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When I bike, I get caked in mud

Megan Troutman Apr 19, 2018



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As a college student, it's essential to prioritize — obviously school comes first, then working 30-plus hours at a minimum wage job to afford food and living expenses, then eating ramen, maybe sleeping, sometimes practicing personal hygiene, socializing and, if there's any time left to breathe, getting in your doctor-recommended daily exercise.

If you're wondering how the “Freshman 15” is a thing, this is why. Students only really have time for microwave meals and, on a good day, a five-minute ab work out before bed.

But here's the catch: I have to pack my schedule each day to maximize productivity and be a happier, more energized person. I'll admit it's weird, but I thrive on overloaded schedules and cannot skip class, because skipping is more stressful than actually going to class.

It doesn't quite make sense, but just know that it works.

So no, I've never had a lot of time to work out. I put it on the backburner because there always feels like more pressing things to attend to in my life.

Also gym people scare me.

There's always someone stronger and more in shape than you, silently judging as you pick up the 10-pounders in the weight room while they go for the 50s. I feel incredibly judged in a crowded gym, so when I do have time to work out I prefer running on the treadmill or, if the weather permits, the trails.

The Flagstaff Urban Trail System snakes about 56 miles across town. The city plans to build a total of 130 miles of trail, but, for now, Flagstaff has 56 miles of non-motorized trail, which is pretty incredible.

A few months ago I thought I was ready to brave the Urban Trail on my bike. It was a little chilly, but I put on thick leggings and a sweatshirt and decided to wing it. My coworker recommended I hop on the trail that leads to Walnut Canyon, which he said is an easy, beautiful ride.

So I biked to the trail and when I got there, it was a little muddy. I pushed through, thinking it would get better. There were a few slippery spots where I felt my tires dangerously falter, but I figured the trail was coworker-approved, and I could make it to Walnut Canyon.

I was wrong.

Eventually, about 20 minutes into the path, mud was caked so far into my tires that the wheels wouldn't turn anymore. I had mud down my back from excessively pedaling and kicking up mud from my tires. My knuckles, white from clinging on for dear life, were also sprinkled with mud flakes.

I sat on the ground and was sad for a bit.

The one day I had time to squeeze in some daily exercise, I became stranded in the middle of the ponderosa pines, picking the mud out of my bike tires with a stick. I made a mental note to never trust my coworker ever again.

But that was a few months ago. Now, the trails are dry and Flagstaff is heating up again.

Maybe sometime this week between school, work, capstone, exams and final essays, I can take my bike out on the Urban Trail again.

Maybe this time I'll make it to Walnut Canyon.

Megan Troutman is the editor-in-chief of The Lumberjack, Northern Arizona University's student newspaper. College Chronicles aims to connect FlagLive! readers to various aspects of campus life.

