Speaker 1: ... Life changes, you know? Life can be good one minute and then difficult the other, but you got to keep going. No matter what, Mt. SAC is here for you.

Speaker 2: Welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast. This is a podcast that's dedicated to helping faculty and other college employees as they try and navigate the challenging fabric of serving students, especially at Mt. San Antonio College, but everyone's welcome.

Sun Ezzell: Hi. This is Sun Ezzell, one of your new hosts of the Magic Mountie Podcast. Thanks for joining us for another episode in our ongoing series, Conversations With Students.

Sun Ezzell: Conversations With Students offers the opportunity to hear directly from students about their lives, educational journeys, and what it's like to be a student here at Mt. SAC. On this hot day in July, a few students shared their experiences taking summer classes, at a time when many of their friends are relaxing at the beach, on vacation, or just hanging out having fun.

Sun Ezzell: One thing they all seem to have in common, was a full plate of obligations, and that juggling life along with classes is always a feat. But there are still facilities open during the summer to help make students load a little easier, like the tutoring centers, the library, the financial aid office, and career services.

Sun Ezzell: So, if you happen to be teaching this term, make sure to tell your classes about these opportunities. We hope you enjoy this episode, as students share what it's like taking short-term classes, and why it's worth it.

Mark: My name is Mark.

Sun Ezzell: Nice to meet you. I'm Sun.

Mark: Nice to meet you.

Sun Ezzell: And so, you're taking some summer classes?

Mark: Yes. I'm actually taking Math 150, which is Trigonometry.

Sun Ezzell: And how's that going?

Mark: Right now, it's just a lot. It's very fast-paced right now. It's just that with math, I'm a little slow with it, but I do study a lot, which is kind of helpful.

Mark: It's more enforced for me to take these kind of classes during summer, that way I just focus on this one class, compared to taking this class in fall or spring when I'm combining three other core classes now. Because where I am with my ed plan, I'm just taking core classes. I don't have no more general ed.

Mark: Right now, I have my AA in Kinesiology. I'm just trying to get all these pre reqs done in order to transfer to Cal Poly Pomona, which they do have a great program for athletic training.

Sun Ezzell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sun Ezzell: So, you're working this summer too, right?

Mark: Yes.

Sun Ezzell: How many hours a week are you working?

Mark: Right now I'm working, well this week I worked 19, but my actual average work schedule is 16 hours per week.

Sun Ezzell: Okay.

Mark: Which is not a lot, but I'm just taking math. It's a little grueling because if I'm working I can't study as much, but also, I need to pay my bills at the end of the month, so it's a big trade off now. But I found that balance now, where I can see... "Yes I need the money to say pay for ..." But also, it's experience at the end of the day. And also, I get to help students right here in the Access Program, which students are very shy to come forth with their disabilities. They don't want many people to know what they're dealing with.

Mark: And yes, it's a little hard for some people to come out, but I'm just like, “I'm just here to help you. If you're willing to come forth and ask for it, then I'll make sure by any means I will help you.”

Mark: I think that's the best thing of us students working here too is that, we're just not some outside looking group looking within these students. We're actually sharing the same troubles with you. Like, “Oh, God. I have a test. I feel some sort of anxiety.” Or, “I haven't studied enough.” We understand those feelings.

Sun Ezzell: How are you making time for everything?

Mark: I have a two hour gap between, where I can eat and study, then I come into work. I use those two hours to study, also eat something quick before I come to work. But also, my job offers ... We supervise students taking their tests. During that time, we're actually able to study, but our priority is to make sure that they're not cheating first, or any sort of suspicious behavior.

Sun Ezzell: Do you think it's easier to work and go to school since your work is here on campus, than it would be if you were working off campus?

Mark: Absolutely.

Sun Ezzell: Yeah.

Mark: Because I was actually working outside of campus, in Highland Park. The job wasn't hard. It's just the drive was really tough. I would be like, “Okay. I have to schedule classes that start at five.” It wasn't really worth it because during that hour and a half, I could have been studying or something more beneficial towards myself.

Sun Ezzell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sun Ezzell: Is there anything else you want to share about just what it's like to take summer classes?

Mark: Honestly, I actually enjoy summer classes more than the 16 weeks because like I said earlier, you're just focusing on one or two classes. It's a constant grind, not grind, but you're constantly learning the information. Say in the 16 weeks you have a class Monday and Wednesday. Then the next start period, you have to wait through the whole week to come back to Monday.

Mark: I think it helps me a little more to say I'm coming back-to-back days on this information, and actually, that information sticks to my head a little more better.

Sun Ezzell: Is there something that your summer teachers do that make taking summer session fun?

Mark: He understands. It's a three hour class. He has these short bursts of excitement, which wakes us all up. It just helps me. I'm like, “Okay. I'm more invigorated to learn in this class.” It's a professor I'm having a lot of fun with. I think that's what summer and winter offer. He understands where our struggles are.

