

## Connect, Share, Support: Students and Alumni at the 1stGenYale Annual Career Networking Mixer

By Lise Chapman '81 MBA | Posted December 20, 2024



Over 150 alumni and students from all Yale schools enjoyed talking with each other at the 9th annual Career Networking Mixer at the Afro-American Cultural Center on Thursday, November 14, 2024. The event was hosted by 1stGenYale, the alumni-led SIG support group for first-generation low-income Yalies. Thank you for the delicious traditional Caribbean food provided by the Yale Alumni Association. Thanks, too, to the team of Sam Gulam Samdani '84, J'Healee '94 PhD, Lara Mohamed '27, Tanisha Narine '26, Julisa De Los Santos, and the House staff for help setting up the room.

Many new alumni joined from the annual Assembly & Convocation, thanks to the YAA staff for including our mixer in the program dinners. Other Yalies attend every year. We are excited to see new and returning students, too. We were delighted to see YAA Executive Director, Alison Cole '99, who welcomed everyone in the room.

The best way to share the story is to hear from our alumni and students, who captured the joy and organic mentoring happening live in this room.

**Ash Duong '25 MBA**, Co-President and Co-Founder, Yale SOM First-Gen/Low-Income (FLI) Club, "What a difference a year makes! Last year, I stood alone as the sole School of Management (SOM) student at this mixer. This year, I was surrounded by nearly ten of my SOM classmates, a testament to our growing first-generation/low-income community. The evening brought unexpected connections too – I discovered that two of my undergraduate classmates share the first-gen journey with me, a revelation that made Yale feel even more like home.

The mixer beautifully illustrated how the first-gen community extends across Yale's entire campus, breaking down the invisible barriers between schools and programs. While this marks my final year attending as a student, I look forward to returning as an alumnus to support future generations of first-gen Yalies. I'm deeply grateful to Lise and the 1stGenYale team for creating these meaningful spaces where our shared experiences can forge lasting connections."

**Tanisha Narine '26**, "I had a wonderful time attending 1stGenYale's Career Networking Mixer last week. The alumni and my fellow peers created an enthusiastic atmosphere for the event as everyone was excited to meet one another, and at the same time, the kindness that radiated throughout the space helped my peers and me to be comfortable with meeting new people. I was especially excited to reconnect with alumni whom I met during my internship with 1stGenYale Summer Bulldogs two summers ago and know I can count on them for support at any point during my Yale journey. In addition to my internship, I was a Yale & You counselor last year through the Admissions Office & am currently serving as a Head Advising Fellow for Matriculate. I am grateful to be a part of the FGLI community at Yale, and speaking with the alumni at this even helped me realize how I can still be a part of a community that means so much to me years after I graduate."

**Grace Kim '22**, "The 1stGenYale 9th Annual Career Networking Mixer was truly inspiring. It brings together a dynamic mix of individuals—from eager first-year students to seasoned entrepreneurs who have built their own companies, schools, and businesses. A few years ago, this was one of the first ways I got involved in volunteering with 1stGenYale, and since then, I've had the chance to connect and reconnect with alumni while introducing students to the exciting possibilities within the teaching career. It was a powerful reminder of how meaningful connections can inspire and shape the future."

**Duyen Pham '26 MBA**, "Never did I imagine spending hours speaking with a Yale '56 alum, listening to a U.S. veteran sing a Vietnamese song in my mother tongue, bonding over life's simplest moments, and receiving career advice from accomplished leaders across business, arts, science, and government. The 1stGenYale Career Networking Mixer brought together incredible individuals with the most relatable yet inspiring stories, reminding me of the power of community and the wealth of support available to first-generation students at Yale. I'm deeply grateful for this experience and the connections I've made. Thank you so much, 1stGenYale."

**Peter Tran '25**, "Being surrounded by all the FGLI alumni who had found their way through Yale and beyond made me very proud to be in the company of trailblazers. I really enjoyed chatting with Ms. Jennifer Lunceford, an alumna whose current non-profit work is helping kids and adults dealing with substance abuse by providing them artistic outlets to channel their creativity. Overall, I came away from the event with a deep sense of pride for being first-gen and a deep commitment to pay it forward for the next generation. After all, it takes a village!"

**Marv Berenblum '56**, "Mentoring these remarkable first-gen Yale students is such a rewarding experience. They are so grateful that you cared enough about them to take the time to share your thoughts with them. But it's also fascinating to learn about their incredible journeys to Yale."

**Courtney Farr '06 MSN**, (president, Yale Club of Santa Barbara), "I had a wonderful time at your mixer! I loved how there were actually 1st generation Yale students there too! I had a wonderful time chatting with Andrew Burgie '87 BA from the Yale service corps. We're going to try and add telemedicine to our Yale volunteer experience."

**Andrew Burgie '87**, (Yale Alumni Service Corps volunteer project leader), "One of the highlights of the annual Assembly is participating in the 1stGenYale Career Networking Mixer held at the Afro Am House. It was great to see fellow alumni volunteers sharing

their life and vocational experiences with present undergraduates and other alumni. I am glad to see that this has become an ongoing tradition that benefits all persons involved.

One of my highlights this time was meeting a fellow alumna with a public health nursing background who was interested in utilizing her skill set and medical instrument patent to facilitate a future Yale Alumni Service Corps project, an organization that I presently Chair. Encounters like this are very welcome and mutually beneficial and I am very appreciative of 1stGenYale for providing and facilitating exchanges like this."

**Sam Gulam Samdani '84**, "Brilliant Minds with Boundless Energy: These students exude intelligence and enthusiasm, bringing fresh perspectives and unrelenting drive to everything they do. Their intellectual curiosity and zest for learning are truly inspiring.

Bold Ambitions to Change the World: Many of these students are focused on making a significant impact, whether through entrepreneurship, social innovation, or other transformative efforts. Their aspirations reflect a deep commitment to creating a better world.

Resilient and Idealistic Trailblazers: Overcoming challenges, they radiate optimism and determination, embodying the power of perseverance. Their stories and visions highlight a remarkable blend of grit and idealism, as they chart their individual career trajectories for extraordinary achievements."

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There are so many more stories to share and fellow Yalies to meet. We look forward to seeing you at a future 1stGenYale event. Email us at [1stgenyale@1stgenyale.org](mailto:1stgenyale@1stgenyale.org) if you would like to join us as a volunteer. We can use your help, especially in communications.

*1stGenYale is a member of the YAA Shared Interest Group and a self-funded 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run by alumni volunteers without remuneration or financial support from Yale.*

*Since 2016, 1stGenYale has been empowering FGLI alumni and students from across all Yale schools, with a network now encompassing over 4,500 alumni and 700 students. Additional information regarding 1stGenYale's impact is contained in our [SB24 Report](#) for this year's student internship results, [2024 Newsletter](#), [2023 Annual Report](#), and website: [1stgenyale.org](http://1stgenyale.org). For questions, email [1stgenyale@1stgenyale.org](mailto:1stgenyale@1stgenyale.org).*

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