



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on April 13, 2021

Republican Takes on Secretive Establishment in Race for Yale Board of Trustees

Ivy League schools and their governing boards have long been part of the insider culture that permeates the entire Deep State establishment. But at Yale, one alumnus wants to change the status quo.

Victor Ashe, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland and former mayor of Knoxville, Tennessee, is running for a seat on the Yale board of trustees against the school's candidate of choice, Morehouse College president David Thomas.

The board of trustees is the university's governing body. It is tasked with hiring the university president, approving staff tenure and pay, and managing Yale's budget and portfolio.

According to an e-mail obtained by the [Washington Free Beacon](#), the school was not planning to make an official announcement about its candidate until Wednesday, the day voting begins. The voting period runs through May 23; during that time, Ashe is "not [to] campaign or otherwise advocate" for his candidacy.

The university's board of trustees, known as the Yale Corporation, largely works in secret, prohibiting its candidates from responding to inquiries (even regarding their positions on relevant issues) prior to or during the election.

Thus, Thomas's candidacy was kept confidential until shortly prior to the start of voting. But candidates who aren't backed by the board, such as Ashe, must announce their run in advance and collect more than 4,000 signatures from other alumni to make the ballot. Ashe received more than 7,000 signatures.

Ashe struck back at the restrictions, saying that they're "designed to preserve the status quo and prevent any inquiry into the background. Totally contrary to the great traditions that Yale has stood for in the past and it's not consistent with free and open discussion and debate on issues."

He added, "It's amazing the lengths to which Yale has gone to make barriers against participation. They'll claim it's to avoid politics. My answer would be, the barriers they've raised are political."

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The secretive and tightly controlled procedures for electing members of the Yale Corporation is ironic given the recent objections of several of the university's most prominent professors to voting-integrity measures enacted in states such as Georgia.

Business school professor Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, for example, organized a group of business leaders to use their influence to oppose any legislation restricting voting.



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Like Ashe, other individuals over the years have launched insurgent campaigns to become members of the governing boards of left-leaning universities. This was the case at Dartmouth in the early 2000s, when a number of candidates led successful petition drives and were elected to the board.

The Yale Corporation is made up of the university president and 16 alumni board members, only six of whom are elected. The remaining 10 are “successors,” meaning they’re appointed by former members prior to leaving. This allows members of the establishment “insider” crowd to perpetuate a board that aligns with their vision, but it nevertheless permits outsiders to transform the makeup of the governing body over time.

If Ashe wins, he will be the first outsider to sit on the board in more than 55 years. The last successful petition candidate to run for Yale Corporation, William Horowitz, was elected in 1965. The most recent candidate was W. David Lee, who lost in 2002.

The Free Beacon notes:

Lauren Noble, a 2011 graduate and founder of Yale’s William F. Buckley, Jr. Program, said she wasn’t surprised by the board’s decision to keep Ashe’s opponent a secret until a day before voting begins. “It’s just the latest reminder that this process is broken. Fortunately, for the first time in years, Yale alumni have a real choice in this election,” Noble said.

Commerce Secretary and former Rhode Island governor Gina Raimondo (D.) vacated her position on the Yale Corporation earlier this year after she was tapped to serve in the Biden administration — leaving open a successor seat on the board.

Ashe said he wishes to make the board more transparent. “What’s more secret than a secret society at Yale?” Ashe asked. “The Yale Corporation.”

Indeed, Yale is home to a number of secret societies. The “Big Three” are Wolf’s Head, Scroll and Key, and (most famously) Skull and Bones.

Sometimes referred to at the “Brotherhood of Death,” Skull and Bones is known as much for its [bizarre rituals](#) for its initiates as for the societal prominence of those initiates, which include American presidents and other leading politicians, as well as members of the media and titans of business.



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