

ARTIFICIAL UNIVERSITY

*The Effects of AI on a Clerical
and Technical Labor Union*



UNITE HERE!

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INTRODUCTION

The tech industry markets Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformational technology for nearly all aspects of life. Across numerous well-funded research labs, companies like OpenAI, Anthropic, and Microsoft have backed research to try and demonstrate AI's ability to give personal guidance, capacity to solve long-standing problems in mathematics, and positive impact on places like the Amazon rainforest.¹

While AI companies' research and political advocacy help boost the valuation of this technology for shareholders, the benefits may be overstated and the adoption of AI technology comes at great cost to workers.²

The AI industry's advocates and advertising consistently omit the critical voice of workers who do the jobs in which rapid AI adoption is taking place. Despite broad attention to AI as either a "crisis" or a "tool," few have paid attention to its effects on clerical and technical workers.³ This report is a first step toward filling that gap.

As of August 2026, Local 34-UNITE HERE, the Union of Clerical & Technical Workers at Yale University, represents 3,933 clerical and technical workers at Yale, including about 1,700 clinical workers in Yale Medicine, the State of Connecticut's largest group medical practice. This report offers an overview of the AI rollout at Yale, including on-the-ground stories of how automation has already affected work at the

University. It provides data-based observations on the changes in Local 34-UNITE HERE membership since the launch of AI. This report concludes with insights to help chart a better way forward.

Local 34-UNITE HERE's research suggests that AI adoption will not result in a singular 'doomsday event.' Instead, this report finds that where AI does increase productivity, the gains of AI have started to produce a slow, steady attrition of middle-class clerical work through "passive automation," a process by which companies, universities, and governments will deploy AI to do more administrative labor without needing to rehire workers who have quit or retired. This has the potential to create a situation where the number of available jobs steadily declines across different sectors in the economy.

This decline has the potential to be particularly acute for clerical and technical workers, the majority of whom are women. For over 40 years, members of Local 34-UNITE HERE have worked to build a middle-class standard in the New Haven region, supporting thousands of households. The potential job loss brought on by the onset of AI automation may have devastating consequences. To avert this crisis, clerical and technical workers need strong protections that would give them the rights to be trained on new work produced by AI, placed in other jobs if AI has automated a significant portion of their work, and empower them in the University's decisions around technological adoption.

Although employers seek efficiency gains that come with new technology, the rush to adopt AI has the potential to undermine Yale's trust with its workers and its ability to deploy AI effectively. Workers are the ones who know their work the best, meaning that AI implementation without collaborating directly with workers will lead to greater inefficiencies in the implementation process.

The efficiencies of AI should be reaped by the worker, not by the corporation.

Employers like Yale University have a vested interest in collaborating with workers to avoid unnecessary hardship for the community and to give workers more say over the use of technology in their workplace. Pay increases pegged to

the productivity increases that come with AI, along with better labor protections that protect against job loss and achieved through collective bargaining and political action, will be essential to protecting good, middle-class jobs in America and abroad.

As public support of AI declines and AI continues to transform white-collar work, workers should band together to have a bigger say in the future of office work in this country. Unions must play an important role in developing innovative ways to respond to and mitigate against the automation crisis of AI.



KEY FINDINGS



While Yale claims AI use is not mandatory, many workers experience consistent pressure from managers to be trained on and to use AI.



AI has led to profound changes in the fields of grant writing, memo writing, email outreach, customer service, information retrieval, and many other tasks that Local 34-UNITE HERE members do on a regular basis.



By rushing to implement AI, the Yale Administration violated a legal duty to involve clerical and technical workers in their AI roll out.



In some cases, AI implementation has made clerical and technical work less efficient, rather than more, and AI-driven errors have sometimes reduced the quality of service delivered to the Yale community.



Using our membership metrics, this report shows that Local 34-UNITE HERE membership has started to shrink fast in the last year.

**AI AT YALE:
EXPERIMENT AND
'FAIL FAST'**

In January 2024, Provost Scott Strobel assembled a “Task Force on Artificial Intelligence” whose primary task was to understand the ways in which Yale can be at the “forefront” of the AI revolution.⁴ The Task Force published its initial recommendations in June 2024.⁵

Even though Yale proudly reports that it is currently New Haven’s largest employer,⁶ the Task Force report says very little about the impact that Yale anticipates AI will have on its existing labor force. The only section of the Task Force report to address the effects that

AI will have on labor is a glancing comment by Yale’s Operations Leadership Team, stating that accelerating AI adoption via pilots and other training should help the University contain “institutional administrative-cost growth.”

IN AUGUST 2024, YALE ANNOUNCED ITS INVESTMENT OF \$150 MILLION TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:⁷

- 1** Acquire about 450 Graphical Processing Units (GPUs), used for training AI models
- 2** Develop the proprietary Clarity platform (Clarity), a Yale-only wrapper for OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Anthropic’s Claude, and Google’s Gemini models, among others
- 3** Hire faculty who are specialists in AI, as well as “computational research support analysts” to run the University’s proprietary AI
- 4** Provide seed grants for research and teaching in AI
- 5** Fund events that would “facilitate innovation and collaboration” across “schools, units, departments, and disciplines”

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! : BREACH OF CONTRACT

In Fall 2024, Yale released Clarity for use by the University community, including students, faculty, researchers, and staff. Yale launched a campus-wide campaign to encourage its use, including hosting many events called “Prompt-A-Thons.”

Despite the clear and immediate ways the rollout of Clarity would change jobs of Local 34-UNITE HERE members, the University made no attempt to contact Local 34-UNITE HERE or engage in impact bargaining about AI as it pertains to the unionized workers at the University. Yale’s initiative to roll out Clarity to the University community without giving Local 34-UNITE HERE 90 days’ notice squandered the opportunity to improve its implementation with the input of line workers and violated the terms of the Local 34-UNITE HERE 2022 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

According to Section 12 of the MOA, “The Agreement on Technological Change,” the University must give the Union 90 days’ notice before introducing technological change that might “substantially change” the nature of members’ work. These 90 days allow the union time to bargain with the University over the impact of this change on Local 34-UNITE HERE members. The University did not give notice to the union regarding their AI implementation, nor have they agreed to bargain with the union over the effect that this technology will have on clerical and technical work.

