Time management and backwards planning

GSG Workshop
November 14, 2018
We respect that:

You are all individuals.

Your graduate experience is different based on degree and discipline.

Commitments vary based on individual.
“The thing is, there really is no way to “manage time”-- time is a constant and it will keep moving regardless of anything you do. When we talk about having better time management, we’re really talking about how we can be more productive in the time we’ve been allotted.”

*Luke Burton* from 15 Time Management Hacks for Student Affairs Professionals
Goals for the day:

To have an honest discussion about the struggles of self management as a graduate student.

Reinforce or provide ideas that can help make your life more efficient and manageable.

Recognize that pursuing an advanced degree can be grueling sometimes, but the end game will be worth it.
Understanding the why

Think of this as your philosophy or education and work, what it’s for, what it means. When using the term "work" we mean the broadest definition - not just what you do to make money or for "a job". Work is your active engagement with the world and can extend well beyond a narrow definition of job or labor or even career. Work is the largest single component of most people's waking lives and over a lifetime it occupies more of our attention and energy than any else we do.
Understanding the why

Think about your view on your education and how it relates to your future goals or work.

Think about things like:
Why a higher ed degree?
What is education for?
What is work?
What does it mean to you?
What does money have to do with it?
What does experience, growth and fulfillment have to do with it?
Backwards Planning

Look at the big picture.

Break larger goals into smaller, more manageable goals and tasks.
Backwards Planning

What are your goals for the week, semester, year?

How do you prioritize what is most important?

Planning shouldn’t supersede doing.
Let’s get started...
Audit your time

How do you use your time?

When are your best times to work?

Is it different for different tasks?

How long do actual activities take (reading, writing, coursework)?
Overestimate the time tasks take

Life is full of interruptions and unexpected challenges and opportunities.

Sometimes other people’s priorities interrupt our own.
Communication is key
Preferred method. What is your advisor’s preferred method?

Stay in touch, but how often?

Complete an Individual Development Plan with your advisor.
Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Reflect and develop a strategy for graduate education.

Manage expectations and maintain a positive working relationship with advisor.

Minimize misunderstandings and conflicts.
Focus and intentionality

Be intentional
Minimize distractions and block time do focused and intentional work

When you get stuck--take a break, use your resources.

Set random thoughts or ideas aside.
Benefits of organization

There are a lot of moving parts to being a successful graduate student.

Staying on top of organization is easier than trying to get organized.

There are best practices for systems, but use what works for you.
Managing writing

Commit to a regular schedule.

Identify productive space.
Sustaining health and well being

Sleep.
Diet.
Physical Activity.
Mindfulness.
Community.
Mental Health.
The importance of mental health

Graduate student mental health is in a free fall.

Identifying support systems is critical.

Finding your time to rejuvenate.
Sleep is not negotiable

Time and quality play a part.

Relationship to mood, health, stress levels, performance.
Reward yourself

Reward yourself with something meaningful.

Incorporate rewards into planning for the week, month and semester.
Resources

Library workshops.

Library staff.

Graduate school staff.

Workshops.

Multiliteracies Learning Center.
Balance is an illusion.
Self-awareness

What does your dashboard look like?
Dashboard exercise

Take a few minutes to think about how satisfied you are with the major areas of your life.

Your call on: “How’s “it” going?”

You can’t know where you are going until you know where you are.
Categories

School--class, work load, performance.

Work--job performance, job satisfaction.

Play--your enjoyment with time outside of school, work, etc.

Love--your relationships with friends, family, partners, pets.

Health--your overall well being.

Designing your life: how to build a well-lived, joyful life. Bill Burnett-Dave Evans - Alfred A. Knopf - 2018
Categories

Other (optional)-you may take the option to pick something that is a significant part of your life not represented in other categories.

Note: It may help to consider both satisfaction and extent of commitment--you may be happy about how something is going but still putting a lot of time into it.
Final Thoughts

Be proactive. Take responsibility for your own experience.
Know your program requirements and timelines.
Take a professional approach to your academics.
Give yourself permission to make mistakes.
Write in short sprints.
Keep a journal.
Use worrying to your advantage.
Get an accountability buddy.
Learn how (and when) to say no.