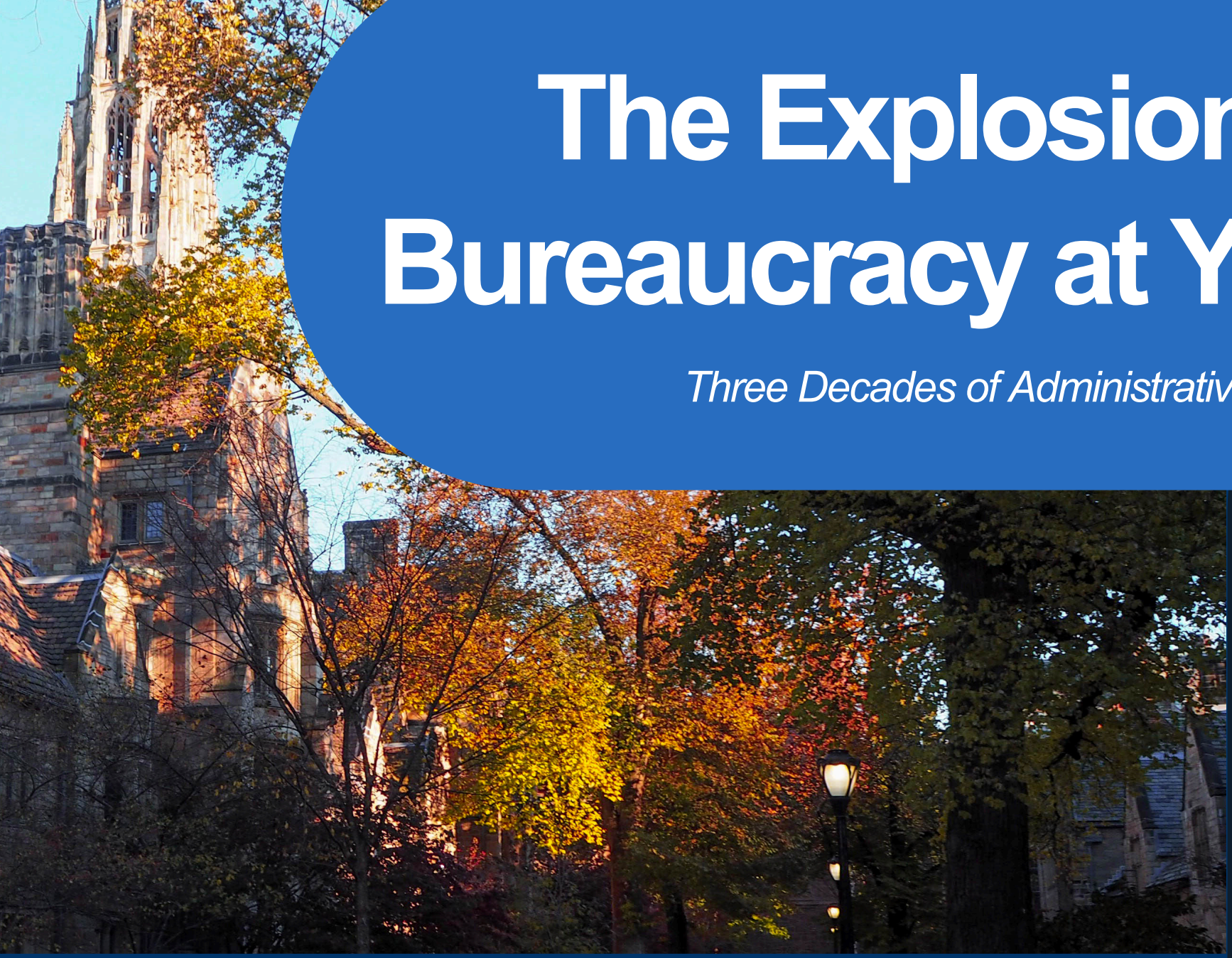

The Explosion of Bureaucracy at Yale

Three Decades of Administrative Growth

BUCKLEY INSTITUTE

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Summary

American higher education is facing a serious public trust deficit. An October 2025 Pew poll found that 70% of Americans believe higher education is headed in the wrong direction. The percentage of Americans with a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in American higher education sits at just 38%, according to a July 2026 Gallup poll, down from 42% the previous year.

One of the key drivers of the erosion of trust is the rapid growth in bureaucracy at America’s institutions of higher education. As Yale University’s Committee on Trust in Higher Education recently noted, “The oft-heard criticism of disproportionate bureaucratic growth or so-called administrative bloat in U.S. higher education matters for both external and internal trust.”

While growing bureaucracy has impacted universities nationwide, Yale has made headlines in this regard. In 2018, for example, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that Yale had the highest manager-to-student ratio in the Ivy League. Accordingly, the report that follows examined the growth of the bureaucracy at Yale since the 1995–1996 academic year, the earliest year of comprehensive data that were previously provided by Yale’s Office of Institutional Research.

Over the past three decades, Yale has experienced a significant and disproportionate growth in its bureaucracy. As Yale absorbed a surging student population, the university dramatically expanded its Managerial and Professional staff as well. In doing so, Yale reshaped the balance of staff, faculty, and students, seemingly prioritizing administrative infrastructure over core academic functions. **Simply put, over the last 30 years, Yale’s management has systematically outpaced almost every other segment of the university community.**

Our research revealed that over the past three decades, Yale’s bureaucracy—its managerial and professional staff—grew 147%. By contrast, the total student population (undergraduates and graduate/professional students) rose by 43%. Yale’s undergraduate population grew by an even smaller 25%. Since 1995, Yale’s bureaucracy grew almost six times as fast as the undergraduate population. All told, the expansion of Managerial and Professional (M&P) staff outstripped all other staff, growing twice as fast as Clerical and Technical (C&T) positions, six times faster than Service and Maintenance (S&M) staff, and even four times as fast as tenured faculty.

This administrative surge has caused the university to surpass temporarily and now rapidly approach—perhaps on a more permanent basis—a notable one-to-one ratio of bureaucrats to undergraduates. In 1995, Yale operated with roughly one M&P staff member for every two undergraduate students. By 2025, that gap closed almost entirely, with 6,401 M&P personnel serving alongside 6,667 undergraduates. If administrative hiring continues at its current pace, the bureaucracy is on track to permanently outnumber the undergraduate student body soon.