YALE: WORKERS SHOULD ADOPT AI AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

According to the Task Force Report, Yale’s Operation Leadership Team (OLT) deemed that “initial success” is contingent on teams “experimenting and ‘failing fast,’ learning from those experiences, and trying again.”⁸

OLT has noticed that many members of Operations “have focused on the ‘do not’ rather than the ‘do,’ and are awaiting clearance to engage with the use of AI,” which is now being “corrected through discussions and pilot activities.”⁹

Local 34-UNITE HERE disputes that AI is purely voluntary for workers at the University. Yale has mobilized a campus-wide strategy of encouraging its use and case studies in this

report show high-level administrators in certain departments have already mandated AI use, resulting in managers doing the clerical and technical work of union members with the help of AI. Even when the use of AI is not initially required, the University has implemented a campus-wide campaign that encourages the use of AI, creating pressure in departments for its use.

A primary component of the campaign encouraging campus-wide AI use are “AI Prompt-A-Thons”¹⁰. These “Prompt-A-Thon” events encouraged and taught staff how AI can help with “enhancing administrative efficiency.”¹¹ In one session held on October 20, 2024, union workers in IT services were trained to design AI prompts to do a whole host of their professional obligations, such as: “Evaluate the effectiveness of a new student support program”; “Draft a communication plan for a new university policy”; “Prepare a budget proposal for a new academic initiative”; and “Collect and analyze feedback from faculty on administrative services.”¹²

Yale’s internal slide decks presented to workers to urge AI use have a disarming effect with “fun” images of Yale’s mascot, Handsome Dan, teaching, dreaming, or working on a computer. Other slides are more alarming. One slide suggests workers who do not use AI will be left behind, stating, “Tomorrow’s jobs belong to today’s learners. Are you developing your AI skills?”¹³

Slides encouraged workers to think about how AI can automate their work through prompts for tasks such as drafting emails, newsletters, meeting notes, employee forms, and summaries of complex information. The presentations do

not address the risks of job automation, the increased potential for surveillance, or the efficacy of this technology in doing certain kinds of work. Nor do the slides provide any sense of the opportunities available for Local 34-UNITE HERE members if their current work is automated.

Yale’s AI campaign provides examples of the ways companies could encourage their employees to use and train AI even when AI carries immense risk of job automation. Administrators have pushed for AI in many different ways across campus, substantially changing union members’ work. This campaign can reasonably be expected to have a much larger impact in the coming years as these types of efforts help administrators learn how to automate clerical and technical work. There has been little to nothing communicated through this campaign about the University’s commitment to the job security of Local 34-UNITE HERE members or a commitment to a responsible AI transition. In this context, it is not unreasonable to conclude that part of the “failing fast” ethos could mean job loss, mistrust with workers, failures in service for university clients, negative community impact, and ultimately a less successful transition to AI.

YALE’S MANY AI INVESTMENTS

In addition to the Yale Administration’s outright \$150 million dollar investment into AI infrastructure at the University, the Yale Corporation has significant ties to and investments in the technology industry.

In 2025, Jaime Teevan was elected to the Yale Board of Trustees and Yale President Laurie McInnis noted that Jaime Teevan would bring tech expertise as a Trustee.¹⁴ Teevan is a chief scientist and technical fellow at Microsoft. Under her leadership, Microsoft “integrated advanced technology into its suite of everyday productivity tools, including the creation of M365 Copilot,

an AI-powered productivity tool.”¹⁵ The Board likewise includes Successor Trustee David Sze, an advisory partner at Greylock Partners.¹⁶

Yale’s endowment office has invested money with notable venture capital firms like Greylock, Andreessen Horowitz, and Benchmark.¹⁷ All three firms hold significant AI positions. Greylock

recently closed a massive \$1.5 billion dollar AI investment fund.¹⁸ AI is a sizeable chunk of Andreessen Horowitz's investment portfolio.¹⁹ Andreessen Horowitz, an industry leader in AI investment, has donated millions of dollars to the Trump campaign and lobbied for the deregulation of AI.²⁰ Benchmark invests in AI startups;²¹ in February 2026, Benchmark hired Jack Altman, the brother of OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, as a General Partner.²²

Yale Medicine (YM) has also directly invested in other startups and medical technology providers that automate clinical work. In 2023, CodaMetrix, "an AI-powered platform for healthcare revenue cycle management," reported that it raised \$55 million in Series A funding in which Yale Medicine participated.²³ In a press release, CodaMetrix President and

CEO stated that "medical coding, as the proxy for evidence of care provided, has to become largely autonomous."²⁴ According to a separate press release from August 20, 2024, Clarium Inc., announced that Yale-New Haven Hospital (YNHH) helped back a \$10.5 million investment in an AI hospital supply chain operations startup.²⁵ During this release, Clarium announced their latest product offering: "Astra OS, which was designed and built in collaboration with several leading health systems, empowers providers to optimize and automate their supply chain operations with insights to achieve millions of dollars in cost savings and productivity improvements annually."²⁶ It is currently unclear as to whether the technologies built by CodaMetrix or Clarium have been deployed at YM or YNHH.

AI RISKS ELIMINATING NEW HAVEN'S "BACK OFFICE WORKERS"

Yale's AI investments in AI and their plans to automate University work present a significant danger to good union jobs.

In a New York Times article published on June 10, 2026, reporter Ben Casselman writes that many economists are concerned about mass layoffs in clerical and technical work, specifically in a group of workers he calls "back office workers," which include "customer service representatives, bookkeepers, payroll clerks and human resources specialists."²⁷ Researcher Mark Muro is quoted in this article as stating that these roles are "anchor jobs for families and households" and are often a ticket to middle-class prosperity in the communities in which they exist.²⁸ Local 34-UNITE HERE consists predominantly of the kinds of jobs that are described in Casselman's article.

In July 2026, the Bureau of Labor Statistics published a report that projects the effects of AI on the country's labor force.²⁹ This report also forecasts a steady decline in the opportunity for clerical workers, administrative assistants, secretaries, and medical transcriptionists.³⁰

The threat of AI leaves the Greater New Haven area's middle class especially vulnerable. In 2024, 6,144 New Haven residents worked in office and administrative support, constituting 9.65% of all workers in the city.³¹ Local 34-UNITE HERE has 893 members who live in the city itself.

The gender disparities of this type of automation are also stark. 78.3% of Local 34-UNITE HERE's members are women. Across New Haven, women who work in office and administrative support make up 13.5% of all women workers³² in the city, making this occupational category the second largest for women in New Haven.

Through Yale's Office of New Haven Affairs, Yale claims to be "proud to be New Haven's largest employer, taxpayer, and community partner,"³³ and states that "Yale and the City of New Haven have worked together for more than three centuries to build a thriving, shared

community." According to Yale, "this partnership is stronger than ever—rooted in mutual respect, opportunity, and growth."³⁴ Yale's Task Force report makes no mention of the impact that AI-driven administrative job losses will have on the University. It also makes no mention of what impact potential job losses or the slowdown in administrative hiring will have on New Haven. As New Haven's largest employer, Yale has a responsibility to deploy AI safely and responsibly, and a responsibility to be accountable to their workers and neighbors in New Haven.



NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF AI EXPOSURE

YALE DEVELOPMENT AND YALE LIBRARY MOST AFFECTED BY AI

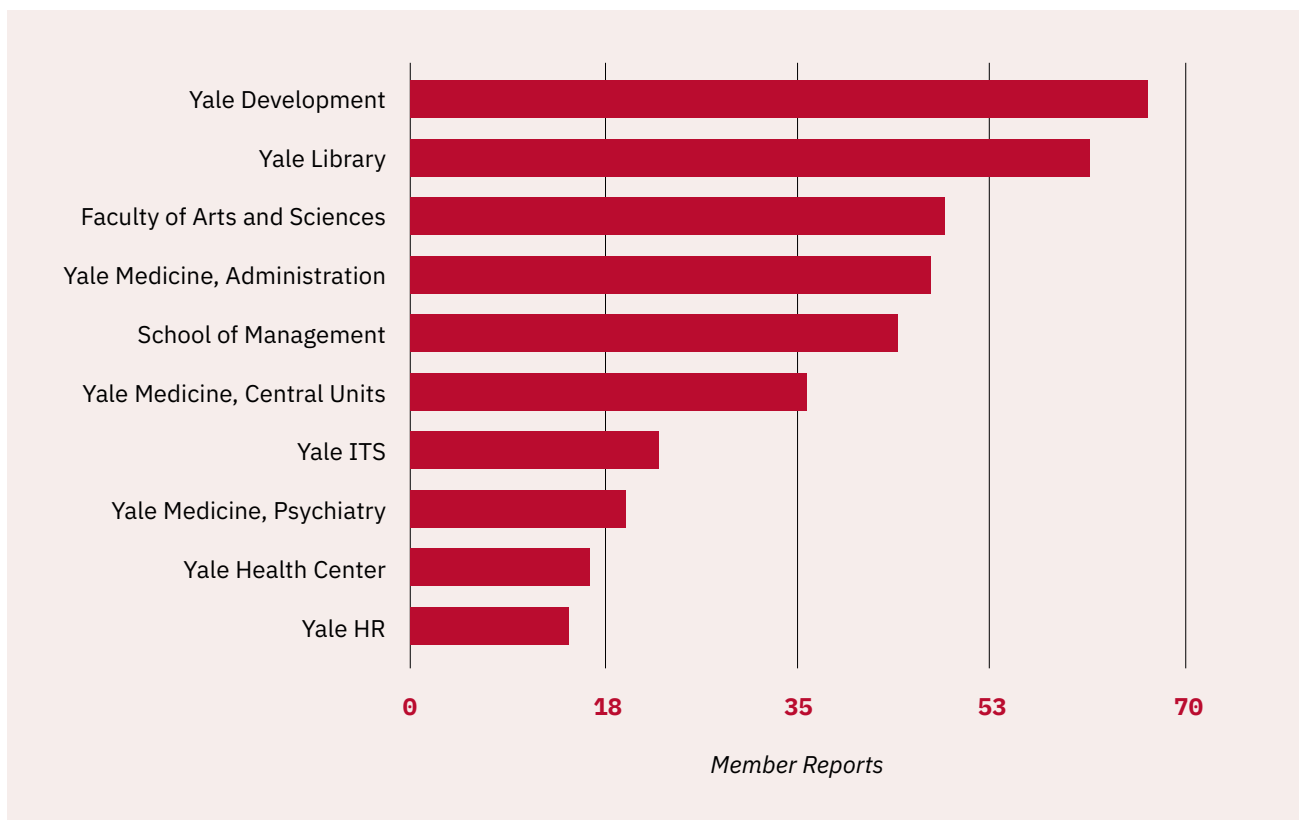
AI use has begun to proliferate through Yale’s clerical and technical workforce with the Clarity rollout.

In March 2025, Local 34-UNITE HERE ran a membership-wide survey ahead of negotiations for the terms of the 2027 contract, which received a total of 2,455 responses. When asked whether AI or Automation was in use in their departments, 719 members indicated “Yes” (29%).

The chart below depicts the Top 10 departments or units by size of responses marking AI or Automation as present in some way in their

department. Workers in Yale Development, the Yale Library, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Yale Medicine reported the largest number of single reports of AI use.

Narrative survey responses also paint a picture of how AI has changed work in the University. In the following sections, Local 34-UNITE HERE members share their firsthand experiences with the Clarity rollout and use of AI in their departments.



YALE DEVELOPMENT: ADOPT AI NOW!

Yale Development had the largest number of independent reports from the survey that mentioned AI implementation or use by the department.

First drafts of the kind of work done by clerical workers in this unit — email writing, grant writing, copywriting, proposal writing, event planning — can be initially run through an out-of-the-box AI model like Claude, ChatGPT, or Gemini, all of which are available through Clarity.

Narrative responses to the survey also suggest that non-union managers in this department now use AI to complete work that was previously done by a union clerical worker. As such, AI presents two threats to the job security of clerical and technical workers: automation of work and the transfer of work to managers. Both of these actions violate the union's contract, but can be difficult to monitor.

Many workers in the survey also reported being urged by management to incorporate Clarity in their day-to-day work. One worker stated, "Senior leadership is encouraging us to use AI in our day-to-day work. We even have to report back to them on how we are using AI. This is concerning for the writer positions in our department." Another worker corroborated this experience, "Senior leadership is pushing/encouraging us to use AI to assist in our day-to-day work and asking us to report back on its use."



Senior leadership is encouraging us to use AI in our day-to-day work. We even have to report back to them on how we are using AI. This is concerning for the writer positions in our department.

Some workers also reported that AI has substantially changed the nature of their work, changing their job in the process. "I was hired as a staff writer. The amount of actual writing I am doing has plummeted because of AI," said one worker. Another worker confirmed, "AI is used frequently to take notes, to write copy for projects and to brainstorm ideas, all things which have taken away from the job functions of union members."

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER TAMERA STERNBERGER

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, YALE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE



One union worker in the Development Office, Tamera Sternberger, described how her job has been fundamentally altered by the incorporation of AI in her department. She reported that she was responsible for a significant amount of writing tasks on solicitation campaigns prior to the implementation of AI.



Before Fall 2025, I would be part of large email solicitation campaigns to donors at Yale College, hands-on with drafting, writing, editing, and multiple draft revisions. In most cases, this fundraising work would entail multiple revisions with my manager and would take several weeks of work to complete. Following the introduction of AI in the Development Office, I am now rarely asked to do any drafting, editing, or revision, since this work is now almost exclusively done by AI by my managers.

