

The Dean's Almanac

March On Huskies

March 4, 2008

I've come to believe that there is a disturbance in the space-time continuum that occurs every year between January and March. The eight weeks between the start of the semester and Spring Break actually take twelve weeks to pass. And then another one occurs between March and May, when the eight weeks after Spring break actually are compressed into five. Does anyone else feel like that? Like the path to Spring Break is one long slog through thick mud?



Lee Burdette Williams at Gampel Pavilion

Speaking of which: I know! I know! I know we have drainage problems on campus. The Facilities folks know, too, and try to identify the worst areas for some repair. But when the ground is frozen, those four inches of steady rain have nowhere to go. We could put drains everywhere, but eventually the campus would have something like a honeycomb surface, and it would then collapse and send us all crashing into the Earth's core. And who wins that way?

So until the ground warms and the rain soaks in, get yourself a pair of reasonable shoes or boots. My recommendation is [this](#)

(http://www.llbean.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?page=beans-wellies&categoryId=54104&storeId=1&catalogId=1&langId=-1&parentCategory=503432&cat4=503425&shop_method=pp&feat=503432-tn)

. Trust me. It is so much easier than dodging puddles that in some cases are wider than Thabeet's wingspan. So **Viktor** and **Emily** (the "Seasoned Puddle Snorkeler"), your Dean says GET SOME BOOTS!

Some other interesting questions have come in, many of them about specific incidents, like the recent road/path closing from Charter Oak toward campus. I forwarded on some of your complaints and am happy to report that Landscape and Building Services has agreed to notify Residence Life when such a thing has to happen (this was after a bad storm and some emergency tree work was required) so students can be notified and plan alternate routes. So thanks, **Tyler** and **Erica** and others who wrote to me about this. This change will benefit a lot of students in the future.

About the gate near Hilltop Apartments, which **Victoria** and **Richard** wrote in about: regular Almanac readers might remember this answer. It's kept closed except for opening weekend because of a longstanding agreement between the University and the local neighbors who did not

want campus traffic driving through their neighborhood. The gate is there for fire safety purposes (the trucks can come in that way), but the rest of us have to take the long way around.

I know a lot of you are frustrated by the recent glut of spam on Huskymail. I agree with **Samantha** as well as **Suzi**, who wrote,

I was wondering how, in the past month, Huskymail has gotten terrible at detecting spam. It used to be really great! I would only get spam maybe once a week, if at all, and it was always labeled with {SPAM?}. Now, every single morning I log on I get at LEAST five emails telling me to "Energize my inner male!" or "Stay man even when drunk!" (Not even sure if that last one is a real sentence or not.) What happened to Huskymail??

Spam is a scourge - the bubonic plague of the electronic age (okay, maybe not that bad). Spammers constantly improve their ability to get through spam filters, which our IT folks then need to upgrade. The upgraded filters work until the spammers figure those out, and on and on. It's like a cyber death spiral (okay, I'm being dramatic again). So just hit delete and be grateful you're smart enough to ignore those enticing offers to "meet nice girl tonight." You *are* smart enough, right?

I've gotten several emails lately about areas of campus that are particularly dangerous for pedestrians. We have a pedestrian safety committee that is evaluating all of these and others they know about. When I get messages from you all, like I did from **Michael, Farah, Tara** and **Lindsay**, I forward them on to the committee, which is chaired by Captain Rhoda Aversa of the UConn Police Department. Her group examines the problem and makes recommendations. Some of them are fairly simple, like improving signage or adding some lighting, but others are not as easy, like building sidewalks on state roads. But we'll keep working on these, so please do let us know about the dangerous locations out there.

As always, folks have questions about food and finance. So in quick order, here are answers to questions from **Joanna, Karin** and **Katie**: 1) Students who live in residence halls (not apartments) are required to be on meal plans because the residence halls don't have adequate kitchen equipment for people to prepare meals, and such activity increases the likelihood of bugs and mice. Also, Dining Services depends on the revenue of all students to support itself (remember that Dining Services is a self-supporting unit that gets no funds from the state). 2) You should direct any suggestions for menu changes or additions to the **manager** of the particular dining hall. Managers have a lot of freedom to make menu decisions, and are very open to student input. 3) There are fees associated with HuskyBucks refunds in part to pay for the HuskyBucks program. When you use an ATM not associated with your bank, you pay a fee. When you use a credit card, you pay a fee (in the form of interest). But HuskyBucks doesn't charge you for using your card. They recoup some of their costs through charging fees for administrative services like refunds.

Speaking of ATM withdrawal, your mom wrote in and asked me to ask you to stop withdrawing \$20 and being dinged for a \$2 fee each time. They add up.

If you're curious about May Commencement, like **Tak** is, check out the commencement [website](http://www.commencement.uconn.edu/) (<http://www.commencement.uconn.edu/>). Tak's right. There are some significant changes, including every school and college having its own ceremony. So start planning now for what will be a complex dance of parking, walking, marching, sitting and cap-tossing.

On-campus housing has been on the minds of a lot of students these days, and a few of you wrote in looking for more information. Please check Residence Life's website (www.reslife.uconn.edu) in mid-March for specific instructions on room selection. Big kudos to Pam and her staff who are all still upright and speaking in complete sentences after a few packed weeks managing the lottery process. I know it's not popular with students, but that's the price of high demand and limited supply.

I'm going to wrap up with **Megan's** question, one that I've had for almost three years myself. What's the deal with the bicycle wheel U-locked to a signpost on the sidewalk heading toward the horse barns? Megan's been looking at it even longer: she's a senior and has been walking past it since she was a freshman. Ah, the symbols that mark the passage of collegiate time. I asked Dave the Head Landscaping Guy, who said they are in year five of a seven-year rust experiment. I believed him (I'm like that). Then he 'fessed up that he really had no idea why it's been there for so long, but maybe he'll send a crew out to investigate, analyze, report back, get appropriate permits, evaluate the level of risk, put out an RFP, review bids, screen contractors for previous felonies, award the contract, stand by helplessly while it's done poorly, sue the contractor unsuccessfully, and eventually remove it themselves. Or he might just start with that last step. Stay tuned.

There were a few other questions that came in, but my brain's a little fried (can you relate?) so check back in the next Almanac. Have a safe and fun Spring Break, friends. Look out for one another, and remember your Dean loves you and wants you around for the last and best part of the year.