 8.6% of J.D. respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino compared to 8.3% of the total J.D. student body.
6 As in the 2013 Report, our survey did not provide a definition of each class group so as not to influence respondent’s pre-existing self-identification. We assume respondents all have different definitions of each class group and the data presented in this report should be interpreted accordingly.
YLS students’ estimates of their average household income during pre-college years were very similar to those in the 2013 Report (Appendix B, pg. 11). In 2015, the average US household income was estimated to be $75,558 and the median income was $53,889. Therefore, 61% of respondents selected average household incomes of at least $100,000, well above the US median income, while at least 16% of respondents selected incomes below the US median. These results place approximately 18% in the top 1% of US incomes and at least 29% in the top 5% of US incomes.8

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Results out of 401 respondents.

Students who identified as the same class tended to have similar estimated household incomes. 84% of lower/working class students selected average household incomes of $50,000 or less. 82.6% of middle-class students selected household incomes of $50,000 to $150,000. 72.55% of upper class students selected incomes of $300,000 or more.

Unlike the 2013 Report, this survey also requested estimates of household size during those years to better assess income estimates (Appendix A, Q. 13). Of respondents with average household sizes of four people (about 42% of respondents), 46% had average household incomes between $51,000 and $100,000, placing them squarely in the middle income bracket for four-person US households. 9 48% respondents reported income greater than $151,000, placing them in the upper income bracket for such households. 10 16% reported incomes below $50,000, which would place them in the low-income group of such households. 11

Students’ self-identified class varied somewhat along racial/ethnic lines. Over half of those identifying as lower/working class identified as a member of a minority racial or ethnic group. A slight majority of the lower-middle and middle-class groups identified as white while the upper-middle and upper-class groups predominantly identified as white.

10 Id.
11 Id.
Results out of 406 respondents. Respondents who identified as a racial or ethnic group with 15 or less respondents were not included in the above.

Within racial/ethnic groups, the distribution of socioeconomic classes predominately resembled that of the total student body, except that a greater percentage of Black or African American respondents identified as lower/working class or lower middle-class than all other groups.
Results out of 406 respondents. Respondents who identified as a racial or ethnic group with 15 or less respondents were not included in the above.

When we broke down the average household annual income brackets during childhood in each racial group, the results indicated that Hispanic or Latino and Black or African-American students are over twice as likely as white students to be in the $50,000 and below brackets. East Asians and South or South-East Asians are about 1.5 times as likely as white students to be in such brackets. White students are also five times as likely as Black or African-American students to be in the brackets above $200,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>East Asian</th>
<th>South or South-East Asian</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15k or below</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15k-$30k</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30k-$50k</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$51k-$100k</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$101k-$150k</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$151k-$200k</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$201k-$300k</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $1m</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Results out of 401 respondents. Respondents who identified as a racial or ethnic group with 15 or less respondents were not included in the above.

We asked respondents about their parents’ education levels as another potential indicator of class background (Appendix A, Q. 12). In the United States, about 33% of adults have at least a bachelor’s degree. At YLS, 91% of students have at least one parent with a bachelor’s degree or higher.¹³


¹³ For the purposes of this report we decided to rank education levels as follows: elementary school, middle school, some high school, high school degree or equivalent, some college, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, professional degree, doctoral degree.
We also compared the lowest educational attainment of either parent (minimum education level) and the highest educational attainment of either parent (maximum education level) for households in different income brackets (see charts below). The minimum education level in higher income households tended to be higher than in lower income households. Households where at least one parent had a professional degree tended to be higher income. Households where one or both parents had a doctoral degree tended to be in the lower or middle-income brackets.
Costs of Attendance

As in the 2013 Report, the 2016 survey included questions about how students are paying for law school (Appendix A, Q. 38). The vast majority of students (76%) have taken out loans to cover some or all of their education. Over half (69%) receive grants or scholarships either from YLS or another source. Of the 20% of respondents who selected “other” most indicated that they worked during the school year or used earnings from summer work. While 41% of students relied on some parental contribution to pay part of their educational costs, only 5% of students relied exclusively on parental contributions.

Students that identified as lower/working class and lower middle-class were far more likely than the average student to rely on loans (95% of each group) and YLS grants (90% of each group), while students

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This is a little less than the percentage of the student body that received “some form of financial aid” in the 2016-2017 school year (73%), according to the Financial Aid Office. But our results for students that receive YLS grants is very close to the percentage reported in 2016-2017 (58% versus 60%).

identifying as upper class were least likely to rely on loans (34%) and unlikely to rely on YLS grants (11%). A majority of students identifying as upper class (66%) and of students identifying as upper middle-class (55%) indicated relying on some contribution from parents, compared to 5% of lower/working class-identifying students, 18% of lower middle class-identifying students, and 25% of middle class-identifying students.

Q. 38. How are you paying for your YLS education? (Please include funding for tuition as well as personal experiences.) Please choose all that apply.

Results out of 371 respondents.

Our survey included some additional questions to better assess students’ financial resources and needs. First, we asked if respondents would be able to rely on friends and family for financial support in an emergency (Appendix A, Q. 39). The vast majority of respondents (81%) indicated they could ask to borrow from parents while 11% indicated they could not borrow from parents, relatives, or friends.

Q. 39. If I had an emergency expense, I would be able to borrow from (check all that apply):
To get a better sense of the student body’s expenses, we asked respondents if any of them were also supporting dependents while at YLS (Appendix A, Q. 4). While the vast majority of respondents did not support dependents while at YLS, 17 students (5% of 371 respondents) and 23% of lower/working class students did support dependents. About 29% of the students with dependents identified as lower/working class, 18% identified as lower middle-class, 24% identified as middle-class, 18% identified as upper middle-class, and 12% identified as upper class.

Finally, we asked respondents whether or not they had paid or used test-prep or other admissions assistance while applying for law school. About 41% has used some such service, while about 59% had not. There was little variation within self-identified class groups except that middle class-identified students were the least likely to have used such services (72% had not).

Other Demographics of Interest

Based on anecdotal data and their own personal experiences, the Report Authors felt additional data on students’ region, educational background, and experience with the legal profession would be helpful when analyzing the YLS student experience through the lens of socioeconomic status.

Geography and Region

Q. 15. Which of the following best describes the region where you spent most of your pre-college years? Check all that apply.

For all regions, a majority or plurality of students identified as upper middle-class or middle-class, but the regional breakdown of each self-identified class group showed more variation. Lower/working class students (20%) and lower middle-class students (29%) were more likely to be from the Midwest than other self-identified class groups. Almost half (49%) of upper class students were from the Northeast.
In addition, the majority of YLS students grew up in suburbs, while only 10% of students responded that they grew up in rural areas.

![Graph showing community type preferences](image.png)

Q. 16. Which of the following best describes the community where you lived during the majority of your pre-college years?

- Rural: 10%
- Suburban: 69%
- Urban: 24%

Results out of 401 respondents. Some respondents chose multiple options.

**Educational Background**

The lack of diversity of undergraduate institutions represented at the law school has been a part of the larger discussion of diversity and inclusion, particular regarding the perception of the large number of students from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (HYP).\(^\text{15}\) Therefore, the survey design team felt it important to break out HYP as a category of undergraduate institutions, although this choice was criticized by some respondents.\(^\text{16}\) 39% of respondents went to some Ivy league school for undergrad while only 18% of respondents went to any public university.

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\(^{16}\) To quote one respondent to Q. 9: “This is quite classist in and of itself!” Admittedly, the Report Authors were not completely satisfied with the breakdown of undergraduate institutions, but felt these choices would provide the most information without making the response options too cumbersome.
Students’ self-reported class varied across students’ undergraduate educational background. 24% of students from public universities identified as lower or lower-middle class, compared to 16.8% of students from Harvard-Yale-Princeton, 14.3% of students from other Ivy-league schools, 9.47% of students from small liberal arts colleges, and 13.7% of students from other private universities. Public universities were also the only type of institution where the largest percentage of students identified as middle-class.

The distribution of educational background in each self-identified class group also varied slightly from that of the total student body. In particular, students identifying as lower/working class were more likely than other class groups to have gone to public universities and the least likely to have gone to small liberal arts colleges or non-Ivy private universities. Students identifying as lower middle and middle-class were the least likely to have gone to Ivy.
Legal Experience

Several student narrative responses in the 2013 Report mentioned that not having family members in the legal profession disadvantaged them at YLS when compared to their classmates (Appendix B, pg. 25-26), so the 2016 survey included a question on such relationships and other experiences with the legal profession students may have had (Appendix A, Q. 17).

34% of respondents said they had no experience with the legal profession prior to their enrollment in law school. More students (39%) had some prior experience by working for a law firm or in a legal capacity. In addition, several students who selected “other” noted prior work experience involving the legal system, such as internships in legal offices and working in government. 26% of students had a close family member involved in the legal profession and about 20% were or had family members involved in a civil or criminal action.
IV. Narrative Responses

Student Experiences

About 77% of respondents agreed that class and socioeconomic status had affected their YLS experience to some extent (Appendix A, Q. 19). In contrast, only 8% of respondents disagreed that class and socioeconomic status had affected their experience. Students identifying as lower or lower-middle class were slightly more likely to strongly agree that class and socioeconomic status affected their experiences when compared to middle, upper-middle, and upper-class students. When compared to the 2013 report, the percentage of students that strongly agreed that class had affected their YLS experience nearly doubled (Appendix B, pg. 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my</th>
<th>Q19. Class and socioeconomic status has affected my YLS experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
211 students provided narratives explaining their responses to Question 19. Two concepts repeatedly emerged from these narrative responses. First, students felt disadvantaged because of their own socioeconomic status, educational background, parental occupation and/or financial resources. Second, students identifying as “privileged” still recognized various ways socioeconomic status, educational background, parental occupation, and/or financial resources affected their classmates. A few students also pointed out the way lack of socioeconomic diversity hampers conversations at the law school about substantive legal issues.

Students who said that their experience was affected by class and socioeconomic status described feeling “like an outsider,” “out of place and not well understood,” and “like being from a non-upper class background puts me at a disadvantage in some ways.” The most common type of narrative responses echoed this student:

> I feel as if I do not know how the institution operates. There are a lot of informal cues and I think people from the elite are already several steps ahead. (Q. 20)

Other students echoed the sentiment that they are at a disadvantage because of the gap in knowledge between themselves and their classmates. One of these students wrote:

> . . . I remember feeling extremely discouraged after one particular CDO event on clerkships. I felt that the event was interesting and informative, and I hadn’t known any of the information that was presented before attending. As I was leaving, I overheard two students sneering at the simplicity of the presentation, and wondering how anyone could have ended up at Yale without already knowing that information. I think this is illustrative of the severe disconnect that can be caused by differences in socioeconomic background. Coming in, I knew so little that it took me months to even become aware of my relative lack of knowledge. In comparison, some of my classmates likely could not even imagine coming to law school without having that information already available. (Q. 20)

Many other students identified parental occupation or lack of exposure to the legal profession as the source of their disadvantage.

> “When I got here I realized that there is a big difference between people who were raised by lawyers/professors/elites on the coasts and people who were raised by middle class professionals in flyover country. I feel like there’s no catching up to some of my classmates, who are more articulate, well-read, and self-assured than I will
ever be. I feel lucky to be studying amongst super-geniuses, but I’m so out of my element that it’s a big struggle to participate in class or approach professors.” (Q. 20)

Several students gave examples of the ways they have felt excluded because of differences in financial resources, such as not being able to afford the same kind of housing, vacations, or social excursions as their classmates and that they felt pressure to spend money they did not have. A few different respondents criticized wine-tasting and wine-and-cheese events in particular.

