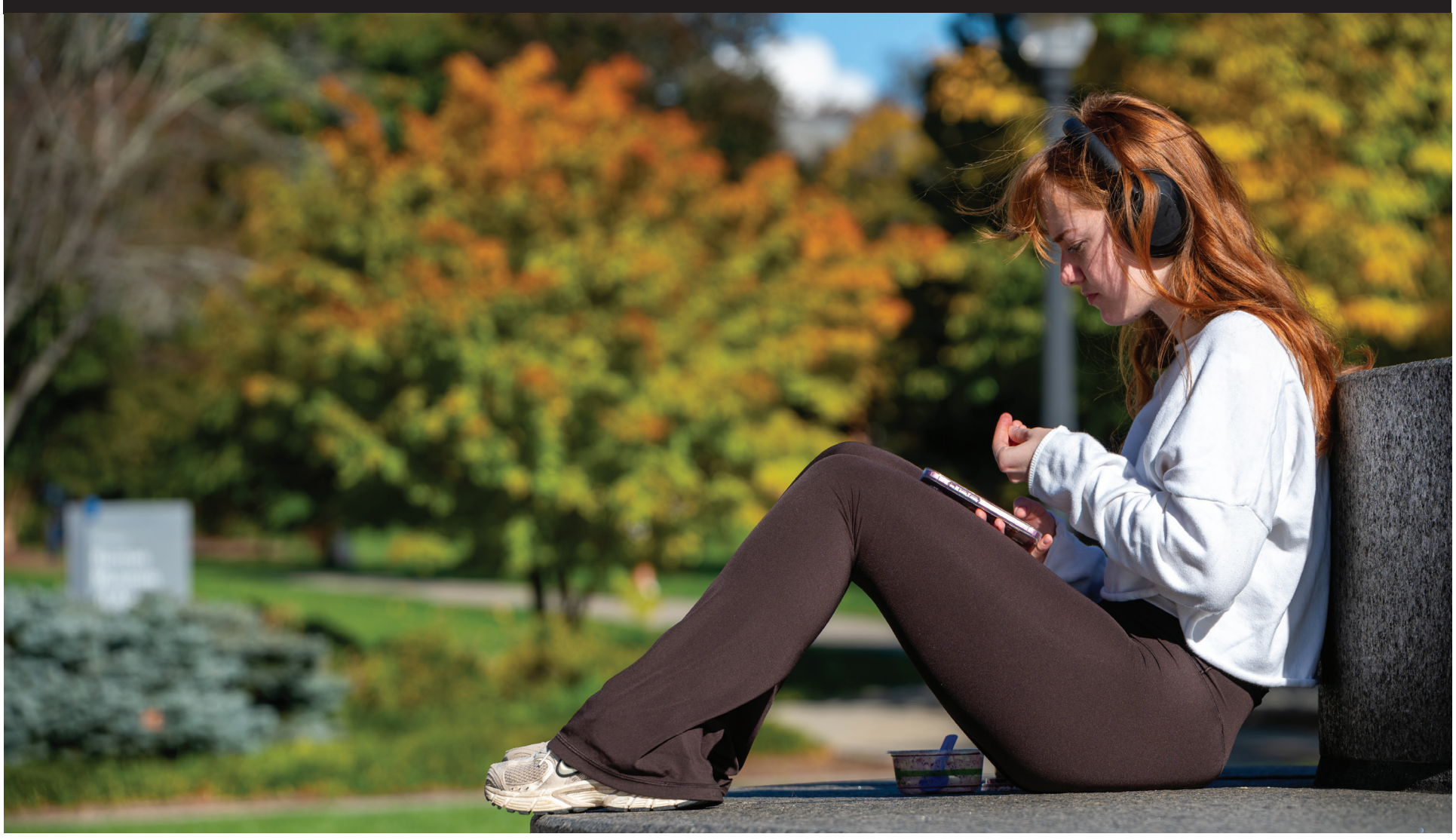
Photo of the Day | Happy Friday!



A UConn student enjoys the autumn day on Sat, Oct. 10. Many students went outside to enjoy the last of the warm weather while the seasons are still changing.
PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

RESPECT YOUR TOI COURSES

by Eli Shoup
CONTRIBUTER
HE/HIM/HIS
twz25002@uconn.edu

In the lecture halls of introductory level courses in nearly every subject, there lurks a number of disillusioned and uninvested students who are "only taking this class for the TOI." Their major is something obviously unrelated to the subject of the course, and as a result they could not care less about its content — in fact, they might even despise it. They resent the professor, the coursework and the University of Connecticut Common Curriculum altogether for the displeasure of the whole experience.

We're all familiar with these students. Many of us have been these students. In the pursuit of fulfilling our graduation requirements, most of us end up taking at least a few courses that we're not exactly excited about. Such is the nature of a standardized Common Curriculum like UConn's.

UConn students are not alone in their struggle with general education requirements. Most colleges in the United States currently employ some form of core curriculum — a certain set of benchmarks that all undergraduates must meet before graduation, generally by earning a minimum amount of credits in a suitably varied array of subjects. We take this for granted and thus feel more comfortable disparaging the Common Curriculum, but it wasn't always this way. In 1989, it was possible to graduate from 38% of the nation's colleges and universities without taking a course in history, 45% without taking a course in American or English literature and 41% without studying mathematics. Since the time of that survey, there have been significant pushes to reform the higher education system, and for good reason.



UConn professor James Stark leads an evidence class in Starr Hall at the law school on Dec. 9, 2015. Writer Eli Shoup said that students should take classes outside their major to expose themselves to different perspectives.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

The point of the Common Curriculum, in the words of the UConn Academic Catalogue, is to "prepare leaders and global citizens, who need to be able to communicate with and cultivate compassion with those outside their own majors, disciplines, professions, communities, and cultures and to make connections between their own knowledge and perspectives and those of others." Basically, it's designed to make you a better thinker and a better neighbor. By making you take courses in each of the six unique Topics of Inquiry, UConn gives you opportunities to experience many ways of learning, thinking and understanding the world.

