

To Connecticut State Legislators

We, the Yale College Council, write to affirm our support of SB 203, intended to ban the use of legacy-preferential admissions.

From its inception, the practice of legacy-preferential admissions was implemented with the intention of upholding the social exclusivity of prestigious institutions¹, limiting the acceptance and enrollment of “undesirable” college applicants² in favor of granting substantial boosts to those with existing familial ties to elite universities. Although such preferences appear to be racially, socioeconomically, and religiously blind, those historically granted the opportunity to form such connections were overwhelmingly White, wealthy and Protestant, due to the inaccessibility of higher education.

While administrative justifications for the continued use of legacy admissions may have drastically shifted in the century since its enactment, the demographics of those who benefit from such preferences have remained disproportionately White and wealthy³. Yale’s refusal to abandon legacy preferences *in spite of this* calls the administration's commitment to cultivating a truly diverse student body into question, and is particularly egregious in light of the Supreme Court’s ruling in *SFFA, Inc. v Harvard*⁴.

Additionally, we emphasize that the archaic practice of granting advantages in the application process *on the basis of familial ties* is antithetical to Yale’s commitment to meritocratic admissions. Although Yale’s refusal to publicly release data documenting admit rates of legacy versus non-legacy applicants hinders quantification of specific percentage advantages, Miller and Bhatia⁵ note that in a group of twelve elite institutions including the Ivy League, legacy applicants were *accepted at a rate four to seven times greater than non-legacy applicants with comparable test scores*. Variations within legacy acceptance rates appear to be rooted in the socioeconomic status of the applicant, with students from the top 0.1% being *seven times more likely to be accepted than non-legacy applicants with comparable test scores*.

We conclude by emphasizing that an applicant's familial ties to a university is no more a sign of personal merit than it is a predictor of their potential for future success on campus. The continued consideration of legacy status by the Yale admissions office constitutes an institutional reinforcement of nepotism and privilege which has no place within the modern educational

¹ COE, DEBORAH L., and JAMES D. DAVIDSON. “THE ORIGINS OF LEGACY ADMISSIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION.” *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2011, pp. 233–47. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23055549>. Accessed 31 Jan. 2024.

² <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/legacy-admissions-college-anti-semitism-united-states>

³ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/elite-college-dropped-legacy-admissions-time-higher-education-institutions/>

⁴ https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/27/upshot/ivy-league-legacy-admissions.html>

system. In light of the egregious advantages, as well as the racial and socioeconomic exclusivity perpetuated by the continued use of legacy admissions, we urge the legislature to pass SB 203.

Sincerely,
The Yale College Council
Birikti Kahsai, Senator for Branford

Undersignors:

Black Student Alliance at Yale
Generational African-American Students Association at Yale
Asian American Students Alliance at Yale
Native and Indigenous Student Association at Yale
Students of the Indigenous Peoples of Oceania at Yale
Mecha de Yale
Yale Middle Eastern and North African Student Association
Yale First-Generation and/or Low-Income Advocacy Movement (YFAM)