

1stGenYale suspends Summer Bulldog Internship Program for 2025 season

The volunteer alumni organization is unequipped to organize the program this year but hopes to make a return in 2026.

ELSPETH YEH 10:04 PM, JAN 26, 2025

STAFF REPORTER



1stGenYale, a non-profit alumni organization, is suspending its Summer Bulldogs Student Internship program for the 2025 season.

Since 2020, the summer program has provided first-generation Yale College students with summer employment under Yale alumni working in various fields. 1stGenYale announced that the program would not run this summer due to the organization's insufficient "capacity and resources."

"As a first-year student, it might be a little bit intimidating, especially if you come from a background where you basically don't have as much experience in attaining internships on a college level," said Andrey Sokolov '27, who participated in the Summer Bulldogs program in 2024. "I really benefited from the program, and I really appreciated the availability of the resources that the program provided. And I think that I'm not the only freshman who can say that."

According to 1stGenYale Board President Lise Chapman SOM '81, the Summer Bulldogs Program has been entirely organized by two volunteers who work around the clock between January and April to solicit host organizations, review internship applications and pair interns.

Yet, the two alumni volunteers cannot sustain the effort by themselves and a fundraising campaign to hire a staff member did not come through in time, Chapman said. The team will explore options to continue the program for the summer of 2026.

This suspension comes despite five years of operation. According to the 1stGenYale's final report recapping the impact of Summer Bulldogs' 2024 program, between 2020 and 2024 they helped 295 student interns find paid internship opportunities wherein students earned a total of \$1.2 million.

In 2024, 190 Yale College students applied for only 107 internship opportunities. Ninety-six percent of student interns came from low-income backgrounds.

Sokolov said that though the suspension is disappointing, he understands it happened because the program was a massive undertaking for those involved.

The program allowed participants to foster professional skills and gain crucial workplace experience. Sokolov described his summer with the program interning with the Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance as immensely beneficial.

Beta Lomeda '26 also participated in the 2024 Summer Bulldogs program where she gained firsthand experience in a Yale School of Medicine research lab. Her time in the program "affirmed" her intention to pursue a career in public health.

The program was particularly helpful for younger students with limited professional experience or connections: 78 percent of Summer Bulldogs interns were first and second-year students.

Alumni partners also benefited from the program. Host organizations profited from interns for little to no cost, as they were

assisted with supplementary funding from the Office of Career Strategy's Summer Experience Award. This allowed students to work with non-profit organizations and in Yale labs that would not have ordinarily been able to support a paid internship.

“Hosting a Yale Summer Bulldog intern has been a transformational experience for me professionally,” said Dr. Anje Van Berckelaer '95, who hosted a Summer Bulldog intern at Battenkill Valley Health Center. “Working with enthusiastic students at a time when the workforce shortage is devastating our rural area has renewed my enthusiasm for my work and offered our staff an opportunity to share, teach, learn and grow together.”

The program endeavored to serve and foster the broader Yale community by connecting Yale faculty, graduate and postgraduate researchers with qualified undergraduate students. According to its final report, 37 percent of program interns worked on projects at Yale schools.

Anne Wyllie, a four-year Summer Bulldog intern host and professor at the School of Public Health, said that the internship program has proven to be an “incredibly rewarding experience” for her lab, as student interns brought enthusiasm and dedication with them.

Yale faculty in the Office of Career Strategy who partnered with 1stGenYale also expressed sadness upon hearing the program would not run this summer.

Yale offers many alternative resources for students in need of summer employment. 1stGenYale encourages students who planned

to participate in the program this summer to contact the Office of Educational Opportunity and their OCS advisors for support in finding internship opportunities.

“While we will certainly miss the collaboration with our wonderful, very dedicated colleagues in the 1stgenYale alumni group, the availability of opportunities for all students, and funding for students on financial aid, remains constant,” said OCS Assistant Director Lisa Blees.

Despite the demand for the program, it is unclear whether 1stGenYale can return to its previous capacity without more robust funding, organization and support.

Twenty-one percent of the Yale College class of 2028 are first-generation college students.

ELSPETH YEH

Elspeth Yeh covers faculty and academics for the University Desk. She is a first year from Cambridge, Massachusetts, now in Ezra Stiles College. She is majoring in Humanities.