

## **UConn Has Among Greatest Impact Nationally on Local Community, Mansfield Study Shows**

*Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group New Statistical Analysis- Shows that Off—Campus Students Make up Whopping 55 Percent of Town’s Population*

MANSFIELD—July 19, 2016--A new analysis shows the University of Connecticut ranks 43 among 55 of America’s flagship state universities. The ranking is based on the number of students living off campus compared to the population of the town or city where the university is located.

UConn has 13,481 undergraduate and graduate students living off campus. This is 54.9 percent of Mansfield’s population of 24,588, according to the Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group.

“UConn officials often boast that 71 percent of undergrads live in university housing,” said Bill Roe, co-founder of the Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group. “But that figure alone says nothing about a university’s negative impact on the host community. Comparing the total number of students in off-campus housing *relative to the local population* gives a more accurate barometer of the impact.”

The Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group is a town-gown organization working to maintain the integrity of the town’s neighborhoods. It wants to reduce the number of college rentals in neighborhoods and convert some existing rentals back to single-family homes.

A large city can easily absorb the many off-campus students of a large university, Roe pointed out. For example, the University of Washington in Seattle has 37,422 students living off campus, but that’s just 5.6 percent of the city’s population of 662,400. Those off-campus students likely have relatively little impact on traffic, affordable housing or emergency services.

It’s the opposite situation in Mansfield, a small rural town established in 1702, that’s home to UConn. Too many student rentals in neighborhoods can cause destabilization. Families often begin to move out of the neighborhoods, he said.

Natural resources can be impacted. Several years ago, Mansfield’s Fenton River ran so dry that the fish were literally flopping in the river bed. Now, water will soon be piped into the area from a reservoir miles away, costing millions of dollars.

“Mansfield has been called a ‘cow patch town’ surrounded by other cow patch towns. We have approximately 11,100 permanent residents, excluding students,” Roe said. “In the ‘Quiet Corner’ of Connecticut, we cannot easily absorb an off-campus population of 13,481 students.”

The University provides no housing for graduate students. Undergraduate students are not required to live on campus. Many other universities require freshmen, sophomores and sometimes juniors to live on campus.

Some of UConn students living off campus belong to fraternities and sororities. The university provides only limited housing to these social groups. These groups are well-known for disruptive parties.

All of the off-campus rental houses are privately owned, and most of these are located in family-oriented neighborhoods. As a result, roads are congested, traffic never ends, and loud parties are frequent. “Often 60 or more uber-type rides nightly bring parties to homes on country roads and into our neighborhoods,” Roe said. This happens day and night.

Student rental conversions in a neighborhood can start the decline of property values and impair marketability of residential housing, according to a University of Maine study.\*

“Investors buy our neighborhood homes to turn into college rentals charging \$2,800- \$4,200 a month,” Roe said. “This reduces the supply of affordable and workforce housing by driving rental prices sky high. It also destroys the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It’s a big problem, and it’s getting worse.”

Some neighborhoods now have 25 percent to 50 percent student rentals. The worst area is almost 95% student housing. These were previously owner-occupied family homes now converted to rentals. “This is further compounded by the construction of large scale private apartments intended to house hundreds of students directly adjacent to residential neighborhoods,” he added.

The off-campus student population amounting to 54.9 percent of the town’s population means UConn’s housing policies and its students have a more negative impact on Mansfield than the student population at 42 other state universities have on their host communities.

The University of Tennessee wasn’t included because figures on its off-campus population were not available. A Wikipedia article provided population data for the analysis and *US News & World Report’s* Best Colleges Ranking contains student population.

The Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group isn’t anti-UConn or against off-campus housing, Roe said. “There are many positive aspects of being the host town to a major university, including employment, cultural events and diversity,” Roe said. “And off-campus student housing provides rental income for some permanent residents.

“But all these great benefits are negated when off campus student population destabilizes the neighborhoods. We’re asking for more understanding of the problem by UConn’s leadership.”

The study can be reviewed at: [www.BillRoe.com](http://www.BillRoe.com)

More information about the Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group is available at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MansfieldNeighborhoodPreservation/>.

#towngown #MansfieldCT #studentification #de-studentification #commodification

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