

Time Management

Managing one's time is an occasional struggle for anyone, but especially for students in leadership positions. Whether it's running from classes to meetings, meetings to dinner, and dinner to events, it sometimes feels as though you're cramming 25 hours into a 24 hour day. It's important to recognize that time management can help you as long as you're willing to assess what you've been doing and make a commitment to budget your time better. Included in this tip sheets are several ideas and methods for improving your time management. Take an opportunity to examine what you can do for yourself and make some positive changes to the way that you run your schedule.

The Big Three Steps to Effective Time Management

Organize—Ideally, you should make a list each morning of everything that you want or need to do for that day. Do not plan every minute and don't even think about which task is most important. Just write them all down. Some people find it more helpful to list their "things to do" in 5 to 7 day groupings. In this way they can plan for longer projects and get a better sense of their week. Whichever method you choose, keep in mind everyone has good and bad days. Don't scold yourself if you don't accomplish everything; just add the uncompleted tasks to your next list and get them done.

Prioritize—After you have recorded these "things to do," go back over the list and rewrite in priority order which things you need/want to do at the top and less important/pressing tasks at the bottom. Another option is to use a grading method with your list. For example, mark those things you need/want to get done immediately with an A+ while those things that are less important with a C. Keep in mind due dates, commitments you have made, and whether or not these tasks involve others. If the items are for class, it is important to consider how much of the final grade they are worth. How you choose to prioritize is a very personal matter. What is important is that you are responsible with your priorities.

Schedule—The last thing to do is to take this list and begin to work these "things to do" into your schedule. Don't plan every minute of your day. Remember to leave room for breaks, socializing, and those unexpected things that pop up. There's no use making a schedule that is impossible to follow. Try these suggestions, see what works best, and then be sure to integrate them into your lifestyle. Learning effective time management now will help you throughout your personal life and professional career.

Tips and Techniques for Managing Time

- Survey your normal time schedule; analyze it.
- Do one thing at a time; resist detours.
- Plan for the unexpected.
- Learn to say "No!"
- Delegate activities/assignments to fellow student leaders/friends when appropriate.
- Handle each piece of paper as few times as possible. File it away or throw it away.
- Think on terms of effectiveness first, efficiency second.
- A few fat files are better than a lot of thin ones.
- If in doubt, throw it out.
- The more quickly a minor decision is made, the better.

- Analyze your fears. What is the worst thing that can happen if you do or don't do the task?
- Shake things up once in a while.
- When you delegate, entrust. Educate the people and turn the project over to them.
- Make sure you follow up. Don't let people get away without doing your request.
- To make a decision, gather available facts, make the decision, and put it into effect.
- Keep your work space free from clutter.

Members of the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) staff are available to assist you with any questions you have regarding leadership issues. The OSE is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m.—5 p.m. For more information, please contact the office at 410.337.6124.