The Dean's Almanac

It's the Homestretch!

November 27, 2006

As I write this, you are all (I hope) enjoying some R&R during this week-long Thanksgiving break, preparing your brains and immune systems to return for the grueling pace of the last three weeks of the semester. I'm thinking your week might include a lot of sleeping, bowls of cereal, familiar sights and sounds of your hometown, or, if you're lucky, an adventure in unfamiliar places. Mine includes parking anywhere I want on campus, a short line at Panda, and long stretches of work at my desk during which no one calls or stops by. This is one of those stretches, and I'm going to use it to go through the FRQ (Fairly Random Questions) file.

Catherine and others continue to feel the lines at some dining halls are too long at lunch and dinner times. I feel the same way when I try to get a table at a restaurant over at Mallworld at 6:30 pm on a Saturday night. But you know what? That's the way it works. Things will be crowded at lunch and dinner. Sorry if I sound unsympathetic, but these are community dining halls, not your family kitchen, and part of the deal with living in a community is having to negotiate with hundreds, or even thousands of other people who want what you want, the same time you want it. That being said, Head Dining Guy C. (stands for Cooperative) Dennis Pierce said at the recent Straight From the Source Forum (nice job, USG) that extended hours for certain dining halls are being considered for next year. I'll keep you posted if I hear more.

At that same Forum, Director of Parking Ann Denny shared that there will be a new parking lot on North Hillside Road, which is the construction site some of you, including John, have written about. I know they start their noisy work early in the morning, but they are on a tight schedule and have limited daylight in the winter to do this work. You want the extra parking, right? I find those "white noise" machines work pretty well. Ask for one as a holiday gift.

Speaking of parking, which I do, often, it seems, your complaints about specific issues (staff parking in student lots and not being ticketed, etc.) all get forwarded to Ann, and she and the UConn Police (who do the ticketing) are working to solve a lot of these problems. If you have a complaint about a particular problem (not just, "there aren't enough spaces when I need one," which we know—honest), send it to me and I'll pass it along.

A few folks, including **Anne**, have wondered about the deal with the Depot Campus. Why don't you renovate the buildings over there? There simply isn't enough money to do all the work, but we're doing a building at a time. Here's a note from Ted Yungclas, Associate Dean in Fine Arts,

who responded to my note about this and about transportation back and forth between these two campuses:

Current plans do indeed call for renovating space on the Depot Campus to house the printmaking program, the photography program, provide much needed archival storage and storage for dramatic arts. The Design Center will relocate to the space vacated by the photo lab. It will be remodeled to accommodate the needs of the Design Center.

We are also aware of the transportation needs of the Art Students. We have been in contact with the Transportation Division from time to time regarding these plans and will work together so schedules can be met. Puppetry Art students have been using the bus for several years to move back and forth to campus from the Thomson building where the puppet lab is located.

Shuttle Queen Janet Freniere added this to the conversation: "The bus that goes out there to Depot Campus runs every 15 minutes. The Yellow Line, which runs by the Fine Arts complex on the main campus operates every 20 minutes at the present time."

A shuttle question also came in from **Sarah**. "Why does the second apartment shuttle stop running late in the afternoon and into the evening?" Janet responds,

She's right! We have historically not run a second Apartment Shuttle after 6:00pm because the ridership has been so low that it was more practical and cost efficient to focus our efforts, buses, and drivers elsewhere on campus. We are constantly evaluating the routes and their ridership. An example of what we evaluate is listed here, as passenger counts for the entire month of September 2006:

- Blue Line = 53,940
- Green Line = 52,605
- Red Line = 30,525
- Yellow Line = 27,293
- **Apartment Shuttle = 13,178**

Many of you, including **Scott**, have asked about the continuing Huskymail crisis. Huskymail is simply an overmatched system, not capable of handling the volume of campus email we currently have. A new system will be purchased and put in place, but it's not like going to Circuit City for a new computer. It requires a lengthy process in which the University opens for bids from vendors, then evaluates the bids, makes a decision and signs a contract. Here in the Very Ethical State of Connecticut, this is a somewhat ponderous effort, but in the end, we get a good system, pay a fair price, and no one goes to jail for taking kickbacks.

