

# College 101: DON'T OVERCOMMIT YOURSELF

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A couple weeks ago in chapel, Ben Hanne gave the message. With the congregation of tired, stressed college students, Ben decided to ask some questions in a sort of truth-telling time. He asked everyone to close their eyes and to stand when they could say yes to one of his questions.

His first question: how many of you are behind on an important project because you are distracted with something more pressing and you have told yourself “it will all be better once [this project is] finished.” Several people stood up. The next question: How many of you have made a joke about how busy you are but it wasn’t really a joke. Most of the rest of the congregation was standing at this point. Then we switched to raising hands to signify our answers. His next questions: who has pulled a late-night in the last two weeks, how many of you have pulled an all-nighter during your college career, who has faked your way through something that you didn’t have time to work on beforehand, who has told a lie this semester to cover up being late or not getting

something accomplished, who has not gotten enough sleep and thought or said ‘it’s just what I have to do.’ At this point, everybody was standing, everybody had both hands raised and were either standing taller or even crouching representing the fact that they answered yes to every single question. Ben still wasn’t done. His last two questions: who has used caffeine or sugar to ‘push through’ and who has ever been so worried about a single project that other items failed to get done.

This came two and a half weeks before finals week. We are now just a few days away from the end of the semester and the stress is real.

Anyone at Southwestern knows that overcommitment is an easy trap to fall into. I am involved in eight organizations on campus. I also have two campus jobs (although the schedules are pretty nice). So trust me, I know the definition of overcommitment. I know the feeling of being behind on a project because something else needs to get done...I’m in that situation right now. Late-nighters are completely normal now. All-nighters, although I haven’t pulled one yet this semester, are my specialty. My former roommates can vouch for that.

I think the fact that our entire chapel community—although just an average of 70 people—answered yes to all of the questions is our wake-up call. It is so easy to say yes. It is so easy to get involved on campus and often times we forget how to say no. We forget that it is possible

to say no to that activity or to say no to an extra event. While it is frustrating when you’re the one behind the scheduling and people start saying no, I think it’s good. I would rather have our students healthy and focused instead of stressed and running around with a fried brain.

I’ve seen it in my friends and I’ve seen it across campus. Everybody wants to get involved but they also want to get good grades and get enough sleep and hang out with their friends and sometimes it just doesn’t balance the way they want it to.

It’s as if students, like me and you, think of their activities as a point system. The more you are involved in, the more you do, the more points you get. And whoever has the most points wins, right? Wrong. In most cases, the student that tries to gain the most points ends up falling behind or simply put, not winning. Students are saying “oh, let me join this group real quick,” “I want to be in charge of this activity,” “I am also taking 18 hours this semester so let me finish this project before I do that,” or even “I need to go to this event before I get to my homework.”

So because of this, I have listed some tips to keep in mind as we head into finals week.

Tips:

1. Take a break—try to make it a goal every day to take at least 15 minutes and just chill. Take a step back and just be. If you’re overworked and stressed, this will help you refocus and keep you going. Take some time for yourself, put your phone down, put your laptop away, maybe take

this time to take a nap or paint or crochet or just take a walk. Even if you just have 10 minutes between classes, take that time to relax a little bit.

2. Sleep—sleep is a fantastic thing. I know we’re in college and we can sleep when we’re old. But sleep is important. Eight hours is the amount recommended by basically everybody. But sometimes eight hours just isn’t possible. Between homework, practices, rehearsals, classes, and (dare I say it), free time, \*gasp\*, sometimes you’re lucky to get eight hours of sleep over three days. Especially with finals coming up, sleep is a must. You can’t pass your classes if you’re falling asleep on your test, right?

3. Learn to say no—I’ve been at Southwestern for two and a half years now. It has taken me this long to finally learn to say no. It’s ok to say no to an activity or an event if it means you will have more time to focus on your education or even your mental health. If that means you don’t go to free movie night so you can work on homework or even sleep, so be it. If you have to skip bingo night, even though that big TV is calling your name, do it. As a college community that calls ourselves the “Builder Family,” there should be no judgement for taking care of ourselves.

4. Go to class—I have heard so many people say “I pay so much money to go here but nothing works.” This is true. But you also spend that much money to go here and when you skip class you are wasting all that money. So go to class. Don’t skip because you have a meeting or

something else. Your education should be your priority.

5. Eat—When it gets to the point where you don’t have time in your day to eat, you need to re-think your schedule. I’ve had several friends say “I haven’t eaten today” at 9:00 p.m.

6. Find a support group—You’re in college. You’re going to have moments where you feel like giving up. It will happen. Do you know how to get through it? Find your friends. In college, you find out who your real friends are. Keep these friends. These friends will help you through these tough times and they will also be by your side when you just need to watch a Disney movie and build a blanket fort.

7. Don’t lose your passion—When you start getting involved in everything on campus, you can lose sight of the original goal. Don’t spread yourself so thin that you forget what you love. Think about your daily or weekly activities. Sure, you have those meetings you hate going to or the work that just has to get done. But take a step back; do you have at least one thing to look forward to each week, even each day? If you get to the point where you dread participating in events or things with your groups, cut back. Take things off of your plate until you are excited to wake up and get things done. You have the freedom to make your college years story-worthy. Make memories that you can tell your kids about. Have fun!

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