It is clear to me that the department, for the most [part] now does all of its writing with the help of AI, strongly reducing the need for [union] work in the process... I now rarely do any writing or editing, which was at least half of the work that I would [do] at my job."

Instead, Sternberger is now responsible for organizing and executing the logistics of student-facing events: moving things, bringing equipment and materials to the rooms where the events are happening, and so on— things that Clarity cannot do. This is not the job she was hired for, the "creative parts" have been "automated away." Local 34-UNITE HERE members like this worker who have played an important role in conveying the importance of the University and helping alumni sustain and deepen their relationship with the University have lost core pieces of their work to automation.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, YALE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

In a separate corner of the Yale Office of Development, a union member who wants to remain anonymous due to fear of retaliation, reported experiencing a departmental culture shift after the release of Clarity. In their unit, which coordinates stewardship of Yale University donors, the worker was directed to incorporate it into as many responsibilities as possible.





By April 2025, AI use was not only encouraged, but a mandatory and non-negotiable part of my job. At this point, my manager had put me in touch with.... the AI Community of Practice group, which was working on a department-wide “AI Best Practices” resource... In this email, I was encouraged to share how I have used AI to automate parts of my job that I had previously done by hand... [This group] was especially interested in my ability to use Clarity to edit text in a spreadsheet before uploading it to [another tool] that I use for my work in Development.

A few weeks later, [those responsible for the AI Best Practices report] got back to me with a document, which compiled a whole host of best-practices for AI prompting that we should follow when completing work that we are assigned... This document provides very good examples of how AI prompts can be configured to automate significant chunks of my job.

The pressure to use AI is so intense, they shared, that Development has incorporated AI competency into the requirements sections of its job ads. “New hires in our department are expected to be extremely fluent in AI, according to job postings,” they wrote, clarifying that “the job ad for a [a Local 34-UNITE HERE position in Development] openly states that the desired

candidate ‘successfully engages with the university’s AI platforms to enhance productivity as it relates to data analysis’ and ‘liaises with other units and vendors to maintain/enhance software platforms, including our AI models.’” This cements, from the worker’s perspective, that AI is an essential part of the culture in their corner of Yale.

YALE LIBRARY: CHATBOTS, NOT PEOPLE

The Yale Library has been aggressively implementing AI into library systems and software.

Local 34-UNITE HERE learned that the Library began to roll out Clarity to its staff in 2024. On August 5, 2024, the Yale Library sent out an email to all Library staff stating that it expects everyone who works in the Library to be conversant in AI concepts, tools, and use. The Yale Library also noted that it is working on creating a generative AI learning program for all staff, stating that the learning program will help the Library integrate AI into library work.

Yale’s head librarian, Barbara Rothenbach, also sent out an email saying that the Library plans to reduce library costs by not filling open positions and by supporting researcher needs through emerging technology, specifically AI.³⁵ In that sense, the Yale Library is interested in rolling out technologies that can alleviate the need for hiring and retaining research support staff, such as collections assistants.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER AMBER SUESS

FRONTLINE SERVICES ASSISTANT, YALE LIBRARY



AI implementation is of particular concern to Local 34-UNITE HERE member Amber Suess, who, as Frontline Services Assistant, spends most of her time assisting students, faculty, and researchers at the University.

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I work in Access and Public Services (APS) at Yale Library, where I staff the physical service points in Sterling and Bass libraries, as well as our Live Chat service (Ask Yale Library Chat) as a Frontline Services Assistant. My work entails helping Library patrons — students, faculty, researchers — via the Live Chat service for help finding citations, compiling bibliographies, or helping them locate Library resources. Over the past year, the Library has been piloting or deploying AI functionality — Clarity, Consensus AI, and a custom Model Context Protocol (MCP) tool — that directly competes with the work that I do at the Library, reducing the overall caseload and need for my current role to the Library, since all three of those tools can answer questions about the Library catalog to potential patrons or staff... [These tools] will automate significant parts of my work when the Library decides to incorporate this functionality directly into the Library chat window on the Yale Library website.

Workers like Suess feel like their jobs are just one software update from being automated away. While Yale has committed to basic job protections with regards to technological change, the University has violated the protections that do exist so workers feel vulnerable when technological implementations can directly replace major parts of their work.

Suess joined the University through New Haven Works, the collaborative effort between the University and Local 34-UNITE HERE charged with helping New Haven residents get hired into Yale. Yale's libraries have been among the most important departments in making the local hiring program successful. Since its founding, New Haven Works has placed 60 New Haven residents into good union jobs in the Yale libraries.

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES: AI WRITES, AI READS, AND YOU CAN'T OPT OUT

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) was the third largest respondent in the Local 34-UNITE HERE contract survey regarding the use of AI technology.

Union members in FAS have faced encouragement from management to incorporate AI into writing letters, biographies, and doing complex scheduling tasks that would otherwise be done by several union members.

Even for members who consciously refuse to use AI on ethical grounds, editing AI outputs has become a part of their job because their co-workers and managers use AI. In certain cases, this has led to a significant drop in the quality of the work that is being produced and shared with faculty, students, and staff.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER CAROLYN KYRTOPOLOUS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, DEAN'S OFFICE



Local 34-UNITE HERE members working in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences also report participating in AI training and being encouraged by management to use Clarity to automate tasks.

Local 34-UNITE HERE member Carolyn Kyrtopoulos, Senior Administrative Assistant 2 in the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, stated in a questionnaire response that she became aware of Clarity in September 2024 at a Faculty of the Arts and Sciences Dean's Office meeting and subsequently had to go through a series of staff meetings and training sessions on how to use AI in her work.

In response to a question about whether or not management encouraged AI use, Kyrtopoulos said that administrators like herself "were specifically told in a team

meeting to look for ways Clarity could help [them] in [their] work and worked on test projects to see how it could make [their] work easier." In the training sessions, staff were instructed to use AI to "organize data and find information" as well as write "summaries of information." Clarity has been incredibly effective at automating work that, in the past, would take several weeks to complete, Kyrtopoulos recounted.



A couple of months later, roughly in December 2024, there was a... staff meeting in which AI was introduced as a tool for Local 34-UNITE HERE [Clerical & Technical staff (C&T)] to use in their work. ... We discussed possible use cases like changing the tone of our emails, using Clarity to analyze large datasets, and altering prompts to get better outputs to letters, memos, and any other written materials. We also discussed more hands-on assignments, such as using Clarity to work on enrollment data. For example, we used an enrollment data spreadsheet with enrollment numbers and were shown how to use to Clarity [to] figure out which courses have low enrollment. Usually, we do all of this work by hand in Excel. In this meeting, management was suggesting that Clarity can help us do these tasks much faster than it was previously possible to do them by hand.