One student wrote:

“It’s hard to find time to meet up with people, and when it’s for meals, we end up going out to save time - and that’s expensive. People segment by income - wine tastings, for example, are quite expensive. Things sponsored by the school tend to be affordable, which is great, but outside of that it’s generally expensive and it feels like some people feel the debt more acutely than others. The public interest auction is a great way to segment the class by disposable income.” (Q. 20)

Another wrote:

“Aside from the sheer culture shock, I have concerns that seem foreign to most of my classmates. I worry about being out of the workforce for 3 years and what it means for my family to not have that source of financial help. I worry about having enough money to fly home for break. I am very careful about money because I know I have no one to turn to, if things go wrong. I worry about textbook prices and getting my rented textbooks back on time. I study on campus so that I don’t have to turn the gas up in my apartment for most of the day. I do not participate in activities that require me to pay up front and be reimbursed . . . And I worry that my family can’t afford for me to take a public interest job.” (Q. 20)

Some students identifying as having class privilege felt out of place at YLS because of other differences in background, particularly for those who went to non-Ivy or public undergraduate institutions. One student wrote:

“. . . even coming from a wealthy family, I have felt a sharp disconnect from the many YLS students whose parents went to top law schools or are part of the extremely rich. I grew up in public schools and even though I have relatives who were lawyers who practiced locally, I don’t speak the language or have the connections of the networks that dominate YLS.” (Q. 20)

In addition, other students that identified as being from upper-middle or upper-class backgrounds felt that their socioeconomic status opened them up to heightened criticism. As two different students wrote:
Affluent parentage is treated with suspicion at YLS, especially among white males. While some amount of this may be well-placed, any suspicion is not conducive to an inclusive community. (Q. 20)

Coming from upper middle class, I constantly doubt whether I’m seeing law through the proper lens, which my classmates constantly remind me of. (Q. 20)

Indeed, several other students’ comments reflected the opinion that the predominance of students from upper-middle or upper-class backgrounds had a negative impact on substantive conversations at the law school and students’ legal work. One student explained:

. . . It makes the school feel like a very insular community in which discussions about economic justice don’t have the benefit of input from people from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. (Q. 20)

Students highlighted this concern in connection with classmates’ career interests. One of these students wrote:

. . . my prior experiences working in public interest law before law school open[ed] my eyes to how the legal system--criminal law, in particular--interacts with class and socioeconomic status, but I worry that many of my classmates do not really understand how this works in practice. (Q. 20)

One student summed up several of these themes in one response:

I’ve never found myself saying “you know, most people where I grew up can’t afford that” more often than here. I’m constantly amazed not only be the extreme wealth of YLS students, but the complete lack of perspective surrounding issues of money and class. I’m in a lucky spot because my parents are highly educated and came from upper class families, but did not, themselves, earn much money (you might say they’re downwardly mobile). Therefore I sort of ‘get’ the schmoozy network deal at YLS, but definitely am not a part of it. I’m especially affected by the seemingly complete ignorance of most of the student body towards issues of rural poverty. (Q. 20)

Several respondents felt that class did not really affect their experience for a variety of reasons. A few students mentioned that their upper-class privilege made it so class did not affect their experience. Some other students explained that race, age, life experience, veteran status, or being a “foreigner” affected them more at YLS than class or socioeconomic status.

Finally, some respondents believed that class differences were not as much of a problem due to the meritocratic nature of the law school. One of those students wrote:
**YLS is a true meritocracy.** I don’t think that people judge me by what I wear or where I vacation; I do think that people judge me by what I think and what I contribute . . . (Q. 20)

Another student response was critical to the very concept of assessing student experience through the lens of socioeconomic status.

I was raised in a lower income working family in a rural community . . . Surveys such as these - which on their face seem to be gathering data to support some conclusion that Yale should be adapting itself to be accommodating to the peasants amongst its ranks so that they feel more [comfortable] - I find to be patronizing at best, and utterly insulting at their worst. If we want class and socioeconomic status to quit being ways in which Yale Law students are categorized, how about we quit going out of our way to categorize and protect them as such - with seemingly asinine efforts, such as this, advancing notions they need to be catered to [] account for the deficiencies of their less “privileged” upbringing. (Q. 20)

**Networking & Connections**

In the narrative responses to questions about socioeconomic background’s impact on the student experience, students mentioned the “schmoozy cocktail party game” and noted that informal information networks provide greater opportunities for some students than others. As one student put it:

**I think that the most stress-inducing differences I’ve seen between students at YLS are rooted in the asymmetries of information that different groups have coming in.** For those with previous classmates, friends, and family members that have gone through the process (or [are] currently students/faculty at YLS or another top law school), there is clearly a different level of understanding at play that allows them to see what activities have instrumental value adds and which are good only for their own sake . . . While it is true that bringing these matters to the fore early on leads to more concern and worry, I also have found there to be a quieter pressure and worry that spreads when people don’t know what’s going on. I believe that, because some faculty members and/or existing networks between students will lead to the spread of this “insider information,” YLS should do a better job of providing all this information up front and openly, rather than saying “people will talk about it, but don’t worry for a while. (Q. 42)

Another respondent drew the connection between informational asymmetries and educational background, implying that YLS could do more to support students from underrepresented schools.
**Financial Needs**

A plurality of respondents felt that the yearly budget used by the financial aid office to calculate aid was enough for their room, board, and living expenses.\(^1\) In narrative responses, several mentioned that New Haven is a low-cost city and some said $17,000 per year was more than enough. On respondent pointed out that outside of the yearly budget, the summer earnings cap was too low even after the recent raise to $7,500 from $6,000.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Q11. I would describe my background as...} & \text{Strongly agree} & \text{Somewhat agree} & \text{Somewhat disagree} & \text{Strongly disagree} \\
\hline
\text{Lower/working class} & 10\% & 15\% & 45\% & 30\% \\
\text{Lower middle class} & 17\% & 31\% & 23\% & 29\% \\
\text{Middle class} & 13\% & 44\% & 31\% & 13\% \\
\text{Upper middle class} & 9\% & 47\% & 32\% & 12\% \\
\text{Upper class} & 17\% & 36\% & 39\% & 8\% \\
\text{Total} & 12\% & 41\% & 32\% & 15\% \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Results out of 318 respondents.

Of the students that disagreed with the statement above, several were under a different budget because of dependents or because of an arrangement with a partner. Other students mentioned that the costs of long-distance travel were underestimated in the budget and that it didn’t account for foreign currency fluctuations. High moving costs and difficulty subletting were frequently mentioned as costs that pushed student expenses over the budget.

A few students mentioned that they were in the position of supporting non-dependent family members or had pre-existing debt to pay down, unique situations that they wished the financial aid office could accommodate. One student wrote:

\[\text{________} \]

\(^1\) Budget for 2016-2017 is available here: [https://www.law.yale.edu/admissions/cost-financial-aid/cost-attendance](https://www.law.yale.edu/admissions/cost-financial-aid/cost-attendance).
[The budget] is a JOKE. Between summer housing costs, losses on sublets, and the expectation that you have to go out and socialize and drink with your peers to network—you better be putting in those RA hours, like Resnik level hours, **if you expect to not look like the poor kid on that budget**. The VAST majority of kids get money from their families and that’s why it works. **The school just forgets everyone is so rich and supported externally and that’s how they can pretend that budget is livable.** (Q. 28)

In addition to social pressures, a few responses drew a connection between costs exceeding the budget and mental health.

*I don't think that the basic budget really takes into account that most social activities students engage in cost money - food and alcohol are primary sites of social engagement for students. Plus, I think that it matters in terms of mental health whether or not a student can afford to occasionally leave New Haven, or if friends/family can afford to visit. The transportation allowances for financial aid are a joke.** (Q. 28)

For some students, financial needs sometimes affected their decisions about which activities to pursue at YLS. Most, however, did not agree that financial need played a major role in their decisions to pursue RA positions, clinics, etc., with some respondents pointing out that several paid activities do not provide sufficient returns to be worth the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my background as...</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td><strong>22%</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results out of 375 respondents.

Of the students who agreed with the statement above, several noted that the pay rates for Coker Fellowships and RA work were too low. As one student explained:

*More about TFing -- which I do for the money -- than being an RA. I'm surprised at how many “prestigious” things pay so little, creating real opportunity trade-offs. So,
for example, I did not pursue a Coker Fellowship, despite the prestige, because I couldn't afford to use that time for a gig that was so much less compensated than being a TF. Similarly, I've done less RA work than I would have in order to have more time to fulfill my TF responsibilities, which are better paid. (Q. 34)

Nonetheless, several students noted that pay from RA positions made it easier to avoid credit card debt or otherwise helped “at the margins.” Some other students noted that their financial security made them freer to focus on unpaid clinic work.

Most students did not feel that financial needs impacted their decision to take or not take particular courses (Appendix A, Q. 37). In the narrative responses, several students remarked that the debt they were going into was large enough that additional hundreds of dollars for course books was not a barrier. Others explained that they found ways around course-related expenses, such as scanning books instead of buying them.

Narrative responses for the minority of students who did feel this way varied a great deal. Some used free textbooks or no textbooks as a plus when deciding to take a course and others decided not to take a course because of the high cost of its materials. One student constructed their course schedule around their teaching fellow schedule and another noted that they took primarily business law courses to prepare for a career in the private sector.

Q. 37. Financial needs played a role in my decision to take a particular course. (e.g. cost of course materials or course timing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my background as...</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
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</thead>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td>Upper class</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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**Career Decisions**

Similarly, students appeared divided over the question of whether financial needs played a major role in their summer job searches (Appendix A, Q. 29) with students that identified as lower/working, lower middle, or middle class tending to agree and students that identified as upper middle and upper class tending to disagree.
Q. 29. Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process for my 1L and/or 2L summer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my background as...</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>17%</td>
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<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Middle class</td>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Upper class</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results out of 375 respondents.

Students who agreed with the above statement explained that they made decisions about which jobs to take and which cities to work in based on SPIF. For example, one student stayed in New Haven to save on rent and other students worked in their hometowns to stay with family. Other respondents, however, said SPIF was generous and sufficient for them to pursue various opportunities.

SPIF made me feel pretty comfortable about the way I was spending my summer, although it is strange to me that you are only funded for the number of weeks you work -- what are we expected to do if we are choosing to do FIP, or just if we plan to continue to exist in the 4 weeks of summer outside of coverage? (Q. 30)

Several students stated that they needed to work at a firm post-graduation for at least a few years to pay debt or support family, so their summer job choices were limited to firms (“because of family considerations and expected debt after graduation, my search for 2L employment was influenced by financial need.”). Conversely, other students felt that the combination of SPIF and summer earnings cap made it easier to turn away from firm jobs to explore public interest (“[b]ecause the law school essentially takes away all money earned above the SPIF amount, I found that there was little choice to be made.”).

Student responses to the question of whether financial needs played a major role in their post-graduation job search were more uniform (Appendix A, Q. 31). A slight majority of respondents agreed that financial needs played a role in their job decisions, including the vast majority of lower/working class-identified respondents.

Q. 31. Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process for my post-graduation job. Please include decisions about clerkships, fellowships, and firm jobs.
Of the students who disagreed with the above statement, several cited a lack of familial obligations (or even relying on family able to provide financial support) as the reason financial needs were not considered. Other students noted that they made decisions based on career interests and not financial circumstances (“I’m not allowing finances to drive my employment decisions.”).

I haven’t made those decisions yet, but I am not going to be seeking a high-paying job. My previous salaries have been $20-25,000/year, so the "low-paying" end (which I understand to be $40-50,000) seems like enough to me. I’m sure my feeling of security/that I don’t need lots of money to live on comes partly from the knowledge that if something terrible happened, my family could help me. (Q. 32)

Finally, several students cited COAP as a reason they did not need to take financial needs into account.

The COAP loan forgiveness program, the fact that I’ve lived on way less than $50,000/yr (the COAP lower threshold), and the fact that I don’t currently have a family mean that I feel relatively great freedom to work with whomever I’m most interested in. (Q. 32)

Of the students who agreed, some noted that COAP was not sufficient due to their specific circumstances. As one student wrote:

As someone who is planning to be married by graduation, I feel unable to pursue a career in the public interest. COAP is generous, but basically does not apply for graduates with spouses. I know that I feel as if I am facing a decision between working in a career that I would love and effectively living on my spouse’s salary alone for the next ten years, or accepting a job I anticipate disliking in order to pay off my loans. (Q. 32)

And another:
I chose a firm for the money. I never thought I would do it -- I haven’t brainwashed myself into thinking this will give me some valuable experience. I’m doing it solely for the money. I don’t want to sound so bitter: I am thankful that at least I have the opportunity to make so much money. COAP is over-hyped. Try living in those amounts in NYC or DC. And then getting married? Hopefully you marry into money. (Q. 32)

Other students described existing familial expectations or obligations as limiting their choices (“I don’t think my parents would ever understand me working for limited pay as a clerk.”). As one student shared:

My father passed away [during law school]. He has been the main breadwinner of my family . . . I have not been able to pursue clerkships . . . and because neither my mom or siblings are able to find stable work, I now feel that it would irresponsible and self-indulgent to give up a firm job after graduation. While we are still fortunate compared to many families, I often face certain constraints and must shoulder burdens that (I feel) many YLS students are largely free from. (Q. 32)

Finally, some students mentioned that fellowships for public interest work did not provide enough funding to live in major cities, including those offered by YLS.

