

The hidden cost of the college grind

When being busy starts to define your personality

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

The first thing I do most mornings is reach for my phone and look at the many notifications left over from the night.

The screen tells me what kind of day I am allowed to have. Classes, writing, prep, meetings, writing and oh, did I mention writing?

At some point this year, busy stopped describing my week and started describing me. I did not announce it or mean for it to happen. I just kept saying yes, piling on responsibilities, until my schedule became proof that I belonged here.

College rewards that kind of dedication. You hear it in small talk, as you casually mention what your week is like.

That idea is not just a feeling. A 2017 Journal of Consumer Research study has found that people often treat busyness as a status symbol, as earlier generations did with leisure. In other words, packed schedules can communicate value, importance and demand.

On this campus, I live inside that message. I write, edit, commentate, prepare for games, show up for club meetings and deadlines, work in QU athletics communications and host a sports podcast.

Some weeks, I bounce between roles so fast that I talk to people while thinking about the next thing, not the one right in front of me.

None of that is a complaint. I like the work as it makes me feel capable. It also makes

me feel safe, in a strange way, as if the work itself can block out doubt.

Busy can become a coping skill when your brain never fully powers down. When anxiety or ADHD wants to get in the ring with me, a schedule gives me structure, rules and a reason to keep moving when my head tries to turn a normal day into “Scary Movie.”

The problem shows up when the grind starts taking over your entire life. It sneaks into places you do not notice at first. You skip a meal because you can eat later, but later turns into midnight.

You ignore a text because you will answer after you finish one more task, then you realize you never answered at all. You go to sleep with your clothes on, as all you wanted to do was lie down and “rest.”

Sometimes people call it burnout, which the World Health Organization defines as an occupational phenomenon tied to chronic workplace stress that has not been

successfully managed.

College sits in a gray space because it mixes school, work and identity. You are building a resume while building a life. When being busy becomes your personality, you can start treating rest like a reward you have to earn instead of a basic need.

That is where the mental health part really kicks in. The Healthy Minds Study, one of the largest ongoing studies of student mental health in the U.S., reports that 33% of students screened positive for moderate or severe anxiety symptoms and 37% screened positive for moderate or severe depressive symptoms in its 2024 to 2025 national data report. The story these studies tell is that many people can’t escape this life. For me, my mental health is always a top priority, and now I don’t know if I am truly giving it as much thought as I should, because my brain has already moved on to the work I

have to do over the weekend.

I do not think the answer is doing less just to do less. I also do not buy the idea that working hard automatically equals self-destruction. What I keep coming back to is intention.

When I choose to be busy because I care about the work, the day has a point. When I choose to be busy because I feel guilty when I stop, the day turns into hell. The difference is “small,” but it changes everything.

I have started noticing that being busy is not always ambition, it’s avoidance. If I keep moving, I do not have to sit with the pressure that consumes me daily. If I keep working, I do not have to admit I feel behind. If I keep producing, I do not have to deal with the fear that I am only valuable when I deliver something.

That mindset also shrinks your world. You can still have friends and still have a social life, but you start fitting people into gaps instead of making space on purpose.

I am learning that a future built on constant motion is not the future I actually want. I want a life where I can work hard and still feel like a person when the work ends.

We do not need to quit everything to do that; we need to stop, breathe and reflect on what we want our lives to be. Sometimes the answer isn’t clear, but once you recognize yourself again, the path is yours to pave.

