

The Dean's Almanac

Crosswalks

Feb 21, 2006

Let's talk about crosswalks for a minute. When people ask me, "So...what do you think of UConn students?" I sometimes say, "Well, they're mostly great -- smart, reasonably polite, ambitious, but they have this weird crosswalk thing."



"A weird crosswalk thing?"

"Yeah. They seem to believe that stepping into a crosswalk creates a force field around them that belies the laws of physics."

"Huh?"

"As smart as a lot of them are," I continue, "UConn students have this kind of annoying tendency to avoid looking anywhere but straight ahead when they step off the curb, and while they do have the right-of-way in such an instance, I'm not sure they understand that having the right-of-way doesn't magically protect them from a car that may just be going too fast and a driver that just might not see them in time to stop. But it's as if they're saying, 'If I don't see you, you don't exist.'"

"So do a lot of them get hit by cars in crosswalks?"

"At least three during the Fall, and more close calls than I care to think about. The thing is," I continue, "if they would simply look both ways-something they should have learned from their school safety patrol days-they'd be able to avoid the injuries likely to occur when a driver isn't paying attention...even if, yes, the driver is *supposed* to be paying attention. But you know, a broken leg hurts despite any righteous indignation that may accompany it, and the rehab will take as long as it would have had the student been hit while jaywalking (and don't get me started on that)."

Hey, that's all I'm saying. Look before you cross. Even the best drivers don't always see you or stop quickly enough.

Enough of that. Welcome to the first installment of the Dean's Almanac. A while back, I was talking with some students about communication issues. It seems many of you are frustrated by what you perceive as a lack of communication from the administration. And to be honest, we're often equally frustrated both by our inability to figure out what you want us to know and by our lack of effective strategies for telling you what you want to know. The students I spoke with had some good suggestions about the uses (and abuses) of web pages, email, voicemail, flyers and posters, and general word-of-mouth. Someone suggested that it would be great if one of "us"

(that amorphous group of people over the age of 30 known as "The Administration") wrote a regular column in the Daily Campus in which information could be exchanged. But the DC said, "No thanks." So we thought that the student web page would be a good alternative. This is that. See? We do listen.

Those same students said that what they would like to see in this column are answers to questions students have, responses to rumors flying around campus, and general updates on things going on. I think I can do some of that. I don't actually have a lot of answers, having only arrived at UConn last summer, but I am starting to figure out who has the answers I need, and I can ask on your behalf. About rumors? I can do my best to sort them out, attribute them, refute them, confirm them. And I can definitely update you on things going on, though maybe not always things you most want to be updated on.

For your part, you can email me (lee.williams@uconn.edu) with questions, comments, ideas for topics, or even the occasional complaint (but be judicious with those-they make me feel bad when they arrive in bulk). Think of this as an alternative to simply making a comment in the Instant Daily that complains about some weird UConn quirk. I may not be able to respond to every note I get, but I'll do my best to keep you informed. I'll also barrage you with some of my own agenda items (e.g., crosswalk behavior) in my never-ending quest to make you better people, which is what I think they're paying me to do around here. And I'll ask you questions: what you think about things going on around here, decisions we've made or are about to make, how we can become the best University we can be, which is what I think you're paying for around here.

Keep in touch, and would you *please* just look both ways? My goal for Spring, 2006: no crosswalk carnage. Thanks.