In parallel to these large department-wide meetings, AI use was also being encouraged in smaller team meetings during the 2024-2025 academic year... In one such meeting, [my manager] projected his screen through a monitor and trained us on how to use Clarity to write scholar biographies.... He used [this] biography as a test case for how to generate a biography in different tones, styles, and lengths with Clarity. Writing a biography by hand is time consuming work, and usually takes approximately two hours per biography. Now, with the use of Clarity, each biography could take a fraction of the time, and four biographies could be completed in the span of two hours of work for one C&T.

Management, and specifically [my direct manager], have also introduced technology to greatly accelerate the speed at which C&T staff write various letters, including those letters that we write for appointments, promotions, and job offers. While letter-writing is not a large part of my job, my coworkers (who are also Local 34-UNITE HERE [members]) write hundreds of letters in a semester, and have had their work significantly affected by this change.

AI use was also consistently encouraged by [my manager] for a particularly complicated and time-consuming scheduling task. This scheduling task involves coordinating around 40 or so [calendars], and usually takes several dozen hours for about three administrators to complete. I was now tasked with completing this task entirely by myself. In several one-to-one and group meetings, [my manager] encouraged me to use AI to complete this task, even instructing me in one meeting on how I can complete this scheduling task by plugging the spreadsheet into Clarity. While Clarity failed to complete the task to the required specification, [my manager] again brought up using Clarity to do this scheduling task for next year's annual meetings in a team debrief in the Spring of 2025. Several other Local 34 [members], including myself, were present in this debrief, and pushed back on [my manager's] impression that AI could do this task effectively. It is likely that I will be encouraged to use Clarity to complete this task again in the future.

Writing biographies and letters are a major part of the work that Local 34-UNITE HERE members do on a regular basis. These letters and biographies are often components of extraordinarily significant events for members of the Yale and broader academic community and serve as communications on breakthroughs in the University's core mission of research and teaching. Local 34-UNITE HERE members understand the significance of these events and have often formed personal relationships and a stake in the success of the subjects of the letters and biographies. This personal connection is removed with AI-generated text.

In the Faculty of Arts and Science, widespread AI use means that fewer workers are needed to do the same amount of work than before, but it also means that more pressure is put on workers to double-check a vast quantity of AI-generated text. If this trajectory continues, administrative labor will slowly turn into a large AI output-checking exercise. This faster output also means these biographies and letters now sound increasingly canned and run the risk of hallucinations and misinformation.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER JENNIFER ONGLEY

ASSISTANT TO THE CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

Local 34-UNITE HERE Member Jennifer Ongley, Assistant to the Chair in the Department of Physics, reported that she does not use AI on ethical grounds. During Summer 2024, her manager gave her a “Plaud NotePin from Plaud.ai, a physical recording device that claims to transcribe and summarize conversations.” She was encouraged to use this device at a faculty retreat and future faculty meetings to remove the burden of taking notes by hand. Ongley refused.



I oppose AI for a multitude of reasons, including its harmful environmental impact, its plagiarizing of art, literature, and scholarship, as well as the threat it poses to my job security. I made my manager aware of my stance toward AI, and she allowed me to continue to continue taking meeting minutes by hand instead of using the Plaud device.

Despite not wanting to use AI, AI is nevertheless present in many aspects of my job. Management told us during staff meetings that they were being pushed by University administration to encourage staff to use AI more in our work. In particular, management suggested using AI to edit our emails and other written communications, to take meeting notes, and to try the University's new AI chatbot. This was intended to improve clarity and conciseness in our writing, as well as save time and make us more efficient.

While some of my coworkers also try to avoid AI, others started using it to draft materials which they then ask me to review. For example, a colleague asked me

to edit a document she wrote with AI that was supposed to provide instructions for admitted students to book their own travel for a campus visit. I was frankly appalled at the document she shared with me. Instead of clearly laying out the specific travel options, it was a confusing jumble of word salad that somehow said very little while using way too many words. I gave up after making a few edits to the first page and sent it back to my colleague with the suggestion that she scrap it and start from scratch on a new draft, exactly the thing she was trying to save time on by using AI.

Other colleagues have also sent me emails they edited with AI alongside their original draft for comparison; the AI-edited ones are all unequivocally worse than the original versions. Another colleague experimented with using AI to draft event posters. While the AI helped with some aspects of design, it also introduced errors that she was unable to remove. She ultimately had to start drafting a new poster from scratch, doubling the amount of time it took her to complete the task.

It is clear to Ongley that AI not only threatens the future of her job but also makes her current job much worse. A lot of her time is now spent on editing AI-generated text submitted to her by others, so much so that it actually increases the amount of work done by her in the process.

Additionally, Ongley worries that the University is pushing a particularly untrustworthy Finance Chatbot that, in her experience, gives incorrect answers to questions.

“

Management and the University are heavily pushing us to use the Finance Chatbot for any questions about Yale financial policies, processes, and forms, instead of looking up the information on Yale’s website or reaching out to management or the Finance Support Center (FSC). This is despite the warning displayed before you launch the Finance Chatbot, which states that its results may be erroneous and you should always double check that they match the policies on Yale’s website and reach out to management or the FSC with any questions. When I tried using the Chatbot, I received a response that was not in line with Yale’s financial policy; had I followed it, it would have created unnecessary work for myself and others. It was already hard to connect with the FSC staff prior to the Chatbot’s launch, and I am concerned that, in the future, the University will not have competent people on staff to answer important financial questions because they think that the Chatbot is “good enough.” In addition, I worry that my colleagues could face discipline for following incorrect instructions from the Chatbot, out of a misplaced trust that the tools the University provides us with are accurate.

YALE MEDICINE: ASK CLARITY, NOT YOUR MANAGER

Administrators at Yale Medicine have likewise felt the push from management to use AI. Survey responses commonly note that AI is being used for meeting minutes, for summarizing information, and other clerical tasks.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! MEMBER DANA GREENE

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT,
YALE MEDICINE**

Local 34-UNITE HERE Member Dana Greene, a Senior Administrative Assistant in the School of Public Health, reported consistent encouragement from management to use more AI in her work. Greene's manager required Greene and the rest of her department to attend a mandatory team meeting for "AI Training" led by a System and Application Specialist at Yale held on October 29, 2025.



“

The presenter of this training was [the] System and Application Specialist. During this meeting, [this Specialist] would: 1) “provide a basic introduction to Generative AI and tools available at Yale, mainly Clarity”; 2) “cover prompting best practices”; 3) “show some demos of job/dept related prompts in the Clarity platform.”

