

The Dean's Almanac

Mysteries Solved

November 14, 2007

It's getting to be that fully-stuffed part of the semester when there are a hundred and twelve events somewhere on campus every night, class projects and presentations heat up, both football and basketball get headlines (not, unfortunately, our outstanding field hockey and men's soccer teams, which surely deserve their very own headlines), and the staff holiday party circuit begins. So what am I doing sitting at my desk?

Answering email, of course. It's what I do.

But first, a topic familiar to regular readers:

crosswalks. Several people have asked me to remind you that crosswalks do *not* have magical powers that protect you from inattentive drivers. It gets dark pretty early these days, and a lot of people are leaving campus in cars and on foot right around dusk—5 or 6 o'clock. Even drivers paying attention do not always see people crossing the street. Please please please look before you cross the street, even when you're in a crosswalk, and make sure the driver sees you. And for those of you crazy souls who walk the unlit roads of Mansfield, e.g., North Eagleville Road, you might want to consider wearing light-colored clothing because in the dark, you pretty much disappear from view when you're dressed in black.



Look—I know you don't like to listen to authority figures (which I still can't believe I am) when they start telling you how to behave. But please do this one thing for me, and for your moms and dads. I just don't think you want to miss class for physical therapy (true case for two students last year) or court appearances (true case for one student who knocked someone over on Glenbrook Rd.), or have a Connecticut license plate imprint on your butt (I made that one up).

Onto your email. **Heather** sent a note to report that the lights on the path leading down from Hilltop Suites to campus were not working, and that when she goes to her 6 am workout (yes, 6 am), it's quite dark. I sent her note to Head Landscape Guy Dave Lotreck, who sent it to Ron who sent it to Jon who took a look and discovered a switch had been incorrectly thrown. They threw it in the other direction and put a new lock on the switch box, and Heather reports that everything is illuminated now at 6 am.

Here's a question from **Andrew** I've not been asked before: "Where can I get my car washed near campus?" No place close that I've found. I take mine to Rusty Speeder in Manchester,

though I have to admit those robots freak me out a little. If I have occasion to be on Route 6 in Willimantic, I go to Foxy, where they offer to wash it a second time if you're not happy with the first try. Of course, there's always the strategy of driving around on a Saturday morning until a couple of kids with a piece of posterboard wave you down and send you to the parking lot of a church for a pretty much-soapless (if not brushless) wash of the fundraising variety.

Now that the L word (lottery) has been mentioned in emails from Residence Life, people (including **Jon, Lindsay and Drew**) have asked why certain groups are guaranteed/not guaranteed housing. Here's my stock answer: Several years ago, the Provost's Committee on Housing Priorities determined the order of criteria for getting housing. GPA was discussed as one criterion, but was not incorporated for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the perceived inequity of academic programs and their difficulty. Students who are new to campus (freshmen, transfers, regional campus change students) get priority over juniors and seniors because the Committee believed these students were not as well-positioned to get off-campus housing as students who had been here for four semesters. I'm sure there will be other housing-related questions coming my way when the lottery happens, so stay tuned.

Garrett wrote in and asked why UConn doesn't cancel classes on federal holidays like Columbus Day and Veteran's Day. The major reason is that we have a set number of academic class days that need to be scheduled in a semester, and if we cancelled classes on these days, it would extend the semester beyond what you might want. Another is that cancelling a day of classes throws off the schedule of labs and other classes that have multiple sections. Labs, for instance, are all the same for all sections of a course during a week. If all Tuesday classes are cancelled, for instance, the lab staff can't just do those labs the following week, because all of the material and equipment will be different for the other classes. This is a serious logistical nightmare. I do agree with Garrett that we need some time off in the middle of the semester, so if anyone out there wants to start a "Bring Fall Break to UConn" movement, I'll sign on. Two days off in October would do wonders for my disposition. Of course, it means giving up our week off at Thanksgiving (which also does wonders for my disposition; obviously my disposition may be the problem).

