

YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards honor outstanding alumni organizations

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The Yale Alumni Association Assembly and Yale Alumni Fund Convocation is a time of reflection and also celebration, an opportunity to honor the people – and the organizations – that make a deep and lasting impact on the Yale alumni community.

This year's Assembly and Convocation will feature the first such virtual celebration, on January 13, honoring the best of the past year with the YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards.

The companion to the YAA Leadership Awards, which honor individual achievement, the YAA Board of Governors Excellence Awards honor alumni organizations for excellence in their events, programs, and best practices for Yale and on behalf of Yale. These awards recognize groups such as Yale College classes, regional clubs, interest groups, and graduate and professional school associations.

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Here's a look at the 2020 recipients:

1stGenYale

1stGenYale responded to the pandemic with nimbleness, a positive spirit, and strong volunteer leadership. With 13 timely webinars held March through June, 1stGenYale demonstrated excellence by engaging alumni of diverse backgrounds, attracting an audience of more than 1,400 alumni and student participants. Several webinars were targeted to, or hosted by, alumni from the past 10 to 12 years. They focused on career advancement and networking with topics such as shifting gears with summer jobs and internships, managing gap semesters, handling virtual interviews, finding a job during the pandemic, and developing a strategy to change careers. Promoting inclusivity and connection during a crisis, these webinars showcased the resourcefulness and expertise of the community, including the 21 emerging alumni volunteers who created or hosted events.

Accelerate Yale

One of the YAA's newest shared interest groups, Accelerate Yale worked to cultivate an active and thoughtful ecosystem that promoted meaningful connections and collaborations throughout the year – while also serving as a bridge between alumni and current Yale students. One of its standout programs was the Yale Angels initiative connecting entrepreneurs with investors, sparking innovation through connection and collaboration. Yale Angels was

launched in November 2019 with an event featuring the founders of Rent the Runway and General Assembly, a presentation on angel investing, spotlights on ventures launched from Yale, and Yale alumni-owned food businesses. The event reflected the mission of the YAA by reinforcing commitments to lifelong learning, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and involved on-campus partners such as Tsai CITY, the Office of Development, and students and alumni who represent diverse segments of the Yale community.

Mixed Company of Yale Alumni

The Mixed Company of Yale Alumni group partnered with the Mixed Company of Yale student singing group to use their voices to support and uplift the voices of Black people nationwide via a social media campaign that raised more than \$6,000 for four Black Lives Matter organizations. Mixed Company of Yale Alumni emailed its alums and posted in its Facebook group to increase awareness of the campaign, tracked donations, and matched pledges three to one through an alum's company. The campaign communications included an extensive list of resources for alumni to use in engaging in lifelong learning about Black lives. The \$6,000 raised went directly to organizations focused on celebrating and enriching Black lives and preventing Black deaths, both locally in New Haven and across the country. The beneficiaries were the Citywide Youth Coalition, Okra Project, Color of Change, and the Innocence Project.

Regional Yale Clubs in Hong Kong and China

Alumni working with regional clubs throughout Hong Kong and China sourced personal protective equipment (PPE) for Yale New Haven Hospital and other frontline medical workers. This effort was spearheaded by Yale School of Management alumna Julie Zhao and Yale College alumna Priscilla Song, along with many other alums who sprang into action. Together, they formed a network of trusted personal links throughout the region that went to outstanding lengths to secure PPE during a period of international jockeying for a scarce supply. The initiative drew on the strong networks of Yale women in Asia to source and donate a life-saving product made scarce by global

disruptions. Through a “person to person” model, the effort extended the power of the Yale alumni community to help medics outside New Haven who were not part of university-backed hospitals with a network of alums to help them fund PPE.