During this meeting, the [Specialist] covered such topics such as defining key tools, accessing AI tools available at Yale, and “identify[ing] potential applications of AI tools to your work.” During this meeting, my manager had staff work through potential use cases of AI in their work, such as using it for emails, generating meeting notes, using it for questions as pertaining to Excel usage, and various other job responsibilities. After this meeting, my manager would encourage staff to use AI in biweekly meetings at a rate of once per every two meetings.

In one-on-one meetings between my manager and me, my manager encouraged me to use AI for questions that I would address to her. For example, I was encouraged to use Clarity to review Yale's policies and procedures regarding departmental travel. This is a question that I would have previously sought guidance on from my manager. Instead, my manager encouraged me to use AI to find the answer to this question first.

Greene's account raises concerning questions about the future of AI in the workplace. Encouraging employees to consult AI before asking their manager for help on a task presents a host of possible issues. For instance, who would be responsible for a costly error in booking travel if a clerical worker was told to ask AI for information and the AI gave them faulty information? Lack of proper managerial

oversight due to the introduction of AI puts clerical and technical jobs at risk and the University has not yet implemented any protections for workers who make errors due to AI outputs. It also runs the risk of creating costs that far outweigh the benefit of saving a few minutes on communication.



A CLERICAL & TECHNICAL UNION AFTER AI

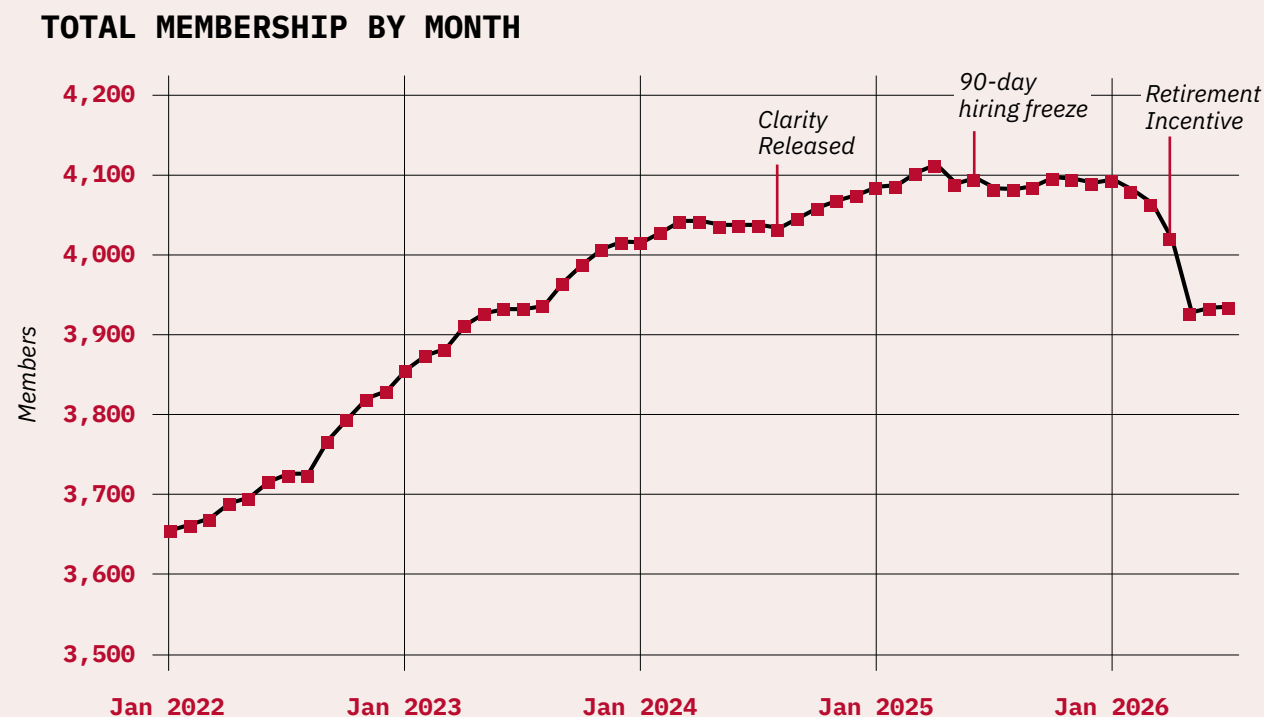
While it would be nice to believe that automating significant portions of a Local 34-UNITE HERE member's job will free up their time to do more interesting and creative work, that is not what usually happens during periods of worker automation.

As seen from industrial labor, job automation typically destroys the job market of the work that is automated, forcing unemployed workers to find new lines of work.³⁶

And, despite what tech evangelists will say, AI is also unlikely to replace jobs one-to-one. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data so far, what is more likely to happen is "passive replacement." Employers will make do with fewer workers to do the same amount of work with AI.

This has already started to happen. The University has paired a hiring freeze with a retirement incentive to cut the total amount of union workers across departments and units. By supplementing a smaller workforce with AI, the University can simply avoid hiring workers to replace those who have retired or have quit, thereby reducing the amount of union work needed to fulfill the same amount of work that was done previously.

