

[*Audio Scene*] [0:00]

Broadcast Audio (Ian Eagle): “It is a UConn coronation. The Huskies make history: back-to-back national champions! No. 1 lives up to the billing. They defeat Purdue, 75-60. They’ve done it again. Utter domination for two years.

*** Television static fades in before cutting out. A woman inhales and sighs. She stands, and walks away from the television. Footsteps fade out. ***

Introduction [0:47]

Nick: Colleges invest in their sports programs because when teams are good, it puts the school in the spotlight. Good sports teams can draw people to certain schools, from prospective students to staff members looking to get involved. So when teams are successful and command attention, colleges will normally look at that as a good thing.

Nick: But there is such a thing as consequences from success. The University of Connecticut men’s basketball team has just won the last two NCAA titles: an accomplishment that jet rocketed the school into national headlines.

Nick: As a result, more students want to be at UConn than ever before, and some students previously enrolled at the university are being pushed away, quite literally.

Nick: I’m Nick Spinali. Welcome to Huskies Without Homes.

Recent success of UConn Men’s Basketball [1:38]

Nick: After winning the 2023 NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship, the UConn Huskies returned to repeat the feat in 2024. With the win, the program claimed its 6th NCAA title and they became the first team to win back-to-back NCAA championships since the Florida Gators between 2006-2007.

Nick: The victory put an exclamation point on an undeniably impressive return to relevance for UConn basketball. UConn’s last basketball championship came from the Women’s team back in 2016. The triumphant return of Dan Hurley’s Huskies not only put UConn basketball back on the map, but it made the school a hot commodity among high schoolers applying for college.

UConn Student (Interview): “Throughout the past few years, it has been, honestly, a big part of being on campus. Especially with all of the culture at UConn, being able to celebrate and to enjoy [the success of the basketball team] with everyone here has been a great experience”

High Application Numbers at UConn [2:32]

Nick: UConn received nearly 58,000 applications for the Class of 2028. It's the first time the school has surpassed 50,000 applications.

Nick: The school is continuing to see an increasing number of applications year-over-year: two years ago, UConn received about 43,000 applications, and just last year, 48,000 more. This trend defies national averages, which indicate that less people are applying for college annually across the U.S. It also coincides with the increased success of UConn's men's basketball team.

Nick: According to UConn Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz, the record number of applications resulted in a record freshman class: this year, the school welcomed 4,500 students to its Storrs campus and an additional 2,000 to regional campuses in Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury, and Avery Point. But, with the influx of new students being welcomed to the school, UConn is having trouble sustaining its current student body.

High Enrollment at UConn [3:28]

Nick: Following UConn's record-breaking freshman class, over 7,400 returning students across the school's campuses were asked to surrender their rooms to make more available for the Class of 2028. That is according to an article by Katie Servas published by WHUS on September 16.

Nick: Connecticut Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney and Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff sent a letter to UConn President Radenka Maric on August 27. In it, they followed up on a meeting they had together on March 12. The letter reads:

Martin Looney/Bob Duff (AI): “In our meeting, it was stated that UConn could accommodate 40,000 students, while not diminishing the academic quality of the students or diminishing the distinction of the education.”

Nick: Looney and Duff articulated their concern with the number of applicants who turned away from UConn because of their inability to attend the campus of their choice.

Martin Looney/Bob Duff (AI): “Our state currently has almost 100,000 open jobs – a significant portion of which require higher levels of education. Students that choose to go to another state for school because they did not get into UConn’s main campus have a high likelihood of not returning to our state. Many of these students are high academic performers and not only deserve to get into our flagship university’s main campus but are necessary for the success of our state’s future.”

Emma, a UConn student who was denied housing [4:54]

Nick: I’m here with Emma, who is a junior finance major at UConn who had trouble applying for housing last spring. So Emma, how did you feel when you first learned that you were denied on campus housing in the spring?

Emma: When I first found out I felt really frustrated and stressed. It felt unfair because I had planned on living on campus and really had no backup plan. I was also really anxious about housing off campus because it could fill up really quickly.

Nick: So what housing options did you initially consider and how did you go about exploring them?

