

## Updated statement from Concerned Students of SoA

March 31, 2020

Since COVID-19 first made its presence felt in our community, we have been actively communicating with our peers across the country and around the world. All of us are trying our best to hold our institutions accountable to their students, faculty, and staff — as well as their surrounding communities — in these trying times. We are acutely aware that this pandemic has only amplified existing inequities, disproportionately impacting some more than others.

Yale occupies a position of outsized privilege and influence, and it has the capacity to free up more resources to those in need. This crisis presents an opportunity for Yale to lead by example, and to manifest its commitment to “improving the world today and for future generations,” as its mission states. The implications are both practical and ethical. The more care a university evinces toward its surrounding community, the more likely it is that both will succeed and thrive. To its credit, Yale recently [contributed](#) \$1 million toward a newly established fund, with the goal of raising \$5 million to support the Greater New Haven community. A few days ago, Yale [pledged](#) to make 300 beds promptly available to first responders and hospital personnel. Like Mayor Elicker, who was initially [told](#) that Yale’s dormitories wouldn’t be available for weeks, we know that a university as [well-endowed](#) as Yale can, and should, do better.

We were disappointed to learn that, in line with university-wide [policy](#), the School of Art will not be offering any tuition reimbursement. As an alternative, we are proposing universal emergency subsidies to ease the financial burdens imposed by COVID-19. Many of us are spending more on materials and utilities, on top of losing dependable sources of income. We are justifiably anxious about our employment prospects and future access to health care, which were already precarious before COVID-19. We are asking for more support because we know that Yale can, and should, do better.

We’re often told by those in authority that change takes time. If we just wait a little, they say, things will get better. But things won’t get better unless we absolutely insist on them, right now. Already, our efforts have led to positive change. After some of us refused to take out additional loans to upgrade to an internet speed compatible with online learning, as was initially suggested, SoA agreed to reimburse the upgrades. We hope that Yale will rise to the challenge and demonstrate what is possible in times of crisis.

### **We urge everyone who can to support those most endangered by COVID-19:**

[Open Letter to Yale Admin During COVID-19](#): Sign to urge Yale to take three crucial steps to address COVID-19

[Open Letter to Governor Lamont](#): Sign to protect individuals in Connecticut’s prisons and jails from COVID-19

[Connecticut Food Bank](#): Help alleviate hunger in Connecticut and provide food to those in need

[Immigrant Bail Fund](#): Help immigrant detainees return to their families in Connecticut as they await trial

Below is a list of our most urgent requests to ensure the safety and well-being of the SoA community:

1. **Universal emergency subsidies** to grant students agency in attending to their immediate needs, including paying rent/utilities, making up for income lost as a direct result of COVID-19, and reconfiguring their art practices for their current living situations. Thus far, SoA has only provided need-based, case-by-case assistance, such as reimbursing internet upgrades and lending a limited supply of equipment. Students should not have to take on more debt during this crisis.
2. **An extension of graduating students’ health coverage**, which is set to expire on July 31, 2020, as well as the expansion of their health coverage outside of the immediate New Haven area, due to the unlikelihood of finding stable employment in the current economy.

3. **More support from the university at large**, which consistently underfunds the School of Art, as well as more fundraising efforts within the school. Yale has long prioritized other disciplines over the visual arts, and should channel more resources toward students who make vital cultural contributions.
4. **Job security for all adjunct faculty** (the vast majority of SoA faculty), who also face great uncertainty in the current economy. We appreciate their undervalued work, and believe that SoA needs a more equitable tenure and faculty compensation system.
5. **Implementation of an early-pass system**, so that students can determine the extent of their participation in online learning. Physical and mental health, not coursework, should be their number one priority at this time.