TOTAL UNION MEMBERSHIP IS SHRINKING FAST

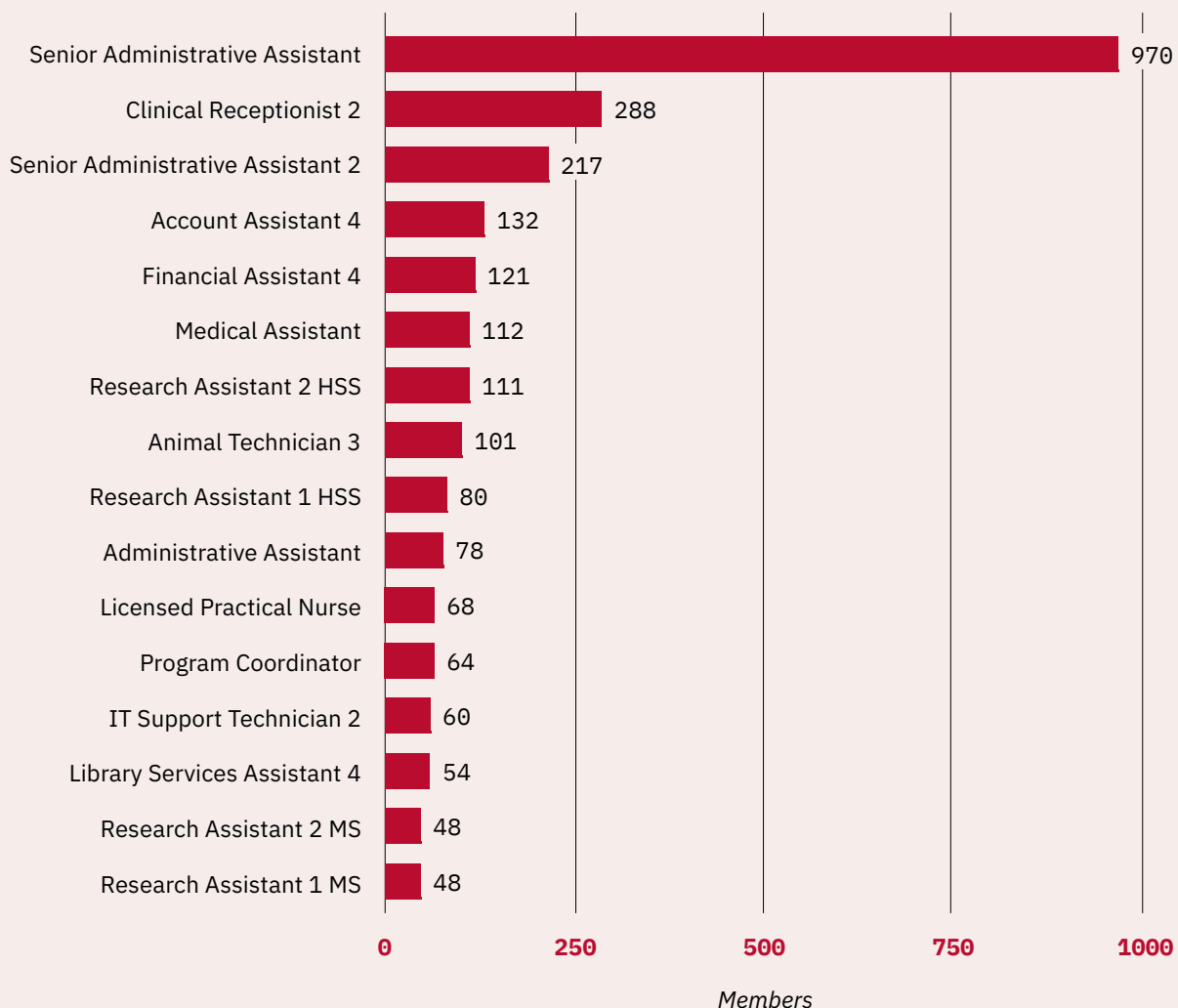


Clarity was released on August 28, 2024, with widespread adoption by Summer 2025, which is when Yale's program to train workers on AI became more aggressive. Local 34-UNITE HERE membership grew until April 2025, at which point the size of the union peaked at 4,112 members. Anticipating an endowment tax by the federal government, Yale implemented a 90-day hiring freeze in June 2025.³⁷

Beginning in April 2026, Yale implemented a retirement incentive. Yale's administration fiercely resisted Local 34-UNITE HERE's attempt to secure a minimum staffing floor to preserve the size of the union.³⁸ As expected, the size of the union began to decline in May 2025 and dropped off sharply over the course of the following four months, the first major downturn in membership since 2020.

LOCAL 34-UNITE HERE! BY JOB TYPE

MEMBERS BY JOB TITLE (BY RANK), 2026-07
TOP 15 SHOWN

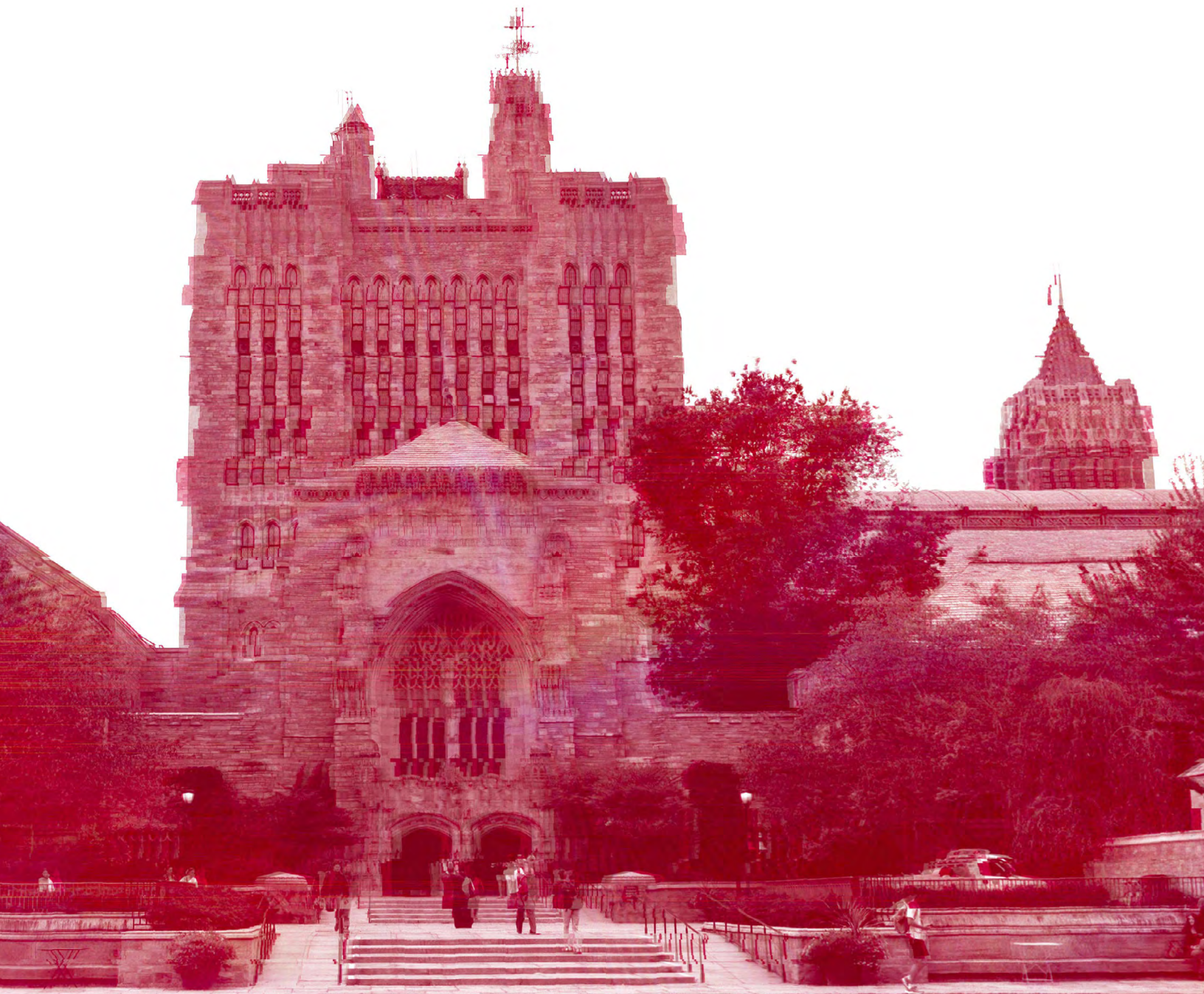


Who works at Local 34-UNITE HERE?

