



Gym User Feedback and Recommendations

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)



Graduate and Professional School Senate (GPSS)



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GSA Facilities and Healthcare Committees

Gym User Feedback Report

GSA Facilities and Healthcare and GPSS Advocacy



Executive Summary/Abstract

Payne Whitney Gymnasium (PWG) is the only general fitness facility provided to the Yale Graduate and Professional School (G&P) population. The resulting high usage (~75%), coupled with the large size of the G&P population (6000 G&P/year vs. 5000 undergraduates/year), makes G&P students one of the top constituents of PWG.¹

A recent survey of the G&P population with a large sample size (>20%) has established broad (60%) dissatisfaction with PWG in general.¹ Most complaints cited the limited hours and the age/disrepair of equipment of the Fitness Center. By conducting an environmental scan we were able to confirm that Yale has the least weekly hours of any Ivy League school¹ (approximately 15 less hours than the next most restrictive) and has the least up to date fitness equipment.² Additional evidence for G&P demand for extended hours was provided by a pilot extension of evening hours in November 2011.³

Meeting with various administrators at Yale University approximate costs were determined for renovation of the fitness center (\$300,000) and a 10 hour weekly extension of gym hours.^{2,3} Such an investment from the University would directly benefit the competitiveness of Yale Universities G&P School given the facts stated above.

In addition there is evidence for several other indirect, yet potentially significantly cost-saving benefits to Yale. For example, the University has recently invested in a University-wide Wellness Initiative which promotes consistent exercise to reduce the incidence of chronic physical and mental health issues.⁴ Graduate students are the number one user of mental health services whose costs are growing at roughly twice the rate of health-care in general (+6% vs.. +3%).⁵

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1. Introduction

Advocacy for student life improvements falls within the mandate of both the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) and the Graduate and Professional Senate (GPSS). Among the various components of student life, access to adequate gym facilities has been shown to strongly correlate with general well being and physical and mental health of a community as highlighted by Yale University's own "wellness initiative".⁴ In addition to individual health, access to gym facilities directly enables community building through self-organized team sports, which Yale University does not otherwise support for Graduate and Professional (G&P) students. For these reasons, access to adequate gym facilities is a priority for both the GSA and GPSS.

A 2012 survey of the G&P population with a large sample size (>20%) and representative demographics (e.g. both on and off campus) showed broad dissatisfaction (60%) with Payne Whitney Gymnasium (PWG) which is the only gym available to the entire G&P population. As a result the GSA and GPSS have conducted and compiled research to define the source of this dissatisfaction and advocate for policy changes to address it.

2. Results and Recommendations

While undergraduates have access to new gyms in their colleges the G&P population only has access to PWG. As a result, a large percentage of G&P students use PWG (~75%), which coupled with the large size of the G&P population (6000 G&P/year vs. 5000 undergraduates /year), makes G&P students one of the top constituents of PWG.¹

A 2012 survey of the G&P population with a large sample size (>20%) and representative demographics (e.g. both on and off campus) showed broad dissatisfaction (60%) with Payne Whitney Gymnasium (PWG).¹ The primary issues cited with limited gym hours and the disrepair of the equipment in the fitness center. Through the use of environmental scans, pilot studies and meeting with administrators we were able to demonstrate Yale is the least competitive Ivy League school on either of the categories and it is our position that additional funds to be allocated to the gym for extended hours and fitness center renovation.

