The Daily Campus



THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE **UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT** SINCE 1896 • VOLUME CXXIX, NO. 81

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

UConn Skydiving wins second place in national championship

by Sara Bedigian
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
Sara.bedigian@uconn.edu

Two members of the University of Connecticut skydiving team placed second in a national collegiate championship in Arizona over winter break.

With no prior competition experience, sixth-semester Alanna Ward and fourth-semester Kathryn Ausere competed in the two-way formation, where they performed a series of coordinated maneuvers, formations and freefall. By placing second, the girls scored above a military team, which they said is a big accomplishment since the cadets are operating at a professional level.

"It's so rare for a civilian team to beat a military team. No one cared about the scores, we were just trying to do our best," Ward said.

> **"It's almost like a liberating feeling. I guess that feeling is just what keeps you going back and feeling, almost accomplished, in a sense, like, wow, I survived."**
> KATHRYN AUSERE

The championship, which was hosted by the United States Parachute Association from Dec. 28 to Jan. 1, brought students from military academies and other universities including Kansas and Iowa State.

This allowed them to form friendships with other students and meet professional skydivers— all of which contribute to the tight knight community that Ward said skydiving brings.

Other members of the UConn skydiving team attended the competition. Aidan Wright, Amelia Smith, Dylan Brockel and Sebby Gorgone, competed in the four-way formation and placed third. Ellarie Stevens and Shining Yu competed too.

Since you must be 18 to start skydiving, most people started when they got to UConn. This was the case for Ward and Ausere, who joined their first year and fell in love with it instantly.

"It's almost like a liberating feeling. I guess that feeling is just what keeps you going back and feeling, almost accomplished, in a sense, like, wow, I survived," Ausere said.

Ward said free falling feels like therapy to her because she only can focus on the jump and nothing else.

"You have to be focused on it," Ward said. "You have to be aware of everything happening."

After both attending Tandem Weekend hosted by UConn, a chance to jump harnessed to an experienced licensed skydiver, they knew they wanted to get their certification licenses to join the team and compete. The Accelerated Freefall license allows you to jump with other people, and create formations, which Ausere said is the best part of skydiving.

"No one really likes just sitting there. If you fall by yourself, it gets really boring," she said.

Despite having jumped many times, they both still get nervous. For Ausere, it's in the minutes leading up to jumping in the plane. For Ward, it's the canopy ride down where she has to focus on sticking the landing.



Alanna Ward and Kathryn Ausere of the UConn Skydiving team. The two placed second in a national competition that occurred over winter break. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNSKYDIVING ON INSTAGRAM



UConn students skydiving in a national collegiate competition in Arizona. The students placed second in the competition. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNSKYDIVING ON INSTAGRAM

Both out-of-state students, Ward and Ausere came into UConn not knowing many people and were able to find a strong community through skydiving. UConn's home drop is at Connecticut Parachutists in Ellington, about 30 minutes from campus, which Ward said creates a strong family atmosphere.

"Our drop zones very much took us in as a family," Ward said. "And it still feels like that."

While you are at the drop zone all day, the jump itself only lasts around five minutes, Ausere said. This allows them to talk and spend time with other people at the jump zone.

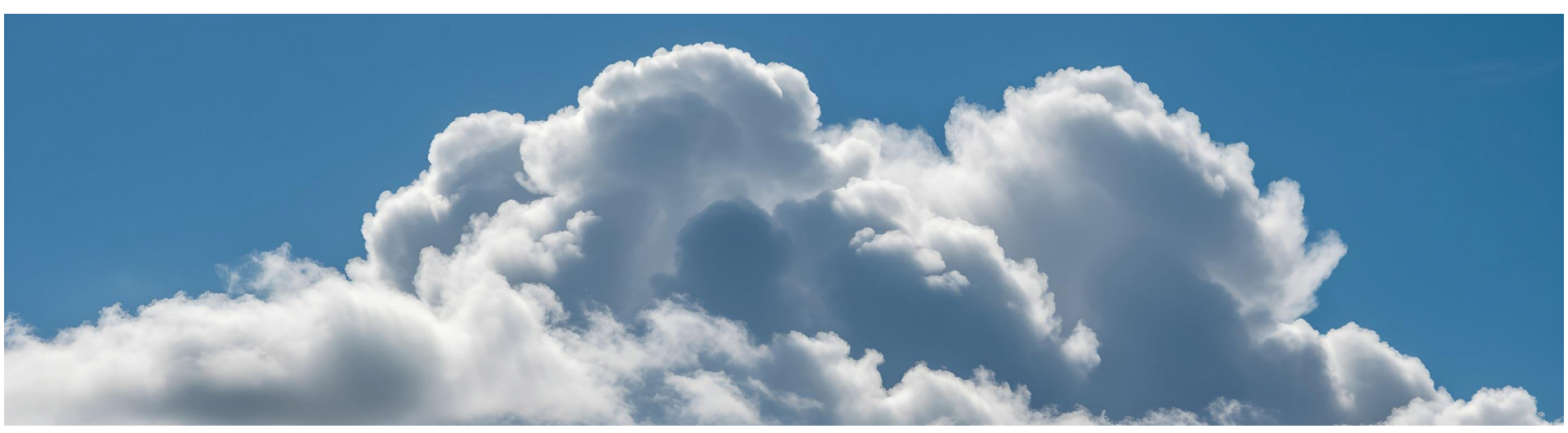
"You're packing your parachute, and then you're also planning your jumps, and then also it's just kind of talking and hanging out with other people, which is a lot of fun," she said. "It's just kind of like hanging outside all day."

In the winter months, they attend indoor tunnel competitions. Just last week, they competed in Nashua in New Hampshire.

As president of the team, Ward is trying to grow the group and provide more opportunities for members.

"I would like collegiate skydiving to be more popular and get it more out there for people to know about it, because I feel like there's a lot of people that are interested in it, but just don't know about it," she said.

For those interested in joining the team or skydiving one time, UConn will host Tandem Weekend in April. Anyone interested in learning more can contact the team at uconnskydiving@gmail.com or on Instagram @uconnskydiving.



For more... dailycampus.com | The_DailyCampus | The_DailyCampus | DailyCampus

A CAPELLA | PAGE 6
Come see the talented singers in UConn A Capella

BLAME AI | PAGE 7
Dissapointed with this year's Superbowl ads

WBB | PAGE 12
Sarah Strong is IN as Huskies host Creighton on Wednesday

WE ARE NOT THE DAILY DIGEST