

The Dean's Almanac

Don't Swim with the Fishes

September 20, 2007

There I was, enjoying warm summer weather, and I woke up one morning to find it was 38 degrees outside. Is there no respect for *gradual* change around here? And then I look around campus and see that we tear down and put up buildings in an equally abrupt way, and it all makes sense. Connecticut is not really the "land of steady habits." It's the "land of overnight road construction that changes your route to work between 6 pm on Monday and 8 am on Tuesday" (but I guess as a slogan, that one didn't fit too well on things).



Lee (left) and friend on Bright Angel Trail

Four weeks into the semester already. Are you all keeping up with your work? Or will you arrive at midterms in a couple of weeks and finally *look* at your syllabus? I feel like I fall into the latter category, to be honest. Part of the problem is UConn, though (I need to blame something other than myself for my procrastination). There are too many things to do every night. I have to decide between athletic events (the women's volleyball team is very fun to watch), musical performances, USG meetings (always entertaining), speakers, and sitting in the Student Union pondering the evolution of student wardrobes (that's when I sound the most like my mother: "Is that actually *comfortable*? No? Then why are you wearing it?").

Some questions have come in from various quarters. I have a few answers, and am still waiting on others. **DJ** wrote,

My question/concern is why are there no recycling cans around campus? As the top public university in New England, UConn should be setting an example for the rest of the state. It kills me every time I see someone throw out their plastic bottle.

I appreciate hyperbole in such matters, DJ, as I agree we need to do this better. And I think we are. I asked Rich Miller and his folks over in Ecohusky for an update on recycling efforts. Here's his answer:

UConn's main campus rolled out a brand new recycling program last May which features a more-than-\$100,000 investment in new recycling containers placed in buildings across campus, as well as posters, labels and enhanced custodial training. For highly-trafficked areas of campus, 1200 new blue and green "slim-jim" containers with restricted lids replaced the nearly-20-year old red and yellow "brutes," which were often used as trash cans and had become an increasing source of mixed trash and recyclables. Our consultant reports that the new restricted lids can reduce this cross-contamination by up to 98% -- a significant improvement, because when trash and recyclables are mixed, the entire contents is almost always handled as trash by our waste and

recycling haulers. In addition, 4500 desk-side paper recycling bins have been installed across campus.

The Student Union has more than 85 sets of slim-jims now strategically located near trash cans and other well-used spaces. Dining Services has begun installing new bins in dining halls and cafes for newspapers and Res Life plans to begin installing new bins soon. Water bottles are rapidly filling up new slim-jims at the Student Rec Facility. The new bins are already resulting in encouraging increases in recycling rates. Comparing 2005 with 2007, average monthly recycling tonnages are up 50% for mixed paper, more than 180% for library paper and more than 400% for newspaper.

Please visit: www.ecohusky.uconn.edu/recyclingprogram.htm for more information.

So let's hear it for our Office of Environmental Policy, for students who care enough to recycle, and for Mother Earth, who is in desperate need of assistance.

Julie's question is on a familiar topic: parking.

I was wondering, as a commuter student that is being told that permits were not oversold, why there are no spots after 10 am anywhere? If they are not being oversold why does Parking and Transportation Services get so much revenue from parking tickets? Shouldn't it be that everyone is guaranteed a spot, or if this is not the case shouldn't it be that when we are so called "blocking aisles" we shouldn't get ticketed when we really can't help it? I'm so sick and tired of having to get on campus at least one hour before I have a commitment and "stalking" someone to a spot just to get ticketed! I just really want to know if the permits are oversold, and if there are any ideas of expanding the lots.

I'm not positive, but I think Julie's irritated. Using my fail-safe Dean of Students Angry Student Equation, where one angry student writing to me equals fifty angry students who are too busy or apathetic to write (for those of you keeping score, that's DOSASE: 1 ASW=50 AS2BA), I figured that perhaps some others also feel this way. So I called the woman who I can't believe still takes my calls and politely answers my emails, Ann Denny, Director of Parking Services. Here's her response:

We have not oversold any student or employee parking.

Revenue from student parking tickets goes to the Police Department to fund enforcement and all materials used for enforcement; \$250,000 goes to student scholarship; funds the Parking Ombudsman's position in Parking Services and the remainder goes to the Financial Aid Department.

Vehicles parking illegally in any parking lots are ticketed by the enforcement officers.

