

The Dean's Almanac

Bells Bells Bells Bells and More

March 9, 2007

Welcome back after what I hope was a reasonably restful Spring Break. To those of you who managed to head south to warmer climes, well, just keep it to yourself.

It was a quiet week here, with ample parking, no lines at Union Street Market, some great women's basketball (with more to come), and the last gasp of the old pharmacy building, now just a pile of rubble between the Union and CUE. About the only other excitement around campus was the skunk wandering around outside Wilbur Cross, which kept me and my office mates entertained one quiet afternoon as we watched it amble around below our windows. Apparently, the rather fat and none-too-graceful animal lives underneath the Storrs Hall annex, so to Nursing students and faculty, beware. That is not a cat with a limp.



Here's a question for you. I've heard from several freshmen and their parents that there's nothing to do here at UConn, and that's why they party and then get in trouble. But I've met many upperclass students who seem to do things other than party. So my question is, how did you make the transition from bored freshman to involved upperclass student? If you weren't into partying, how did you meet others who felt the same? Or did you? Is it true that a student's only options here are to party or sit alone in their room watching movies? Do seniors drink more than freshmen? Less? I am looking for a little clarity on this issue, so please email me (lee.williams@uconn.edu) your thoughts on social life at UConn.

The more I've thought about this, though, the more I've realized that the creation of a social life is really the responsibility of each individual, and it's one of those tasks of growing up. Mom isn't here to schedule play dates. You don't have school from 7:30 am till 3:30 with a full slate of after-school stuff. The friends you grew up with are not here in Storrs (at least that's the case for many of you). So how do you make the transition from a kid whose life was planned by others to an adult who plans his/her own life? Because I've got to tell you, once you get out of college, there are even fewer options. Out in the real world, there's no Husky Howl, no movies or concerts a few minutes' walk away (unless you land in the heart of a city). Friends are not down the hall—they're across the city, or the state, or country, and making new friends is a necessity. And there aren't parties every Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sometimes it's just you and some friends and a DVD or new music, conversation, a good meal. Probably sounds a little boring, but one day, this will all make sense.

And what's here in the mailbag? All sorts of interesting things. One issue that's come up a few times is your general aggravation about not being able to move in at the start of spring semester until the Monday before classes start (as opposed to Sunday). So Associate VP of Y'all Sam Miller agreed to arm-wrestle me over it, and even though he gave me a tough time, I finally slammed his arm to the table, stood up and screamed, "YES!! Sunday it is, Sammy!!" So next year, that's what it will be. Seriously, Sam was a driving force behind this change, so many thanks to him and to Residence Life for seeing the need for a change and making it happen.

Benjamin asked why classes are held on Presidents' Day, which is a federal holiday. Yes, it is, but our academic calendar makes it difficult for us to cancel classes one day during the week (especially when labs are involved). So we hold classes, and most employees are given the choice of taking the day off or using the holiday on another day. You probably have noted that most businesses are open on Presidents' Day. It's usually just government offices that are not.

Over on East Campus, **Emily** has been losing sleep because of the bells that she says are chiming from the steeple of Storrs Congregational Church every hour all night. "It's hard enough to fall asleep worrying about midterms, but when you add in bells every 15 minutes, I feel like I'm in an Edgar Allen Poe poem." Kudos for a literary reference, and one that might resonate with our Eastsiders:

In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.

So I called Tish Ignatowicz, office administrator at the church, who was surprised to hear that the bells are playing overnight. "They are scheduled to chime every quarter hour, and then play on the hour, from 7 am till 9 pm, but if they're playing overnight, something is not working correctly." So she's looking into it and will make sure that's not happening. By the way, what you're hearing at those times is a recording, but what you hear around 4:15 in the afternoon is being performed live by the church's carillonneur (i.e., bell-ringer) on the church's historic [80-year old carillon](http://www.storrscongchurch.org/Music%20Program/dunham.htm) (<http://www.storrscongchurch.org/Music%20Program/dunham.htm>).

A query about lighting around the Islamic Center came in from Qesar, who thinks the area could be better lit, especially if some burned-out bulbs could be replaced. The Center, like the churches on North Eagleville Rd., are actually not University property, though the University does provide some maintenance which the church or center pays for. So I believe the Islamic Center folks are now looking into this and soon Qesar and his companions will be brighter...I mean, the area will be brighter. Qesar's plenty bright already.

There's been a lot of email about the weather, closings, and UConn's efforts to keep roads and sidewalks clear. So here's the thing about closings and delayed openings: conditions vary even within a few miles of campus. When the decision is made to delay the start of school, or close completely, it's being made in consultation with UConn and State Police who know what the

roads look like around campus and beyond. The Facilities Department also gets to offer an opinion on how long it might take to get parking lots plowed (a much easier task when they're empty) and sidewalks sanded. But do they know what YOUR driveway looks like? Do they know that you're visiting a friend in Avon or Providence and can't get back in time for class because it's worse there? Of course not. So make your own decision about your own safety, and then just deal with whatever consequences there might be. Most faculty are pretty understanding (though I will say that they are more understanding of students who usually come to class than they are of those who only show up occasionally and then try to use the weather as an excuse—just an observation), and will cut you some slack.

As for your complaints about ice on the sidewalk: Here—buy some [Yaktrax](http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/fs311.html) (<http://www.herringtoncatalog.com/fs311.html>), available in three stylish colors. You will look cool. Sorry to not be very sympathetic, but we live in the northeast, and winter weather is part of our reality. This is a big campus with a lot of sidewalks and roads, and our facilities and grounds staff work very hard, often in terrible conditions, often overnight, to clear as much as they can. So put on some reasonable footwear (Uggs are not reasonable footwear when it's wet and/or icy, nor are spike heels, flip-flops or sneakers) and give yourself a little extra time to get places.

On a lighter, better-weather, note, **Greg** asked about plans for space being cleared by the demolition of the old pharmacy building. I have suggested an amusement park, a petting zoo/skunk sanctuary, an airfield, and a sculpture garden, but unfortunately, no one on the Building and Grounds committee listens to me. The current plan is that it will be left as open space, good for Frisbee, public displays of affection, stump speeches, outdoor dining and people-watching.

Want to have dinner? My treat. First eight students to email me (lee.williams@uconn.edu) and are free at 5:30 on Wednesday, March 21, are invited to join me for a catered dinner somewhere on campus to be determined.

That's it for this time. Stay warm and dry and use some aloe on your peeling sunburn, and remember, final exams are only 8 weeks away.