Mark: For example, there was a part of the exam where I didn't really know this problem well. I was like, “Yeah. I don't really know how to draw it out.” He was like, “Yeah. You didn't understand that. I need to teach that better then.”

Jasmine: I'm Jasmine. I'm a student at Mt. SAC. I'm going into my third year already. I've been here since Summer 2017.

Jasmine: I feel like, I mean yeah it's really hard because you're doing 16 weeks in six weeks, but it gets you more onto your feet. You're like, “Oh, my assignments are due in two days.” It's like, you're doing them already. The professor explains them, and then she's like, “Okay, go on.” It's like you're on your own all of a sudden.

Sun Ezzell: How many summer classes are you taking?

Jasmine: Right now, I'm taking two.

Sun Ezzell: Okay. What are you taking?

Jasmine: I'm taking this reading class and Sociology, but Sociology is online.

Jasmine: It just gets stressful because I go to work. From here, I go straight to work. And then, I come home late at night, and I have to start doing homework. Sleep starts to become minimized, and it becomes a pattern every day.

Sun Ezzell: How many hours a week are you working during summer?

Jasmine: Seven hours.

Sun Ezzell: Seven hours a week or seven hours a day?

Jasmine: Seven hours a day.

Sun Ezzell: Seven hours a day? Oh my goodness.

Jasmine: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sun Ezzell: So, you're here on campus for a two hour class-

Jasmine: Two hours. Go home, have an hour break, hour 15 minute break, then go to work.

Sun Ezzell: Oh, okay. And then, when do you do your online class? How does that work?

Jasmine: As soon as I go home, turn on the computer and just dig myself into reading the textbook, doing the assignments that's given for me.

Jasmine: Right now, it's just much more manageable than it was last summer because [inaudible 00:06:56] I'm off at 10, at 11, or the time that my manager puts me to work. It's just go home, do my assignments, and try to catch up on anything I can before the next day.

Sun Ezzell: Is there something that you wish that your teachers knew about your schedule that they might not know?

Jasmine: I feel like sometimes the professors don't know their office hours is usually when a student has to go into work or they're at work, so it's harder and it gets worse because if it's like, “Oh, I won't respond to your email after a certain time.” Because I need help, or I'm not going to understand this, I'm going to be lost, and it conflicts with the professor is doing it, and how a student does.

Jasmine: Let's say the student, like me, sometimes I have Friday's and the weekends off, and a professor is not going to be in town because they go out of town. Things happen. I don't really like to rely on Google that much. When I look up stuff for science or history, I prefer to ask the professor because I feel like they have the answer to it then, what it is in the textbook.

Sun Ezzell: Is there something that you think that the professors are doing well, especially for summer?

Jasmine: I feel like the professors they give it a chance to break the ice with the students because nobody knows anybody.

Speaker 6: It's a little hard because sometimes students, they need that break, the summer break. They don't want to take a class. But I think as a student, you have to be emotionally and mentally prepared to not take a break and just keep going because we barely got a break between the spring and the summer. I think we got four days.

Speaker 6: I was telling somebody this yesterday. It's crazy. I was saying, “I'm so tired. I only got a four day break. Everybody else is going to the beach, having a great time, and you can't really do that if you're working, and you're taking a summer class.” It's a little hard, but it's going to be worth it once we transfer and achieve all your goals. That's how I feel about it.

Sun Ezzell: That's great.

Speaker 6: Yeah.

Sun Ezzell: So, you're working too. How many hours a week are you working this summer?

Speaker 6: Right now, I'm a student, and I work on campus at admissions and records. I'm working 19 hours a week. It doesn't seem like a lot, but when you're working it's hard to study, and you have to help other students. Sometimes your needs aren't, not as important, but you need to help other people, and you have to put your needs aside to help others, so that's what I do.

Sun Ezzell: Is this the first time you've taken summer or have you done intersession before?

Speaker 6: I've done intersessions before. I remember I took Math 71 a couple winter's ago. That was hard because it's winter and you want to be sleeping.

Sun Ezzell: Right.

Speaker 6: I remember I took Speech 1A in the summer also.

Sun Ezzell: Was there something you learned the first time you took summer classes that helped you for the next time you took summer?

Speaker 6: When I first started, I had the feeling that things were like high school. You're always friends with everyone, so once my classes would end, I would be feeling a little attached to people that I had met.

Speaker 6: But when I took speech I did get attached to the people, and my class was only six weeks. Speech is a very open communication class. You're always doing speeches and everything, so you have to communicate a lot with people.

Speaker 6: So, that class was a little hard. Once it ended, I felt really sad. I'm like, "I'm not going to see these people." A lot of students were just transferring in for the summer, and just taking a class, and leaving.

Speaker 6: It's good. I mean, I got to connect over social media, so that was interesting. But now, I just feel over it.