Local 34-UNITE HERE is predominantly made up of women. As of 2026, the union self-reports as 78.3 % women, 20.1% men, 0.4% non-binary, with 1.2% of members declining to answer.

What are the members' job titles and responsibilities?

Generally, the white-collar roles considered most at risk of AI replacement. Local 34-UNITE HERE workers can typically be found in offices and in laboratories. The largest and most common worker hired in the union carries some version of the “Administrative Assistant” title. Administrative Assistants are followed by both Research Assistants and Clinical Receptionists as the most common types of worker in the union. These jobs are very much at risk of automation.



**A BETTER
WAY FORWARD**

The rush toward AI adoption threatens Yale's role as the city's largest employer and betrays a shared history of problem-solving between Local 34-UNITE HERE and the University that spans over 20 years.

After decades of bitter disputes and contract negotiations, often being resolved only after strikes, the University and Local 34-UNITE HERE made a dramatic change in the way they interact. Under the leadership of President Richard Levin and Vice President John Pepper, the parties created and invested in a set of best practices institutions that were designed to facilitate communication and problem-solving. While negotiations still had conflict, Local 34-UNITE HERE and managers worked to build trust and collaboration. President Peter Salovey preserved President Levin's legacy of improved labor relations and as a result, after five strikes within two decades, Yale and its clerical and technical workforce have negotiated four contracts with industry-leading worker protections while maintaining labor peace.

In 2025, Richard Levin, the 22nd President of Yale University, began a speech on the progress Yale made under his tenure by saying, "The first story is about Yale and its city; the second is about Yale and its unions. Both stories begin badly. Both end well." Yale and Local 34-UNITE HERE have invested significant effort into building a relationship that is motivated by problem-solving and guided by best practices. Since 2003, they have managed to settle contracts peacefully and to navigate challenging issues together; issues such as the Great Recession, the integration of the Yale New Haven Hospital, and the 2020 global pandemic. The University's approach to AI implementation has represented a sharp departure from this problem-solving approach and is now subject to a grievance that may end up in arbitration.

This unilateral rush to implement AI has made current negotiations more challenging. The risk of job automation could destroy thousands of good union jobs, which comprise an important part of

Greater New Haven's economic foundation. AI poses significant complications that demand an even deeper commitment to ongoing problem-solving rather than unilateral implementation.

Advocates of AI within the University may cite 2026 studies like Boston Consulting Group's "AI Will Reshape More Jobs Than It Replaces"³⁹ and argue that task automation will not lead to job loss but instead change the type of work that is performed by Local 34-UNITE HERE members. While history shows that there are strong reasons to be skeptical of this claim, Yale still has the opportunity to provide a national model of a responsible transition.

A responsible transition would require significant investment in training programs alongside higher pay for the workers undergoing the training needed to use this new technology to its full effect. The raises should also come with a guarantee that these jobs will continue to exist now and in the future. Yale could agree to maintain at least its current level of 3,933 Clerical and Technical positions over the next five years, which would dramatically expand its capacity and give workers more confidence that innovative AI use will augment University operations instead of eliminating jobs. Such a guarantee would change the orientation of AI implementation from one of conflict and mistrust to one of collaboration.

Yale could lead joint task forces focused on reaping the advantages of AI for the University and workers. Yale could facilitate problem-solving and realign incentives to encourage all parties to focus on how to help the University increase its capacity with the use of AI, while inspiring confidence that such capacity will not jeopardize thousands of livelihoods.

The world is living with the consequences of the tech industry's ethos of 'moving fast and breaking things.' Children now suffer from greater mental health issues and addiction to social media.⁴⁰ Scholars have found that housing costs increase with increase of short-term rentals on platforms like AirBnB.⁴¹ As Amazon workers are forced to work under increasing surveillance, a worker described the workplace as feeling "like you're in prison."⁴² Prediction markets risk creating new gambling addictions, spark insider trading fears,⁴³ and are generating concerns about creating incentives for destructive and unlawful behavior.⁴⁴ AI adds potential mass unemployment to this list.

Yale's previous Trustee Gina Raimondo warns, "Millions of Americans – from white collar to blue collar, entry-level to executive – may soon find themselves jobless and without prospects."⁴⁵

The ongoing development of AI appears to be inevitable, which has left many national leaders searching for solutions to address the challenges that it will create. By building on its own history of best practices and union and employer innovation, Yale is well suited to provide important answers to these challenges. Unfortunately, its current approach to rolling out AI betrays this history and its role as a national leader. It is not too late to choose a different path.

FINDING SOLUTIONS THROUGH EXISTING UNION INSTITUTIONS

The unfortunate result of 'moving fast and breaking things' is that it also undermines decades of innovation that have been developed through Union and University partnership. Local 34-UNITE HERE members who are laid-off from the University retain their salary and benefits through a contractually-defined Interim Employment Pool (IEP) for a period of 1 to 15 months, with a possible extension of 50% more time. A skilled team of union and University staff work together to place workers into new jobs at the University. Often workers retrain and gain new sets of skills through on-the-job training efforts. Through this provision, workers' lives are not entirely disrupted when they are laid off. In turn, the University retains skilled and dedicated workers who develop a deep sense of loyalty to the University.

While the IEP can serve as one important part of a solution to AI worker displacement, the potential scale of layoffs due to automation could easily overwhelm the system, as a growing

number of laid-off workers are forced to compete over a shrinking number of jobs. Allotting more time for workers to stay in the IEP is one clear way the University could give workers a chance to find a job.

The IEP would function better if there were a growing number of other jobs available at the University, particularly jobs that are harder to automate. However, the University continues to undermine union job growth by employing non-union staffing through subcontracting or by outsourcing to employers like Yale New Haven Health, who have large groups of non-union employees and weaker wage and benefit standards. Often, jobs created by technology come with technology vendors who act as subcontractors for the technology. These jobs provide worse standards for workers and limit access to stable employment in the region. These jobs are also not accessible to laid-off members. As AI displaces workers, employers like Yale should limit subcontracting and outsourcing.

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