Ultimately, the disproportionate rise of Yale's administrative state has and will continue to undermine public trust at a time when higher education is already under significant scrutiny over skyrocketing tuition costs and ideological bias. If Yale wants to regain public trust, it will need to take action to rein in its seemingly unchecked bureaucracy.

Yale's own Committee on Trust in Higher Education acknowledged as much. In April 2026, the Committee recommended "a transparent review of [Yale's] administrative structure." This suggestion accompanied an alarming admission:

> *It was remarkably difficult for our committee to answer a basic question: What share of Yale's resources is devoted to its core academic functions and what share is not? The data were not easy to interpret.*

The Committee went on to note, "A university committed to evidence-based inquiry should be able to account for its own administrative growth with the same rigor it expects of its scholarship."

Unfortunately, such transparency does not appear to currently exist at Yale. In the past, Yale has attributed a significant portion of the bureaucratic growth to the School of Medicine. Both then-Yale President Peter Salovey and Associate Vice President for Communications Karen Peart told the *Yale Daily News* in 2021 that the School of Medicine was a major source of bureaucratic growth. Peart did so again in September 2022. Yale University Provost Scott Strobel blamed the School of Medicine in explicit terms in 2023 and Senior Associate Provost for Strategy and Data Analysis Chad Losee made the same point in 2026.

However, when asked by the Buckley Institute for data on the M&P staff by school, the Office of Institutional Research declined to make that information public. This response matches past comments about a lack of data transparency from Yale's Committee on Trust in Higher Education and the draft Yale Faculty Senate report on bureaucracy in 2022.

How the Yale Community Has Changed Since 1995

Over the past three decades, the Yale community has grown significantly. Yale's expansion matches a nationwide student surge going back decades, peaking in 2010.

However, at Yale, bureaucratic growth since 1995 has been pronounced in comparison to other parts of the university community. The Managerial and Professional (M&P) staff represent that bureaucracy.

To be sure, the growth of the M&P staff, while significant over the long term, was not consistent year over year. Between 1995 and 2008, Yale's bureaucracy surged by 65% until the global recession forced staff cuts in addition to other belt-tightening measures. The total M&P staff remained relatively flat until the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 academic years when it began to grow again. Other than a brief slowdown at the onset of COVID, bureaucratic growth has remained consistent since 2015–2016, jumping over 50%.

This remarkable growth has allowed the Yale bureaucracy to largely catch up with the undergraduate population in total size. For comparison, Yale started the 1995–1996 academic year with one bureaucrat for every two undergraduates. During COVID, when incoming freshmen delayed enrollment and upperclassmen took time off to avoid a virtual campus experience, Yale's bureaucracy outnumbered its undergraduates.