Yale Alumni Association of the Northwest

This regional alumni association created an Arts in Minnesota virtual series featuring several panels with leaders of Minnesota’s most prominent arts institutions. With Minneapolis being the site of George Floyd’s killing, the series started with an examination of the local arts communities’ responses to his death. An early event spotlighted the theaters in the region that showcase work by artists of color. A second event in November specifically explored the arts communities’ responses to the tragedy and cultural trauma in distressed democracies. This successful series has sustained its momentum, with prominent arts leaders featured in programming planned into this coming summer. The series also invites local arts organizations and alumni of other universities to attend via the Twin Cities Alumni Network. This openness and inclusiveness increases the Arts in Minnesota series’ impact and reach and advances Yale’s reputation and leadership while addressing important issues in the community.

Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance

For the past year, Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance core programming focused on structural inequality, sounding the alarm within the Yale community on the inequity suffered by people of color. Using a multi-media combination of in-person panels, videos, and virtual town halls, YANA’s Fighting Inequality series advanced the goal of democratizing access to the resources and opportunities. From March to June 2020, YANA’s programs were all designed to raise awareness and mobilize alumni into fighting structural and racial inequity. The Fighting Inequality series created an ongoing forum to showcase the work of Yale leaders actively engaged in addressing inequality across a range of areas, and in producing this series, YANA collaborated with the YAA, AAAYA, Yale

Black Alumni Association, Dwight Hall, and 1stGenYale. Alumni speakers featured in the series were sourced through peer-nomination or self-nomination, ensuring the widest possible diversity and demographic range. The town halls attracted global audiences and the content was later posted on YANA's YouTube channel.

Yale Black Alumni Association

YBAA planned and held virtual programs that addressed the well-being of Black alumni during a time of racial turmoil. The first session, titled "Emotional and Cultural Strength for the Journey Ahead," targeted the entire community of Black alumni. The second session, titled "On Black Motherhood for the Journey Ahead," targeted a specific subgroup featuring Black alumnae from across generations and at different life stages and stages of parenting, from those with babies and toddlers to those with children in college. The topics of both sessions were outside the typical subject matter of alumni events, which positioned them as unique, innovative, and compelling, and the sessions were well attended. The planning team for events consisted of a cross-generational group of alumni from the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s. And the format and content of the sessions served as blueprints for subsequent sessions over the summer, and the impact of the programs was positive, uplifting, and encouraging.

Yale Blue Green

Yale Blue Green launched the Yale Blue Green Sustainability Initiative in February 2019 with the goal of organizing and engaging environmentally minded alumni to advance Yale's position as a global leader in sustainability in line with university goals. In December 2019, the Sustainability Initiative working group released a proposal to the Yale community outlining their priorities. It received close to 500 signatures, launched a mentoring program, and created a fund with a match to support the Office of Sustainability. Its Outreach Committee was the driver behind getting signatures for the proposal to the administration and secured endorsements from alumni from every Yale College decade from the 1950s through current undergraduates, as well as the

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and every professional school. The Sustainability Initiative has been a pathway to introducing many new alums to Yale Blue Green and involving them in the broader opportunities that alumni engagement can offer.

Yale Club of Germany

The decentralized Yale Club of Germany (Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and more) has been treated to a world-class lecture series kicked off by the Munich chapter. The series, “Dialogues on Democracy,” consisted of a stream of high-profile guests and boosted broad-based engagement of alumni volunteers as both planners for the events and also as participants. The events were exceptionally well-attended. One of the talks, held at Munich University, drew 400 guests, including multiple alumni who drove 600 kilometers from Berlin and even an alumna who flew in from London. The Dialogues on Democracy series supported the Yale Club of Germany’s mission to hold public events involving members of the Yale community “to contribute to the international exchange of knowledge and experience.”

Yale Club of Washington, D.C.