Student Awareness and Attitudes

About 19.7% of respondents agreed to some extent that YLS students are understanding\(^\text{18}\) of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, while about 63% disagreed (Appendix A, Q. 22). When compared to the 2013 Report, the percentage of respondents that strongly disagreed with the statement doubled and the percentage of respondents that agreed with the statement at all dropped from 29% to 20% (Appendix B, pg. 15).

\(^\text{18}\) The Report Authors intentionally used the same phrasing for this series of questions as in the 2013 Report in order to compare across time. We intentionally provided little or no guidance about the meaning of the question.
Of the students who agreed or were neutral, many commented that while YLS students could not exactly know what it is like to be a different socioeconomic background than the one they are in, most students are capable of empathy and genuinely try to understand different perspectives. Many of these students wrote in some variation of:

_\textit{I find it hard to generalize across the student body - I think most are understanding in terms of empathy, but some are not understanding in terms of sensitivity/consciousness. (Q. 22)}_

Additionally, many students noted that YLS students have become increasingly aware of issues related to class privilege, since, as one student wrote, it’s “difficult to avoid the conversation these days.”

Of the students who disagreed, many agreed with other respondents that YLS students seemed to “try” to be understanding but were less optimistic about their success. Students noted that this was particularly apparent in the ways students think about law and policy.

_\textit{I have noticed very little, if any, mean-spiritedness, but I do think it is difficult for people to really get any sense of how the other half lives. I also think some YLS students have a tendency to view people with less money or education as objects to be manipulated by policy (always with the best of intentions!) and cared for by agencies/organizations rather than as conscious human beings with their beliefs and values. (Q. 22)}_

_\textit{Upper class people at YLS consistently misrepresent themselves as being middle class or upper middle class. They view their experiences as “average” and are often confused when people do not identify with predatory businesses in contracts, well-meaning doctors in torts, etc. (Q. 22)}_

Frequently respondents noted that YLS students assume their classmates are in the same financial situation. Several students commented on expectations, from both individuals and student organizations, to attend expensive events. As one student summarized, “It seems like the two basic options are to be rich or faking it well.”

A few students compared treatment of socioeconomic diversity to other types of diversity, with some believing class was relatively overlooked.

_\textit{I think awareness of economic difference is very low at the law school, certainly compared to awareness of racial difference. (Q. 22)}_

While others believed that class issues were too often a focus or relatively uncontroversial compared to other differences.
Frankly, the discussion around class is toxic here. I never felt welcome or interested in FGP. Like discussions about race, the discussion seems to be determined by competitions about who suffered greater injury. **This is a race to the bottom that is disappointing and I think damaging.** (Q. 22)

[Understanding] requires empathy, imagination and a willingness to learn and hear. And from my experience, YLS students have that in spades—far more so than they have toward diversities of religious, political and other sorts of value-laden backgrounds. (Q. 22)

**Faculty Awareness and Attitudes**

About 22% of respondents agreed to some extent that YLS faculty are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, while about 47% disagreed (Appendix A, Q. 23). 30% of students responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, representing a significant decrease from the 49% of students who felt neutral on the subject in the 2013 Class Action Report. Since the number of students who agreed and strongly agreed that YLS faculty are understanding remained constant, there was a significant increase in those students who disagreed or strongly disagreed that that faculty are understanding of the experiences of those from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. (Appendix B, pg. 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my background as...</th>
<th>Q23. YLS faculty are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>Upper middle class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3%</td>
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Results out of 375 respondents.

As with those commenting on student awareness, survey responses explained that there is little in the way of active classism. Many students noted that, in general, faculty are more aware of class differences.

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19 As with the question on student awareness and attitudes, the Report Authors intentionally used the same phrasing for this series of questions as in the 2013 Report in order to compare across time. We intentionally provided little or no guidance about the meaning of the question.
than students. However, this understanding often appears to manifest on a theoretical level rather than a practical one. Which is to say that while many faculty members try to be understanding, lack of personal experience with the effects of socio-economic status means they do not necessarily take steps to ease the path of those from different class backgrounds.

As a salient example, many students mentioned the price of textbooks and how only a few professors understood and tried to compensate for this burden. According to one student, some professors “have offered to purchase books or other course necessities for anyone who can’t afford them.” More often however, students commented that professors too often didn’t take the costs of books into account or consider teaching from older and cheaper editions. One student wrote:

> [M]ost of them *don’t seem to take cost into account when assigning textbooks* or informing students when an older edition would suffice. (Q. 24)

Respondents also often noted that among professors, there seems to be a baseline assumption that everyone comes from an upper-middle class background.

> *Faculty mean well, but frequently make uncomfortable assumptions about students’ backgrounds.* (Q. 24)

> *I think at least some faculty members assume that everyone is from an upper middle class background and make comments to that effect in class or in conversations with students.* (Q. 24)

> *In many classes, poor or disadvantaged people are talked about as an abstract, not as an understood reality. I don’t think it crosses many of my classmates’ or professors’ minds that not everyone in the classroom has the same clinical detachment to these issues, that for some of us, it was our lives.* (Q. 24)

Students agreed there are often wide differences within the faculty in terms of understanding and accommodation for those of non-traditional socio-economic background. In fact, many of the students who disagreed or strongly agreed that professors are aware noted that their answer applied to the faculty at large but that some individual professors have been very understanding. Others drew a distinction between the clinical and non-clinical faculty.

There was disagreement among students about the socio-economic status of professors. Some wrote that the faculty were probably from higher class backgrounds than students while others believed that the faculty was more diverse in terms of socio-economic status than the student body. In general, students agree that the faculty can be more proactive. One student wrote:

> *I don’t think professors are cognizant of ways they can equalize the playing field.* (Q. 24)
Administration’s Awareness and Attitudes

As in the 2013 report, a plurality of students reported being neutral on the understanding and performance of the administration. However, whereas in 2013, nearly 46% of students neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that administrators are understanding of socio-economic differences, only 36% percent of respondents in 2016 said the same. (Appendix A, Q. 25). Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who agreed to some extent that the YLS administration is understanding of the experiences of people from all socio-economic backgrounds decreased slightly from 38% to the 2016 rate of 33%. Corresponding, there was a significant increase, from about 17% to 31% of students who disagreed with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11. I would describe my background as...</th>
<th>Q25. YLS administration is understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Results out of 375 respondents

Given the open-ended nature of this question, narrative student responses were wide-ranging and therefore hard to generalize. Most students commented upon the administrative offices they interacted with most directly, namely financial aid and student affairs. Many students praised these offices for their understanding and accommodations but were more ambivalent about the administration as a whole. Several students said some variation of “I have not had enough interaction with the administration to be able to answer this question” or “I think it varies across administrators.”

In the realm of financial aid, students supplemented the questions more directly about financial aid by pointing out that despite the general generosity of aid packages and SPIF, the timing of disbursement can result in gaps for those without sufficient savings. As with other students and faculty, respondents

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20 As with the question on student awareness and attitudes, the Report Authors intentionally used the same phrasing for this series of questions as in the 2013 Report in order to compare across time. We intentionally provided little or no guidance about the meaning of the question.
expressed the view that the administration’s policies seem to assume that students have a safety net and other resources to rely upon.

I think a lot of YLS’s advice to new students about finances, move-in, and so on is predicated on the assumption that students are coming from a certain financial status to begin with. My roommates and I discussed how there were a lot of up-front costs that made life pretty difficult until loan disbursements came in. (Q. 26)

Many financial programs, such as SPIF, are helpful for FGP students, but make assumptions that resources are available prior to disbursement of funds (i.e. SPIF only gets disbursed in late spring, which means I’m unable to get housing before much of the affordable housing is taken. (Q. 26)

Some students noted that this leads to policies that disproportionately affect those without ample financial means.

$200 to drop a class from a previous semester? Why? Small price for some, prohibitive for others. (Q. 26)

Other policies -- like taking away students' grants when they make money from law firm summers (and taking the grants away faster if you have a lower student contribution, as lower-income students do) -- actually have a negative effect on those with lower socioeconomic status. (Q. 26)

Additionally, some expressed concern that the administration’s assumptions about student backgrounds lead to a certain passiveness that disadvantages precisely those without prior cultural capital, reiterating the themes expressed elsewhere.

It seems that the informal networks of prestige and achievement in which YLS either actively or passively places a lot of stock (clerkships, Coker Fellowships, etc.) presume a level of familiarity with higher echelons of the legal profession. (Q. 26)

The administration often presents new information with a caveat saying, "We know that this will cause significant anxiety, but you really do not need to be worrying about this yet." As someone who didn't know that things like Clerkships or YLJ were important coming in, this only made me more anxious. It made me feel as if I was far behind my peers who had already been aware and concerned about these things. (Q. 26)
V. Recommendations from the 2016 Survey

At the end of the 2016 survey we asked respondents for any recommendations or policy changes they thought would make YLS more supportive of students from all socioeconomic backgrounds (Appendix A, Q. 42). The following recommendations are based on some of those responses, the 2013 Report, the rest of the 2016 survey, and discussions with various administrators, faculty members, and students, including the 2016-2017 FGP Board. Nonetheless, this section is intentionally and solely representative of the opinions of the Report Authors of this report. It should not be interpreted to reflect the opinions or agreement of any survey respondents or any other individuals, including the members of the FGP Board.

1. Admissions

**Responsible Party in 2017: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid**

The Admissions Office (AO) has started to work with FGP to improve targeting and recruitment of applicants from low socioeconomic backgrounds, but more can be done.

1.1. The AO should either internally or with an outside consultant regularly reassess its admissions criteria and procedures to identify barriers for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, including practices that may have a disparate impact on students from such backgrounds.

1.2. To accomplish these long-term tasks, the Admissions Office should hire a full-time employee to oversee recruitment of underrepresented students and may want to hire more diversity representatives.

1.3. The AO should collect data regularly and monitor outreach to and yield from low-income, first-generation, and FGP applicants. The AO should especially collect data on why low-income admits decide not to matriculate.

1.4. The Admissions Office should publish a timeline, with numeric goals, for increases in the number of low-income and working-class students as a percentage of the student body.

1.5. The AO should advocate that LSAC allow all law school applicants to self-report socioeconomic and/or first-generation status and then encourage such applicants to apply to the law school, possibly using similar practices to the way URM applicants are recruited.

1.6. The Admissions Office should expand its pre-application outreach to public universities with diverse populations, especially in underrepresented regions of the country.

1.7. The AO should affirmatively encourage applicants and admits taking advantage of fee waivers and travel reimbursements for visiting the law school.

1.8. Faculty members should be trained in reading applications through the lens of socioeconomic diversity. The AO should circulate guidance or best practices.

2. Finances
Responsible Party in 2017: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid

Students provided several suggestions for rethinking the way tuition and financial aid works, but we don’t think students should be expected, nor are they likely to possess the qualifications, to create a full proposal for increasing financial aid, providing sufficient fellowships and improving COAP. Instead, members of the Financial Aid Office, members of the Dean’s Office, the Chief Financial Officer and any other relevant administrators should form a committee to seriously assess the feasibility of the following proposals:

2.1. The law school should seriously consider measures to limit increases to student debt so that financial needs do not become an even larger factor in students’ career decisions.

2.2. The law school should lead the way by meeting 100% of financial need for low-income students, possibly with grants that cover full cost of attendance. The minimum loan amount should be eliminated for students below a certain wealth threshold.

2.3. The law school should increase financial aid and improve COAP for married students and students with dependents. Students should not have to be advised that they cannot get married to take advantage of the COAP program.

2.4. The law school should provide additional funding for JSD candidates to cover the average number of years it takes to complete the degree, which we understand to often be more than the two years currently funded.

2.5. Instead of allowing students to take out an additional COAP eligible loan during a clerkship, clerkships should be treated like any other eligible employment and immediately covered by COAP. Such COAP payments could be subject to reimbursement by the student if their post-clerkship income is too high to be COAP-eligible (e.g., biglaw associates).

2.6. The committee should also consider the expansion of emergency loans and grants and the elimination of the summer earnings cap for some if not all students. Emergency loans should be better publicized and easier to access.

2.7. Alternately, although the current $7,500 SPIF grant and summer earnings cap is close to the average costs students incurred in the summer of 2015, this amount does not account for extreme expenses students may incur in New York or San Francisco or other high cost-of-living cities. SPIF and the summer earnings cap should be adjustable based on the city were students are working, with a floor of $7,500. We also recommend regularly reviewing SPIF funding and the summer earnings cap every three years.

2.8. The annual budget for cost of attendance should increase its estimate for cross-country or foreign travel and, separately, moving costs at the beginning and end of each term.

2.9. The law school should explore financing options for students to use during the transition between loan disbursements. Possible topics to explore include additional grants or partnerships with financial institutions.

