Pushing Back End-of-Year Move-Out Date
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BACKGROUND

Yale offers its students an intellectually rigorous academic community unparalleled at any other university. Students enrolled in Yale College are expected to prioritize their education, and in return are provided resources to grow and succeed in this academic environment. In line with this expectation, Yale College reserves a five-day period between the end of classes and the beginning of final exams to, according to the Undergraduate Academic Regulations, “conclude their coursework and prepare for final examinations”. Reading Period allows Yale College students to adequately prepare for the incredibly rigorous finals period that is expected of a Yale education. To this end, most clubs and classes do not meet during this period, and students are generally expected to focus their energy on studying for final exams and completing final projects and papers.

There is only one institutional barrier to students focusing their entire attention on finals: moving out of residences. Every spring semester, students living in residential college housing are required to vacate their residence by 12pm noon the day after finals period ends, which means most students spend their Reading Period and finals period balancing studying for exams and completing projects with packing all of their belongings and moving them to summer storage.

In light of this issue, Yale College Council has set out to research the current situation and find ways that the academic calendar can be adjusted to help students meet their academic commitments and the needs of the institution. Our hope is that the data gathered and alternatives considered in this report will be useful for the Yale administration in thinking about how best to serve students during a stressful and busy time of year for both students and the institution.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Student Opinion

In an effort to gauge student sentiment on a variety of issues, Yale College Council distributes a survey every semester with questions designed to provide student input on the YCC’s policy priorities. In fall 2019, the survey asked students to rate the difficulty of moving out by the designated deadline. Of the 1,069 students that responded to the question and had been present for move out in spring semester 2019, **76% of students responded that move out for spring semester had been “very difficult” or “difficult”** (38% of students responded that moving out had been “very difficult” and 38% of students responded that it had been “difficult”). Only 15% of students said that move out was “not difficult” and 9% said that it was “not difficult at all” [see graph below].

Q12 - Yale College requires students to vacate dormitories by noon on the first day after Spring semester examinations end. Have you ever faced difficulty moving out by the move out deadline, and if so, how would you rank the difficulty?
Final Exam Distribution

Although move out poses a significant challenge to almost 80% of students that responded to the fall survey, those most affected are the students with a final exam on the last day of finals period. Although we lack the data to be sure, we will attempt to estimate the number of students that tend to have an exam on the last day of finals period. Of the classes offered by Yale College in fall 2019, only roughly 65 had a final scheduled on December 18th, the last day of finals period; we use this distribution as representative of the average number of courses scheduled on the last day of finals in any given semester. Yale College advertises on its website that every year, over 2,000 courses are offered. Even conservatively estimating no overlap between spring semester and fall semester offerings, that would mean 1,000 different classes are offered each semester. Given that only some courses require writing a final exam, and that only 65 of these have a final scheduled on the last day, we believe it is reasonable to say only a small fraction of students must take an exam on the last day of finals period. Further, as not all students live on campus, a slightly smaller fraction of students must move out of their residence only one day after taking a final exam. This is the group of students that we believe our recommendations can best assist.

Potential Obstacles

In an effort to understand barriers to extending the move out date for all Yale College students, we met with Sergio Gonzalez, Operations Manager of Silliman College. Mr. Gonzalez provided us with the following potential obstacles to altering the move out date:
1) **Room Turn Over** - that Yale Facilities would not have enough time after extended move out to turn over, including to clean and to otherwise prepare, rooms for commencement and reunion activities.

2) **Dining and Cost** - that the dining halls would need to be open for an extended period, adding to the annual cost of room and board.

**Room Turn Over**

The greatest obstacle to extending the time that Yale College students have to move out of residential colleges is reducing the already limited time that Yale Facilities has to prepare residences for Commencement activities and class reunions. In May 2019, final exams officially ended at 5:30 pm on May 7th. Students were expected to completely vacate their dormitories by noon on May 8th, the next day. Families of graduating students were permitted to move into residential colleges as early as noon on the 18th of May, two days before Commencement. There's also insufficient time after Commencement to prepare the rooms for reunions and summer activities; according to Mr. Gonzalez, reunion activities began two days after Commencement. Though additional dialogue is needed with the Facilities Department, we recognize that ten days is a very short window to prepare for families to move into residences; we also believe that it's possible to find a compromise that allows for an easier move out process for students and enough time to turn over residences for Facilities.

**Dining and Cost**

Despite this concern, it is possible to extend the move out deadline without accommodating for more meals. In fact, students often have access to residences but not dining halls during periods where is is "optional" to be on campus like Spring Break and the week before classes start in fall. Because Yale Dining would not need to be extended to cover any additional time that residences are open, we do not anticipate increased costs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The fundamental issue that prevents a longer period between final exams and move out is the rapidity with which rooms must be prepared for Commencement, reunion activities, and summer programs.

To address this conflict, we (1) recommend a minimum six-hour, or maximum 24-hour, extension to the current move-out time. However, the length of extension that is most feasible depends on some factors that we are unable to gauge: largely, the process by which Facilities prepares these rooms, how conducive this process is to avoiding certain rooms, and for how long these rooms can be avoided before significantly hindering Facilities in what they need to do.

As a short-term, immediate fix, we also recommend (2) publicizing the system that allows students to petition their head of college office for a later move out time. Petitioning students will be granted an extension only if they are enrolled in a class with a final exam on the last day of finals period, which we know is only a fraction of Yale College Students. Because we know that not all rooms are used for Commencement, and over the course of the summer a residential college is never filled to capacity, we believe that this system will allow students in greatest need of extra time an extension while also allowing Facilities to prepare an adequate number of rooms in time for Commencement and other summer activities.
FINAL THOUGHTS

While our work is a step toward addressing this problem, we hope that this report will call attention to the issue and ways that it might be solved. Please direct any inquiries to reilly.johnson@yale.edu.