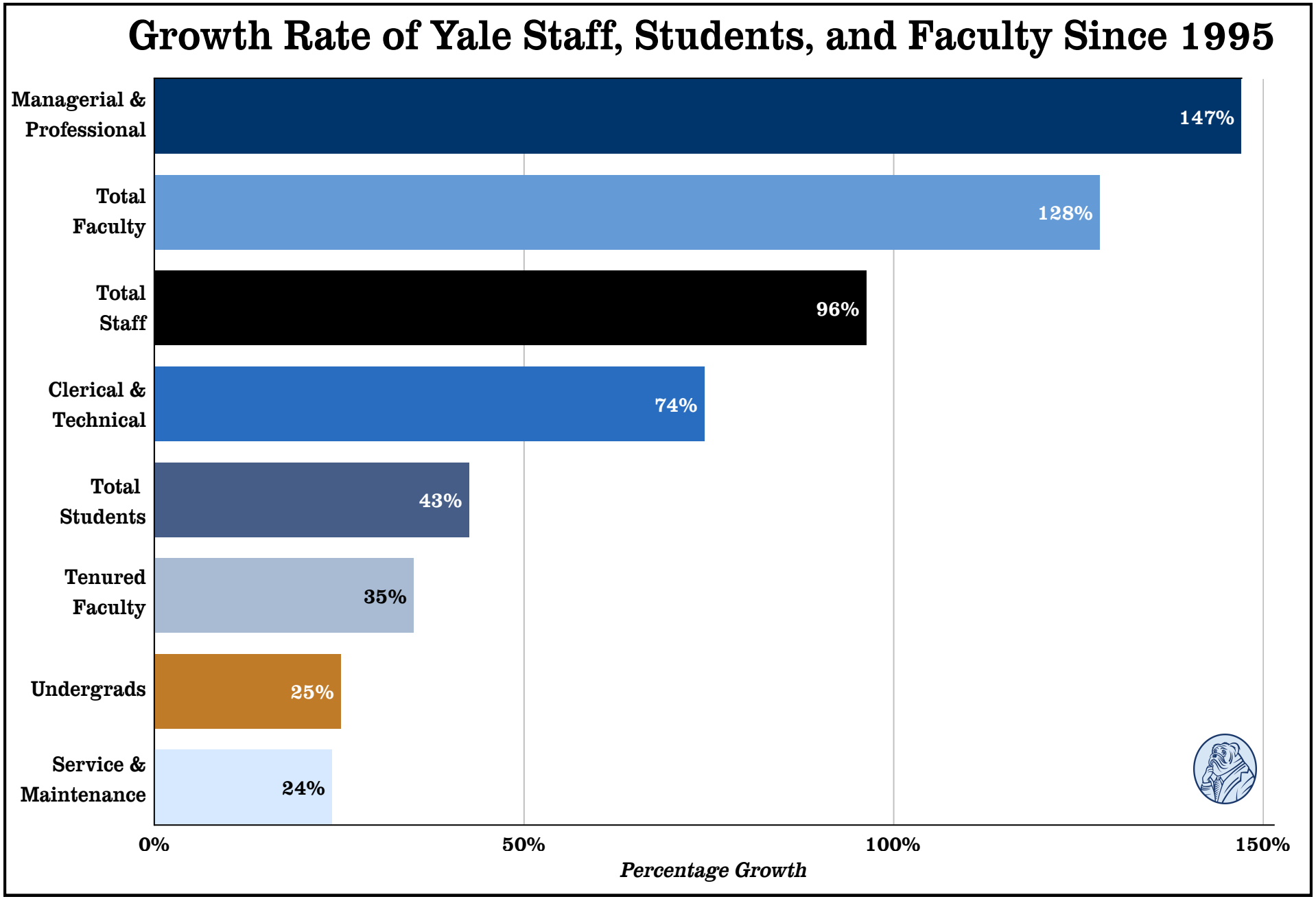

Figure 1: Growth Rate of Yale Staff, Students, and Faculty Since 1995

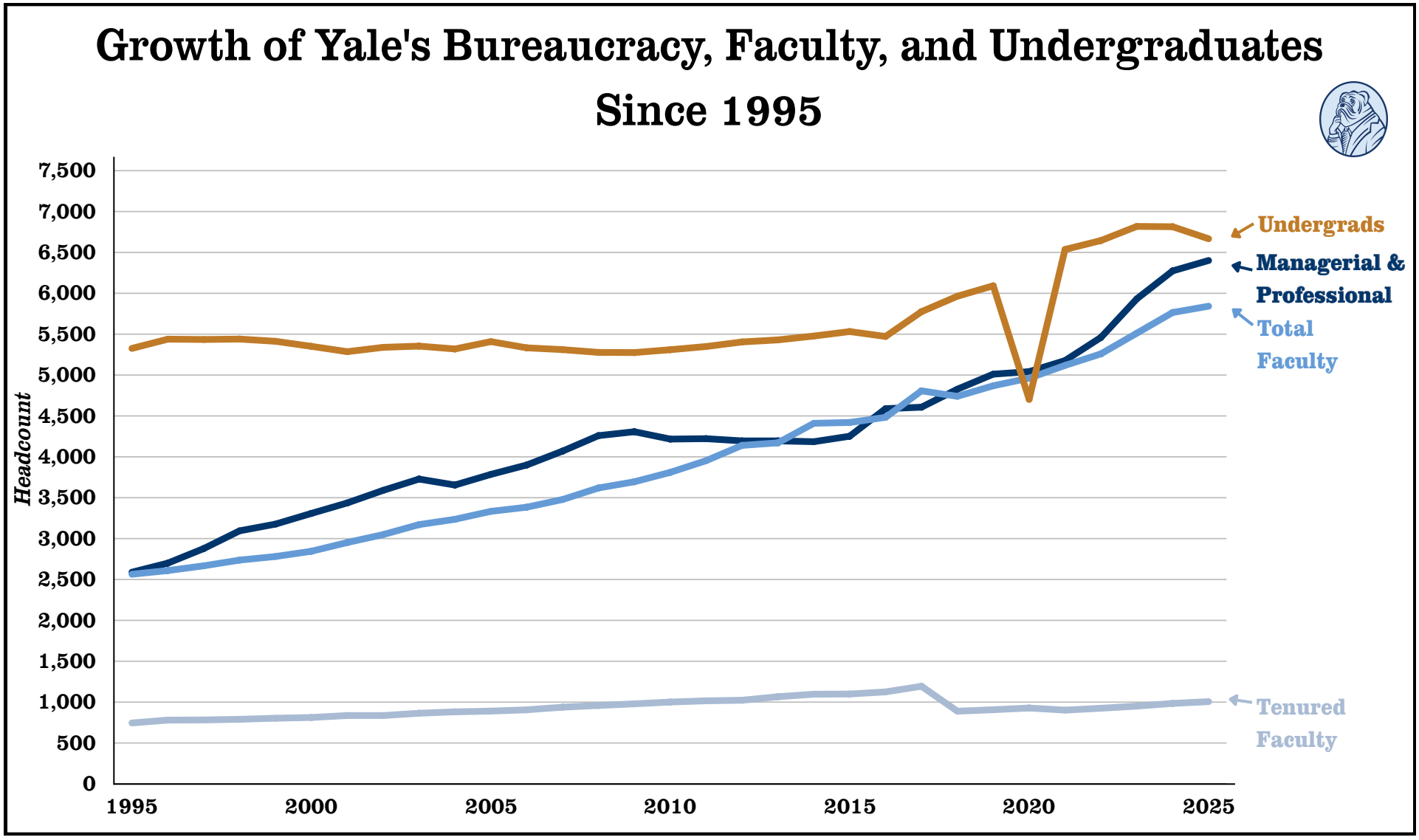

Figure 2: Growth of Yale's Bureaucracy, Faculty, and Undergraduates Since 1995

The Changing Staff Composition

Much of the growth in the Yale community has been at the staff level. Between 1995 and 2025, the overall staff nearly doubled. The staff expansion has not been even by any stretch. Yale's bureaucracy, its Managerial and Professional (M&P) staff, led the way with 147% growth. By contrast, the Clerical and Technical (C&T) staff grew 74%, or half as much. At the back of the pack, the Service and Maintenance (S&M) personnel grew by 24%.

While M&P staff and the C&T staff who support them grew, S&M staff languished. Total students (undergraduates and graduate/professional students) and total faculty outgrew the S&M staff as well.