Sun Ezzell: Teachers feel the same way at the end of intersession, especially, because it's so intense.

Speaker 6: Yeah, it is.

Sun Ezzell: We don't have that much time together-

Speaker 6: It's really intense. I had an exam last week for calculus and I have one again on Monday.

Sun Ezzell: Wow.

Speaker 6: There's no break. We have finals in three weeks, so it's hard to be mentally prepared and everything.

Speaker 7: If you plan to transfer out of Mt. SAC, a lot of the schools ... Here at Mt. SAC, we're a semester system, but a lot of the schools are going to be quarterly. So, even though you may not like or might be scared of the whole six weeks condensed, the fact that one day in a six week course equivalents to a week of the regular semester, can be a little frightening, but it definitely prepares you.

Speaker 7: That's what Mt. SAC is for. It definitely prepares you for that next step, which is the university, whether it's Cal State or UC.

Sun Ezzell: You're taking a couple of classes?

Speaker 7: Yes. On top of work, and on top of basketball practice, so it's hectic. But I'm actually doing greater than I expected.

Sun Ezzell: What classes are you taking?

Speaker 7: Stats and Soc two.

Sun Ezzell: Wow.

Speaker 7: Yeah. It's crazy because I took Stats, and the reason I'm taking Stats is for my communication major. I need it in order to transfer out. I was taking Soc two as a general ed originally, but after talking to my counselor, I can actually double major and graduate next year with three degrees. So, it will be my AAT Communications, my AAT in Sociology, and my AA in Liberal Arts.

Sun Ezzell: Wow! That sounds amazing!

Speaker 7: Yeah, so it's only motivated me more to pass these classes and then to do more.

Sun Ezzell: How did you discover those interests?

Speaker 7: It's a funny story. After graduating high school, I went to ASU, but it was for basketball. Immediately into my first semester, I had a huge culture shock, and it triggered anxiety, whereas I dropped out not even finishing my first semester. And came out here, and I started working right away.

Speaker 7: My intentions were to come to Mt. SAC because after high school, a lot of my friends I knew were here. I was like, "Oh. I'll come to Mt. SAC." But since the semester had already started, I was like, "Oh, I'll wait for the next semester," which was the winter.

Speaker 7: I got so wrapped up in working and making money, I was like, "Why even come to school if I'm making money?" Coming to school is where you learn how to make money, you get those job skills, and that knowledge on how to get a position where you're doing good financially, but I was already doing good.

Speaker 7: At the age of 18, I had a supervisor position at Kmart, so in my head I'm like, "Oh. No major responsibilities. All the money I make is for me." But then, within working there for about three years, I got bored of working because it was like, "Oh, I'm doing the same thing. It's not the money that's interesting me. What am I doing?"

Speaker 7: So, I left that job and went to a new job, and it was the same level position, but higher pay. I was like, "Okay, maybe this will boost my esteem to work more." At Kmart I got bored. It was at Universal Studios, and I loved it. After the third year, I got bored again. I knew I wanted to stay with the company because it was such a big company. I heard about internships with public relation, did research on it, and I was like, "Huh. That sounds like me." I was like, "Okay, let me apply for the job."

Speaker 7: I missed the job just because I qualified for it. The only thing that got me was not having a Bachelor's degree. And so, that's what discouraged me. I was like, "Oh, I can't. I need to go to school."

Speaker 7: Universal is a great business, it's doing well, but it can always be taken away. Universal can come to an end at any point, but one thing that can never be taken away is knowledge. I look at the classes that I'm taking in summer, and a lot of people are like, "Oh, Stats and Soc at once in the summer. That's hard." It's not, but that's also just motivation. When I hear someone say I can't do it, I'm like, "No. I'm going to do it." Not, I'm going to try, but I'm going to do it.

Sun Ezzell: That's great.

Speaker 7: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sun Ezzell: And you're working on campus too. How many hours a week are you working?

Speaker 7: 19 hours.

Sun Ezzell: Okay.

Speaker 7: Yeah, the full 19 hours. The maximum you can work as a part-time student employee is 19, so I work that full 19. There's always that support on campus, whether it's from the information desk, high school outreach, EOPS, Rise, Aspire, any of those programs. They're here to help no matter what, whether it's just need to rent a book or for that tutoring, they're here to make sure you succeed.

Speaker 7: I still find time to have a life outside of academics and outside of work. It's definitely doable. It's definitely manageable. Nothing's impossible.

Speaker 2: Hey. Thanks so much for joining us for the Magic Mountie Podcast. We love your likes, we love your shares, and we love your comments, so please engage with our community, download from wherever you love to get your podcasts, iTunes, Google, Rate my Professor, we're there. We want you to be back with us next week.

Speaker 2: Remember, any opinions that are expressed in this podcast do not necessarily represent Mt. San Antonio College or any of its agents. We'll see you next time.