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# Overworked. Underpaid.

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# Overworked. Underpaid.

## **Abstract**

I am two people right now.

Split between a constant feeling of having a deep pit in your stomach from fear of not having finished something. Until that pit is anxiousness and for a second you have to take a few deep breaths because you know yourself.

“Shit, I forgot to eat.”

And the anxious feeling is gone because you forgot something as little as eating.

My eyes are on fire. I rub them and take another sip of coffee. I heard my friends talking about how they took Adderall to finish their papers. I was desperate and so I turned and asked my friend,

“Can you give me Tylenol and tell me its Adderall?”

“Why? I can just give you Adderall” he responded, as if what I said didn’t make sense.

His arm reached out towards me with a small pill between his fingers. For a second, I thought I may have needed it, reached out-

“What am I doing?” [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

campus work, Class, classism, Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Hidden costs, homework, loans, minimum wage, student employment, student jobs, student worker, work study

## **Disciplines**

Civic and Community Engagement

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](https://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

**1 VERB 1 : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward**

## OVERWORKED. UNDERPAID.

September 16, 2019

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“What am I doing?”

I stopped, said “No thank you” and walked away. I wonder if that’s how my mom got addicted to crack? And her mom? Or was it Xanax that made them spiral? I soon had this other pit in my stomach that taking one pill might be what was going to be my spiral. It was only 1pm and I still had 4 hours of work, 2 hours of class and a bunch of readings.

There are no exact times this happens in someone’s week, because in my week there is someone always taking Adderall, someone who stayed up all night to finish an assignment because class and work was too important, a friend who is sick but refuses to go to the health center simply because of time, or someone sleeping in and missing everything.

This is the other side of me.

The one who is too tired to get up and go to work or class or to do anything. The days I relax are when all responsibilities are forgotten and I have a self-proclaimed “self-care day” where I have no energy to do anything. These days I get the most rest but miss the most information, and end up feeling more anxious the next day because I did nothing the day before. Sometimes these days feel like days to recollect my sanity and figure out if I’m actually depressed or really just tired.

I am not the only student on campus who is like this—who has normalized things like a friend taking eight low-dose and two high-dose of Adderall or overworking and forgetting homework, not spending time with friends, not exercising, not sleeping, etc.

Maybe some of us get there by procrastinating. But most of the people I know get there because in addition to all of the other demands on their time, they are working 2-3 jobs. Last fall, I was working 40 hours a week. For people like me, here is a rough estimate of what a typical week looked like:

There are 168 hours in a week.

56 hours go to sleeping (if you get 8 hours a day).

48 hours go to course load, since each course should claim an average of 12 hours of time (four hours of class dedicated to work and 8 hours of homework).

40 hours goes to work.

21 hours spent eating if you took 1 hour for each meal.

That left 3 hours for everything else: social time, exercise, volunteer work, extracurricular activities within a 7-day week.

But how much time do we actually spend with our friends or on our phones or just sitting around? It definitely isn’t three hours. What about going to a football game or the time spent going to office hours and talking to a professor?

Obviously, this math isn’t going to work. So for those of us working 2-3 jobs, where do we make up the time?

Do we sleep less than eight hours a day? Do we spend less time at each meal or cut some meals all together? Do we cut down on the 12 hours that should go to school work? I haven’t even included the oversleeping, overworking/overreading/overtalking, and all the necessary time spent being you.

“Gettysburg College provides on campus employment for approximately 45% of the student population (typically 5-10 hours per week)”. If there are 2,600 students on campus and 45% have jobs that means there are 1,430 students who work. Out of these 1,430 students how many work more than the average 5-10 hours?

I am here to tell you that there are more students than you think who have a work-study job working more than 10 hours a week. These students have 2 jobs working 10-30 hours usually. This isn't even taking into account students working off campus who are not confined by a time limit of hours spent at one job.

But why? The minimum amount a student can make here at Gettysburg College is \$7.25 and at most \$8.00 an hour. When talking to my friends at other colleges in New York, their minimum wage is \$12 an hour because that is the state's minimum. It takes me more than 16 hours to make what she does in 10 hours because I am only making \$7.25. My sister attends a college in Pennsylvania close to Philadelphia where students make a minimum of \$9.00 an hour which raises a dollar every year you work the same job. If you've had the same job all four years you could also be making \$12 an hour by the time you graduate.

If Gettysburg College wants "to ensure that the ability to pay does not become an obstacle to a Gettysburg education" then they may want to consider raising their work study pay rate; working the hours I'm working IS an obstacle to my education and my mental and physical health.

What do you give up?

How do you become one when you're spread so thin to pay for college? To make up loans? To afford to live if you don't even have a meal plan because that too is something you cannot afford?

I am here and admitted into this college but at what cost?

Lexus Davis '20  
Contributing Writer