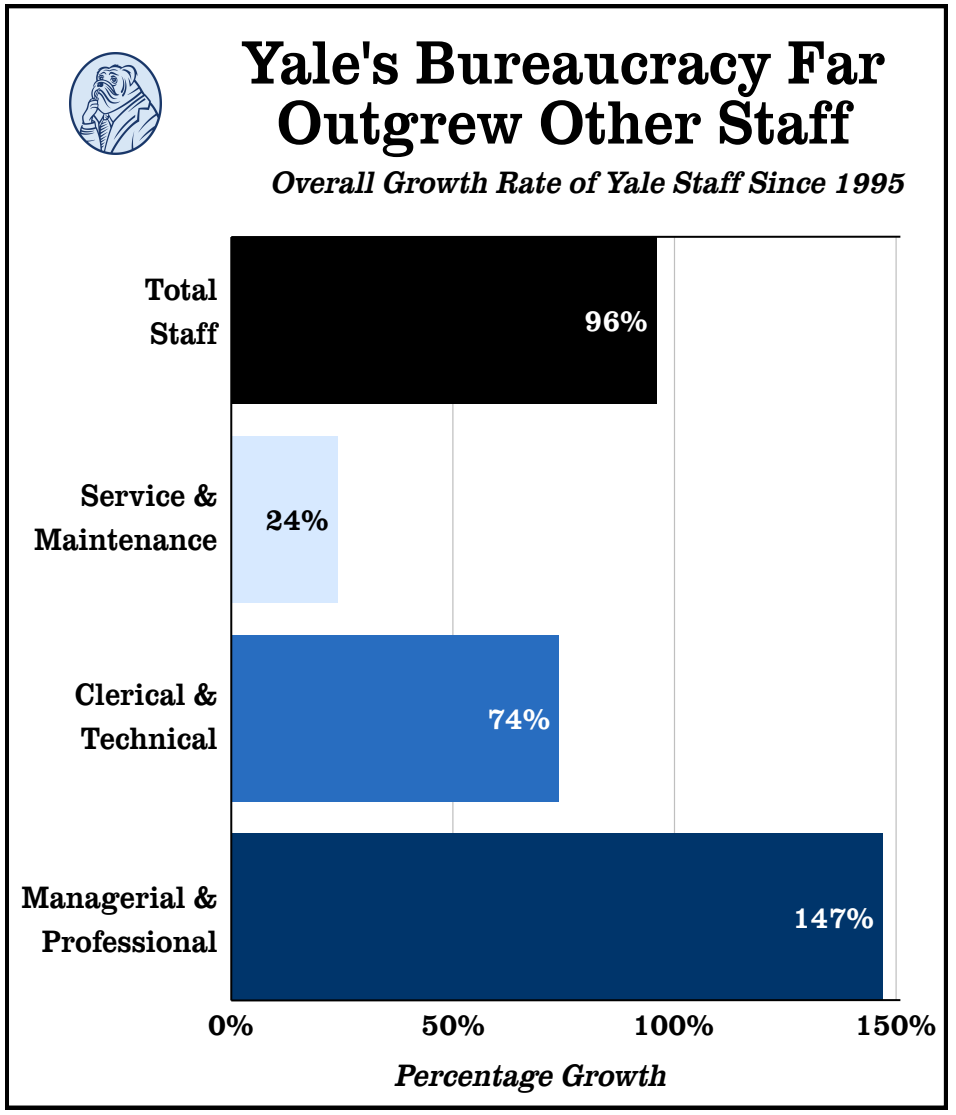

Figure 3: Overall Growth Rate of Yale Staff Since 1995

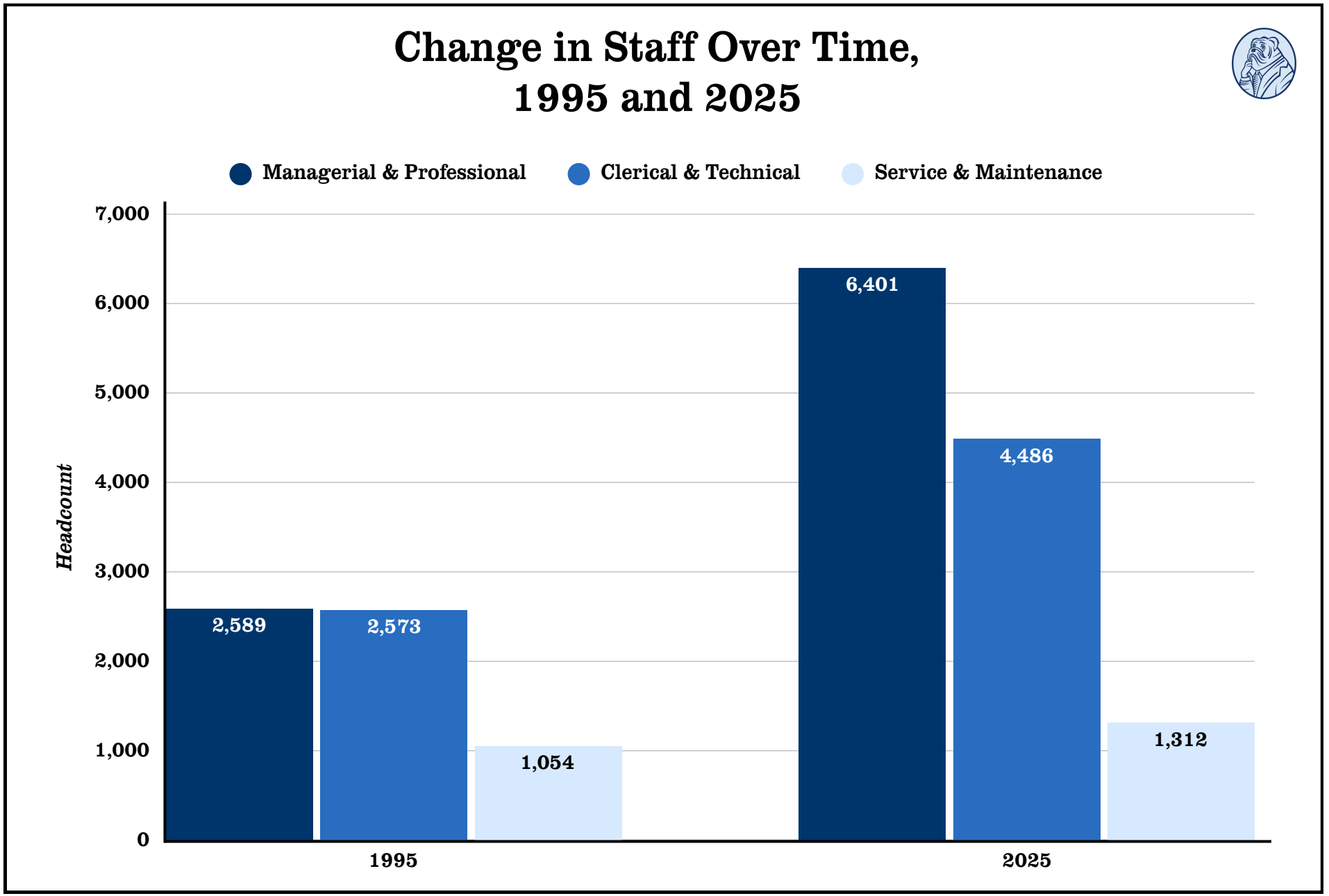

Figure 4: Change in Staff Over Time, 1995 and 2025

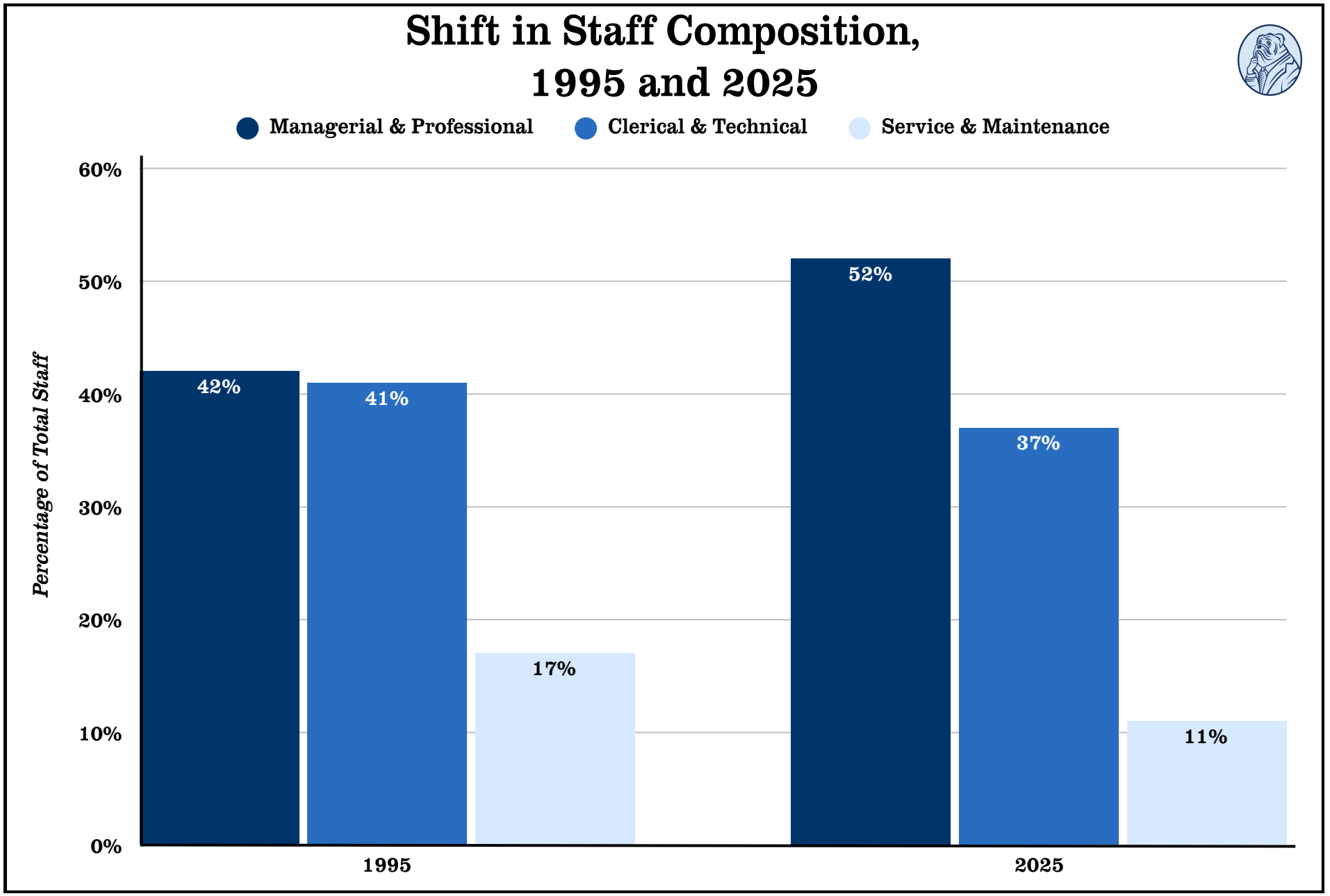

Figure 5: Shift in Staff Composition, 1995 and 2025

The Shift in Faculty Composition

Another notable trend in the changing Yale employee roster was the makeup of the faculty. In particular, between 1995 and 2025, the relative sizes of the tenured and non-tenured faculty shifted dramatically.

Overall, Yale's faculty grew by 128% in the 30 years since the 1995–1996 academic year. That strong topline number, however, masks a significant disparity between the different divisions of the faculty lounge. Over three decades, tenured faculty grew by 35%. Non-tenured faculty—instructional, visiting faculty, term, and research—grew by 166%.

While Yale's non-tenured faculty outnumbered their tenured counterparts at a more than two-to-one rate in 1995, that ratio jumped significantly to almost five-to-one three decades later.