21 $8,000 according to conversations between the Report Authors and Jill Stone in Spring 2016.
3. Coker Fellowships and TA Positions

**Responsible Party in 2017:** Dean Gerken, Dean Klevorick, Asst. Dean Maldonado

3.1. Increase funding for Coker Fellowships and RA positions to match University Teaching Fellow jobs to curb the phenomenon of students foregoing job opportunities at the law school because of financial considerations.

3.2. Increase transparency regarding applications for RA positions, Coker fellowships, Clerkships, Public Interest fellowships, etc.

3.3. One student suggested that the administration should refuse to process RA applications if the professor has not made a public posting of the RA position, which we support subject to certain exemptions (e.g., working with previously employed students).

4. Faculty & Curriculum

4.1. The Faculty Hiring Committee should consider class as it intersects with racial and gender identity in targeting and recruiting entry level and lateral hires from underrepresented backgrounds. As of Spring 2017, only two full-time faculty members identify as first-generation professionals.

4.2. Students from low-income backgrounds, especially students of color, students from underrepresented undergraduate institutions, and older students, should be brought into the faculty hiring process both to help recruit those who have received offers as well to establish mentorship relationships for those students who may lack access.

4.3. Several students supported the idea of assigning faculty mentors outside of the small groups. Such mentorship assignments should be subject to accountability mechanisms, such as a required number of meetings between each advisee and advisor.

4.4. The faculty and administration, with student input, should develop and implement best practices for creating inclusive classroom environments for students from low-income backgrounds, including training about implicit bias and assumptions so that professors do not embarrass or marginalize students from lower or working-class backgrounds, public universities, rural or urban areas, or students who have no prior experience with the legal profession.

4.5. Faculty should reconsider requiring permission of instructor for course enrollment, and if they do teach such courses, should be transparent about what is being considered in a candidate’s resume, writing sample, etc.

4.6. Faculty should endeavor to make all readings available electronically, or as much as possible. Faculty should at least make scans of the readings for the first two weeks of class accessible to all students in their classes on the Inside Site or Canvas.

4.7. The registrar should eliminate fees for late course changes.

5. Inclusion
Responsible Party in 2017: FGP Board, various student groups, Dean Cosgrove

5.1. Students mentioned a desire for spaces for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and expressed dissatisfaction with FGP. We recommend FGP amend its constitution and policies to make it clear that the group is a space for low-income and lower-middle income students, if their parents are professionals. FGP should also work on a guide for students from low-SES backgrounds, available to all students to reach those who may be low-income but not want to join the group.

5.2. Other student groups, from political to interest-based to affinity groups, should either partner with FGP or develop programming and support for members of their group that are also low-income. Student groups that organize trips, retreats, or other large events should make sure to cover all costs of the event or else make clear what contributions participants are expected to make in advance.

5.3. As several students expressed alienation with the usual “wine-and-cheese” receptions accompanying speaker and other group events, we suggest student groups and the school’s program offices plan alternative events that cater to more diverse student interests.

5.4. Several students criticized the Public Interest Auction as an alienating display of disparate levels of wealth. Students suggested the Auction contain more raffles or else that funding for the Yale Public Interest Fellowship come from some other source. The Report Authors have met with the Public Interest Initiative and discussed several options for making the event more inclusive, including removing or reducing the public bidding portion and running alternative fundraisers and increasing raffles specifically for activities with professors and other high-cost items.

5.5. The OSA should eliminate fees for school-sponsored activities (e.g., trips during orientation).

5.6. The OSA should publicize (or, if necessary, construct) a map of the entire law school so that professors’ offices are more accessible and navigation isn’t a secret to be passed down among students.

VI. Past Recommendations

Progress on 2013 Recommendations

The following summarizes the recommendations made in the 2013 Report and their current status. In some cases, members of the YLS administration provided information about the recommendation’s status, which should not be taken to reflect the views of the Report Authors, Editors or FGP.

1. Consider identities and experiences of students in development of orientation programming.

From the Office of Student Affairs: At Orientation, the OSA added a diversity presentation followed by small group lunch and dialogue discussions to consider issues of identity and inclusion. It added activities for partners and children at Orientation.
2. **Survey student body on class issues every three to four years.**

FGP has made this one of the responsibilities of its Advocacy Chair.

3. **Student groups should include discussions of class, including intersectionality, with other aspects of student experience and the legal profession.**

4. **Professors should think critically about the responses in the 2013 report.**

Dean Klevorick regularly sends out a memorandum on academic environment to the faculty that has become both longer and more substantive since 2013.

5. **The administration should take social class into consideration in admissions and in anticipating the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.**

From the Admissions Office: Added admissions questions to application to identify and track FGP status in admissions process. The AO hired Diversity Reps who serve as resource during application and post-admit process. The AO added specific FGP event to Admitted Student Weekend programming. The AO sent Diversity Reps to summer alumni events to connect with incoming 1Ls and create support network prior to entering law school.

6. **Open up information networks, particularly in connection with relationships with professors.**

From the Office of Student Affairs: OSA moved information from the inside site to outside site to make it more searchable; created a weekly newsletter to try to capture or reinforce info that isn't otherwise publicized.

Dean Klevorick has emphasized the importance of mentoring to the faculty and encouraged them to reach out to students proactively and provide feedback.

7. **Reduce the “permission of instructor courses” and clarify admissions procedures for such courses.**

Dean Klevorick explained that the number of permission of instructor courses is necessarily at the faculty’s discretion, but that he does try to assess whether a course “makes sense” as a permission of instructor course when reviewing course descriptions for a given term. He told the Report Authors that he would ask the registrar to flag permission of instructor courses so that he can discuss whether the restriction is necessary with the professor and will request that professors be as transparent as possible about requirements in the course description.

8. **Develop, enforce and publicize uniform policies.**
From the Office of Student Affairs: OSA continued to move information from inside site to outside site. It clarified a number of policies relating to student organizations.

9. **Student organizations should provide alternative information systems to students from all backgrounds.**

Since 2013, student organizations such as YLW, FGP, and other affinity and non-affinity groups have continued to open up networks of information with guides for the YLJ application process, buddy systems for clerkship applications, and group-specific dinners and lunches with professors. Currently, students are working on a Wikipedia for information about YLS.

10. **Direct professors to use the least expensive textbook and notify students of course materials as early as possible.**

Dean Klevorick has asked faculty members to take costs into account when choosing textbooks and to post a syllabus early. He has also encouraged the faculty to post early assignments to the inside site.

11. **Revise the student budget to help students accurately anticipate expenses.**

From the Financial Aid Office: The annual Cost of Living Survey has been the primary vehicle for setting the Personal Expenses in our Cost of Attendance budget. The Financial Aid Office will continue to seek guidance and input, via the Cost of Living Survey prior to setting the budget for the following year and states that for that reason, it is highly important that everyone participates in the survey.

12. **The administration should explore options to help students deal with the pre-loan disbursement transition period.**

From the Financial Aid Office: The Financial Aid Office advises students as early as April during Admitted Student Orientation, of the expenses they may incur before their financial aid funds are released to them; also conduct a presentation during Orientation Week, and beginning of the Spring semester on budgeting financial aid funds; during the summer and throughout the academic year (especially during the months preceding the arrival or return to campus), FAO reminds students via emails and Financial Aid News Alerts that it is critical they come prepared to cover expenses out of their own funds because of the federal and institutional mandate of when funds can be released; host many financial aid literacy workshops during the academic year that are designed to aid students with managing the budget they have to work with.

13. **Better publicize funding available for travel and increase funding.**

From the Office of Student Affairs: The OSA added a Domestic Research Fund to fund student academic research travel. It created website to showcase funding opportunities; added additional funding for
moot court and mock trial competitions. It lifted student org restrictions to allow student orgs to support student travel.

From the Financial Aid Office: FAO has a Clerkship Interview Travel Loan that is available to students. The travel loan is available to 2L/3L students for up to $2,000 and documentation and receipts must be included with request. Information about the Clerkship Interview Travel Loan is publicized in CDO’s clerkship guide and will be publicized in the 2017-2018 JD Financial Aid Student Handbook.

VII. Acknowledgments

First and above all, we are delighted to thank the hundreds of YLS students who took the (extremely precious) time to not only fill out the survey, but provide thoughtful, challenging, and fascinating comments. There are not enough words to thank you for your honesty and generosity.

We must also extend extremely special thanks to:

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And last but certainly not least, we must say thanks to the First Generation Professionals. Thanks to both the 2016-2017 Board that supported our work with funding and patience and to the members, past and present, who make YLS a better place to call home for three years.
VIII. Appendix A: Questions from 2016 Survey
Class Action Survey 2016

This survey is intended to assess the attitudes of current Yale Law School students about class and socioeconomic status. YLS students who complete the survey and submit their Yale E-mail in the follow-up submission form will be entered into a raffle. Each day, one box of Girl Scout cookies will be raffled off and at the end of the survey, 8 spots for drinks with Prof. Chua will be raffled off. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. If you are not a current Yale Law School student, please do not proceed.

If you have any questions, please contact corey.meyer@yale.edu.

I. Background

1. Current Class Year
   - 1L (1)
   - 2L (2)
   - 3L (3)
   - LLM (4)
   - Other (please specify, e.g., J.S.D.) (5)

2. Are you pursuing or planning to pursue a joint degree?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

3. Gender
   - Female (1)
   - Genderqueer (2)
   - Male (3)
   - Transgender (4)
   - Other (5) _________________

4. Do you identify as LGBT?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

5. Race/Ethnicity (Please select all that apply)
   - Native American/American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
   - East Asian (2)
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (3)
   - South or South-East Asian (4)
   - Middle Eastern (5)
   - Black or African American (6)
   - Hispanic or Latino (7)
   - White (8)
   - Biracial or Multiracial (9)
   - Other or Refuse to Disclose (10)
6. Are you an international student?
   - Yes (1)
   - No (2)

What continent or geographical region are you from?

7. Age
   Please enter your age.

8. Undergraduate Institution
   - Harvard/Yale/Princeton (1)
   - Other Ivy (2)
   - Small Liberal Arts College (3)
   - Other Private University (4)
   - Public University (5)
   - University Outside the US (6)
   - Other (7) __________________

9. Other Degrees (Please list degrees other than an undergraduate degree that you hold.)
   ____________________________

II. Class Background

1. I would describe my background as...
   - Lower/working class (1)
   - Lower middle class (2)
   - Middle class (3)
   - Upper middle class (4)
   - Upper class (5)

2. What is the highest level degree any of your parent(s) or guardian(s) received during your pre-college years?
   - Elementary school
   - Middle school
   - Some high school
   - High school degree [or equivalent]
   - Some college
   - Associate’s degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Professional degree (J.D., M.D., etc)
   - Doctoral degree
   - Other:__________

3. What was the average size of your household during your pre-college years?
   ____________________________
4. Please estimate your family’s average household income during your pre-college years. Please use your best estimate.

- $15k or below (1)
- $15k-$30k (2)
- $30k-$50k (3)
- $51k-$100k (4)
- $101k-$150k (5)
- $151k-$200k (6)
- $201k-$300k (7)
- $301k-$500k (8)
- $501k-$1m (9)
- Over $1m (10)

5. Which of the following best describes the region where you spent most of your pre-college years? Check all that apply.

- Outside the US (1)
- Northeast US (including NY) (2)
- Northwest US (3)
- Midatlantic US (4)
- Midwestern US (5)
- Southeastern US (6)
- Southwestern US (7)
- West US (including HI and AK) (8)
- Puerto Rico or US Territory (9)

6. Which of the following best describes the community where you lived during the majority of your pre-college years?

- Rural (1)
- Suburban (2)
- Urban (3)
7. Please indicate you experience with the legal system, if any, prior to your enrollment in Law School by checking relevant boxes below:

- □ Worked in a law firm or organization or in a position that involved legal issues. (1)
- □ Have a close family member involved in a legal profession. (2)
- □ Was party in a civil action. (3)
- □ Have a close family member that has been a party in a civil action. (4)
- □ Was party in a criminal action. (5)
- □ Have a close family member that has been a party in a criminal action. (6)
- □ Have no prior experience with the legal system. (7)
- □ Received or have a close family member who received public benefits; e.g., unemployment, social security, medicare, and/or nutrition benefits. (9)
- □ Other (8) _______________

III. YLS Experience

1. How would you classify the social class background of the average student at YLS?

- □ Lower/working class (1)
- □ Lower middle class (2)
- □ Middle class (3)
- □ Upper middle class (4)
- □ Upper class (5)

2. Class and socioeconomic status has affected my YLS experience.

- □ Strongly agree (1)
- □ Somewhat agree (2)
- □ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- □ Somewhat disagree (4)
- □ Strongly disagree (5)

3. Please explain your answer to the question above.

4. YLS students are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

- □ Strongly agree (1)
- □ Somewhat agree (2)
- □ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- □ Somewhat disagree (4)
- □ Strongly disagree (5)
5. Please explain your response to the question above.