An interesting question came in from **Dede**, who said she is weary of listening to (and smelling the fumes of) idling food delivery trucks outside her residence hall. Please know this: these truck drivers are not permitted to let their trucks idle, and if they are doing so, please contact your dining hall manager pronto. That being said, though, some of these are refrigerated trucks, and the refrigerators continue running even when the truck engine is off. This can be loud, too, but it's necessary to keep the tater tots from thawing.

Matt wrote, "I live in Hilltop Apartments, and every day when I return to my building (Novello) I have to walk down an incredibly steep (and dangerous) slope directly in front of the building. The grass and dirt has completely eroded away from student usage, and now there is only exposed rock. This creates a very dangerous situation for the student body (no pun intended), and I was wondering if anything could be done about it. If there was ever a perfect place for a staircase to be built, this would be the place." Head Landscape Guy Dave Lotreck has promised to take a look at this. He says there are over a hundred miles of sidewalks on campus, and they are difficult to maintain, but they appreciate the feedback about locations and condition.

On a related note, **Melissa** suggested that lights be installed in the stairway from Putnam leading down to the bottom floor of the Refectory. Logan Trimble from Housing has been in touch with Facilities about getting this done. So let me know if these appear in the next couple of months (sorry—it's also a lengthy process to get internal work orders through; this is a very big campus and we don't have enough staff to do things right away).

Speaking of Logan, he also responded to a question I sent him from **Amy** in Hilltop. "If you don't have enough water pressure in your shower, you might have debris in your showerhead. You can put in a work order to have it cleaned," or do what my mom suggests, take it off and soak it in some vinegar. That will clean out the debris, which, with water as hard as ours, can be significant. Can't do much about the hard water, though. At least it's not high in copper. When I was a hall director at Wellesley in 1987, the copper in the water was so bad it turned blonde hair green. No joke—I was one of the victims.

Here's a question *I've* had since I arrived here: Where's the student music scene at UConn? On other campuses I know, there are a lot of student bands and individual performers who play at open mikes, band competitions, things that allow aspiring performers to get some experience. I know there are a couple of things like this each semester, but I really think you musicians out there need to start some stuff up. Work with SUBOG and the Programs staff in Student Activities. A great potential resource is the new student organization Insense has as its mission "helping student musicians get famous," or so says Ajay Shenoy, who is Incharge of Insense. They host concerts and shows and put out a CD of original student music, Want to make some good music and need a little direction on how to get heard? Contact the group, and Ajay at their website: http://insense.whsites.net/ and see what Insense can do for you.

Sarah, who wins the prize for getting two questions into this Almanac, asked about recycling, or lack of it, in the Student Union. Here's the response from Monica Rudzik, Student Union chief:

Sarah is right on target! The SUBOG Policy Council has also been asking us to do more and we are responding as quickly as possible. We currently recycle all mixed paper and all cardboard. We have also ordered recycle bins that will allow "U" patrons to separate trash throughout the building; this will include bottles, cans, newsprint and other paper. Look for those soon! We also try to do our part by purchasing recycled products and materials whenever possible. We've asked the Policy Council to continue to recommend additional ways that we can be an environmentally friendly U. If Sarah has a suggestion, she should contact me directly or Monica Merlis, chairperson of the Policy Council. We are always looking for ways to improve!

A special shout-out goes to the Month of Kindness committee. This is a really great UConn tradition, and they deserve some kudos for making our community an even nicer place to be. How 'bout them apples?!

This week is UConn's World AIDS Week. Don't forget to **wear red** on November 28 in memory of those who have died from AIDS/HIV, and please consider coming to a candlelight vigil on Thursday, November 30, at 7 pm in the Student Union.

And that about wraps it up for me. I'm exhausted from answering all these questions (okay, maybe not the ones I just forward on), and it's a good thing tomorrow is Thanksgiving and I can sleep in a bit. What will I be thankful for when I sit down at the dinner table? The food, of course. The roof over my head. Good health. And of course, a cool job working for a great University full of thoughtful, interesting students.

Now get back to studying hard.