

The Dean's Almanac

Here's to Ewe, UConn

January 8, 2007

Happy New Year, folks, and welcome back to scenic Storrs. It's been quiet, of course, without you here. Ample parking, short lines at lunch, crosswalks empty of prayerful members of the Order of the White Earbuds. I hope you all have gotten plenty of rest, had meaningful conversations with your families, reunited with friends, some of whom seem much cooler than they were in high school, others the opposite (you, of course, fall into the former category). Did you work? Did you sleep? Did you decide to change your major? And if you did, was that one of the meaningful conversations you had with your parents? Some surprises they don't like so much, you know, and finding out on graduation day that your degree is in Anthropology instead of Finance is one of them.



I had a good break. Thanks for asking. Favorite movies over break: “The Queen” and “Dreamgirls.” Favorite new music: KT Tunstall’s “Eye to the Telescope” and the Wood Brothers’ “Ways Not to Lose.” Worth reading: “The Emperor’s Children” by Claire Messud. Favorite UConn sports moment: the video clips showing the women who were honored on December 21 as “Huskies of Honor” (wish I had been here to see Jen Rizzotti’s crossover dribble in person). Favorite non-UConn sports moment: Boise State’s gutsy go-for-two in OT against Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl.

Enough about me. Let’s hear from you—yes, *You*, Time Magazine’s Person of the Year (Nice going). **Michelle** asked me about UConn’s sheep. “What do we do with them? Do we make yarn or do we just keep them for the fun of having sheep?” Michelle, if having sheep is your idea of fun, you need to get out more. Anyway, according to Dr. Steve Zinn, Professor of Animal Science:

“The sheep are used for teaching, research and extension. Many of the lambs (mostly the males) are sold. The females are kept to replace the older ewes, which are then sold. The wool is sold through the wool co-op. We don’t market any ourselves. So we sell wool and we sell live animals (they may eventually go for meat, but we don’t market the meat).”

Another All-Creatures-Great-and-Small question came in from **Bridget**. “I don’t like having to artfully dodge the goose poop that is EVERYWHERE around Mirror Lake--on the paths, in the grass, on the benches. It’s disgusting. The water in the lake often has a film on it from goose feathers. Is there something that can be done to rid the campus of the geese? Nobody likes them!”

Is that true? *Nobody* likes the geese? Wow. I feel kind of bad for them. It is true, though, that goose overpopulation has become a serious problem in the Northeast, thanks in part to the more temperate winters (Global warming? *What* global warming?), the building of human-made lakes for landscaping purposes, and the cute tradition of taking one's kids to feed the ducks. I mean, if someone gave me a nice place to live and all the stale bread I could eat, *and* I got to avoid a long, arduous flight south, I'd have to give that some serious thought.

Some goose trivia? The average Canada Snow Goose (which is what we have) eats four to five pounds of grass a day and defecates about every eight minutes, leaving behind about a pound of goose poop each day ([My, my. The things I learn in this job...](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/canada_geese.htm), http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/canada_geese.htm)

I asked the Facilities Folks and see if there are any goose-relocation plans (much preferable to goose-eradication plans) in the works. According to Dave Lotreck, Head Landscape Guy, there isn't. The most effective strategies don't work for us (like noisemakers, which I'm sure the faculty of Arjona and Monteith would just love, and fox decoys, which are just a little too irresistible for some students looking for replacement pets). Dave is open to suggestions.

Melissa and others have written in to ask about the intermittence of hot water and water pressure in various residence halls. Sometimes these problems can be fixed, but only if Housing Operations knows about them. So please report these problems to them using the online form at [their website](#). Sometimes these problems can't be fixed without a lot of money and time (and water turned off for an extended repair period). But this is how life in a community works. Limited resources, seemingly unlimited demand. Lots of people want hot water all at the same time, and we can't all have it. But do report it—they'll fix it if it's fixable.

Stephanie asked a question that I know a lot of you have. "Why do we move in for spring semester on a Monday and not a Sunday? For people whose parents work, Sunday is a lot easier because they don't have to take a day off to bring us to school." Yeah, this kind of bothers me, too, but the reason for it is that Monday is a holiday, so a lot of people don't work. That includes many people here on campus. A lot of offices are closed for MLK Day, and classes don't start till Tuesday. Back in the days before most things were done online, people couldn't get in to those offices to pay their bills, register late, etc., until Tuesday, so a decision was made to not let students return without anything to do on Monday. I'm going to see if some conversations about this can take place that perhaps will encourage us to figure out a way to be more flexible about moving back to campus next year (wow—now there's an administrative answer).

To **Jordan** and others who wrote to complain about Huskymail, there's help on the way. University IT Services (UITS) is upgrading Huskymail with a temporary fix that might solve some of the spam and slowness problems. Stay tuned. If it works, credit the wonders of open source software. If it doesn't, blame the vagaries of open source software. We are also working on identifying better ways to communicate official announcements and hope to significantly reduce or eliminate the student listserv announcements about events on campus. I think the listserv is useful for informing you about important deadlines from offices like the Registrar, Bursar, and Financial Aid. But I'd like to see groups and offices around campus that put on

events find some other, more effective, ways to communicate with you. I'd like to hear your suggestions on this.

Speaking of tech stuff, a lot of you have offered suggestions for channels that you'd like our cable system to carry. We are hoping to have the first meeting of the Student Cable Advisory Committee in the next few weeks to begin looking at this situation, which, as you might expect, is much more complicated than adding channels. More on that as it unfolds (including the names of students on the committee whom you can contact with input).

Let's wrap this up with a history lesson courtesy of a question from **Mandy**, who wondered about the "Knight Hospital" and other buildings on the Depot Campus. What were they before they became the Depot Campus? Here's a response from Mark Roy, staff member in University Communications and campus historian:

The Depot Campus used to be the Mansfield Training School (MTS), a facility for mentally retarded persons starting around 1900. It closed in 1993, after a number of lawsuits regarding the care of persons with mental disabilities and as the state established more group homes for former MTS residents. The portion on the south side of Route 44 became part of the University. The buildings on the north side became the Donald T. Bergin Correctional Institution. The University has repaired buildings at the Depot Campus as resources have become available.

There are several offices and storage facilities over there these days, including Human Resources, the Puppetry Museum, the Fuel Cell Institute, and of course, some intramural and recreation fields.

Are you **free for lunch** on Tuesday, January 23 at noon? Lunch is on me at Chuck and Augie's for the first eight students [I hear from](#). The agenda is yours.

Okay, then. Time for all of us to get back to work. Stick to those New Year's resolutions! Eat well, drink less, exercise more, go to class, and keep in touch.