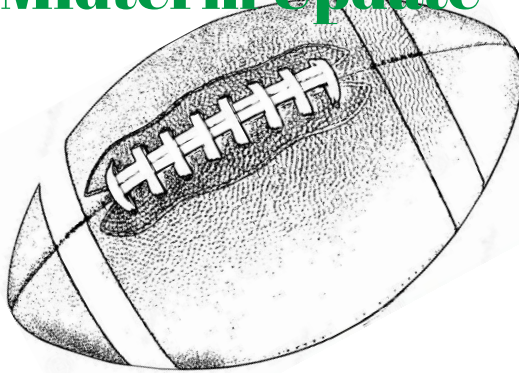


CANNON DIAL ELM CLUB

Midterm Update



Fellow Cannon Dial Elm Alumni,

First, I want to re-extend my invitation to come back to Cannon for Homecoming and all the attendant festivities, on October 25. We want to see you at the club for a great reception downstairs after we BEAT HARVARD! Please RSVP [here](#).



Second, as I mentioned in my last Newsletter, the University recently [announced](#) several changes to their dining policies. Starting next Fall, they will now **require members of eating clubs** and co-ops to pay for a **SECOND** meal plan in the dining halls that would cost them about an additional \$900 per year. I, along with all the chairpersons of the other eating clubs, believe that this policy is a misguided step with potentially bad results for the eating club system.

Let's start with the obvious: it's wrong to ask people to pay for something that they neither need nor want. If students already have a meal plan, and the University is confident that they are not experiencing food insecurity, then this is an unnecessary burden on the students and their families. Indeed, most eating club members do not even use the two free meals per week that they are currently granted. The new plan eliminates these optional free swipes and replaces them with two meals that the students must pay for whether they use them in the dining halls or not!

This policy will create financial stress for many students and their families. While the University is offering to pay the cost of this plan for students already on financial aid, the 30% of juniors and seniors who are private pay, including many whose families still have significant financial burdens, must pay out of pocket. We have several Gunners whose families live in high cost-of-living areas, have significant medical expenses, or have multiple kids in college and are just over the line from being eligible for financial aid. Many of them need to make ends meet via loans or additional jobs. This policy will lead at least some of them to drop out of their eating clubs, further stratifying the campus into haves and have-nots.



Perhaps most worrisome to me, this policy gives the University a beachhead to incrementally weaken the eating club system over time. They may require a \$900 plan in 2026, but maybe in 2027 it will be a \$2000 plan or a \$5000 plan in 2030. They may cover the costs for all students on financial aid now, but maybe next year they will only cover half, or none at all. They could use this policy to eventually starve out the Clubs. In this scenario, only a select few (and likely the wealthiest) students would be part of clubs. This would make Princeton look more like Harvard or Yale, whose social scene is defined by a handful of elitist finals clubs and exclusionary secret societies.

Besides, just imagine parents' confusion when they get two contracts to sign to feed their child, and realize they are duplicative!

This issue has been around for over 5 years. During that time, the GICC has proposed sensible alternatives. The University could simply make this second meal plan optional for club members and let students decide for themselves if they need it. Alternatively, if the University has conviction that these dining hall meals are necessary, then it should continue giving everyone two free swipes at the dining halls. Instead, I see this plan as a tax on private-pay Princeton families that endangers the clubs.

There's something magical about the Princeton formula of having private, student-run spaces that they make their own. It results in a sense of community that is perfectly catered to those students, which they cannot find elsewhere on campus. This is why eating club members are

generally happier than their fellow students, reporting the highest satisfaction scores on campus in a recent dining survey.

If the University wants to improve the undergraduate experience, then they should cultivate these different spaces and increase the variety of communities that students can choose from. Their proposed plan, in which the University imposes the “correct” undergraduate experience for everyone, will smother these communities, and they will find that one-size-fits-all is actually one-size-fits-none.

I will let you know when the new GICC website, dontharvardourprinceton.com goes live. There you will learn more and find suggestions on how you can take action to stop this plan before it starts!

Finally, we have a long way to go to close the funding gap for our new construction, which starts right after the turn of the year. **PLEASE go to our [website](#) and donate to the Thrive in '25 campaign, or use the handy form below to submit your contribution, to this important cause that will enable Cannon to thrive long into the future!**



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Thrive in '25

Enclosed is my contribution to the **Thrive in '25** Campaign:

Contributions may also be made online at cannonclub.com/thrive-in-25, by venmo@cannonclub, or princetonprospectfoundation.org/donate designating Cannon Dial Elm at Recipient.

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Address

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This gift is in memory / honor of

☐ A check made payable to *Princeton Cannon Dial Elm Foundation* is enclosed.

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☐ AmEx ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

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