Time Management

Background

Scheduling and managing time wisely are important for the student organization leader. If you miss important appointments and deadlines, you will cause complications both for your organization and to your academic and personal life. This will cause anxiety, frustration, guilt, and other nasty feelings.

Purpose

What is time management?
It is a process of constantly asking what is most important and arranging priorities to reflect that choice.

It is knowing:
- a system for helping you meet your goals
- practical tips for using your time effectively
- how to succeed when facing stumbling blocks or procrastination
- yourself: your habits, goals, and time during the day when you're most alert and productive

Time management really means managing yourself!

Time Management Tips

- Only twenty to twenty-five percent of a student's time is controllable, and the average student is interrupted every ten to fifteen minutes. This fact suggests the need to minimize interruptions but also to plan them into your day.

- An effective way to isolate and manage interruptions and any unexpected items is to use a priority system. On your daily to-do list, mark the important and essential things to be done today with A, the secondary items with B, and the marginal items with C.

- **Delegate:**
  o determine who and why
  o determine what and when
  o check for understanding and acceptance
  o have interim status checks
  o recognize and reward

- **Paperwork:** Handle materials once. Choose one of the four D's: dump it, do it, delegate it, or delay/defer it.

- **Reading materials:** Scan the index and tear out articles of interest. If you keep a reading pile, schedule a time to read the materials; otherwise, throw them away immediately.

- **Personal organization:** Write your to-do list at the end of the day. It gives you the chance to review what you have accomplished. Look at it fresh in the morning to keep you on track for the day. Block out your prime time for the A items.

- **Studying:** Don't make your schedule overly vague. Don't delay your planning. Be prepared for assignments. Be flexible, monitor, and adjust!

- **Writing:** Write an outline. Once the outline is done, seventy percent of your work is completed. Word processing is wonderful simply filling in the details.

Time Management

Procrastination

Procrastination = negative delay
Tedious, difficult, or uninteresting tasks are usually those that we put off doing. Yet, it is these tasks that are essential to success in college. Procrastination slows achievement of current goals and restricts future opportunity, as it clogs up time. The time spent before doing the job is is usually wasted. Procrastination can come about in a number of ways:

1. *Paralysis by planning*
    Here, the planning process is drawn out to avoid confronting an issue. Plans are argued and polished and perfected, but implementation of the plans is delayed unnecessarily.

2. *Perfectionism*
    Often tasks are fussed over long after they have been achieved to quite a sufficient level. This serves to delay tackling other problems. Often perfectionism simply is not required and is not cost-effective for success.

3. *Boredom*
    Boring jobs are very easy to delay for spurious reasons. Here, self-discipline is needed.

4. *Hostility*
    Where you are hostile to the task, or the person given the task, there is a strong temptation to delay the task.

5. *The Deadline High*
    Coming up against a tight deadline and meeting it is immediately satisfying. It can be associated with strong rushes of adrenaline. The problem with this is that you may find that jobs are being delayed precisely to get this rush of adrenaline. Occasionally, jobs may fail because they are begun too late. The way to avoid Deadline High procrastination is to set deadlines for intermediary goals which must be achieved.

6. *Positive delay*
    Occasionally, delay can be positive and useful. When you are tired, upset, or angry, it can often be best not to tackle jobs that require sensitivity and clarity of thought. If you do not have the information or skills to do a job properly, it may be best to delay until you have acquired them. It is okay to delay if there is something more important to do than the job being delayed. Delay can also be useful in a situation where you feel threatened or are unhappy about the course of action needed to meet a crisis. By delaying in these cases, you give time for more information to come to light to guide the choice or may see a different perspective that changes your view of the circumstances. Alternatively, random occurrences may give you a useful advantage or reduce the severity of a problem. These positive aspects of delay must not, however, be used as an excuse to avoid action that is obviously essential.

How do we get out of the habit?
•   Set acceptable standards, but avoid perfectionism.
•   Schedule the difficult important, and unpleasant tasks first.
•   Set deadlines. "Go public" by announcing them.
•   Handle a task just once. When you pick it up, dispose of it.
•   Reward yourself after the job is finished!

Conclusion
•   Procrastinate procrastination!
•   Plan for the unexpected.
•   Learn to say NO!
•   Once you have found extra time, enjoy it! Avoid over-scheduling.