

The Dean's Almanac

Start Your Engines

August 25, 2006

Hello, Huskies. I'm taking a quick break from move-in to say hey to all of you returners as well as our 3200 new freshmen and 650 or so transfers. Sorry my screen went black for a few weeks there. I was re-booting.



First, a big shout out to some of the great folks I met at PeerFest, including Amanda, Christian, Carlton, Victor, Karla, Celina, Adonis, Marsha, Logan, Laura, Collyn, Jesse, Zane and Tyler. And thanks to those who came to my session and learned how to persuade administrators like me to support their good ideas. Go forth and make disciples of self-advocacy, okay?

For those of you who are new to campus, the Dean's Almanac is a way to get some questions answered, find out if a rumor you've heard is true, make suggestions about improving UConn, and generally connect with an administrator (which would be me). I'll write up some of your questions for everyone to read, and will be happy to answer others privately.

So what's been piling up in the mailbag the past few week? Look, I know some of you are still ticked off about the closing of Ryan, but just give it a chance and see if you can live without it. Have you been to Union Street Market yet? The food there is absolutely great. I recommend the veggie burrito and the house salad. Blimpie's is open for business, Panda is hours away from opening, and Wendy's, well, give them another week or two. But give the Dining Services folks a break! They are a self-supporting operation (they receive NO money from the state or from the University), and as much as they would love to provide every student with a custom-designed diet, delivered right to your door, they have to keep their costs in line with what you can and will pay for dining. So they simply can't keep low-volume operations open, nor can they afford to renovate all of our oldest facilities. And more pressing: we need classroom space on this campus to accommodate the growth in class sections that I know you know we need.

Natasha and others (including the entire football team) have asked why students now have to pay for parking at Hilltop and Charter Oak Apartments and Suites. Here's the scoop from Ann Denny, Director of Parking Services:

"Hilltop and Charter Oak Apartments and Charter Oak Suites are now under the same parking rules and regulations as other residence halls. When these two complexes were built, they were managed by Capstone Management Company. Students living there were told that their parking was included in their housing payment. Parking Services did not receive any money from these

complexes even though we ordered and issued parking permits and processed the parking ticket appeals.”

So when we took over management of these facilities, we charged for parking like we do at all other areas. We gave students a two-year grace period and then began charging. This seems fair to me.

Several of you, including **Adam**, have asked for more information on how prices are set for meals, and why you won't be able to use points at the new vendor stores (Panda, Blimpie, Wendy's) when that's what you were told several years ago. For those answers, I turned to C. (stands for "Cost-containment") Dennis Pierce, Director of Dining Services. Dennis says it is the decision of those vendors not to accept points. You have to keep in mind that the value of a point is not an actual dollar, so if they accepted points, they would essentially be discounting their food significantly, and that wouldn't make sense, of course. But they will accept Husky Bucks, which are a dollar-to-dollar value.

Why is a point not a dollar? Because it was purchased in combination with flex passes and unlimited service. Dennis also wants to remind us all that it's not fair to look at the product and see just the food's raw cost (yes, you can make a turkey sandwich for less than you'll pay on campus or anywhere). You are also paying for the service (labor and benefits, energy costs, etc).

Jeff asked about the front-end-eating potholes at the entrances to X and W lots. I sent his note over to Facilities, and they filled them in that week. Special thanks to Dave Lotreck and John Decker from Landscape and Building Services, and, of course, to Jeff, for pointing this out. We really do like it when you let us know that something needs fixing.

Speaking of which, **Valentino** asked about the keyboards on the public computer terminals just outside Bookworms Café. Apparently they were pretty gross. I sent that note over to Brinley Franklin, Head Library Guy, and he alerted his tech staff, specifically Rick O'Toole. After some discussion, they decided they were not cleanable, so they'll be replaced soon (if not already), and a regular cleaning schedule will be implemented (boy, I want that job). So next time you sit down there to check your email, say a quiet thanks to Valentino, Brinley and Rick for taking care of the sticky keys.

Here's a tough question from **Carol**. "What's the deal with our gym? Honestly, it's pathetic. Have you seen it? There are no TVs, a lack of circulating air, and no music. It's also wayyyy too small and there's always a wait! It's seriously lacking and I'm really disappointed! Any idea how come?"

Aw. Come on. Is it that bad? Well, yeah, it's a little small, but Director of Recreation Patti Bostic and her faithful staff have used every square inch of that space to provide as much equipment as they can, and I'll tell you, they run a TIGHT SHIP. But it's no LA Athletic Club. Why is that? Up till now, it's just not been a priority for UConn. Not to say it's not important, it definitely is. Just that building new residence halls and academic buildings has been more important. Now that those are built, we can start planning a new recreation center. It's being talked about around campus, and I wouldn't be surprised to see construction start on one in the next couple of years.

Too late, I know, for Carol and others who are already here, but hey, you got to enjoy some nice residence halls and classroom buildings, unlike those who went before you.

And you've got a brand new Union!!! Personally, I've found that walking from one end of the Union and back is a decent work out, especially if you take the stairs from the Market to the 4th floor. And if you wear your iPod and some Underarmour, you can pretend you're in a really nice gym. So maybe for now, the Union can be a kind of rec center-outpost.

Okay, then, friends. That wraps it up for this week's Almanac. I am happy that you're back, and want to remind you to take good care of one another, especially the freshmen who don't know their way around yet. Don't make fun of them. You were there once, right? So keep your karma healthy and be nice to everyone, especially your Dean of Students.

Got a question? A rumor? Just want someone to know what you think? Send me a note at: Lee.Williams@uconn.edu.

More dangerous than an unanswered question is an unquestioned answer. - unknown