

Yale professor wrote to Epstein about women, including undergraduate

Computer science professor David Gelernter exchanged emails with the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein between 2009 and 2015. In one message, Gelernter referred to a Yale student as a “v small goodlooking blonde.”

Asher Boiskin & Jerry Gao

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Yale computer science professor David Gelernter '76 GRD '77 invited Jeffrey Epstein to campus and described the appearance of an undergraduate in emails to the convicted sex offender between 2009 and 2015, documents released Friday by the Department of Justice show.

In emails exchanged over more than half a decade reviewed by the News, Gelernter also scheduled visits with Epstein in New York City and discussed the scent of women in Paris. The Department released some three million files related to Epstein in its Friday release, in response to a law passed by Congress in November requiring the disclosure of investigative materials about Epstein that have become a political flashpoint for the Trump administration.

In an October 2011 email to Epstein in which Gelernter appeared to discuss his software startup, he wrote: "I have a perfect editoress in mind: Yale sr, worked at Vogue last summer, runs her own campus mag, art major, completely connected, v small goodlooking blonde."

It was not clear what role Gelernter was envisioning for the student. The emails reviewed by the News did not seem to implicate Gelernter in any crime or indicate that he was aware of Epstein's ongoing sex trafficking operation.

Gelernter did not respond to the News' multiple requests for comment, via email and phone call, since Friday afternoon.

Gelernter, who started teaching computer science at Yale at least four decades ago, has been described by The Washington Post as "a vehement critic of modern academia" and as having a "bombastic rhetorical style and disdain for elites." In 1993, Gelernter was severely injured after opening a mail bomb from Ted Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber, in Arthur K. Watson Hall. Gelernter's name was floated around in the first Trump administration as a potential pick as the president's top science adviser.

This semester, Gelernter is teaching "The User Interface," a computer science course offered to both graduate and undergraduate students.

In 2008, the year before the earliest publicly released email correspondence with Gelernter, Epstein pleaded guilty to two felony prostitution charges in Florida. He was sentenced to county jail and required to register as a sex offender. At the time, The New York Times reported that authorities had identified Epstein as having "paid women, some of them under age, to give him massages that ended with a sexual favor."

"I can't believe anyone anywhere could be more of a character than Jeff Epstein," Gelernter wrote in an email to John Brockman, a literary agent, in December 2009. "I've never talked to a more interesting guy or one w/ more all-around horsepower & faster acceleration."

In 2019, federal agents arrested Epstein and prosecutors charged him in New York with sex trafficking of minors. Epstein had trafficked girls, including high school students, and young women, bringing many of them to his private island in the Caribbean. Epstein died in 2019 in his cell at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City.

Karen Peart, a University spokesperson, offered a brief response to the News' questions about the extent of the University's knowledge about Gelernter's relationship with Epstein, whether it would investigate the academic and whether Epstein ever visited Yale.

"The university has no knowledge of the information you've shared," Peart wrote in an email on Sunday.

In early December 2009, Brockman, the literary agent, forwarded to Epstein an email he received from Gelernter, who had written that he had "heard of Jeffrey Epstein only as a sort of brooding, mystical presence."

"I wouldn't have sworn he actually existed," Gelernter wrote. "But I'm more than happy to talk to him," he added, opening the door to a relationship with the convicted sex offender.

Over the course of the next six years, Gelernter and Epstein would exchange emails in which they discussed women, business dealings and Gelernter's art projects. The two also planned several meetings and phone calls.

In their email correspondence, Gelernter and Epstein extensively discussed Lifestreams, Gelernter's software startup that aimed to help computer users manage and share their electronic documents with others. Epstein provided advice to Gelernter about the budding company, even helping the professor revise his business pitch.

In one email chain from May 2011, Gelernter complained to Epstein that work on Lifestreams kept him from grading a "pile of final papers." In a separate email chain two days later, Gelernter told Epstein that he had forgotten to issue grades for his senior students.

"Yes, & just found out my grades for srs are due yesterday or they won't graduate," Gelernter wrote to Epstein, in response to an email from early that morning about whether he was awake.

After Epstein wrote in the same email chain that he was in Paris, Gelernter responded with an email in which he referred to walking along the Seine, seeing Parisian architectural sites and "French girls dressed & behaving like actual females everywhere."

Epstein told Gelernter that the professor had left out of his Paris description "the smell of nutella crepe mixing with the cheap perfume of the streetwalker," which Gelernter affirmed. The Yale academic responded that "any Paris group of spring girls is perfumed, just not as vividly as the golden-hearted whores."

In another exchange of emails from 2009, Gelernter, whose paintings have been displayed on Yale's campus, lamented to Epstein the suppression of sexuality in art. He described "beautiful women" as "the fuel source of all human creativity."

In his reply, Epstein advised Gelernter to "consider focusing" his artistic capability on Hebrew letters.

"I think you might consider focusing on the negative spaces between the hebrew letters much more erotic a bulging shma, or throbbing ka," Epstein wrote to Gelernter. Sh'ma means "listen" in Hebrew.

Gelernter apparently took heed of some of Epstein's artistic advice. In November 2012, the academic placed 29 of his creations in an exhibit at Yeshiva University, in New York City, titled "Sh'ma/Listen."

On multiple occasions, Gelernter and Epstein discussed scheduling meetings in New York City and also New Haven. In correspondence with Lesley Groff, Epstein's long-time executive assistant, Gelernter organized a March 31, 2011, meeting with Epstein "for breakfast" at Epstein's Manhattan townhouse. And in December 2010, Gelernter invited Epstein to "see the paintings, the turkeys, the campus etc." in New Haven.

"We'd love to have you," Gelernter wrote.

Epstein asked whether there was a helicopter pad nearby. Gelernter suggested to Epstein that he could "send a car" to pick up Epstein from Bridgeport-Sikorsky Airport or Tweed New Haven Airport. The professor added that he would check to see if Epstein could alternatively land on the Yale New Haven Hospital heliport.

"Yale's hpad is only med, but I'll check that," Gelernter wrote.

It's not clear if Epstein then came to New Haven. Peart did not answer the News' questions about whether or not Epstein received permission to land on Yale's helipad.

Gelernter and Epstein's email exchanges appear to have come to an end in 2015 after Epstein declined to invest in a software startup launched by his son, Daniel Gelernter '10.

On Oct. 12, 2015, Groff told Epstein that Gelernter wanted him "to meet with Dan" and provide him with advice for his company, which was then at what Gelernter called a "crucial branch point."

Daniel Gelernter exchanged emails with Epstein, discussing his now-defunct tech company, Dittach, that helped users manage email attachments. He asked Epstein on Oct. 14, 2015, to invest in his company, sending him a proposal for a \$1 million investment and promising royalties in return. Epstein disagreed with the terms of the investment, pushing for more royalties.

Daniel Gelernter did not reply to the News' repeated requests for comment.

The last publicly known email exchange between David Gelernter and Epstein appears to have taken place on Oct. 25, 2015. After Epstein explained to Gelernter his decision not to invest in his son's company, Gelernter wrote that he hoped to "get a chance to talk again someday" with Epstein, expressing regret that the investment "didn't work out."

Gelernter studied religious studies as both an undergraduate and graduate student at Yale, according to the alumni directory.

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The Ted K Archive

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