Emma: So my first step was to look into off campus apartments here at UConn, so I joined Facebook groups and checked websites like Zillow and Craigslist. I also reached out to friends and classmates to see if anyone was looking for a roommate. At one point I even considered commuting from home, but the drive would have been over an hour away.

Nick: So what factors influenced your decision to choose your current housing situation over other alternatives?

Emma: It really was the cost and proximity to campus [that] were my two main factors. I ended up choosing an off campus apartment that was about 10 minutes away from campus. It wasn't the cheapest option for me, but it seemed safe, and I could split the rent with a few other students.

Nick: So how has your current housing arrangement impacted your finances compared to living on campus?

Emma: So living off campus has definitely been more expensive for me. Rent, utilities, and groceries add up pretty quickly and I didn't budget for these things initially. On campus housing would have been more straightforward because the utilities and meal plans are included in that cost.

Nick: How has living off campus influenced your ability to participate in campus activities or connect with your peers.

Emma: Living off campus has definitely made it harder to stay involved. I have to plan everything around driving or the bus schedule, which means I sometimes miss out on events or study groups. It's also harder to just run into people - like if I had been on campus, it would have been a lot easier to talk and connect with people.

Nick: What have been the biggest challenges or unexpected benefits of living off campus?

Emma: The biggest challenge has been managing all the responsibilities of living off campus - like cooking, cleaning, and budgeting my money. It has been a steep learning curve for me.

Emma: One benefit is having more privacy and control over my space, so I can set my own schedule without dorm rules or noisy neighbors.

Nick: In hindsight, do you feel like your current housing situation is better or worse than what you might have experienced living on campus?

Emma: In hindsight, I still prefer to live on campus for the convenience and community, but I am making the best out of the situation. Living off campus has forced me to grow a bit faster, so there's some silver lining there.

Nick: Finally, what advice would you give to incoming students who are facing similar housing challenges and what changes would you suggest the school implement to address the crisis?

Emma: For incoming students, my advice is to start looking at housing options earlier. Also have a backup plan. Join housing groups, connect with other students - that will make the process less overwhelming. And for UConn, I think they need to increase transparency about housing availability and invest in more on campus housing.

Transportation and Parking Difficulties at UConn [8:43]

Nick: According to the UConn Residential Life website, Storrs students who applied for housing after the February 10 deadline would be placed on a waiting list. However, according to an article by Gianni Salisbury that was published by the Daily Campus back on September 13, some students who met the deadline were still placed on a waiting list for housing.

Nick: One example is Zoe Ender, a first-semester digital media and design student, who opted out of the waitlist because she lives close enough to campus and felt comfortable commuting. However, Zoe followed up in a written statement to the Daily Campus where she described that now, she's facing issues with commuting. She says:

Zoe Ender (AI): "It's been such a hassle, the parking passes were awful to try and get. I ended up buying the cheapest one which was still around \$350. The buses have been such a problem

lately. My commute should be around 20 minutes one way, but it ends up being more than an hour... when you factor in parking and the buses.”

Nick: Parking has also been an issue on campus for both students and staff. High permit and citation fee prices have left students commuting to campus in a vulnerable position: pay the price for the permit, or risk paying the price later on for a ticket. In some cases, like Zoe’s, cheaper parking passes are located off campus and still require a commute once the car is parked, an extra hassle when bus lines are sometimes inconsistent. It’s safe to assume these problems will only be magnified as more students are forced off-campus.

Conclusion [10:09]

Nick: Dan Hurley’s Huskies have UConn at the top of the college basketball world. But while the program’s rise in popularity may be good for the school’s athletics department, it’s been less than ideal for the housing department.

Nick: UConn’s housing crisis is very real, and some students are already facing the consequences. We reached out to the UConn Residential Life department to ask how they are currently addressing housing problems and their future plans. However, they were unavailable for comment. One phrase associated with the school’s brand is “Students Today. Huskies Forever”. Lately, it’s felt more like “Students Today. Tenants Tomorrow”.

Nick: Thanks for listening to this episode of Huskies Without Homes.