

University of Washington ADVANCE/New Initiatives Time Management Workshop 21 November 2003

“TIME TIPS”—Loveday Conquest, Professor (Biological Statistics) and Associate Director, School of Aquatic & Fishery Sciences, UW

OBJECTIVE: LONG BLOCKS OF DISCRETIONARY TIME TO THINK AND TO WRITE

"Engineer" your day carefully, and manage your calendar. Schedule in time to, for example: [1] work on proposal or paper; [2] review proposal or paper. If the office is distracting [or too many interruptions], go elsewhere [e.g., library].

Lousy teaching schedule that 'cuts up' your days and weeks too much? Talk with chair about moving when the class meets, possible consolidation [2 x 1.5 hrs instead of 3 x 1 hr?].

Lots of students trying to meet with you? Limit the # of student meetings per week. Back the meetings up against other meetings and let the student know what the endpoint is ["I have another commitment at 3:30, so we have 45 minutes"]. I use a form email to let students know their spot in the queue [e.g., "you are 6th in the queue and I can meet with you in 2 weeks on this date"]; sometimes when they realize their place in the queue, they will find the answer elsewhere. Do not meet with people without knowing what the purpose of the meeting is.

I keep a large, loud desk clock on my desk—I can see it, and so can the person I'm meeting with.

Consolidate meetings and schedule them during times of day that would be most 'unproductive' [for scholarly reading and writing] for you anyway.

To get over avoidance [sometimes I just do not want to review this proposal or paper!, or write this administrative report, or revise this paper, or do my income taxes, etc.] schedule it in your calendar, then don't think about it anymore until it's time to do it. Consider scheduling this to do in a quiet 'away' place, like the library, with fewer distractions.

Limit departmental committee service [get your chair's help on this].

Limit student thesis committee membership to the meaningful ones, especially the Ph.D. committees where you will have to write and grade individual general exam questions, spend lots of time reading dissertation chapters, etc. If you have an area of expertise that many students use [and therefore may feel that you just have to be on their committee], you can still provide help to such students occasionally without having to serve on the committee. If the amount of your collaboration is such that co-authorship on a paper is warranted, bring it up at the beginning, not at the end.

I make my office hours for my large class 'meaningful' by meeting in a place AWAY from my office [currently, the lab space where my TAs live]. There's always a crowd, I have an enjoyable teaching experience, and students tend not to bother me at other times. This also limits the amount of class-related email from students [a real time sink otherwise].

Don't spend time/energy on details that don't really make a difference--focus your resource on the things that make the most difference! If 90% is adequate, then quit at 90% and do not go for [unproductive] perfection.

"Proactive breaks"--20-minute catnaps; take a walk; listen to music. Schedule them in. Return to work refreshed.

Manage your email reading carefully. Reply to the most urgent ones; leave the rest until later, like mid-morning or mid-afternoon break.

If you have to work in your office and truly do not want to be interrupted [e.g., it's Tuesday and the proposal has to be finished by end of week], consider putting a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door, with the reason why, and asking folks to contact you via email instead. It's probably not a good idea to do this every day, but most folks will understand when you have to meet a deadline.