

# The Dean's Almanac

## Howdy, Husky Nation

*April 1, 2007*

Howdy, Husky Nation, from the second floor of the Wilbur Cross Building. I'm happy to say the toaster has been removed from Wilbur's Café just in time for the warm weather. You know, we don't mind the fire alarms sending us outside when it's nice out. It was all those cold and snowy winter days we had to stand out there huddled together that made us all a little cranky. Alas, the offending commercial toaster has been replaced by a regular kitchen-type, and is now in the safe hands of the café staff, behind the counter, where no one will try and put a croissant in it.



Now that that particular problem is solved, on to the next one: Spring Weekend. I liked the answer one student gave me when I asked a group of you (at "Straight From the Source"—thanks, USG, for another entertaining evening), "What are you doing for Spring Weekend?"

"I see it as a great weekend to visit my folks," he said. "And take my car with me." True that, I think. Your parents would love to see you. In fact, they've emailed me and said they will take you out for dinner at the restaurant of your choice, do all your laundry for you, let you host a great party at the house with whatever friends you can find, not ask you about the tattoo, and give you \$50 for gas. So go on home. I'll be fine here by myself.

I had a marvelous dinner last week with some very fun students (hi to Aaron, Louis, Suzi, Deb, Rob, Katie, Allison and Heather). Great conversation about social life at UConn, which gave me a lot to think about. I am still puzzling over how we help freshmen get over the hump from bored and/or lonely to involved and happy to be here. How do you step outside yourself and your immediate residence hall neighbors and find people who share your interests, your goals, your ethics? Deb said, "It takes courage." But where does that come from? If anyone has ideas out there, please share.

Speaking of sharing, I've gotten some great responses to my last set of questions about this very topic. Thanks to all of you who wrote some very thoughtful, insightful and provocative responses. I've compiled them and shared them with the Student Affairs directors I work most closely with (Tom from AOD, Christine from Student Activities, Todd from Fraternity and Sorority Life, and Cathy from Community Standards), and we will be using these responses to help shape our plans for improving student life at UConn over the next few years. Please feel free to [send more observations](#) that you think we need to hear. Short of moving into a residence

hall myself (been there, done that, never want to go back; I've used up my emotional eligibility), your ideas are the best way for me to understand what student life at UConn looks like.

And thanks, O-Leaders, for your ideas and answers to my many questions on this topic. Maybe you aren't the best operatic performers in the world, at least not when it comes to the Brady Bunch theme song, but you do good work for this University, and I appreciate you. Thanks for lunch.

Interesting month in the mailbag. **Kelsey** wrote:

I am emailing you to see if you can do anything about putting in some lighting for the stairs leading up to Towers. Walking back from the Library late at night with no lights is sometimes difficult. I know that there are lights, but they don't seem to work, or be turned on.

Even though I come from a family of New Jersey electricians and can install conduit with the best of them, I sent this one over to the guys in the electrical shop, and got this response from Jon Morrell:

Lee, my employees worked on the lights Tuesday. We found one light out and two that were cycling. Thank you and the student for the information.

Well, no wonder it was dark, what with those light bulbs out on their bikes. But hey, thanks Jon, and our other electricians, for making the Towers stairs safer.<

Speaking of safety, I got a similar note from **Aaron**:

I was wondering what happened to the wooden platform, from last year, that helped students cross the massive puddle at the bottom of the stairs from Hilltop? Over the last couple of weeks, a giant puddle has been common. In avoiding this deep and wide puddle, students have resorted to walking down a rocky portion of the hill to remain dry. The problem with this new path is the rocks are dangerous to walk on and slip when stepped on sometimes. In addition, over the last couple of days, these rocks have become muddy and I have witnessed a few students slip and fall. It seems to be a problem of drainage because there is a drain nearby but the water does not flow to it. I am wondering if you could look into the possibility of improving the drainage or replacing the wooden platform.

At first I thought, hey, these folks need to be on belay, and then I sent this one over to Old Reliable, Dave Lotreck, head of Landscaping Services, who forwarded it to Al Chapman, head of Structural Services, and a new platform was installed the following day. Aaron wrote again to say thanks, which I gladly passed on to the hard-working guys in Facilities.

Unrelated to facilities and stuff, here's a question from **Matt**:

I was wondering why UConn has their Spring Break a week before most other universities and colleges? Is there a way ours can be moved back a week later to accommodate with other schools? I know I wanted to travel with my friends from home for Spring Break but I couldn't

because theirs was a week later. Plus it helps break up the long month of March. Please consider this!

Matt, I totally agree. If I had friends who still went south for Spring Break, I'd want to travel with them myself (unfortunately at my age, Cancun and its particular brand of Spring Break fun is out, but a quiet week of work days that end at 5 pm feels just fine). I am happy to report that next year, Spring Break will indeed be a week later (March 9-15). Wish I could take credit for this, but it's just a function of the calendar and where the opening of school falls. You can see the next five years all for yourself on the [Registrar's website](http://www.registrar.uconn.edu/cal5yr.html) (<http://www.registrar.uconn.edu/cal5yr.html>).

**Angela** asked about the rumor that keeps popping up that West Campus is being torn down. YES!! IT IS!! NEXT WEEK!!! Hurry! Get out while you can!!!

Okay, seriously. NO!! IT'S NOT BEING TORN DOWN!! At least not in the foreseeable future. I know they're not the most beautiful buildings on campus (those are in East, right?), but hey, they're structurally sound, they're paid for, and where the heck would we put you while we replaced them? Cots in Gampel? Geno might take exception to that.

Speaking of housing, I am sorry sorry sorry that so many of you want to live on campus but got lotteried off. And I am sorry (though less so) that those of you who did get housing are not happy with the housing you got. I wish there was something I could do, but my magic powers are limited to lighting and puddle problems. It is not Residence Life's fault, so stop being so mean to them. They would love to provide everyone with housing.

Hey look! It's 5 pm on a Friday, so I am outta here, but not before saying hi to those Husky parents who seem to enjoy reading the Almanac, to my cousin Diane in New Jersey, and to those hard-working Daily Campus staffers. Friends, I *do* know that getting a paper out every day is no small feat. I can barely manage two Almanacs a month. And by the way, I'm a vegetarian :) .