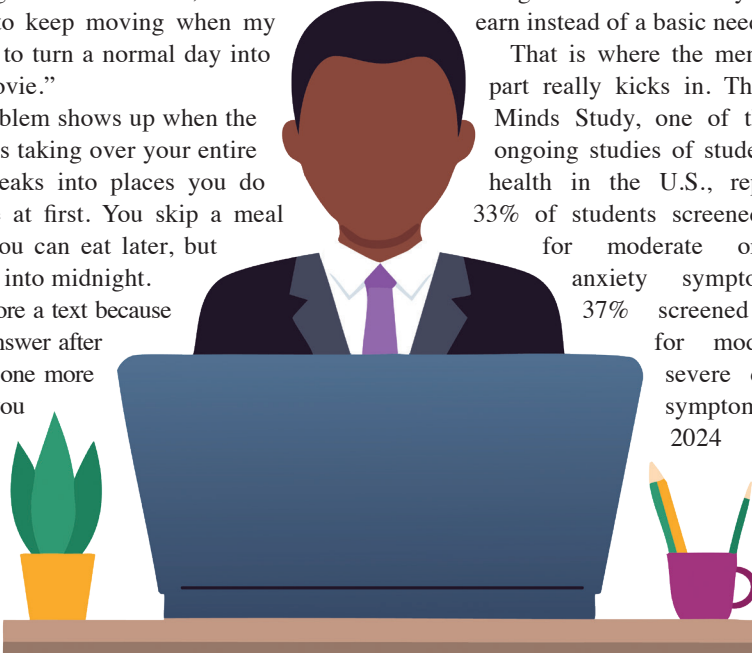


ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

‘Toy Story 5’ trailer brings the gang back, but is it justified?

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
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The official trailer for “Toy Story 5” does not waste time trying to convince anyone that the toys still matter. It opens with the familiar faces that helped raise a generation, as the fear of playtime vanishes and a screen becomes a child’s new best friend.

Disney and Pixar dropped the new trailer on Feb. 19, with the film set for a June 19 release. Andrew Stanton will direct, with Randy Newman returning for the score, keeping one of the most recognizable sounds in animation tied to the next chapter.

The trailer frames the story as toy meets tech. Bonnie, now 8 years old, gets a tablet device called Lilypad that arrives with her own ideas about what play should look like. The toys do not feel ignored, but can be replaced by a device with built-in apps, games and attention.

After leaving at the end of “Toy Story 4,” Woody reunites with Buzz and the rest of the toys, working together to try to stop Lily. We hear from Woody when he talks with Jessie that more toys are being abandoned each day.

On paper, the movie plot sounds perfect for 2026. Kids grow up, interests change, toys adapt, or they fade. A tablet just accelerates the process.

However, I still believe the story should have ended with “Toy Story 3.” In my mind, it was a perfect send-off and there wasn’t a need for a fourth movie.

But 2019 came around and “Toy Story 4” earned more than \$3 billion worldwide.

That kind of success makes any ending no longer a given.

That is why it was announced that a fifth movie would be coming, because Pixar would be stupid not to cash in on the gravy train that put them on the map all the way back in 1995.

Still, the familiar voices are a big reason why fans, including myself, stay invested. Tom Hanks will return as Woody, Tim Allen as Buzz Lightyear and Joan Cusack returns as Jessie.

One detail in the cast that carries weight for longtime viewers is that Mr. Potato

Head and Mrs. Potato Head will sound a little different this time.

Don Rickles, who voiced Mr. Potato Head from the start, died in 2017, and Estelle Harris, the voice of Mrs. Potato Head, died in 2022.

Legendary “Looney Tunes” voice actor Jeff Bergman is voicing Mr. Potato Head and actor, comedian and home cook Anna Vocino is voicing Mrs. Potato Head.

Lilypad, voiced by Greta Lee, positions herself as helpful and modern. The trailer suggests something sinister under the friendly surface, with the device pushing the room toward screens and away from imagination.

If the film is successful, which early indication says it will be, Pixar will likely create another “Toy Story” film, and more and more sequels to the most beloved Pixar franchises like “The Incredibles” and “Coco,” which were already announced for a 2028 release.

Disney has made it clear that their approach relies on sequels and remakes because familiar brands feel safer than new ideas. Pixar has felt that pressure too, with recent original releases struggling.

That reality does not automatically make a sequel stale or unnecessary. The trailer shows a perfect plot designed for this day and age. A kid not only outgrows toys but also skips past them entirely.

My excitement comes from that same place. We do not need another “Toy Story” movie, but I still want to see it and relive my childhood with the toys that mattered to so many of us.



ILLUSTRATION BY JACOB FOWLER