

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
Faculty Engagement and Development

What the latest research says about...

Successful Work-Life Balance in Academia

Presented by
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#UHFED

Work-life imbalance

Burned-out adults cost an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion a year in healthcare spending in the United States.

- ▶ Plus, 54 percent of Americans do not use all their vacation time, leaving a collective 662 million vacation days on the table—days that would generate \$128 billion in direct spending, and an overall positive economic impact of \$236 billion for the U.S. economy.

A 426 Billion a year loss?



Work-Life Balance Insights from Academics

- “It’s easier to think of balance in “**Seasons**” versus days. There was a season where I was writing a book. There was a season where I was starting a family.”
- “Go easy on yourself for ordering pizza multiple times a week and catching up with friends while you’re running errands. **The break you give yourself** might be the only one you’ll get for a while.”
- “The people most stricken by work-life-balance issues are dual-earner families. Both people in the house have jobs, so there’s no one whose job it is to exclusively manage the household. It really helps if you **off-load** as many of those **household management jobs** outside the family as you can stand to.”
- “If you can, you should try to “**segment**” between your work and non-work lives. **But when that’s not possible**, it helps to think of it as a work fever dream. As unappealing as that sounds, at least you’re not surprised when it extends past 6 p.m. and you **have a plan** to get through the fever.”
- “It is worse because I can schedule my own work, outside of class times, so I flex and I flex and I flex until I’m juggling too much and everything is behind. I’ve learned to set appointments for myself and timers for my focus. I keep **certain small blocks of time sacred** no matter what, no flexing, and when my timer goes off, I’m done focusing on that thing for now.”



What does the latest research say?

1. Work relationships drive a lot.

- **Quality** of our relationships predicts our willingness to stay and keep struggling for balance.
- **Unresolved conflict** is a huge stressor that follows us home.
- **Strong networks** significantly increase our resilience.



2. Minimize demands, maximize control.

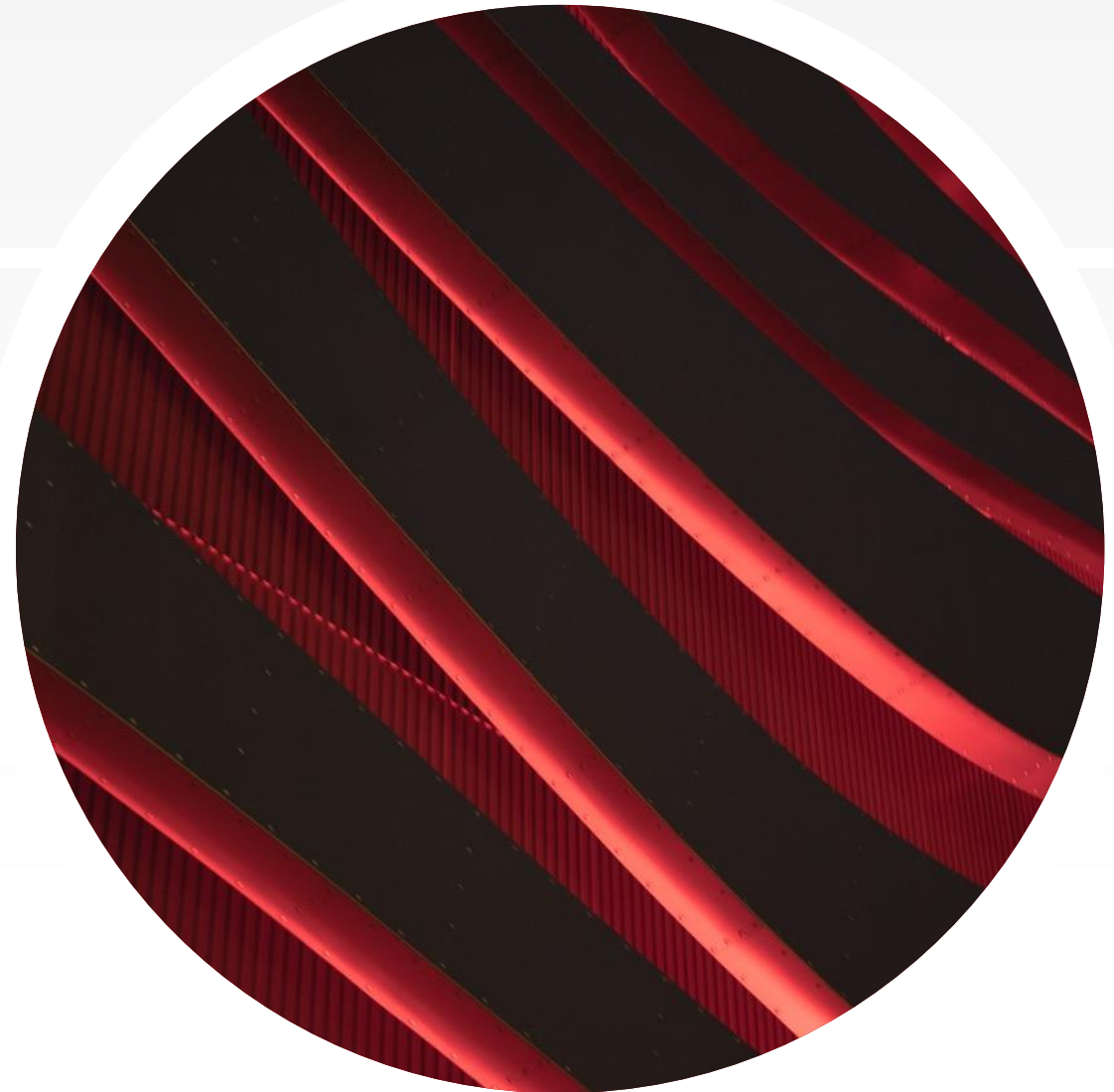
- We benefit most by saying **NO** to things that demand a lot of our time without giving us much control about how we do them.
- **If we can't say no**, then negotiating more control over the details of how we do it helps us create more flexibility and adapt our balance.