6. YLS faculty are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
   - Strongly agree (1)
   - Somewhat agree (2)
   - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
   - Somewhat disagree (4)
   - Strongly disagree (5)

7. Please explain your response to the question above.

8. YLS administration is understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
   - Strongly agree (1)
   - Somewhat agree (2)
   - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
   - Somewhat disagree (4)
   - Strongly disagree (5)

9. Please explain your response to the question above.

10. The basic budget estimate that YLS financial aid provides for room, board, and living expenses for 1 person accurately captures my cost of living expenses for the academic year.
    - Strongly agree (1)
    - Somewhat agree (2)
    - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
    - Somewhat disagree (4)
    - Strongly disagree (5)

11. Please explain your answer to the question above.

12. Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process for my 1L and/or 2L summer.
    - Strongly agree (1)
    - Somewhat agree (2)
    - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
    - Somewhat disagree (4)
    - Strongly disagree (5)

13. Please explain your answer to the question above.
14. Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process for my post-graduation job. Please include decisions about clerkships, fellowships, and firm jobs.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

15. Please explain your answer to the question above.

16. Financial needs have played a major role in my decision to pursue an RA position, Coker Fellowship, clinical experience, teaching fellowship, or any other activity at YLS.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

17. Please explain your answer to the question above.

18. Financial needs played a role in my decision to take a particular course. (E.g. cost of course materials or course timing)

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

19. Please explain your answer to the question above.

IV. Financial Resources and Expenses

1. When applying to law schools, did you pay for or use LSAT prep courses, admissions consultants, or private LSAT tutors? (If yes, please name the type of preparation.)

- Yes (1)

- No (2)
2. How are you paying for your YLS education? (Please include funding for tuition as well as personal experiences.) Please choose all that apply.

☐ Loans (1)

☐ Grants (YLS Funded) (2)

☐ Outside scholarships (3)

☐ Personal Savings (4)

☐ Parental Contribution (5)

☐ Spouse/Partner Contribution (6)

☐ Non-Parent Relative Contribution (7)

☐ Other (i.e., working during school year) (8)

___________________________

3. If I had an emergency expense, I would be able to borrow from (check all that apply):

☐ Parents (1)

☐ Other family members (2)

☐ Friends (3)

☐ None of the above (4)

4. Do you support dependents while at YLS?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

5. Please explain your answer to the question above.

V. Miscellaneous

Are there ways that YLS students, faculty and the administration could be more supportive of students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and students’ financial need? Are there specific programs or policies you would like to change? If so, please explain.
IX. Appendix B: 2013 Class/Action Report
Class/Action:
A Report on Socioeconomic Class as Experienced by Students at Yale Law School

March 2013

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Please direct press inquiries to Chase Sackett at chase.sackett@yale.edu or 314-479-6603.
Student perceptions of the class background of the average YLS student appear largely accurate. A majority of students believe class has affected their YLS experiences. Students identify challenges with awareness of social class in the YLS student body. These challenges primarily concern sensitivity to lower-income students, but also include stereotypes about wealthier students. RECOMMENDATION: Consider identities & experiences as part of orientation programming.

RECOMMENDATION: Survey the student body on class issues every 3 to 4 years. RECOMMENDATION: Student group events should include discussion of class at YLS, including intersectionalities.

About half of students are ambivalent about professors’ attitudes towards class, but significant minorities feel positively or negatively about experiences with professors. Some students have had positive experiences with professors. Many students feel professors assume all students come from upper middle-class backgrounds. RECOMMENDATION: Professors should critically consider their approach to issues of social class and consider student responses to this survey.

Students perceive the administrative staff, particularly Jill Stone, as highly responsive to the needs of students from diverse class backgrounds. However, students from working class or lower middle class backgrounds reported dissatisfaction with financial aid policies. A few students noted unpleasant interactions with members of the administration. RECOMMENDATION: Consider additional administrative steps taking social class into account, including efforts related to admissions.

Success at YLS and in the legal world depends in part on access to closed, informal networks of information. Some students may take advantage of family connections to individuals at YLS and in the legal world. Students with family members in legal or professional jobs may be advantageously prepared for YLS culture, the legal profession, and legal academia in general. Students who attended elite undergraduate institutions may be especially prepared for “YLS culture.”

Class background and disposable income affect students’ ability to network with classmates. Students who attended prestigious schools have access to alumni networks. Family and educational background affect the ability to form relationships with professors, including working relationships. Students expressed concerns regarding admission to permission of instructor courses.
RECOMMENDATION: Open up information networks to students of all backgrounds, especially relationships with professors. ................................................................. 30
RECOMMENDATION: Reduce number of permission of instructor courses and clarify admissions procedures. ...................................................................................... 30
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Executive Summary

The Class/Action report provides an analysis of student experience with social class throughout the Yale Law School community. In the fall of 2012, recognizing the unspoken salience of social class within our community, a group of Yale Law School students commissioned a survey, distributed over the YLS all-student email listserv, asking students to answer questions about the impact of social class on their experience at YLS. This report analyzes the 243 student responses to the survey and provides recommendations to further improve the YLS environment for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Student respondents self-identified their own class backgrounds. 4% identified as “lower/working class,” 8% identified as “lower middle class,” 27% identified as “middle class,” 50% identified as “upper middle class,” and 11% identified as “upper class.”

Responses about student experience with social class at YLS have been grouped into four broad, though frequently overlapping categories: Awareness & Attitudes of Students, Awareness & Attitudes of Faculty & Staff, Networks & Connections, and Living Expenses & Costs. The Class/Action report analyzes student attitudes in each category and provides recommendations for improving the environment at YLS with respect to that category of social class experiences.

Awareness & Attitudes of Students

Analysis: Student perceptions of the class background of the average YLS student appear to be largely accurate. However, students identify challenges with awareness of social class within the YLS student body. While these challenges primarily concern sensitivity to students
from lower-income backgrounds, they also include stereotypes about wealthier students. Overall, a majority of students believe that class has affected their YLS experience.

**Recommendations:** The Class/Action report recommends that the identities and experiences of students be considered in the development of orientation programming. The report also recommends that the study body be surveyed on class issues every three to four years to keep an accurate picture of student experiences with class at YLS. Finally, the report recommends that student groups include discussions of class at YLS, including intersectionalities with other aspects of the student experience and legal profession.

**Awareness & Attitudes: Faculty & Staff**

**Analysis:** About half of students are ambivalent about professors’ attitudes toward class, but significant minorities of students report either positive or negative experiences with professors in this context. One issue many students noted was that they feel professors assume that all students come from upper-middle class backgrounds.

Students reported that the administrative staff, particularly Jill Stone, is highly responsive to the needs of students from diverse class backgrounds. Students from working class or lower-middle class backgrounds reported dissatisfaction with University-wide financial aid policies, but students noted overall that YLS administrators are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Recommendations:** The Class/Action report recommends that professors think critically about social class in the classroom and consider student responses to this survey. Additionally, while the administration is doing a commendable job already, the Class/Action report
recommends that it entertain additional steps taking social class into consideration, including efforts related to admissions and anticipating the needs of students of diverse backgrounds.

**Networks & Connections**

**Analysis:** Many students expressed the belief that success at YLS and in the legal world depends in part on access to closed, informal networks of information. Class influences students’ ability to access these networks through professors, professionals, and other students. Students noted that some classmates may be able to take advantage of family connections to individuals at YLS and in the legal world, and that classmates with family members in legal or professional jobs may be advantageously prepared for YLS culture, the legal profession, and legal academia in general. Students also noted that classmates who attended elite undergraduate institutions may be advantageously prepared for YLS culture.

Students noted that class background and disposable income affect students’ ability to network with their classmates. Finally, students noted that both family and educational background affect their ability to form relationships with professors, including working relationships, and several students expressed that this concern extends to admission in “permission of instructor” courses.

**Recommendations:** The Class/Action report recommends that YLS attempt to open up information networks to students of all backgrounds, particularly with respect to relationships with professors. The report also recommends that YLS reduce the number of “permission of instructor” courses and clarify admissions procedures to these courses. More generally, the report recommends that YLS develop, enforce, and publicize uniform school policies. Finally, the
report recommends that student organizations continue to provide alternative information networks to students of all backgrounds.

**Living Expenses & Costs**

**Analysis:** Students noted that textbook costs and lack of early notice about required course materials poses concerns, and that even with financial aid, the cost of tuition and living expenses is a substantial burden on many students. Many students noted that the timing of loan disbursements in the fall and spring create issues for students on financial aid, both with respect to federal grants and loans and YLS’s technology loan program. Many students noted that financial constraints have affected their job choices and prospects.

**Recommendations:** The Class/Action report recommends that the school direct professors to encourage use of the least expensive textbook option and to notify students of required course materials as early as possible. The report also recommends that the administration continue to increase student input and revise the student budget to help students accurately anticipate and pay for expenses. Recognizing that federal law prevents the University from making early financial aid disbursements, the report also recommends that the school continue to publicize, and explore options to end, the difficult transition periods between semesters. Finally, the report recommends that the school publicize available transportation funding for job interviews and increase the funding available, especially for students who have significant private sector interview expenses and 2Ls attending clerkship interviews.
I. Introduction & Methodology

The Class/Action project began in the spring of 2012 as Yale Law School students recognized the unspoken salience of social class within our community. While our anecdotal experiences revealed that socioeconomics significantly influence many students' experiences at YLS, the issue is often avoided, pushed aside or forgotten. We also recognized the important interaction between social class in general and students' past, current and future work in law and policy.

As a result, we committed to perform a survey on social class and student experiences at YLS. We pursued three primary objectives:

1) Identifying student perspectives, attitudes and concerns regarding class issues at YLS;

2) Raising awareness of class issues among the YLS community; and

3) Developing recommendations for positive change.

The survey asked students to answer questions about their own background, perceptions of others’ at YLS, and how students, faculty, and the administration understand and interact with students of different class backgrounds.\(^1\) Our methodology built on past surveys performed on undergraduate campuses by students affiliated with the national students' organization United for Undergraduate Socio-Economic Diversity (U/FUSED).\(^2\) We also considered the important contributions of Yale Law Women's April 2012 Speak UP study.

We opened the survey to YLS students from October 31, 2012 to November 8, 2012. We advertised through the YLS all-student email listserv, offering a randomly drawn $15 Amazon gift certificate to encourage students to participate. We received a robust response: 243 students, or over a third of YLS’s student body, completed the survey. Respondents offered a wealth of

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\(^1\) The full survey is located in this report's Appendix.

\(^2\) More information on U/FUSED can be found at http://ufused.org. For full disclosure, Class/Action Co-Chair Chase Sackett currently serves as Director of Affiliate Development for U/FUSED and served as its founding Executive Director.
thoughtful contributions and perspectives, with many students writing at length about their experiences with class issues at YLS.

Four general areas of concern and opportunities for improvement emerged from the survey results, which this survey addresses:

1) Awareness and attitudes of students;
2) Awareness and attitudes of faculty and staff;
3) Networks and connections; and
4) Living expenses and costs.

Underlying each of these issues, many respondents identified a transcendental concern that affirmed our initial suspicions: socioeconomic class is insufficiently discussed at YLS, to the detriment of students from all class backgrounds. For each issue area, we identify key findings and offer recommendations for improvement.

We hope this report can foster that ongoing conversation while empowering students, faculty and staff to forge a more inclusive, cognizant community for people from all class backgrounds. We also recognize that class issues are not unique to YLS or law schools in general, and hope that our work will spark similar initiatives at other schools around the nation.

A Note on "Class"

Our survey did not provide a definition of "social class" for respondents to consider. However, in this report we have taken care to recognize that many considerations contribute to class distinctions. These considerations include finances, cultural competency, social connections, and educational capital, for example.
II. Survey Demographics

243 students completed the Class/Action survey, all but 10 of whom were J.D. students. J.D. responses were evenly distributed across class years, ranging from 74 3L students to 80 2L students. Slightly more women (53.1%) than men (46.5%) responded to the survey. The survey allowed students to choose multiple responses for their race/ethnicity, which limits comparability to the institutionally reported YLS demographics. For example, it appears that responses for "White" (69.6%) were overrepresented compared to the institutional reporting (59.7%), as with survey responses for "Asian" (17.9%) versus reporting (13.6%).

