Yellow Bike Club Expands Fleet, Extends Maintenance Hours

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Bowdoin’s student-run Yellow Bike Club has doubled the number of yellow bicycles it rents to students, staff and faculty to 80, and is planning to add weekly bike maintenance hours to service the College’s entire bicycling community.

Chris Kan ’13, co-president of the Yellow Bike Club, says the club was able to gather the additional bikes from the many discarded ones that students left behind last spring. The Yellow Bike Club got its pick of these bikes before they were rounded up for the annual Give & Go sale in June.

The club also received a student-employment grant from Bowdoin to hire Bill Page ’13 as a bike mechanic over the summer. Page repainted the newly acquired bikes a sunshiny yellow, replaced parts, filled tires and did other repairs.

The Yellow Bike Club was founded about eight years ago to promote green transportation on campus. It rents its bicycles on a first-come, first-serve basis for $25 a year, or $15 for a semester. With this fee, members receive a bike lock, comprehensive maintenance and bike storage over the winter and summer, if needed. While the bicycles are in storage, the club’s staff mechanics repair them, readying them for the new semester.

The club’s four student mechanics this year will be adding weekly maintenance hours for the tune up and repair of any bicycle used by a Bowdoin community member, according to Kan. “We are expanding community hours in response to the demand for bike maintenance,” he explained. “Last year we held two quick-fix weeks and had over 200 individual community members helped.”

Club members can also drop off their bike at the YBC shed, behind the Mustard House, for maintenance at any time, as long as they email the club with their name, their bike’s problem and their lock combo.

Although the club was able to double its fleet this year, Kan says the 80 bicycles still don’t meet demand. Already 30 first-year students have rented bicycles, and more are on the waiting list. The remaining 50 available bicycles are being saved for upperclassmen, with preference for renewed members.

Kan says the size of the club’s fleet is limited to its storage space. The YBC has enough room to store 80 bicycles in its shed.

To rent a bicycle, one has to first download a contract from the club’s website and, after filling it out, drop it off at the information desk in Smith Union. The club will notify those who submit
requests if it has a bike available for them.

The club is fairly forgiving when it comes to bike use. Normal wear and tear on the bike is expected, including a few nights left out in the rain, Kan said. In situations of gross negligence, or the bike is stolen, the member is responsible for replacing the bike. “If you run into a wall, we’ll cover it. If you decide to go cliff jumping with your bike, we probably won’t,” Kan said, adding, too, that the club makes students liable if their bike gets hit by a snowplow.