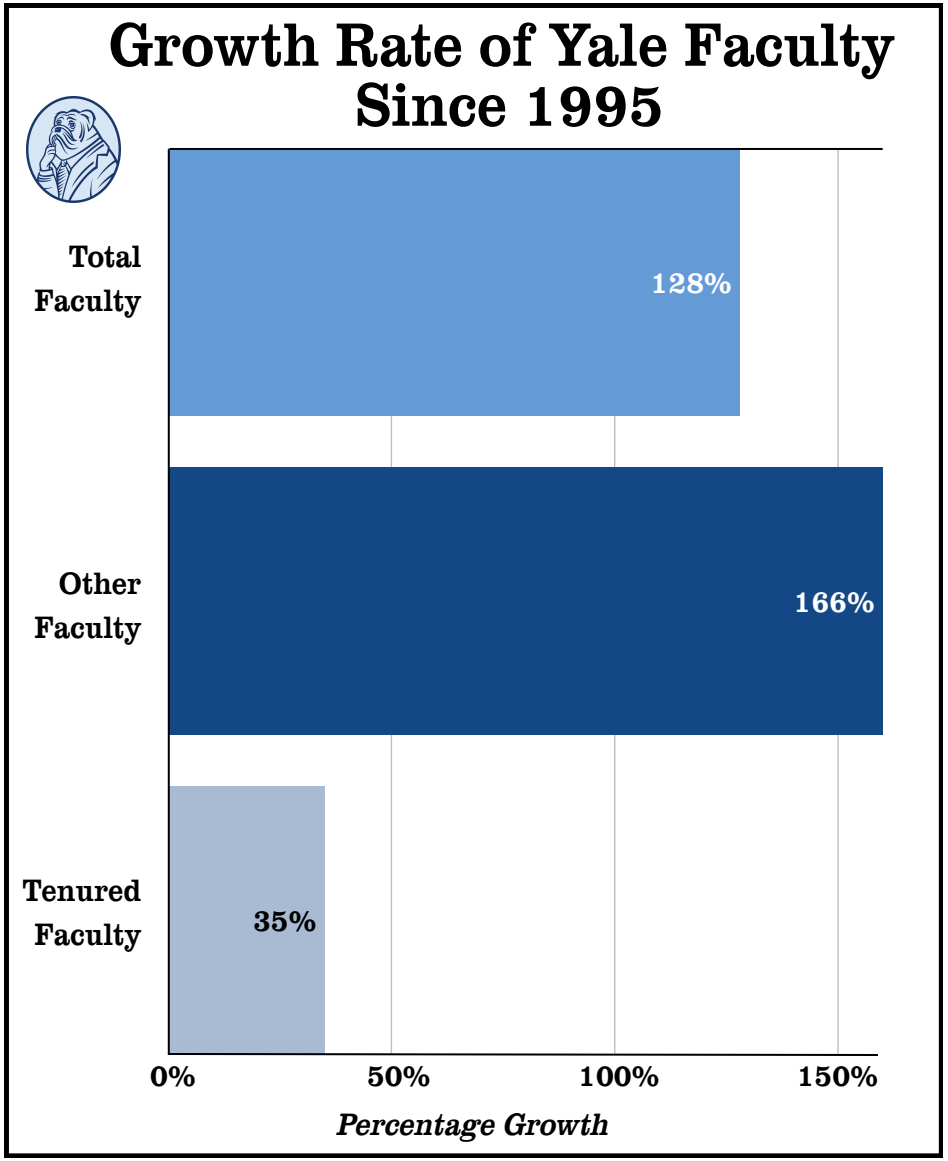

Figure 6: Growth Rate of Yale Faculty Since 1995

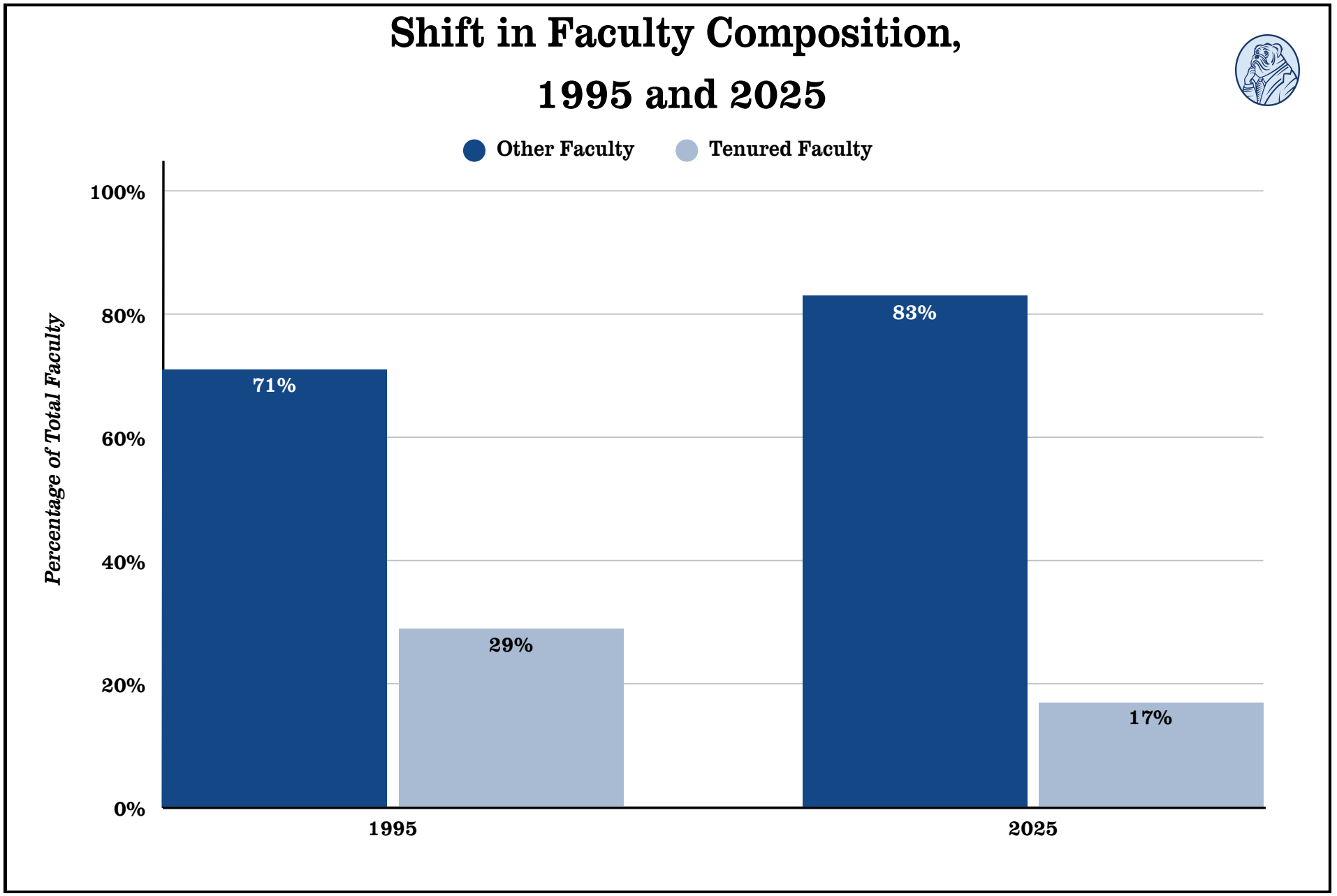

Figure 7: Shift in Faculty Composition, 1995 and 2025

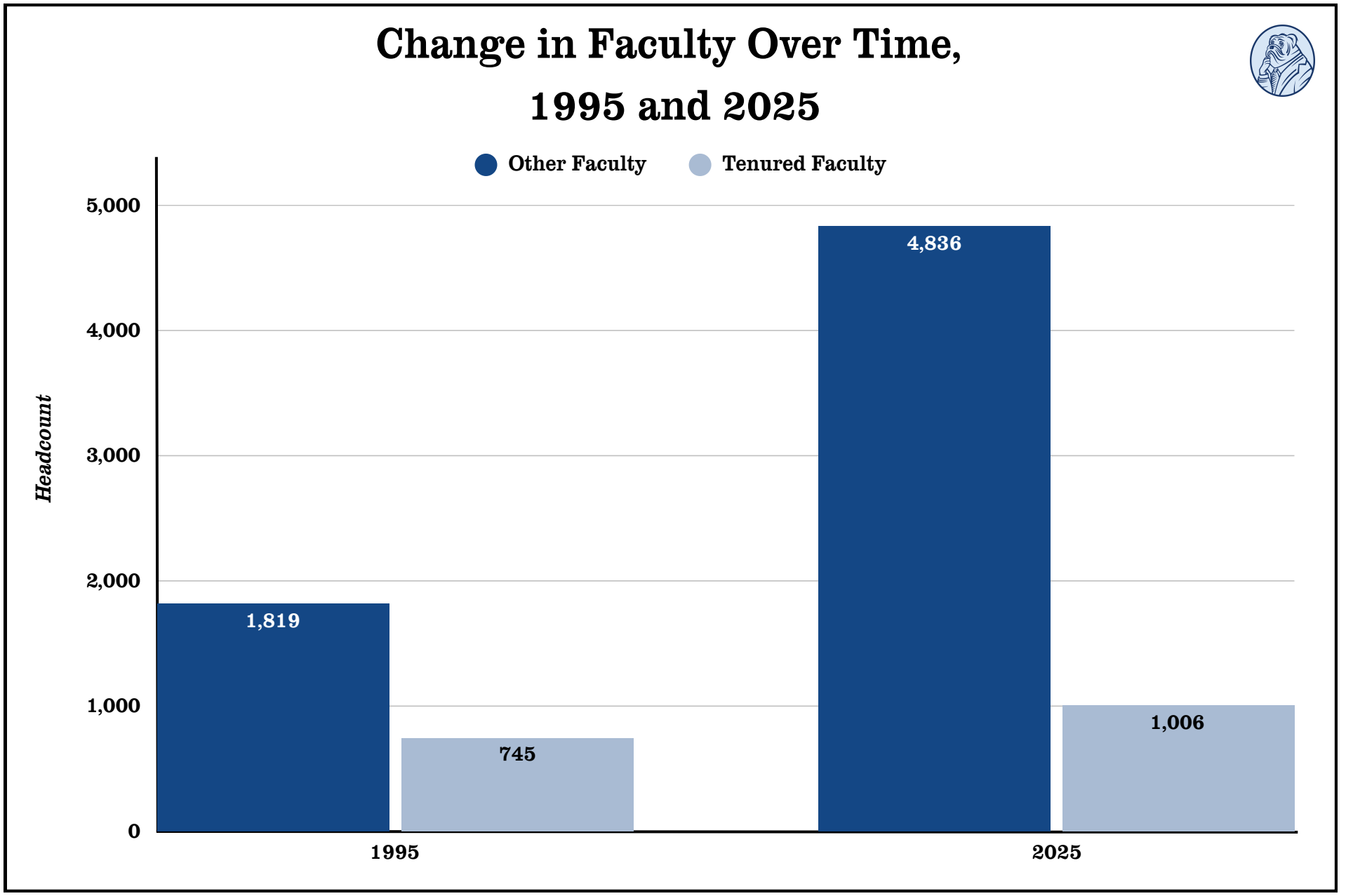

Figure 8: Change in Faculty Over Time, 1995 and 2025

A Bureaucrat for Every Undergraduate

Although the total number of Managerial and Professional (M&P) staff officially surpassed undergraduates for the first time as a temporary COVID-related phenomenon, Yale is quickly approaching a one-to-one ratio of bureaucrats to undergraduates on a more permanent basis.

As it stands, Yale went from a ratio of around one bureaucrat for every two undergraduate students in 1995 to just under a one-to-one ratio in 2025 (1 bureaucrat to 1.04 students). Currently, Yale employs 6,401 M&P staff, slightly below the 6,667 undergraduates who call Yale home.

In February 2025, Yale announced plans to have a permanent undergraduate population of 6,600 going forward, a drop from current levels but 100 per class above the pre-COVID levels.

