

STUDENTS SAY 'CHEERS' TO NEW PUB & GRILL

On the Rocks provides new gathering spot

BY ADAM DURSO
PHOTOS: AUTUMN DRISCOLL,
RICHARD PETROSINO AND CJ YOPP

IT WAS A chilly game day afternoon, but things were heating up inside On the Rocks, Quinnipiac's newly opened pub & grill. Scores of students had come to watch the highly anticipated men's ice hockey game Feb. 29 between the Bobcats and ECAC archival Yale on one of the venue's big-screen TVs.

Austin Calvo '20, president of the Student Government Association, was one of the first to arrive. As the pub filled to capacity with students age 21 and over, he knew he was part of something special. Each goal brought louder cheers as trays of sliders, nachos and other classic pub fare made the rounds. The students tipped back beer, wine and ciders and shared a collective roar as they watched their Bobcats blank the Bulldogs 5-0 across 16 screens.

"The energy and enthusiasm inside was just amazing," said Calvo. "It was an experience I'll never forget."

Speaking at the pub's ribbon-cutting ceremony the day before, Quinnipiac President Judy Olian called it a symbol of the partnership between the current administration and the student body, and an investment in building a stronger and more connected campus community.

"On the Rocks is exactly what we'd hoped for," said Olian at the ceremony attended by faculty, staff, students and a few alumni. "It shows the very important role that student engagement plays as we continue to design the University of the Future."

Indeed, student input shaped nearly every aspect of the 2,000-square-foot space, from its pool and shuffleboard tables right down to its name. It is the culmination of three years of advocacy, collaboration and persistence started by Allison Kuhn '19. Kuhn, vice president of the Class of 2019, wanted her fellow classmates to have a place on campus where they could enjoy a drink and socialize, something the university had lacked since the closing of the Rathskeller, aka The Ratt, around 2000.

"Students have always had to travel to New Haven to enjoy nightlife," said Kuhn, who returned for the pub's ribbon cutting. "We thought it would be nice to have a choice closer to home."

In 2017, Kuhn and some of her friends in student government visited the campus bars of several universities.



Cutting the ribbon for the new pub and grill are Student Government President Austin Calvo '20, left, QU President Judy Olian and Allison Kuhn '19, who led the initiative for the pub.

They took extensive notes on how the spaces were used to foster a sense of community, from layout to special events, and came to a single conclusion.

"We knew that Quinnipiac could do this better," she said.

Kuhn and her peers drafted a 25-page proposal they presented in 2018 to representatives from several offices including Public Safety, Campus Life and Facilities. The project seemed stalled until a pivotal meeting between Kuhn and Monique Drucker, vice president and dean of students.

"I just told Monique that I wanted a pub," Kuhn recalled.

Drucker supported the idea but asked for tangible proof that a pub was something the entire Quinnipiac student body would get behind. This, Drucker said, would require more than a simple online student survey.

In October of 2018, Kuhn and the SGA partnered with representatives from the Office of Student Affairs to organize Friday senior pub nights inside the Rocky Top Student Center. One of the main planners was Matthew Kurz, assistant dean of student affairs. Kurz had anticipated a positive turnout, but he didn't expect lines to stretch out the door.

"We were at capacity each night," he said. "The pub nights were so popular that we had to turn students away."

It was all the proof that Kuhn and the SGA needed. Kurz helped them refine their earlier proposal, which made it to Olian's desk in the spring of 2019. A day before her graduation, Kuhn received word that her dream of a campus pub would become a reality.

While Kuhn never had the chance to enjoy On the Rocks as a student, she plans to take advantage of it during alumni gatherings and events. "Alumni want a way to stay connected to the university," she said. "Now we have a great place to do so."

Although certain pub events require that attendees be of legal drinking age, others will be open to everyone. Calvo called what his predecessors accomplished "truly monumental" and expressed gratitude for the university administration's support of student-led initiatives.

A comedy night took place at On the Rocks before the university closed for the semester. When the pub reopens, there will be trivia nights, more big games, and new reasons to cheer, laugh and share camaraderie.

And there will be plenty to catch up on.

1. Shawn Urban '20 plays a game of pool during the opening celebration for the university's new pub and grill, On the Rocks, in the Rocky Top Student Center, York Hill Campus.

2. Students chose the name for the venue, which will sell beer, wine, ciders and a variety of pub foods. It opened with a ribbon-cutting party on Feb. 28 attended by students, faculty, staff and alumni.

3. Boomer hung with students Feb. 29 when those 21 and up gathered to cheer on the men's ice hockey team as it bested the Yale Bulldogs 5-0. They enjoyed the game broadcast on the 16 TVs located within.

4. Among the alumni who came back to check out the new pub & grill at the dedication were, from left: **Matt Corso '19**; **Allison Kuhn '19**, vice president of the Class of 2019; **Joe Iasso '19**; and **Antoine Campbell '19**.

5. Shuffleboard and pool tables provide an outlet for some friendly competition.

6. Sliders, chicken wings and fries were in plentiful supply as these friends toasted a victorious night for Bobcat Nation. From left, **Caitlin Smith '20**, **Kristina Duran '20**, **Madeline Chiapperino '20** and **Jessica Ruderman, MS '20**.