I received another financial aid question this week, this time from **Lauren**:

Students and parents have to fill out the regular FAFSA each year, but then there's an extra supplement for special circumstances that you can send in later. Why are special circumstances not included on the original FAFSA? Students that need financial aid may not be able to get it because their need comes from one of these circumstances and by the time this form gets filled out, all the financial aid money is gone. How is this fair?

Good question. I once again turned to Jean Main, irrepressibly cheerful Director of Financial Aid (and that can't be easy). Here's what she had to say:

The FAFSA is designed to determine ALL aid applicants' Expected Family Contribution based on the same data, therefore the FAFSA needs to be a uniform process and data collection vehicle for all. Special Circumstances, as prescribed by the federal regulations, must be an institutional policy that evaluates special circumstances on a case by case basis. The policy must be designed

such that only a small portion of any institution's student body meets the criteria. Just as the name communicates, special circumstances are "special"; they are situations that are unique and don't apply to all applicants. The FAFSA is designed to be as simple as possible, and I realize many find that statement hard to believe. Information regarding UConn's policy regarding special circumstances can be reviewed on the financial aid website at www.financialaid.uconn.edu

(Another) **Heather** has been wondering about the shower heads in Holcomb that apparently allow the water to come out with such force that she has found herself pinned to the wall, yelling for help, which undoubtedly concerns her CA (okay, I made that last part up, but she does wonder why, if we're trying to conserve water, we have plumbing that seems to do the opposite). I sent this along to Logan Trimble, Head of Residential Facilities, who reported back:

We have energy savers on the showers. Much of the force behind the water is *air* pressure. A low flow shower head is defined as a water saving shower head typically rated at 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm) or less. A non-low flow shower head can use between 5 to 8 gpm. We had tried the really low flow heads in Holcomb (.5 gpm and 1.0 gpm) but settled on the 1.5 gpm after testing various devices with students.

So enjoy your water massage guilt-free. Some people pay good money for that kind of experience.

Another residential facilities question came in from **Maximilian** and others: When does the heat get turned on in the halls? There's no easy answer to that question. Residence halls are not like houses, where you can turn the heat on and off when the weather changes from day to day. Once it's on, it's not a simple thing to turn off. So facilities staff first consult the weather oracle (weather.com) to figure out when it might turn cold for good, then check in with Logan's Magic 8-Ball (did you know there are 20 standard answers on the Magic 8-Ball? (See the sidebar). And then they offer up a prayer and flip the switch. So here's hoping that by now, Max and his friends are warm and toasty in Towers, as it appears the last days of summer have finally headed out of New England. I hope, too, that you enjoyed what apparently is the last autumn we'll ever see, as it has been cancelled for good after three billion seasons, according to [The Onion](http://www.theonion.com/content/node/69371) (<http://www.theonion.com/content/node/69371>).

Matthew asked a familiar question: Why is Huskymail so slow? Short answer: because it's an antiquated system with inadequate storage and needs to be replaced. The answer to your next question is, yes, they're working on a solution. If you absolutely need reliable email service for things like potential employment communications, I suggest you use something like Yahoo or gmail or mail.com (that's the one I use, and it's fairly dependable).

20 standard answers from the Magic 8-Ball

As I see it, yes
Ask again later
Better not tell you now
Cannot predict now
Concentrate and ask again
Don't count on it
It is certain
It is decidedly so
Most likely
My reply is no
My sources say no
Outlook good
Outlook not so good
Reply hazy, try again
Signs point to yes
Very doubtful
Without a doubt
Yes
Yes - definitely
You may rely on it

There were more questions than I have time or space to answer this week (a girl's gotta eat lunch now and then). I'll be back with more questions and maybe even a few more answers after Thanksgiving break, disposition improved, waistline increased. Here's a quick hello to Alana's FYE class who had to read some Almanacs as part of an assignment. It was fun meeting you, and I didn't catch **Adam's** cold, so either I have a great immune system or he's not as dangerous as he looks.

Have a safe break.