In practice, this puts M&P staff on track to surpass the undergraduate student population permanently. In the past two academic years alone, Yale has added around 470 M&P staff, or around 235 per year. If current bureaucratic staff growth rates hold, it will take just two academic years for the Yale bureaucracy to surpass the planned undergraduate population of 6,600 permanently, starting in the 2027–2028 academic year.

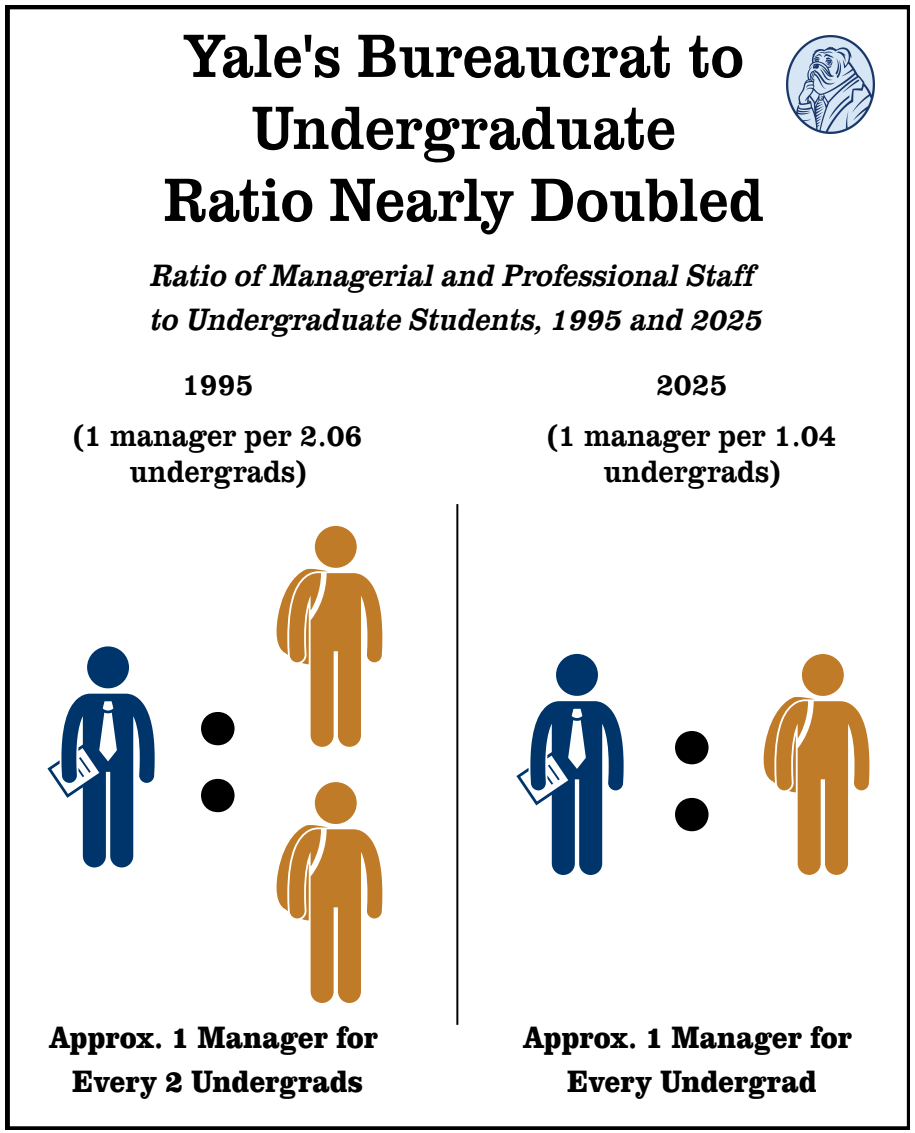

Figure 9: Ratio of Managerial and Professional Staff to Undergraduate Students, 1995 and 2025

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the bureaucracy has exploded at Yale over the past three decades. It has grown disproportionately relative to other critical functions of the university. When the bureaucracy outgrew undergraduates during COVID, it spurred significant negative press coverage, criticism, and debate. As the bureaucracy continues to grow, Yale should expect a similar public response.

