

The Dean's Almanac

Summertime...and the Livin' is Easy

June 25, 2007

My, my, it is pretty in Storrs during the summer. Wish you were all here to enjoy it. Of course, if you were, all those empty parking spaces would disappear and the line at Wendy's would be fifteen minutes long. So maybe it's okay that you're not here. Wherever you are, I hope it's as lovely as it is here.

So what's going on here, you ask? Orientation is the big activity - three sessions a week. Our incoming freshmen arrive on Mondays and Thursdays, transfers on Wednesdays, and proceed to roam the campus in packs of about 20, led by an orientation leader identifiable by a shirt with a name on it and a propensity to point at things. Parents also arrive, and are whisked away by another set of orientation leaders whose job it is to keep those parents from 1) tagging along three steps behind their sons and daughters, 2) introducing their student to other students and 3) telling them to major in accounting when they are really interested in ornamental horticulture.



The Dean plays Oozeball (but not very well)

Other fun summer activities that you miss out on because you'd rather be wherever you are include ice cream in the Student Union every Tuesday and a lunchtime barbecue and live music every Wednesday. Evenings, I'm sorry to say, aren't too exciting. Mostly we stand out on 195 and look north, watching for the flatbed trailer that's supposed to arrive with our new town, Storrs Center. I'm also sorry to report that the vacant lot that appeared when the old pharmacy building disappeared is still a vacant lot, though just this week, the Board of Trustees did approve funding for improving this lot. But no word on when it will begin. On a happier note, work will soon begin on improvements to the Depot Field and the eventual building of a second field out there.

[Uh-oh. As I'm sitting here at my desk, looking out the window at the parking area below, a police officer is ticketing cars. See? It's not just you, and it's not just during the school year. Parking enforcement at UConn never sleeps.]

We have some new foals over at the horse barns - five, I think. Very cute. The calves aren't quite as cute, I'm afraid, and they don't let visitors into the pig house. But I like the foals. They seem

to have the same wide-eyed sense of anticipation that incoming freshmen have, though are less concerned with what they're wearing and don't have Facebook profiles.

I sat in a mostly-empty Gampel Pavilion last Saturday and watched our superb women's basketball team play some pick-up. I have to say that Renee Montgomery is even more fun to watch when she doesn't have to worry about getting the hook from Geno for a no-look, behind-the-back pass to Tina Charles on a break.

A few questions came in at the end of the semester that I've not responded to here, so let me get to some of them. **Kristen** writes,

“As a music major I spend the day in the music building, only leaving to eat lunch at Buckley dining hall. Most fine arts majors often run across 195 instead of using the crosswalk with the pedestrian light because it's a lot faster and sometimes the button is broken. Is there any way we could have a crosswalk painted between the Fine Arts building and Buckley? Any police officer knows what part of the street I'm taking about because they often perch by the Daily Campus and watch us dodge traffic.”

You know, if I had my way, our campus would be one giant crosswalk, which would mean, of course, no cars anywhere. Kind of like Disney World. Alas, here at UConn, pedestrians and cars must learn to peacefully coexist. This means, in part, not putting crosswalks everywhere, because then it would be virtually impossible to drive, and 195 is a state road that carries a lot of local, non-campus traffic. So for now, you'll have to use the existing crosswalks. Does the button really not work well? I've not heard that, but please let me know if others have experienced this. And really - are there UConn police officers sitting there? And if there are, might they not have a reason to sit there, like watching for drivers who disregard pedestrian safety? If you think, at any time, a UConn police officer is not doing his/her job, I really encourage you to visit the Public Safety website and learn how to report officer misconduct. Last year, by the way, there were 16 such complaints, and two of them were found to have merit. I applaud those students who took the time to make a formal complaint, and I applaud Chief Hudd and the Department for taking those complaints seriously and investigating them. The Department is always looking for ways to be better, and it's your job as a Husky to help them do so.

Couple of bus questions came in. **Jessica** asked why only some of the bus stops, and not others, have schedules on them. Shuttle Boss Janet Freniere had this to say:

“We are addressing this issue as we speak. The “Infoposts” that are at some of the stops were an experiment of sorts a few years ago. They cost about \$150.00 per schedule holder at that time and have gone up in price considerably since then. While \$150 may not seem like a lot, when we have 64 stops.... Anyway, to make a long story short, Facilities has made a prototype of the schedule holder and we are awaiting an estimate from them for the price to make more. Some stops, where we generally pick-up very few people on a consistent basis, may never have them. However, we do know that we have to have them at many more “popular” stops than we do now.”

And **Frank** asked why the buses stop running earlier on Spring Weekend, when it seems they are most needed. This is a longstanding issue involving safety. Whose is more important? The drivers? Or the students who need a ride? Back in the days of ESW (that's Embarrassing Spring Weekends, which brought shame and disdain upon our fine University and ruined many promising academic careers), it was truly unsafe for buses to be out and about on those nights. But now that we live in an era of FSW (Fun Spring Weekends, where people have a great time without wrecking the place), we might be able to revisit this issue. I'd love to see more transportation options available on Spring Weekend, including Guard Dogs. Think of the column inches the Daily Campus will save if it doesn't have 35 DUI arrests to report in the Police Blotter. We'll work on this for next year, assuming you want to have Spring Weekend again (let me know).

On the landscaping front, I heard from **Caroline**:

“Why is there a strip of mud between pavements outside of Colt (Towers)? The side of our building, facing T-Lot, has a porch which extends several feet from the building. There is a drop-off blacktop area extending from the parking lot to the building. However, the two have a good eight-foot gap between. With constant student traffic, it naturally becomes mud every time it rains, and can be quite slippery, especially when you're trying to carry anything.”

According to Head Landscape Guy Dave Lotreck, this area is prone to erosion due to foot traffic, the grade of the hill, and vehicles on the sidewalk (?). They'll take a look at it and see if they can improve it before next mud season.

Okay, then. Time for me to head to the Dairy Bar for a banana chocolate chip cone before my next session with parents of incoming freshmen (this is the one where I tell them all how wonderful you are and that most of you will spend your weekends in the library or volunteering at an animal shelter...I don't know why, but they look incredulous). Go slather on the SPF 30 and enjoy the rest of your summer. I'll see you in August.