Tips for Managing Your Time as a Faculty Member

- **Set aside blocks of time for working on your research and scholarship.**
  Research/scholarship is part of your job. Remember that most faculty members owe the university about 16 hours per week for research/scholarship (assuming that 40% of one’s time is assigned to research). So, schedule time to do it! For example, set aside at least one day per week to work at home or in another non-distracting location on scholarship/writing/research. Consider setting up your workplace without an Internet connection, or, at the least, do not answer email and the telephone until after your workday is finished. Work hard and if you become saturated take a break—go to the gym, take a walk—and come back and finish up the day. Stick to the day, establish a routine, and don’t schedule other activities that will interfere with it.

- **Set goals for what you want to accomplish.**
  Set specific goals for the semester, month, and week. Set specific goals for each writing day. Monitor your progress toward meeting these goals. Take advantage of even small blocks to get something done. Make it your goal to do some writing every day (and we don’t mean email). Know which projects you are working on now and what is coming up next. Prioritize your projects so that you work on the most important things first.

- **Monitor and assess your work habits to find what is best for you.**
  Honestly examine how you work now. Are you accomplishing what you set out to do? Where is your time going? Do you know when you are at your “best” for doing work? Keep a time diary (and do it accurately) for two weeks to figure out when you are most productive, and when you surf the web, check sports scores, and chat with colleagues and friends. It’s fine to do those things, but if you know you are least productive right after lunch then leave the surfing and chatting for that time every day, and get back to work by mid-afternoon. If you have ineffective work habits, take steps to change them.

- **Establish set times for office work and stick to them.**
  As with your scholarship, set aside specific times to do your other work including teaching, course preparation, grading, and consultation with students. While you do need to be available to meet with students and do other office work, you do not need to, nor should you, be available to meet with students every hour of every day. Make sure that the students with whom you work know when they can schedule meetings with you. Encourage students to form peer support groups so that they do not have to always call on you for assistance.

- **Group meetings, teaching, and appointments as much as you can.**
  Try to group your teaching, meetings, and appointments together to the extent you are able. If you need to come to campus for two meetings with a two hour block in the middle, schedule appointments in-between. While some people work well in the short blocks between meetings or appointments, most of us end up losing that time. So be efficient. Control your schedule as much as possible instead of letting it control you!
• **Know your focus and stick to it.**
  Be clear about the focus of your work. If you get invited to work on a project that is not related to your interests and expertise (e.g., a grant project or a book chapter that is outside of your field), say no and wait for more relevant projects to come along. Trust that there will be other opportunities. Remember your FOCUS, and set your own agenda. This can help you make those hard decisions about which projects to work on and which to say no to. Don’t be afraid to say NO when the fit is not right.

• **Keep up with grading.**
  As a rule of thumb, get students’ assignments and other work graded and back to them within one week. Don’t put off grading; you are apt to fall behind and will feel overwhelmed. If you need to, stay home one morning to do grading.

• **Limit committee work and other service, especially early in your career.**
  Limit committee work, and do committee work during times that you are less productive or less mentally active/engaged. Avoid becoming involved in service activities that have little or no pay-off in terms of your scholarly agenda.

• **Involve graduate students in your work.**
  Involving graduate students in your work streamlines the process and provides mutual benefits. They receive mentoring, and you get the benefit of intellectual exchange, joint presentations and publications, and assistance that can free you up to do other things. Think about writing a grant to get graduate student support.

• **Don’t try to change the world too quickly.**
  Avoid the temptation to try to change everything about your classes, program, the department, the college, and the university. Certainly things are done differently elsewhere, and certainly they can always be done better. However, your priority right now should be to obtain promotion and tenure and not revamp the entire teacher education program. Focus on your teaching, your research, your grants, and your publications, while you learn about what has come before your arrival here. You will be in a better position to influence policies, curriculum, etc. when you are better established in your career and know more about the history and context of where you are.

• **Try to find some balance in your life.**
  While work is an important part of your life, it is not everything. Try to establish some balance. Build a network of friends with whom you can relax and socialize. If you work on the weekends (and most people do at least some of the time), limit what you work on then. Be sure to take some time for rest and relaxation.