Table 1. Environmental Scan of Ivy + 1 (MIT) Gym Hours

University	Monday-Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekly Total
Yale	6:00am - 10pm	9:30am - 4:30pm	9:30am - 4:30pm	94 hours
Harvard	6am - 11pm	10am - 8pm	10am - 11pm	108 hours
Penn	6am - 11:30pm	8am - 10pm	8am - 11pm	116.5 hours
Princeton	6:30am - 1am	8am - 1am	8am - 1am	126.5 hours
MIT	6am - 11pm	7am - 9pm	9am - 11pm	113 hours
Dartmouth	6am - 11pm	9am - 9pm	9am - 9pm	109 hours
Cornell	6am - 11:30pm	10am - 10pm	12pm - 11:30pm	111 hours
Brown	5:30am - 12am	7am - 9pm	7am - 9pm	120.5 hours
Average:	17.5 hours	13.2 hours	13.8 hours	114.5 hours
Min:	17 hours	10 hours (Harvard)	11.5 hours (Cornell)	108 (Harvard)
Yale:	16 hours	7 hours	7 hours	94 hours

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In order to assess the issue of gym hours, we first conducted an environmental scan of all the Ivy +1 (Ivy League schools + Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)) schools for comparison. As can be seen in Table 1, Yale has the least gym hours in every category. Across this board, this is a result of reduced evening hours (on average -1 hour/day) and significantly reduced weekend hours (on average -6 hours/day).¹

Table 2. Pilot Study on Extended Evening Hours in Fall 2011

Date	Number of G&P student participants
October 25 th 2011	60 students
November 1 st 2011	105 students
November 8 th 2011	151 students
November 15 th 2011	177 students

In order to assess demand for extended gym hours among the G&P population, GSA, GPSS, the McDougal Center and the Athletic Department conducted a pilot extension of evening hours for four weeks fall of 2011 (Table 2).³ From October 25th until November 15th PWG hours were extended from 10pm to midnight for G&P students exclusively and the numbers were monitored (Table 2). In addition, the usage of specific facilities was monitored and appeared exhibit representative demographics (i.e. Fitness center, Pool and squash courts most used resources (see Table 3)).³

As a result of (1) the GPSS survey demonstrating broad (60%) G&P dissatisfaction with PWG, (2) the environmental scan demonstrating PWG's least competitiveness compared to analogous resources at all over Ivy League institutions and (3) a pilot study establishing demand for extended hours, GPSS and GSA, together, advocate for additional funding to be provided to the Athletic Department to extend PWG hours. Based on the cost of our pilot study we estimate a conservative increase in weekly hours by 10 hours would cost approximately \$60,000/year (= \$125/hr*10hrs*50wks/year).

Table 3. Usage of PWG resources by G&P students

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Ace Israel Fitness Center	655	57%
2	Indoor Track	246	21%
3	Basketball and Volleyball Courts at the Lanman Center	180	16%
4	Swimming Pool	267	23%
5	Brady Squash Center	122	11%
6	Fencing Salon	4	0%
7	Gymnastics Studio (8th Studio)	17	1%
8	Classrooms and Dance Studios	185	16%
9	Courts on the 5th floor	97	8%
10	None of the above	315	27%

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According to the 2012 GPSS survey the fitness center in PWG is its most used resource among G&P students (Table 3). In addition, aside from limited hours, the disrepair of the equipment in the fitness center was the primary complaint of the G&P population. Meeting with gym administrators we were able to establish that the Fitness Center at PWG has not been renovated in the longest time relative to other Ivy League gym facilities and much of the equipment is nearing the end of its usable lifetime.² As such, GPSS and GSA, together, advocate for additional funding to be provided to the Athletic Department to extend renovate the fitness center at PWG. Based on discussions with Athletic department administrators we estimate this cost to be approximately \$300,000.

3. Conclusion

It is the opinion of the GSA and GPSS that allocating additional funding to PWG for extended hours and fitness center renovation will have several significant benefits for Yale University. First, it will significantly increase the competitiveness of the University among other Ivy League G&P programs in this major area of student life. Second, it will reduced physical and mental health-care costs as Yale has recently recognized in its university-wide “Wellness Initiative”⁴. The mental health component of the Wellness Initiative is of particular importance to G&P population whose mental health-care costs are increasing (~6% last year) at twice the rate of other healthcare costs (+3% last year), which is a major concern of the GPSS and GSA⁵. Recent scientific studies have shown that mental health can be improved on a on week to month timescale by exercise and have efficacy similar to pharmacological intervention⁶.



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