A slight majority, 50.2%, of respondents identified their class background growing up as upper middle class. Only 12.1% identified as lower/working class or lower middle class, while 10.9% identified as upper class and 26.8 as middle class.

Strikingly, nearly all students (91.7%) reported that at least one of their parents had a bachelor's degree or higher degree. In fact, 44.1% of respondents reported that at least one of their parents had attained a professional or doctoral degree. All students reported that at least one of their parents had received a high school degree. In comparison, as of 2012 only 33% of Americans aged 25- to 29-years-old have attained at least a bachelor's degree; 63% have completed some college but not graduated; and 90% have at least a high school degree.

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3 A single-digit number of students identified as "other." According to the American Bar Association's 2012 data sheet, these figures slightly over-represent the female (49.4%) student body population at YLS compared to the male population (50.6%). See https://officialguide.lsac.org/RELEASE/SchoolsABAData/SchoolPage/SchoolPage_Info/ABA_LawSchoolData.asp?sid=177.

4 See id.

What is the highest level of education either of your parents attained?

Race/Ethnicity (Please choose all with which you identify)
I would identify my class background as…

Students' estimations of their families' average household income during their pre-college years were fairly evenly dispersed across the available categories. A plurality of students (24.9%) selected "$51 to $100k." Less than 10% of students selected a response under $50,000 per year. In contrast, 29.5% of students selected a response over $200,000 per year. However, we should note that it is difficult to draw conclusions from this data. Factors such as students' likely lack of information about their families' household incomes during their childhood or differences in costs of living between geographic areas present significant confounding variables.

The information reported by students on the means by which they are paying for their YLS education supports the validity of our survey sample. According to the law school, 77% of the student body received some form of financial aid for the 2011-2012 academic year and more than 56% qualified for grants.6 These numbers correspond with our data: 77.3% of survey respondents reported taking out loans and 51.7% reported receiving YLS grants.

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Additionally, cross-tabulated data reveals students' self-identifications of class closely correlated with both their parents' highest education level and their estimates of their family's average household income during their pre-college years. For example, over four-fifths of students who identified as upper class responded that at least one of their parents holds a professional degree or doctoral degree. By comparison, at least one parent with a professional or doctoral degree was reported by about three-fifths of students who identified as upper middle class; about half of students who identified as middle class; and only a tenth of students who identified as either lower/working class or lower middle class. The same sort of spread was visible with regard to estimates of household income.
Please estimate your family's average household income during your pre-college years. (Use your best estimate or select "I don't know.")

How are you paying for your YLS education? (Please include funding for tuition as well as personal expenses.)
III. Awareness & Attitudes - Students

Student perceptions of the class background of the average YLS student appear largely accurate.

At least 70% of students from every class background identified the background of the average YLS student as upper middle class. If our survey accurately captured the YLS student body, it appears that students were largely accurate. As noted above, a majority of students surveyed identified their class background as upper middle class.

Students' self-identified class backgrounds appeared to influence their perspectives—though the same sample sizes in question were small. Students who identified as lower/working class, lower middle class, and upper class were more likely to view the average YLS student as upper class, in comparison with those students who identified as middle or upper middle class. Upper middle class students were also more likely than all other groups to identify the average YLS student as middle class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would describe my class background as...</th>
<th>Lower/working class</th>
<th>Lower middle class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of students believe class has affected their YLS experiences

A majority (58.5%) of students from every class background responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the statement that class background and socioeconomic status have affected their YLS experience. Nearly all students who identified as lower/working class or lower middle class chose "Agree" or "Strongly Disagree." 28% of all students neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 12.5% of all students chose "Disagree," and only 2 students chose "Strongly Disagree."

### Have your class background and socioeconomic status affected your YLS experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would describe my class background as…</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In their qualitative responses, many students asserted that class affects everyone whether they recognize it or not. As one student wrote, "Class background impacts everyone's experience. It has shaped my understanding of what seems 'normal' and what seems 'extravagant' in a very privileged environment itself." Another wrote, "Socioeconomic status impacts everything."

Numerous students recognized their own comparatively privileged backgrounds. One wrote, "I'm guessing that it would have affected my experience more sharply if I came from a lower-class background." Another identified stigma against more affluent students, writing that while their parents are paying for their education out of pocket, "I don't tell anyone because I don't want them to judge me."

Other students reacted in shock to the privilege they see in the YLS community. One student wrote, "I was astonished by the entitlement that some students here have," but also commented that "[o]verall people are great and very nice."

A few students commented on race. One student wrote, "Being of African-American descent, however, has been a point of struggle here. This community can be hard to weather as a racial minority regardless of financial status."

Several students commented that their class backgrounds have influenced their view of the law and career aims. A student responded, "I think it influences the way I read cases and the parties I identify with." One student commented, "It affects my views on the policy scholarship I pursue and also the way I see myself in relation to my classmates." On the other hand, another student commented that their upper-class background and parents' service work had made them "less cynical of going to a big firm because I view it as a false dichotomy that one has to choose between working to help underprivileged populations and pursuing a well-paying career path."
However, a handful of students rejected the notion that class plays a role in the YLS community. A student responded that class "hasn't [played a role] because law school is so expensive that tuition becomes sort of an equalizer." One student wrote, "I don't think socioeconomic background status affects an YLS students, except those who come from extremely privileged or famous families." Another wrote, "YLS is a super left-leaning, politically correct school. Nobody really care where you're from or how much money you have. It is literally a complete non-issue."

Students identify challenges with awareness of social class in the YLS student body – These challenges primarily concern sensitivity to lower-income students, but also include stereotypes about wealthier students

Less than a third of YLS students "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that YLS students are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. In contrast, 35.6% of students chose "Disagree" and 6.9% chose "Strongly Disagree." This reaction was visible across all backgrounds, as at least 30% every category of students chose "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree."

![Pie chart showing YLS student understanding of experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.](chart.png)
YLS students are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. (Cross-tabs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would describe my class background as…</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative responses reveal that many respondents felt that students are ignorant of issues of social class, while a significant minority identified more virulent animus. Numerous respondents also noted the difficulty of describing the YLS student body as a whole. As one student wrote, "I think it's impossible to generalize this. Every YLS student is different."

Many respondents felt that a substantial fraction of students attempt to be sensitive to the issue of class and are well-intentioned. As one wrote, "I think we're all empathetic people."

However, respondents also noted that many students come from privileged backgrounds and lack personal experience with issues of class. One student wrote, "I think there is a great sympathy and empathy, but to understand it, one would need to have experienced it and had his or her life shaped by it." Another wrote, "I do think many YLS students (and I like to think of myself in this group) do try to understand experiences different from my own, but there is a limit to how much [we] truly can understand. And then of course, there are people who don't even try."

Student concerns about class attitudes focused on assumptions about class backgrounds and lack of self-awareness, which affected students from both privileged and less privileged backgrounds. One respondent commented, "People work under unexplored assumptions and
have biases against individuals from less privileged backgrounds." A student wrote, "There seems to be an assumption that everyone comes from the same place/same amount of money." A respondent commented, "Students are somewhat quick to judge other students based on their socioeconomic background." Another student identified biases against students from both less and more privileged backgrounds, writing, "I think the privileged kids are completely unaware of the experience of non-privileged kids (and are also unaware that they're unaware), but I think likewise, people coming from "lower" or just different socioeconomic backgrounds feel very negatively towards the privileged kids and don't take the time to understand them."\(^7\)

Concerns about class awareness and student attitudes also considered insensitivity to differences in students' financial means. One student commented, "I find sometimes that folks don't understand that eating out all the time or other simple things like that just [don't] fit within my budget." A student wrote that "when explaining I did not have a smart phone because I could not afford one, a peer exclaimed their surprise and mentioned that just last year they had two."

Also, several respondents identified insensitivity towards class issues and socioeconomic diversity during in-class discussions. One respondent stated, " . . . [class] biases are frequently revealed in discussions involving the areas [of] criminal law and government entitlement programs." Another wrote, "It seems like students often make comments, whether in class, or when talking about summer jobs (and salaries), or when talking about the cost of an event that make it clear that they don't even understand the differences in economic situations of their fellow classmates in the room."

Several responses asserted that class is not discussed in comparison to other aspects of identity. One student wrote, "YLS students are incredibly focused on race and gender. Very little

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\(^7\) Other research on class in higher education supports the finding that students at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum experience negative effects of stereotyping. See Elizabeth Aries, *Race and Class Matters at an Elite College* 109-129 (2008) (studying undergraduate class interactions at Amherst College).
discussion of the huge class differences here." Others also commented on geography and rural/urban divides.

**RECOMMENDATION: Consider identities & experiences as part of orientation programming**

Issues of access and privilege influence and inform the study and practice of law, whether in cases like *Gideon v. Wainwright*, YLS students' clinical work in our local community, or students' social experiences. As many students have commented, however, the issue of class is often suppressed or unrecognized by the YLS community. This absence of conversation diminishes the experiences of many students: both the recipients of ignorant slights and those who do not consider their own privilege and self-identity.

As a result, we recommend that the law school develop and implement orientation programming that challenges students to consider their own identities and experiences. This conversation should spur students to critically examine their own perspectives and nascent legal careers. We believe that class should play a role alongside other topics that significantly inform students' identities and perspectives, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, faith, prior education, and family lives.

Critically, this programming would not lecture students about how they *should* view law school or the legal profession. Instead, second- or third-year students—such as Dean's Advisors—would lead small group dialogues focused on sharing experiences and perspectives, not instilling dogma. Incoming students would also learn about issues to consider in the YLS community, such as those raised by this study or the YLW Speak Up study.

**RECOMMENDATION: Survey the student body on class issues every 3 to 4 years**

In order to ensure that class and socio-economic diversity remain salient in the minds of students and professors, it is our intention that this survey should spark an ongoing conversation about class at Yale, rather than being a one-time event. The survey and the events that follow
should be repeated every three to four years, to track changes in the level of diversity of the student body and to acknowledge improvements in the culture of the law school.

**RECOMMENDATION: Student group events should include discussion of class at YLS, including intersectionalities**

YLS does not currently have an affinity group concerned with issues of class among the study body. However, many events held by current student groups relate to issues of class and inequality in society at large. In addition, affinity student groups often hold events focused on career opportunities or barriers that certain groups encounter in law and the legal profession. We encourage these student groups to consider explicitly addressing intersectional class issues when they plan and frame these events. We also encourage them to create opportunities for students to share their own experiences with class during their education and in the broader community.

**IV. Awareness & Attitudes – Faculty & Staff**

**About half of students are ambivalent about professors' attitudes towards class, but significant minorities feel positively or negatively about experiences with professors**

Nearly a majority (49.2%) of respondents "Neither Agree Nor Disagree" that professors understand are understanding of the experiences of students of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Many students felt that they had insufficient contact with professors to say either way. One student wrote, "I suspect that faculty don't even think about it." Others acknowledged differences between professors. A representative response attested, "Depends on the professor. Some yes, some very no." Another wrote, "Except when they think $250 textbooks are completely acceptable." A number of students speculated that the vast majority of professors themselves come from upper middle class backgrounds and "are disconnected from the experiences of more disadvantaged classes," even when they are well-meaning.
However, significant proportions of students chose firmer answers: 22.0% "Agree[d]" or "Strongly Agree[d]," while 28.0% chose "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." Students who identified as upper class were significantly more likely to respond favorably, while the small sample size of lower/working class students were much more likely to choose "Strongly Disagree."

**YLS faculty are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would describe my class background as...
**Some students have had positive experiences with professors**
As noted above, around a fifth of students attested to positive interactions with professors related to issues of class. Students identified Professors Grewal, Ayres, and Ellickson as particularly sensitive. Several pointed out positive interactions with unnamed professors—for instance, when a professor provides free course readings instead of requiring students to buy textbooks. One student felt that professors better understand class issues than the YLS student body in general.

**Many students feel professors assume all students come from upper middle-class backgrounds**
A significant number of students felt that professors assume all students come from comparatively privileged backgrounds. Many respondents indicated that professors' in-class comments on class or assumptions left students feeling intimidated or alienated. For example, one student commented that “[p]rofessors sometimes act like we're all rich” and another that professors "make tons of insensitive comments."