Being regularly exposed to different perspectives in this way not only makes you a better problem solver; it also helps you to relate to and connect with others within and outside of your own social groups. Armed with the experiences you're gaining in the classes you hate taking, you are better equipped to represent your community and have more power to improve your own life and the lives of those around you.

Along with making you a better citizen, having experience in subjects outside of your major will make you a more competitive professional candidate. Having something unique to include in your resumé in addition to the qualifications of your major will help you stand out in a sea of applicants. What's more impressive is if you can connect your experiences in a seemingly unrelated field to skills that you can apply to your own discipline. This ability to make connections across subjects — part of what UConn's Common Curriculum aims to cultivate — shows an impressive level of versatility, which is valuable to many employers.

Despite the advantages of leaving your academic comfort zone, I can understand that it is nonetheless frustrating to be forced to invest valuable time and energy into studying a subject that you don't like, aren't interested in or feel that you're bad at. Learning, like many things that are good for you, can be difficult and upsetting at times — or even most of the time. I'm not trying to tell you that you shouldn't be frustrated on these occasions. I am saying, however, that this frustration doesn't justify the utter disdain and disrespect I've seen people show for fields and classes outside their major.

The professor of your gen-ed class isn't being audacious in expecting you to put real effort into your assignments, they're trying to teach you something (which is, in fact, their job). Just because a course doesn't have an obvious connection to your major doesn't mean it's not valuable. Everything you learn here contributes to your understanding of the world; it's up to you to figure out how and why.

I can't speak for everyone, but I personally would prefer to live in the future where the CEOs read Karl Marx, the medical professionals analyze health outcomes in marginalized communities and the engineers take archaeology classes. If we all approach college education with a little more respect for the subjects we hate the most, we can learn so much more — and maybe use that learning to build a future that's just a little brighter.

DEAR BUSINESS STUDENTS, CAREER OBSESSION IS KILLING YOUR CURIOSITY

by Evelyn Pazan
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
evelyn.pazan@uconn.edu

Since I started my time at the University of Connecticut's School of Business three years ago, there has been a dramatic change in the career recruitment process. Each year, top- and mid-tier firms have become increasingly predatory and pushed recruitment timelines earlier into our academic careers. The situation is so dire that it has become a joke among business students that if you haven't been networking out of the womb, you're already too late.

While UConn and its students have no control over the external pressures and must adapt accordingly, we're beginning to experience internal ramifications. Because of the recruiting creep, students are prioritizing activities that will shine brighter on resumes, pushing out other passions and pursuits that they might have. The need to become a competitive applicant is real, but we can't give up our creativity for our career.

The results of earlier recruitment timelines are extremely apparent in the emphasis on pre-professional development for students, which can often make it feel like you are competing for a job before you've even graduated. Much like Ivy League universities, many student organizations in the UConn School of Business require applications to become a member, including the highly esteemed Hillside Ventures, The Opportunity Fund Project, the Student Managed Fund and UConn Consulting Group, among others. Application processes for these organizations can include initial submissions, interview rounds and pitches which narrow down candidates to only the most committed students with the most time to dedicate.

It isn't just the application process that takes a lot of time. As a participant in some of these organizations, I know that they require a large time and energy commitment from members to make the most out of them. They often offer out-of-state or international trips and have additional expectations hidden in the fine print, such as aiding in the following recruiting process.

None of these organizations are bad for students on their own. They do, in fact, provide students with unmatched professional opportunities. The problem arises when students are so captured by their future career that they choose to ignore genuine interests for the sake of their resume. Instead of pursuing exploration and deepening existing passions, students who put these organizations on a pedestal end up spending their time working to be someone a recruiter would want to hire — not someone they really want to be. During some of the most formative years of life, this trade-off is not worth it.

There comes a point when pushing toward a goal no longer becomes productive and symptoms of burnout begin to fester, leading to reduced academic efficacy and feelings of depression. Without a creative outlet or an activity that is viewed as "just-for-fun," it is too easy to slip into an obsessive and emotionally damaging space that can hinder your passion about anything at all.

Beyond the emotional aspect, there are career implications that come from overcommitment to a certain goal. Ironically, pre-professional clubs may be pushing students away from what employers really want. While student managed funds and similar activities are important additions to a resume, their increased prevalence begs the question of how much they really differentiate applicants. Rather than elite pre-professional experience, recruiters look for candidates who are adaptable, curious and creative, according to a Harvard study.

Through clubs that align with your personal interests outside of your career, you can demonstrate the traits that employers are looking for and show versatility, as well as the ability to match a company's desired culture. Whether you choose to join the Cheese Club or the True Crime Club, branching out makes you a more interesting and layered candidate who offers more humanity to fields that really need it.



UConn students attend one of the many career fair's that the university offers. At the career fair, students talk face to face with employers and hand them their resumes in hopes of post graduate success.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Curiosity may benefit your career, but you also owe it to yourself to take advantage of the low-stakes exploration that college offers. You should create opportunities to move out of your comfort zone or try something new, even when they might not offer a networking opportunity or leadership position. The goal of college is to prepare you for your career, but it is also to develop thoughtful and multi-faceted individuals whose identities go further than their major.

Chuck Edwards, former Corporate Vice President of Human Resources at Microsoft says it best: "the enemies of curiosity are speed, volume and pressure." Don't let the speed, volume and pressure of pre-professional organizations drive you away from what will really fulfill you and set you apart. Your brain and heart need language, art and creativity, and your resume needs it too.