The Yale Club of Washington, D.C., launched two outstanding programs over the past year: an event series focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion; and a community service initiative focused on addressing food insecurity. In the event series, the club organized intellectually rich events that engaged 625 alumni. These events included a private tour of the National Museum of African American History, a dinner with Professor David Blight focusing on Frederick Douglass, an event with the ambassador of Haiti, alumni mentoring events with KIPP Academy students, and more. On the community service side, the club launched a fundraiser and educational webinar to raise awareness of rising food insecurity and to create an opportunity for the Yale alumni community to come together to pay for meals for needy families. As a result of this initiative, more than 200 Yale alumni engaged in raising more than \$16,000 to pay for 400,000 meals for those in need in the D.C. area.

Yale College Class of 1970

Forced to pivot to a virtual format, the Yale College Class of 1970 nonetheless staged a 50th reunion that was remarkable in its creativity, depth, and breadth. Hundreds of classmates were trained to Zoom over the course of two dozen sessions in the two months leading up to their reunion. During reunion week, 24 Zoom sessions were held, ranging from large webinar events, discussion sessions, and a memorial service to music nights, a dance party, and a cabaret night. The class also created a survey of its members in conjunction with the Class of 1965 to examine shifts in social attitudes over time, revealing fascinating trends in two of the last of the all-male classes. Finally, it created and published two beautiful hard copy reunion books, one of which was a book of recollections of the Yale campus in 1970 along with images of the same places today, using original material collected from classmates.

Yale Food + Drink

The Yale Food + Drink Facebook group has demonstrated repeated excellence by providing a source of vibrant community and enrichment during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many alumni have been unable to connect with each other – and in some cases, anyone at all – in person. The group has blossomed into more than 1,200 active members. The combination of the nature of the group as a Facebook group, in which one can easily participate with an Internet connection, and the well-liked topic of food has elicited enthusiastic participation from a wide range of Yale alumni community members.

Yale Healthcare Club of China

This past April, the Yale Healthcare Club of China, the YAA, and the Yale School of Public Health collaborated to organize a webinar on COVID-19 management, bringing together leading health authorities and experts including Dr. Wenhong Zhang, the preeminent infectious disease expert in China. The thoughtful discussion engaged a worldwide audience of Yale alumni, physicians, employees of Yale New Haven Health System, Yale students, and faculty. The webinar

registered 1,581 participants and 1,337 video recording views within one month of the event and resulted in large donations of personal protective equipment, including Tyvek gowns from Yale alumni and friends to major hospitals in China, and later, to Yale New Haven Hospital. The YHCC Forum continues to host events that focus on cutting-edge healthcare topics, inviting the most authoritative experts, including Yale professors, in relevant fields to share ideas and providing a platform for lifelong learning for Yale alumni and their communities.

Yale School of Music

In hopes of providing musical solace to the patients and health care workers in the Yale New Haven Health System, the Yale School of Music community came together to present Music for Healing. There were three concerts in all – one each in May, June, and August – in addition to a curated library of on-demand content. The Music for Healing project exemplified the school's mission and commitment to preparing students for service to the profession and to society by providing a series of performances to stream, and the collaborative nature of the project made it particularly meaningful and creative. Performances were given by YSM alumni and students, and the last performance featured the Morse Chorale, a choir of students from 14 different New Haven public schools and is part of YSM's Music in Schools Initiative.

YaleWomen Houston

The YaleWomen Houston chapter responded to the George Floyd murder with a two-part virtual discussion of race and privilege, held in June with expert Denise Hamilton, founder of WatchHerWork.com. As allyship is important to bring more voices together to advocate for change, YaleWomen Houston partnered with the Yale Club of Houston to co-sponsor and help promote the event, increasing reach and attendance. Nearly 50 alums signed up for the live event. Hamilton provided an overview of recent high-profile police brutality cases and created a space to discuss difficult subjects in these challenging times, offering a thoughtful conversation without judgment. The post-event

survey feedback was very positive, with an average rating 4.7 of 5 stars. The [video recording](#) was shared with other YaleWomen Chapters and YANA, and on social media and by the speaker, who said the video had more than 200,000 views via her network. Other YaleWomen chapters are considering similar discussions to further help embrace our differences and foster inclusion and belonging.

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