Respondents also raised concerns that students who are not from elite backgrounds have difficulty interacting with faculty outside of class. Students wrote that faculty members were more likely to develop relationships with students who went to elite private colleges or had distinguished professional experiences before coming to law school. As a result, some students felt that working class or lower middle class students are disadvantaged because they have had fewer opportunities for such experiences. One respondent explained, “Yale law professors love success, not struggle. They favor the students who have had the freedom to build up impressive resumes of privilege-contingent accomplishments. … Being from the lower class and lower middle class is not just a matter of financial but also a matter of culture. Class is both resource and culture. …”
RECOMMENDATION: Professors should critically consider their approach to issues of social class and consider student responses to this survey.

First, we hope professors review this report and recognize the concerns students have raised. For one, professors should recognize that not all YLS students come from comparatively privileged upbringings. While about half of students identify as upper middle class, about two-fifths of the student body reported a working class, lower middle class or middle class background. We also hope that professors can build on the successes of their peers—a significant number of students believe that certain faculty members effectively address issues of social class.

Students perceive the administrative staff, particularly Jill Stone, as highly responsive to the needs of students from diverse class backgrounds. However, students from working class or lower middle class backgrounds reported dissatisfaction with financial aid policies. In comparison to feedback regarding the YLS student body and faculty, respondents perceived administrators more favorably. Most students agreed that administrators were understanding of the experiences of students from all class backgrounds. Some students from working class backgrounds disagreed, but many of their comments were specifically related to University-wide policies affecting the financial aid process, and not to their personal interactions with administrators.
YLS administrators are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many students surveyed indicated they were satisfied by administrative staff’s professionalism and helpfulness, expressing that administrators seemed more “in tune” with the needs of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Although students expressed some concern about the financial aid process, multiple respondents specifically mentioned that the staff and administrators were flexible and understanding about unexpected changes in students’
financial circumstances. Even a student who responded unfavorably to the survey suggested that, “Jill Stone has been working hard to make YLS a more accessible place for students of lower socio-economic status. I have really appreciated her efforts to educate, inform, and equip students since she's been here.” Other students echoed that sentiment, saying, “Jill Stone is amazing and very understanding, accommodating,” and that “things have been much better since Jill Stone took her position at the financial aid office.”

**A few students noted unpleasant interactions with members of the administration**

However, a handful of students mentioned having unpleasant interactions with deans and administrators because of their assumptions and negative comments about students and families from low socio-economic class backgrounds. One student mentioned, “One dean made a comment last semester suggesting that families with lower financial resources did not have adequate financial skills.” Another suggested that “there are certain implicit assumptions about the availability of capital that are at work in the minds of administrators. I also suspect that they either don't understand or, more likely, don't care about how socioeconomic background makes decisions regarding debt and employment particularly charged.”

**RECOMMENDATION: Consider additional administrative steps taking social class into account, including efforts related to admissions.**

Although the administration is doing a commendable job already, students have suggested some steps that administrators can take to make the law school experience less alienating for students from all backgrounds. These include improving socio-economic diversity in the student body, being proactive about anticipating the needs of students of diverse backgrounds instead of responding after problems arise, and making changes to the financial aid process (as discussed in greater detail at Section VI). One student remarked, “While it seems like the administration cares a great deal about its current students, I'm less sure about its efforts to diversify the student body. The school seems to operate on a ‘get the best we can, then deal with
their backgrounds once problems occur’ approach, which doesn't foster the most welcoming
environment for students of backgrounds outside the traditional law student majority.” Another
suggested that, “YLS administrators could lead some additional changes to ensure there's not a
disparate impact of career decisions on students that correlates with our economic resources.”

V. Networks & Connections

Success at YLS and in the legal world depends in part on access to closed, informal networks of information

In general, students noted that YLS and the legal world in general can be difficult to navigate without access to inside or informal information. YLS boasts a particularly significant amount of unofficial policies, such as the grading practices of individual professors. The crumbling status of the clerkship Plan also presents difficulties, for instance. These opaque policies or requirements particularly disadvantage students from less privileged backgrounds.

Some students may take advantage of family connections to individuals at YLS and in the legal world

A number of students expressed the belief that classmates whose parents are lawyers, judges, and academics – and classmates whose parents are educated and well-off, more generally – are at a distinct advantage at YLS for several reasons. First, these students may have direct “family connections” to professors, judges, and lawyers that can assist students in their professional development. One student listed “[n]ot having the family connections other students have” as a primary concern, for example. According to our survey data, at least 35% of students have one parent with a professional degree such as a J.D.

Students with family members in legal or professional jobs may be advantageously prepared for YLS culture, the legal profession, and legal academia in general

Students mentioned that their classmates who have family members in the legal profession may have learned about the culture of YLS and the legal profession at large. One
student wrote that YLS “is designed to benefit and does benefit students who know the rules of
the game…. Whose older brother or dad is very plugged into the professions of legal service and
legal academia, etc.” Another student wrote, “One of the things that shocked me is how many
students had family (parents, siblings, etc) who also attended YLS, were judges, etc. It seemed
like a coterie of people groomed for this experience, which I wasn't expecting.” Another wrote
that “[t]hose without the benefit of family members who have gone through law school are at a
massive disadvantage.”

More generally, students with parents from educated and/or privileged backgrounds may
enter YLS already acquainted with the concepts, terms, institutions, and people discussed in class
because they heard these terms discussed at the dinner table during childhood. One student
wrote, “I can definitely tell whose parents come from more professional backgrounds, because
people are much more well-versed in legal issues, etc., than I was coming into law school (and
tha[n] I still am).” Another wrote, “I think a lot of the faculty assume that we have had a lot of
exposure to legal information - legal words (Latin stuff), etc., because we have tons of lawyers in
our family for example.”

**Students who attended elite undergraduate institutions may be especially prepared for
“YLS culture”**

The advantages of professional connections, shared knowledge and experiences, and
cultural/academic fluency are not unique to students who grew up in more privileged settings. A
number of students also mentioned the role that prior educational experience plays in navigating
YLS. Students observed that classmates who attended elite universities or who obtained
advanced degrees before coming to YLS were particularly at an advantage.8

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8 Of course, many of the nation’s elite undergraduate institutions struggle to achieve broad socioeconomic diversity, so “advantageous family background” and “advantageous educational background” are categories that frequently overlap.
Students reported that elite college backgrounds are advantageous for several reasons. As one student wrote, “Not having attended an Ivy League college (and not gaining all that comes with that—network, social skills, publishing, post-college jobs, etc) has made me feel very much at a disadvantage throughout my time here.”

**Class background and disposable income affect students’ ability to network with classmates**

Not all of the networking at YLS involves building relationships with the right professors and elite lawyers or being college friends with in-the-know 3Ls. Simply socializing with fellow classmates at Bar Review, on the weekends, and over vacations can be a strain on the wallets of students without the disposable income for drink tabs and meal bills. A law school social culture structured around outings to bars and restaurants emphasizes socioeconomic divides between students, even outside of the classroom. One student pointed out that “It's really embarrassing to try to make friends with people who never have to really worry about money when I seriously cannot afford that beer at BAR on Thursday night.” This aspect of student life may not be appreciated by the financial aid office; one student wrote of being “[u]nable to participate in social activities predicated on having disposable income -- and even going out to drinks regularly can be difficult if you're just living on the expenses that Yale has calculated as part of their grant program.”

**Students who attended prestigious schools have access to alumni networks**

In addition to resume-boosting publication opportunities and prestigious post-college jobs, students mentioned that classmates who are alums of prestigious colleges have access to networks of other alums at YLS. These student networks are the channels through which much of YLS’s important, “unofficial” advice gets passed. As one student wrote, “There are students at this law school who still know each other from prep-school activities like national-level debate, a hobby that, not unlike many Ivy-league prerequisites, requires significant parental support and
involvement.” Another wrote, “Fewer connections => less insider knowledge because I didn't go
to the same prep schools, undergrad or fellowship programs as some other students.”

Another student described entering YLS without a network of acquaintances. “I had
never met a soul from YLS--past or present--before walking into Sterling Law Building on the
first day of orientation. It took me a full year to even partially understand the informal dynamics
that govern YLS: which classes to take, which professors to build relationships with, what needs
to be done to earn a clerkship, etc.” Another student gave an example: “Students with fewer
connections to YLS might not understand, for example, that a certain professor is difficult, or
may elect to take classes with visiting professors who turn out to be difficult graders.”

Because so many policies at YLS are unwritten and unofficial, students without
connections to older students or recent alums may not have access to crucial information – if
they even know that information exists in the first place. As one student put it bluntly, “You can't
function properly unless you have the connections of an elite private school.”

Family and educational background affect the ability to form relationships with professors,
including working relationships

Many students wrote that family and educational background are particularly important
when it comes to developing relationships with professors. Beyond students’ in-class
experiences, relationships with professors can provide students with mentorship as well as
recommendations essential to securing clerkships or fellowships after graduation. Yet many
students reported having more difficulty developing relationships with professors than
classmates of other backgrounds.

As one student wrote, “YLS faculty are a wonderful but rarified group. I think that they
often have trouble connecting with students on a level that is not academic. For many students
who did not grow up in a family where there were deep conversations about news, politics, or
academics around the dinner table, this can be incredibly intimidat[ing], especially during 1L year.” Another echoed, “Admission to the elite world of legal thinking is the only thing some professors seem concerned with, although this world itself often assumes previous experiences and exposure.” One student wrote that YLS professors “favor the students who have had the freedom to build up impressive resumes of privilege-contingent accomplishments.” Another wrote that professors “would rather get to know a wealthy, well-connected student than a student who hasn’t checked all the same boxes in high school, college, and in the working world.”

A number of students noted feeling more comfortable working with the clinical faculty, who “ground the academy in the everyday world.” One student wrote that, “Even if they have been educated solely at institutions like Harvard and Yale, their work at least evinces an engagement with people of different socioeconomic backgrounds.”

**Students expressed concerns regarding admission to permission of instructor courses**

In turn, students expressed concern that systemic biases may bar students' entry into permission of instructor courts. One student wrote, “Permission of the instructor courses have always felt closed to me, largely because I didn't have the background or experience required to secure a place. I have always felt that I lacked this background in large part because I didn't attend an Ivy League college, and therefore didn't have all of the opportunities that came with that…”

Reviewing course listings for this year reveals that a substantial proportion of classes are listed as permission of instructor courses. Many of these courses ask for a transcript, resume and statement of interest, but provide no information on criteria for admission. The opaque nature of this process can disadvantage students without developed networks at YLS. Moreover, many of these courses are clinics or seminars, which provide students with key opportunities to write and build relationships with professors.
RECOMMENDATION: Open up information networks to students of all backgrounds, especially relationships with professors

To some extent, family or educational background will always matter. A student who is close family friends with a judge or who did undergraduate research for a professor may be at an advantage regardless of institutional efforts to provide equal opportunities. However, YLS should consider ways to ensure information is more widely dispersed to students. The "How-To" sessions are a helpful step, as well as the effort to publicize professors' office hours online.

Connections with professors pose the most critical issue. As the YLW Speak Up report advocated, professors should announce research or collaborative opportunities in class and publicly (wall emails, posted advertisements, on the YLS Inside page). According to anecdotal information, for example, many if not most small group professors choose their Coker Fellows before the public process is announced. Professors should recognize that these practices operate to the disadvantage of both women—as YLW has shown—and students from less privileged backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATION: Reduce number of permission of instructor courses and clarify admissions procedures.

Specifically, the administration and faculty should seek to reduce the number of permission of instructor courses and clarify admissions processes for these courses. The current opaque process can prevent students from less privileged or prestigious backgrounds from developing relationships with professors in small-group settings and pursuing particular areas of interest. For the permission of instructor courses that remain, professors should identify what they are seeking from students with regard to resumes and statements of interest.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop, enforce, and publicize uniform school policies

One suggestion for the school is to develop and enforce “official” policies and practices. Grading practices among professors, for example, are widely varied, and these practices may or may not be consistent with YLS’s official grading policy. Currently, students with acquaintances
who attend or have attended YLS may be able to find out about the grading policies of individual professors, while students without these connections have access only to the school’s official policy.

Because official policies are of no use to students who don’t know about them, the school should continue to make information easily available to students. 1L Orientation and the events held by the Career Development and Financial Aid Offices held throughout the year are good practices. To the extent that it can, 1L Orientation should include more information about how to navigate YLS’s requirements and access its resources. For example, despite years of effort the law school still does not even have a map of the building. A student who cannot find a professor’s office may be embarrassed to ask for help and then decide not to attend office hours.

**RECOMMENDATION: Student organizations should continue to provide alternative information networks**

Many student organizations and affinity groups are already taking steps to address the information gap felt by students without access to family or Ivy League information networks. For example, many interest and affinity groups run mentoring programs to connect 1Ls to upperclassmen who may be able to give them access to the informal information channels. Through the Dean’s Advisor program during orientation and beyond, the Law School also attempts to connect 1Ls to upperclassmen and give them access to informal information channels.