The lack of transparency does not help matters. While there is little reason to doubt Yale's past comments that the medical school accounts for some of the growth in bureaucracy, the hiring of other staff across the university suggests it is unlikely that the medical school is the only source of managerial growth. Yale's refusal or inability to provide specifics hurts its credibility. Greater transparency will help shift the perception that the university has something to hide.

Accordingly, the findings in this report should raise concerns. Existing scrutiny over nearly $100,000-per-year tuition and ideological bias on campus means Yale has little trust to spare. Yale's expanding bureaucracy will not inspire the confidence of the public on whose taxpayer support Yale depends. Americans send tax dollars to universities believing that this allows education to thrive and supports groundbreaking research. Paying bureaucrats, on the other hand, is not a public priority.

If Yale wants the trust and the taxpayer dollars from the American public, it will need to make a serious effort to rein in its ever-expanding bureaucracy.

Methodology and Qualifications

The research in this report depends solely on public Yale sources. Until recently, Yale's Office of Institutional Research provided an annual factsheet with key data on the size of the student body, faculty, and staff, in addition to other critical data points about the university. This year, Yale discontinued the annual factsheet, collecting university data in the Yale Office of Institutional Research's online data browser.

In addition to discontinuing the creation of new factsheets, Yale removed past factsheets from the Yale website. Though it includes information not previously available on the factsheets, the online platform does not extend as far back historically and lacks critical details. For example, the online platform provides student body data for only the past six years and detailed faculty data for only the past three. In addition, the online platform only provides breakdowns of staff by type for the current year. The data in this report are sourced from the online platform when possible and then from previously downloaded copies of the factsheets, which were available as far back as the 1995–1996 academic year.

Additionally, since the 1995–1996 academic year, Yale has made several changes to how it counts both staff and students:

- In the student count, Yale alternated how it counted special degree (Eli Whitney students) and nondegree students. On the factsheets, Yale counted them separately from undergraduate students but as part of the total count of students at Yale. The online platform includes them as undergraduate students. Accordingly, this research counts those students as part of the undergraduate student body for all years.
- In the 2000–2001 academic year, Yale began to exclude post-docs from the faculty count. This research excludes post-docs in all years.
- In the 2018–2019 academic year, Yale added the "Continuing" faculty category to its factsheet. The tenured faculty totals for the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health were most impacted, as was the overall tenured faculty number. Because Yale did not provide a full breakdown of which faculty would have previously been included as "Continuing" faculty, adjustments to previous year totals were not possible.
- The online platform also includes, in the Schools of Medicine and Public Health, a category called "Yale Appointees, non-Employees," which was not included on the factsheets. These staff were therefore excluded from the count. Faculty growth trends indicate that the factsheets did not include this category of faculty in the count.

Full Data

	Managerial & Professional	Clerical & Technical	Service & Maintenance	Total Staff	Undergrads	Total Students	Tenured Faculty	Total Faculty
1995–96	2,589	2,573	1,054	6,216	5,326	10,986	745	2,564
1996–97	2,700	2,598	980	6,278	5,439	11,085	780	2,609
1997–98	2,878	2,692	990	6,560	5,435	10,982	782	2,667
1998–99	3,095	2,883	1,144	7,122	5,440	10,990	790	2,737
1999–00	3,177	2,848	1,013	7,038	5,413	11,017	803	2,781
2000–01	3,308	2,959	1,131	7,398	5,351	11,039	812	2,845
2001–02	3,436	2,990	1,151	7,577	5,286	11,126	836	2,952
2002–03	3,590	3,127	1,175	7,892	5,339	11,270	836	3,049
2003–04	3,728	3,153	1,190	8,071	5,354	11,385	864	3,171
2004–05	3,655	3,147	1,203	8,005	5,319	11,359	881	3,236
2005–06	3,785	3,262	1,122	8,169	5,409	11,483	890	3,333
2006–07	3,900	3,326	1,140	8,366	5,333	11,416	906	3,384
2007–08	4,070	3,436	1,179	8,685	5,311	11,454	938	3,478
2008–09	4,259	3,700	1,217	9,176	5,277	11,446	959	3,619
2009–10	4,307	3,760	1,200	9,267	5,275	11,593	979	3,695

	Managerial & Professional	Clerical & Technical	Service & Maintenance	Total Staff	Undergrads	Total Students	Tenured Faculty	Total Faculty
2010–11	4,217	3,709	1,159	9,085	5,310	11,701	1,001	3,810
2011–12	4,222	3,813	1,148	9,183	5,349	11,875	1,016	3,953
2012–13	4,195	3,955	1,173	9,323	5,405	11,906	1,023	4,140
2013–14	4,195	4,093	1,181	9,469	5,430	12,109	1,066	4,171
2014–15	4,185	4,004	1,168	9,357	5,477	12,336	1,097	4,410
2015–16	4,252	4,019	1,184	9,455	5,532	12,385	1,099	4,420
2016–17	4,589	3,923	1,164	9,676	5,472	12,458	1,125	4,483
2017–18	4,607	3,914	1,145	9,666	5,775	12,956	1,194	4,807
2018–19	4,827	4,004	1,219	10,050	5,964	13,433	889	4,740
2019–20	5,011	4,122	1,241	10,374	6,092	13,609	907	4,869
2020–21	5,042	4,165	1,235	10,442	4,703	12,060	928	4,962
2021–22	5,177	4,109	1,248	10,534	6,536	14,567	902	5,118
2022–23	5,460	4,151	1,272	10,883	6,645	14,806	925	5,259
2023–24	5,932	4,335	1,314	11,581	6,818	15,081	951	5,512
2024–25	6,274	4,447	1,329	12,050	6,814	15,564	984	5,765
2025–26	6,401	4,486	1,312	12,199	6,667	15,657	1,006	5,842

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