

May 10, 2017

Why I Took a Semester Off

STORY BY EMANUELA SCHNEIDER

When I saw the words "Congratulations! You are admitted to the University of Texas at Austin," pop up on my computer screen, I bounced out of my seat and squealed with joy. My mom ran downstairs, worried something had happened to me. I jumped into her arms. I couldn't control my excitement. As a journalism student in Brazil, transferring to UT had been a fantasy of mine for a while. But in that gratifying moment, I never considered what the next year and a half would be like.

As an international student, my tuition was so expensive that I felt lousy each time my parents had to pay for it. My dad and I agreed that I would work for a year and become a Texas resident. I started applying for jobs at the beginning of my first semester, but only started working in October.

I worked at two different Starbucks locations for my two first semesters. I had to work around 20 to 25 hours a week while studying. I know many people who can work those many hours and still get a high GPA. I'm not one of them. Working that much while studying took a toll on my grades. When I was studying, I was worried about work; and when I was working, I was worried about studying.

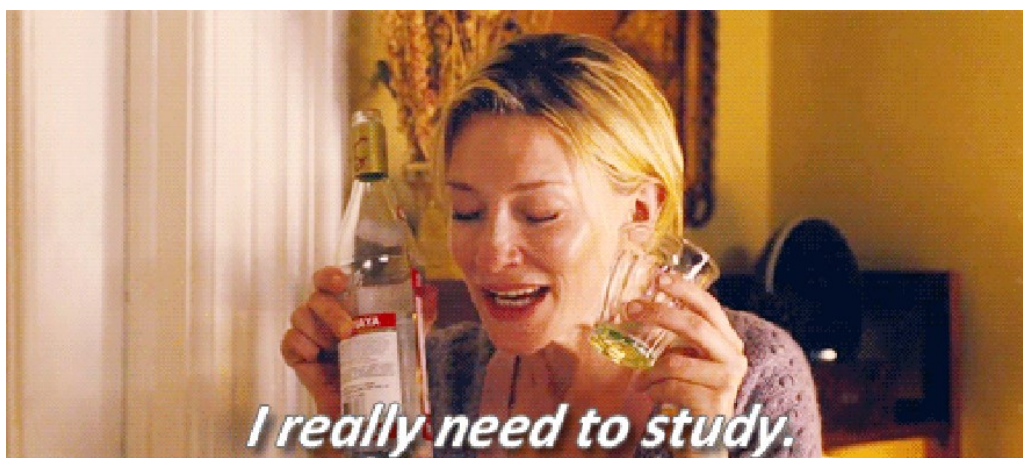


Photo courtesy of Tumblr.

However stressful that was, I still felt like I was part of UT. The second Starbucks was on campus, so my coworkers were also students. We were all struggling to balance work and academia. We all went through it together.

Because I only started working in the middle of my first semester, I would still have to pay out-of-state tuition for my third semester. That's when I decided it would be better to take a semester off.

I worked as a host at Kerbey Lane Cafe. My shifts were from 6 p.m. until 3 a.m. I would go to bed at 9 a.m. and wake up at 3 p.m. My life turned upside down. I ended up distancing myself from a couple of friends at UT and made new friends at Kerbey. They were completely different people with different lifestyles. I had a different lifestyle. I became an extrovert. I pushed myself to go out to places I didn't usually go to. While I would usually just hang out with friends at home, Sixth Street started becoming my regular spot.

During that semester off, I learned quite a few things about myself. I hated studying during my first year at UT, but not studying for an entire semester made me miss it. A lot. I missed learning. I missed the classrooms. I missed the silly interactions between classmates. I missed feeling lost and having to ask the TAs for help. What hit me the most, though, was that I missed campus. While I was sleeping and working, I knew my friends were having their finals. Campus for me had become something I just passed by, and I did not like that.

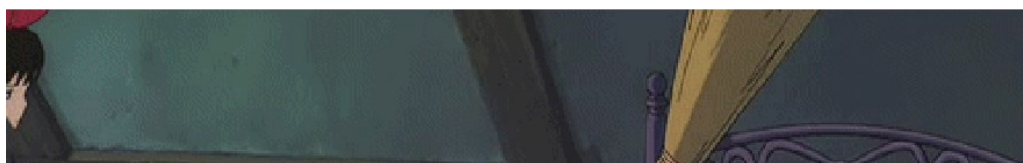




Photo courtesy of Tumblr.

My Brazilian culture also became more apparent. I'm known to be friendly and dorky. My friends at UT know this, but I've come to realize people who don't know me too well tend to take it as a sign of flirtation. In the service industry, that can become quite irritating.

Speaking of service industry, I value that a lot more. When you see a server walking around balancing a huge tray with food on it, you should know that's already more than what I can do. Servers can deal with a lot, but somehow they always have smiles on their faces.

The time I took off was an experience I didn't want, but I'm grateful I had it. I made friends for life. I enjoyed life. But now I also enjoy my studies. Taking a step back from UT and student life made me value it a lot more. And taking a pause in life gave me a different perspective of it. I hope this long and maybe tedious sum up of my past year or so has helped at least one of you readers who might be going through the same thing!



COMMENTS (0)

Newest First

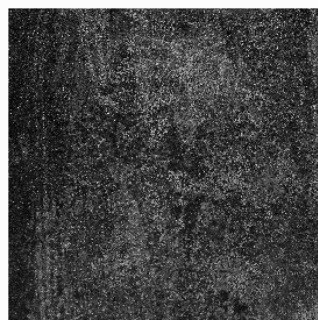
Preview
POST COMMENT

APPLY HERE

Now accepting 2023-2024 applications.

Here at ORANGE Magazine, we look for every type of creative. Whether you're good at writing short stories, have an excellent understanding of AP style, understand how to photoshop just well enough to make deep fakes look believable, or know how to take stellar photos, we want you on our team.

Do you have the juice?



Hand-crafted by UT students

 Search