



UNTANGLING

Problem Solving for Student Businesses

Don't fall into the twenty-hour overwork trap.

At the beginning of the semester, it's easy to want to maintain the same quality of service your business provides when school is in session, during the semester. You are introducing your business to new students on campus or to staff who may not be familiar with your business and how you make it super.

You have pride in your business and may want to offer all your menu items, or be able to give your customers your product or service at all hours from the very beginning of the semester.

However, when you are not fully staffed, you must avoid this temptation and compensate for being understaffed. When you have fewer co-managers returning, you should not try to do the soup AND the dessert AND the entrees.

Otherwise, if you try to do too much with too few co-managers, suddenly you, or some co-managers, are working **more than twenty hours a week**.

Which means?

- BURN OUT, that's one result.
- Also stress, leading to fatigue and in-fighting. Comanagers that used to be close are grumpy, trying to adjust to the beginning-of-the-semester challenges AND working extra hours. This is not conducive to a smooth transition from summer to student.
- Reduced product quality leading to customer complaints (they don't know that you aren't at full staff. A bad beginning may mean they won't return.)
- Not to mention that the student employment office specifies that students **cannot** work over 20 hours per week when taking classes. (Source: <http://www.umass.edu/umfa/seo/FAQs/>)

What can you do to avoid these scenarios?

You could hire in the later part of the previous semester, but that increases labor costs, one of your biggest expenses.

You could try to hire earlier in the semester with in days of returning, but that requires stellar effort on the part of the hiring committee.

More practical solutions

- Reduce the number of services you offer.
- Reduce the number of hours you are open.
- Reduce the number of food items you offer, if you are a food service business.
- And most important: Inform your customers that you are in the process of hiring and will be up to speed when you are finished hiring and training.