In addition to compiling empirical data about class participation, Yale Law Women’s *Speak Up* series offers recommendations to help students develop relationships with professors. YLW also maintains resources, including the Outline Bank, that help equalize access to information about courses and instructors.
On the clerkship front, a number of organizations have begun holding information sessions for 3Ls to share their experiences with the application process. Additionally, YLW publishes a guide to the clerkship process, improving access to information that is increasingly important as the process becomes de-formalized.

**VI. Living Expenses & Costs**

**Textbook costs and lack of early notice pose concerns.**

Several students also raised concerns about the cost of textbooks and the fact that faculty members give so little notice in advance about required course materials. One student commented, "[Professors have] the expectation that students have resources to throw down $200 per book at a moment’s notice. . . . [T]hey think $250 textbooks are completely acceptable." Professors commonly do not list required textbooks until just before or after the semester begins. As a result, students cannot accurately budget for the semester in advance or purchase textbooks from less expensive sources than the campus bookstore.

The cost of tuition and living expenses is a substantial burden on many students

The YLS Class/Action survey noted that class background can affect students in many ways, both subtle and direct. For many students, one of the most salient issues they face at Yale is how to handle the $54,575 in required tuition, fees, and insurance, while still having enough to buy books, pay for an apartment, and reserve funds to deal with emergencies.\(^9\)

For many students of limited means, paying these bills is a daunting challenge. In some respects, the Law School does an admirable job in helping students cope. In other cases though, ranging from a failure to update the cost of living calculations for some reasonable expenses, including the skyrocketing costs of textbooks, students can be extremely constrained in their finances.

\(^9\) [http://www.law.yale.edu/admissions/costs.htm](http://www.law.yale.edu/admissions/costs.htm)
For example, Yale assumes an average living expense of $17,000 per student per year. However, multiple students noted the significant price of living in New Haven and attending school at Yale. One student wrote, “As a PhD student I had approximately $500 / month more to live on than what I live on here (I'm taking out the maximum in student loans)....and that graduate student stipend wasn't exactly living the dream.” Some students noted that the student budgets issued by the financial aid office underestimate certain costs, including travel expenses. “The travel budget, at least for me, is only a couple hundred dollars for the entire year. I am from a Rocky Mountain state that does not have a major airport. For me to travel home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, I must exceed that travel budget many times over,” wrote one student.

**The timing of loan disbursements creates issues for students on financial aid**

Among students who raised financial aid or direct financial support issues within the survey, the most frequently mentioned difficulty facing students without external support concerned the timing of financial aid disbursement. Multiple students emphasized that while loan quantities may ultimately be sufficient for their needs, policies often presumed that they could rely upon outside funding - either loans or gifts from parents or other family - to provide for necessities until loans came through. As one student wrote, “My 1L year I had to borrow over $1,000 from my grandparents...in order to make ends meet with these big beginning of the year expenses. I was lucky to have grandparents that are willing and able to loan me money, but many other people from lower-middle class backgrounds are likely not as lucky.”

Students whose families are not able to provide such interstitial support faced significant hardship as a result. In particular, respondents highlighted problems with financing the transition (back) to Yale at the start of each school year and an inability to afford January rent on their fall loan budgets. These difficulties were amplified for students who came to Yale from either a non-
profit or educational institution such that the students themselves (as well as their families) lacked savings to see them through the transition. Students who took SPIF funding for the summer reported difficulty in making that funding last through mid-September when school year loans were disbursed. Students attributed both hardships to an inability to access funds prior to the formal start of classes. Another student wrote, “The budget on which student loans are based seems to assume that students have outside sources of funding, particularly to bridge the gap between semesters. I have NO IDEA how I am going to pay for January rent. It would be so nice if there was some sort of bridge loan to cover this time. I had a similar problem in August, where I literally could not afford groceries during orientation.”

While students acknowledged that these policies were set not by the financial aid office but rather university-wide or federal loan policy, they also emphasized that rent, groceries, and moving/travel expenses are often required weeks or even months prior to disbursement. As one student wrote, “I think YLS Financial Aid does an excellent job of helping students work through difficult (and often unexpected) financial issues. However, in my personal experience, Jill and the office’s hands are tied in many instances due to unreasonable university-wide policies. My main contention is with the policy regarding distribution of financial aid (policy: no funds distributed until first day of classes). That policy is problematic because it leaves lower income students without resources to purchase books and prepare for their courses until the first day of class.”

Survey respondents also raised similar issues with the technology loan program. While respondents appreciated the existence of the program, they expressed concern that because the reimbursement of the cost was split over two semesters, the program still required students without access to funding outside their student loan budget to carry a credit card balance for the
Financial constraints also have affected the job choices and prospects of students
For many students, financial constraints have had negative effects on their ability to compete for or accept certain kinds of jobs. Nearly half of students "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that financial needs have played a major role in their job search process. Cross-tabulations also show that students' class backgrounds strongly correlated with their responses. Unsurprisingly, the less privileged the student's class background, the more likely they were to respond that financial needs had played a major role in their job search process.

If applicable: Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process. (Cross-tabs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would describe my class background as…</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower/working class</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both summer and post-graduate employment choices may be limited by a student’s class background. For example, SPIF’s limitation to public interest employment means that students without financial resources cannot elect to perform work that is open to their more affluent peers, such as a summer internship for a judge. Students also expressed concern that in past years, SPIF’s lack of responsiveness to costs of living forced them to make difficult decisions about whether and how it is feasible for them to accept employment in locations with high costs of living. One student wrote that “SPIF money is granted based on the number of weeks worked, without any consideration of the cost of living in a given location. Students who wish to work in cities like NYC, San Fran, and DC either have to opt to go somewhere less expensive, or work a second job while doing public interest work, or scrimp on the necessities of life.”

Finally, many respondents to the YLS Class Action Survey noted that their financial status limited their ability to travel to interviews for both summer employment and post-graduate clerkships. In particular, multiple students raised concerns about the effects of clerkship moving off-plan on less affluent students’ ability to fly to interviews absent YLS internal support which is still linked to the Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a clear policy directive encouraging professors to use less expensive textbook options and disclose required materials in course listings

Professors could consider self-assembled readings or the use of older versions of textbooks likely to be available used either within or outside of Yale. Additionally, professors should be encouraged to list textbooks for courses as soon as they have selected their materials. For example, many professors likely know what textbook they will use for a course when the course listing is released. If possible, professors should include information on textbooks when the course is listed.
RECOMMENDATION: Continue to increase student input and revise the annual student budget

From this survey, it appears that the estimate of certain expenses could be improved with increased student input. For example, the line item for utilities can ask students to differentiate between fall and winter heating costs, to accurately account for the increase in cost during the winter months. The administration has reported that the most recent cost of living survey supports holding the annual maximum allotment at $17,000 because average student costs are under that total. However, our research supports a more nuanced view. The current cap particularly disadvantages students from lower-income backgrounds, as they attested in our survey. The administration should consider alternatives for students who cannot rely on their parents for assistance, including greater publicity for emergency loans.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue to publicize, and explore options to end, the difficult transition periods between semesters

If possible, create options to allow students funding to facilitate travel to New Haven and pay moving expenses at the start of 1L Orientation. Apartments typically require down payments, which students may struggle to afford before receiving financial aid. Include orientation (which now extends up to two weeks) in consideration of both the timing and quantity of loan disbursements for incoming 1Ls.

Additionally, assuming that it is impossible to disburse spring semester loans prior to January 1, the Financial Aid Office should continue to publicize this funding gap. In addition, as federal law prohibits the University from making an early disbursement, Yale should continue to think about solutions that might bridge that gap, including a potential short-term private sector emergency loan option.

RECOMMENDATION: Publicize and increase funding options available for students travelling to job and clerkship interviews

For clerkship and non-Big Law job interviews, students are often asked to front (or simply absorb) the costs of travel. This can place certain jobs out of reach of students without cash on hand. The school should better publicize the options available to students to pay for public service job interviews and should consider short-term loans to students who may have significant private sector interview expenses. Additionally, funds for attending clerkship interviews are currently only available to 3Ls; with the collapse of the Plan, this should be broadened to include 2Ls as well.
X. Conclusion

This report identifies a number of challenges as well as opportunities for positive change on behalf of students, faculty and administrators. We are encouraged by the willingness of so many students to consider issues of class and to share their perspectives. We also take heart in the efforts that have already been made, such as the recent Summer Public Interest Fellowship increase to a $6000 maximum and some professors’ commitment to reducing their students’ textbook expenses. We would also be remiss not to recognize the privilege we enjoy as Yale Law School students, regardless of our class identities or backgrounds. Finally, we are grateful to the law school for funding our work through the Zelia & Oscar Ruebhausen/Debevoise & Plimpton Student Fund.

We also emphasize that this report should be considered a start to the conversation. As our team reviewed the survey results, we raised as many questions as we did findings or suggestions for change. For example, we are curious how professors and administrators perceive class and opportunity at YLS. A broader study involving interviews and long-term analysis like the YLW Speak Up project could provide an even richer portrait of social class at YLS.

While our report and survey only touched on the topic, we also urge the administration to consider its admissions approach. As our report reveals, the YLS student body is far less diverse in terms of social class than the nation as a whole. Challenges such as broad educational inequities and underrepresentation of talented lower-income students in highly selective undergraduate institutions certainly contribute to the lack of class diversity. Regardless, we encourage administrators to consider ways to increase socioeconomic diversity within the YLS student body or to compare it to other institutions. For example, while the percentage of students receiving federal Pell Grants is an imperfect measure of undergraduate socioeconomic diversity, it allows some comparability between institutions.
Most of all, we encourage members of the YLS community to critically consider the role of social class in their own paradigms and decision-making. While our class identities and backgrounds do not define us, they shape us all to some extent. We can only foster an inclusive and supportive community if we recognize our own assumptions, biases and preferences.
Appendix: Class/Action Survey

1. Current class year
   a. 1L
   b. 2L
   c. 3L
   d. LLM
   e. Other _______

2. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other

3. Race/Ethnicity (Please choose all with which you identify.)
   a. American Indian or Alaska Native
   b. Asian
   c. Black or African American
   d. Hispanic or Latino
   e. Native American or Other Pacific Islander
   f. White
   g. Mixed
   h. Other _______

4. I would describe my class background as…
   a. Lower/working class
   b. Lower middle class
   c. Middle class
   d. Upper middle class
   e. Upper class
   f. I don't know

5. What is the highest level of education either of your parents attained?
   a. Elementary school
   b. Middle school
   c. Some high school
   d. High school degree
   e. Some college
   f. Associate degree
   g. Bachelor’s degree
   h. Master’s degree
   i. Professional degree (e.g., J.D., M.D.)
   k. Doctoral degree

6. Please estimate your family's average household income during your pre-college years. (Use your best estimate or select “I don't know.”)
   a. $15k or below
   b. $15k to $30k
   c. $30k to $50k
   d. $51k to $100k
   e. $101k to $150k
   f. $151k to $200k
g. $201k to $300k
h. $301k to $500k
i. $501k to $1M
j. Over $1M
k. I don't know.

7. How would you classify the social class background of the average student at YLS?
   a. Lower/working class
   b. Lower middle class
   c. Middle class
   d. Upper middle class
   e. Upper class
   f. I don't know

8. Have your class background and socioeconomic status affected your YLS experience?
   1. Strongly agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly disagree

9. If so, please explain.

10. YLS students are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
    1. Strongly agree
    2. Agree
    3. Neither agree nor disagree
    4. Disagree
    5. Strongly disagree

11. Please explain.

12. YLS faculty are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
    1. Strongly agree
    2. Agree
    3. Neither agree nor disagree
    4. Disagree
    5. Strongly disagree

13. Please explain.

14. YLS administrators are understanding of the experiences of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.
    1. Strongly agree
    2. Agree
    3. Neither agree nor disagree
    4. Disagree
    5. Strongly disagree

15. Please explain.

16. How are you paying for your YLS education? (Please include funding for tuition as well as personal experiences.) [checkbox responses]
    a. Loans
b. Grants
c. Outside scholarships
d. I am paying for it with my savings
e. My parents are contributing
f. Other ___________

17. Are there ways that YLS students, faculty and the administration could be more supportive of students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and students' financial need? Are there specific programs or policies you would like to change? If so, please explain.

18. If applicable: Financial needs have played a major role in my job search process.
   1. Strongly agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly disagree
   6. N/A

19. Please explain.