

# The Dean's Almanac

## The Deal with Tomatoes

*October 26, 2006*

I appreciate it when you send me questions I can answer, because the ones I can't answer (or can't answer in a satisfactory way) make me feel kind of bad. And I appreciate the requests that I can actually fulfill, because there are some I just can't do much about. I can't create more parking (I can just tell you some of the reasons we don't have enough). I can't keep the dining halls open 24 hours so you can get your tater tots whenever you want (though I can refer you to an upcoming opportunity to talk with Head Dining Guy C. (stands for Compromise) Dennis Pierce). I can't assuage your fears about being lotteried out of housing in the Spring. I can't get more student tickets for basketball games.



I can, however, answer **Benjamin's** question.

"In North Dining Hall, there are signs saying how tomatoes are temporarily not being offered because hurricane damage to tomato crops has caused prices to rise. However, once a week I eat at Putnam dining hall in Hilltop, and tomatoes are being offered every time I go there. So why is it that Hilltop gets tomatoes, and North doesn't? I live in North, and I would like my home dining hall to have tomatoes, because they are very healthy and I like the taste of them."

Benjamin, I am so glad you like tomatoes, which are much better for you than tater tots. The answer is a simple one: each dining hall manager decides how to spend his/her budget. North's manager can decide to forego tomatoes to provide other things. You should talk with your dining hall manager and request that tomatoes be offered, though be prepared to lose something else.

I heard from **Cheryl** that the football team's kickers have been practicing their kicks in the direction of D-Lot, and that some cars have been damaged. I asked Vaughn Williams, Head Athletic Facilities Guy about this. He said the team shouldn't be kicking on that side, since the netting is up on the other side of the field, and he has requested that the team make that adjustment. So hopefully you won't see stray balls coming that way anymore. And if you do, ask Chris Pavasaris, the punter, who seems like a nice guy in addition to having a great leg, about it.

I got a couple of questions about the stairs from D-Lot down to Stadium Drive. I guess they're under repair. Haven't heard when they'll be done. Can someone let me know if they're still working on them?

**Tiffany** asked if our residence halls will ever be wireless. That topic is under discussion, and is certainly a direction we'd like to go in. The issue is, of course, cost. But yes, someday, hopefully soon, there will be wireless access in our halls.

A quick note on "cost" as a recurring theme. So many requests and suggestions you make are great ones, but are simply not in the budget. We should have wireless. We should have a great rec center. We should have beautiful residence halls for everyone, not just some of you. We should have more sections of classes you need. We should have tomatoes in every dining hall. But we should also provide an affordable education for Connecticut's outstanding students (and those few lucky folks from out-of-state), and everything we do that costs money drives up the cost of a UConn education. You may say, "It's just a few dollars a student," but for some of you, a few dollars here and a few dollars there make a real difference in your ability to pay for your education. We would love to give you just about everything you want, but we also want to make sure students from families that don't have a lot of money can continue to go here. This is very, very difficult to balance. So please be patient and know we're sometimes frustrated, too.

**Aaron** asked about the overgrowth of brush on the walkway between Hilltop and the track, and I sent his note on to Dave Lotreck, Head Landscape Guy, who sent out the trimming crew to take care of it. Thanks, Dave, and Aaron, too, for the suggestion.

The leaf-blowing noise, though, which **Robert** asked about, is not so easy to fix. I'm sorry they make a racket and disturb classes, but it's a short-term problem. The leaves need to get collected. We can't ask the crews to do this at night, and weekends are reserved for people to rake their own leaves. So be patient. All that beautiful fall foliage comes with a price, as does living in a community which is full of mostly wonderful people. Or...organize a group of your classmates, get some rakes, and go out and rake the leaves into a neat pile so the leaf crews can come by and just scoop them up in a few minutes' time. It's good exercise, especially done early in the morning.

Speaking of Robert, I had a great lunch with him and some others this week, and another fun group a couple of weeks ago. Over an exquisite Chuck and Augie's pistachio chicken salad one day and a turkey panini the other day, I enjoyed some very interesting conversation and came away, again, impressed by the thoughtfulness and Husky pride of UConn students. I'll do another lunch sometime soon. Stay tuned.

Hey—do you have any concerns about the Peter Pan bus service, you know, where you buy tickets and wait to get picked up at the Co-op? If so, please write and tell me about your experience. I'd like to talk with the Peter Pan People and share your concerns to help them improve their service.

Okay, I need to talk with you about something serious. I've gotten questions from several of you about our process of notifying the community about the death of a student. Here's the absolute truth: we notify the community as soon as we 1) have confirmation of the death, 2) have permission from the police and or family, if that appears to be an issue, and 3) can get the announcement out on the appropriate listserv. We may delay it slightly if we are waiting on

information about memorial services, though we will send out an announcement without this if it is not something we will know quickly.

So why would delays occur? If something happens off-campus, we might not know about it. On-campus incidents are reported to us by UConn's police. But when something, anything, happens off-campus, we may not hear about it, even though there are rumors going around campus, or some students know about it. Sometimes it's a matter of notifying next-of-kin prior to announcing it publicly. This may be difficult to believe, but sometimes we find out about something the same way you do—in the newspaper. We depend on the state police and families to notify us about off-campus incidents, and that doesn't always happen in a timely manner. If there are rumors that are not true (such as a rumor that someone has died but is, in fact, still alive), we DO NOT send out an announcement refuting the rumor. Why? Because it's medical information and out of respect for the privacy of the people involved, we do not share such things publicly. If we ever think you need to know something for your own health and safety, we will definitely tell you.

That's it. No conspiring on our part to keep information from you. No desire on our part to dismiss your questions or concerns. These are very difficult situations and we are trying to balance the needs of the community with the needs of individual students and their families, the requests of the police in some cases, and the requirements of the law. So please give me the benefit of the doubt on this. I will never lie to you.

Lots of your other questions are in the queue. Sorry not to get to them all, but my desk is a mess, I haven't read the papers my students turned in last Monday, and I'm hoping to get some lunch. So I hope this will suffice.

And just in case you're wondering, I know you are taking care of one another out there. Please keep it up, and please know how much I appreciate it.

**Want to talk with UConn Big Cheeses like the Provost, vice presidents and other fun folks? Come to the "Straight from the Source" forum being sponsored by USG on Wednesday, November 15 at 7 pm in the Student Union Theatre. I'll be there, too.**

**Want to talk with Dennis Pierce, Director of Dining Services? He'll be at the RHA meeting on Wednesday, November 29, at 7 pm in the RHA office (near Ryan Refectory). If you can't make it, share your concerns and questions with your RHA representative. Commuter students can attend as well.**