So I guess the question is, what exactly does "oversold" mean? Does your permit guarantee you a space? Or the right to find a space? The folks in Parking tell me that there are spaces at all times, just not in the closest lots. People willing to go immediately to a more distant lot, park,

and walk, will probably use less time, on average, to get to the center of campus than those who go to a closer lot and go up and down the aisles hoping to get lucky.

As for new lots, I do believe that a new lot is being constructed on the north side of campus, but it is still a more remote lot than people might desire.

Ben wrote to ask about the UConn Police.

Why are they cracking down so much on Celeron? In past years the police wouldn't start knocking on apartment doors to clear out Celeron until around 12:30am, and usually there were several warnings to clear everyone out of an apartment before they began making arrests/handing out alcohol citations. The past several weekends, the police have begun clearing out Celeron at 11pm, well before any parties were under way. UConn right now is a school that has a reputation among many young people as being a school that is very academically strong, but also a lot of fun. That balance of academics and fun is a strength that draws people, including myself to the University. Ruining the fun of the students is only likely to scare people away, including the academically strong students that the University seeks to attract.

The balance of academics and fun is an art, and I agree with Ben that it's part of what makes UConn a great place. That said, I'll venture a few guesses and opinions. One is that fall semesters in the past have also started out with a more visible presence by both the State Police and the UConn Police, in part, I imagine, to establish some standards for students and others who might not be familiar with the "academics" side of the academics/fun balance, at least not till they get their midterm exams back. Also, because the weather is warmer now, there are more people outside, thus requiring more attention than is needed in the bleak midwinter weather of Storrs. Another guess I'd make is that from a law enforcement point of view, it's easier to break up a small potential party at 11 pm than a large out-of-control party at 12:30. Not to say that all potential parties become out of control in a couple of hours. But those that do can be kind of scary. From a distance, police officers can't always tell the difference between the charming and well-mannered students I know and love and those students or visitors who are not so charming, may perhaps be itchin' for a fight, or even, in rare instances, might be armed. And think about what it's like to be 1) outnumbered by the guests at a party, and 2) wearing a uniform that some people interpret as a threat in and of itself.

Like I said, those are my personal opinions, and you might not agree. But please do consider what things might look like from an officer's point of view, and maybe try assuming that they're just doing their jobs the best way they can. My point of view tells me this: so far this semester, we have way too many students being transported to the hospital because of alcohol poisoning, way too many students being arrested for driving while they're intoxicated, and way too many students reporting that they have been robbed, harassed, or harmed in some way because of someone's drunkenness. If breaking up a gathering can reduce these numbers, that's okay with me.

But yes, fun is important, and I'll continue to work on this and think about this and listen to your ideas for finding this all-important balance between having a good time and having a relatively safe time.

From over on the very edge of campus, **Daniel** asked,

I'm concerned with the safety of the residents of Northwood Apartments. Since there are no sidewalks along North Eagleville Road beginning at Hunting Lodge Road, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road. I noticed that sidewalks are being repaired/added just after the Police Station. We are wondering if these works include the adding of sidewalks in the area I'm mentioning.

The new sidewalks on North Eagleville Road are a great addition to the campus, but Daniel's right. We still have a long way to go, literally. The stretch of road he refers to is, according to UConn's Chief Operating Officer Barry Feldman, not actually ours:

I believe this road comes under the jurisdiction of the Town of Mansfield. The town is planning to install sidewalks on Hunting Lodge from North Eagleville to Celeron, but I don't know if there are plans to build a sidewalk on this part of North Eagleville.

So I asked Matt Hart, Mansfield town manager and, like Barry, a hard-working and very nice guy, what might be in the works. Matt agreed that this stretch of road is a concern, and that sidewalks are a likely addition at some point in the future, but not within the next couple of years.

WOULD SOMEONE PLEASE ASK ME AN EASY QUESTION???

"I noticed about 20 dead fish floating within about a ten-foot radius in Mirror Lake. Is this normal? Or should the water be tested?" asks **Kris**.

I hope dead fish are not the norm. I've asked the Dave the Head Landscape Guy, and he's asked the Environmental Policy folks, and they're probably really busy right now moving us toward a 21st century recycling plan. I'll let you know what I find out in the next Almanac. Till then, stay safe, take care of each other, and stay out of Mirror Lake. It's hasn't been working out too well for the fish.