What does the latest research say?

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3. Time spent planning and mindfulness matter.

- **Plan** time on a weekly to monthly basis.
- Planning sufficient time **for thinking** about how to do tasks is as important as planning time to do the tasks.
- Reserve **unstructured time too** to boost health and creativity.
- Practice multiple, brief **mindfulness** moments daily to encourage well-being.



What does the latest research say?



4. Feed strengths first and frequently.

- “Fixing” ourselves is a fast-pass to over-balancing and burning out.
- Making the most of our strengths results in **greater performance gains**.
- Learning more challenging skills in our strength areas gives us **greater life-satisfaction** and makes us feel more balanced.

What does the latest research say?

5. What is the difference between our real and our ideal mix of time?

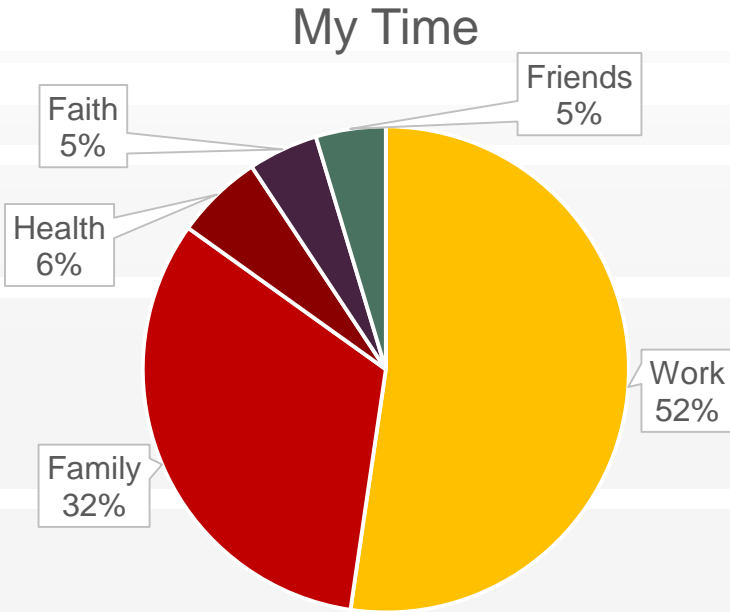
- Usually 5 value buckets: **work, family, health, faith, and friends.**
- Small gaps are better...but we can handle big gaps for short, well-defined periods.
- Large gaps (>30%) for more than 6 weeks is a **danger zone.**
- If a bucket = 0, then this a **traumatic event.**



What does the latest research say about successful work-life balance in Academia?

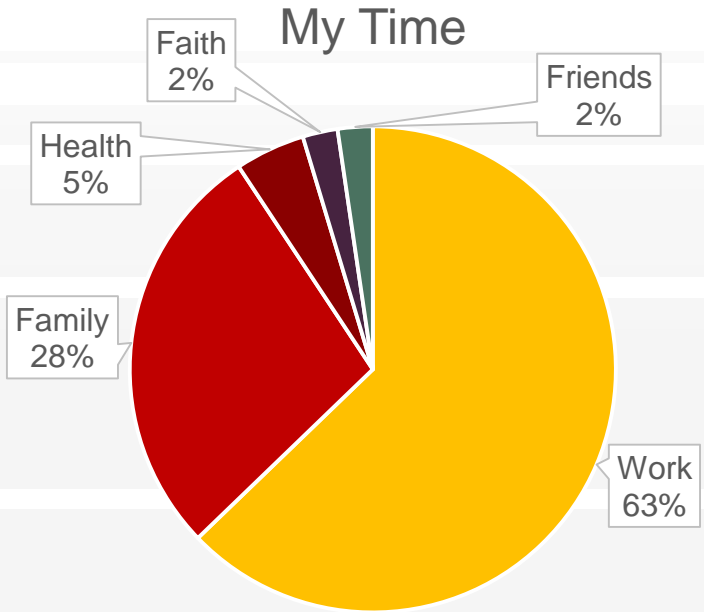
Mind the Gap!

Ideal Month



Total Gap = 23% which is <30% but...

Real September





What does the latest research say about successful work-life balance in Academia?

In summary, balance gets easier when we:

1. Get high-quality relationships at work.
2. Say NO to high-demand, low-control work.
3. Plan how to use time each week/ month.
 - Allow time to be bored and mindful.
4. Feed strengths first and frequently.
5. Mind the gap between real and ideal balances.



Buy a Way Out of Burnout Buttons

Prevent	Cope	Recover
Good sleep	Use more social support	Find formal therapy
Mindfulness	Formally add unstructured/ thinking to your schedule	Take an official rest/ time out
Keep near ideal balance	Monitor your balance gap	Start a formal plan to close your balance gap
Quality relationships at work	Maximize time working with work buddies	Get coaching to resolve conflicts or recover relationships
No low-control tasks	No more high-demand, low-control tasks	Reduce high-demand tasks
Do career planning to leverage strengths	Re-engineer work to rely more on your strengths	Find ways to feed a neglected strength

Key UH Work-Life Balance Resources

Provost's Work-Life Balance Catalogue:

<http://www.uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/benefits/work-life-balance/>

HR's Wellness Program and Perks:

<http://www.uh.edu/human-resources/PowerUP-Wellness/>

Employee Assistance Program:

www.uteap.org

Counseling and Psychological Services:

<http://www.uh.edu/caps/>


Promotion and Tenure Tools:

<http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/faculty/promotion-tenure/>

Family Friendly Resources @ UH Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FamilyResourcesatUH/>

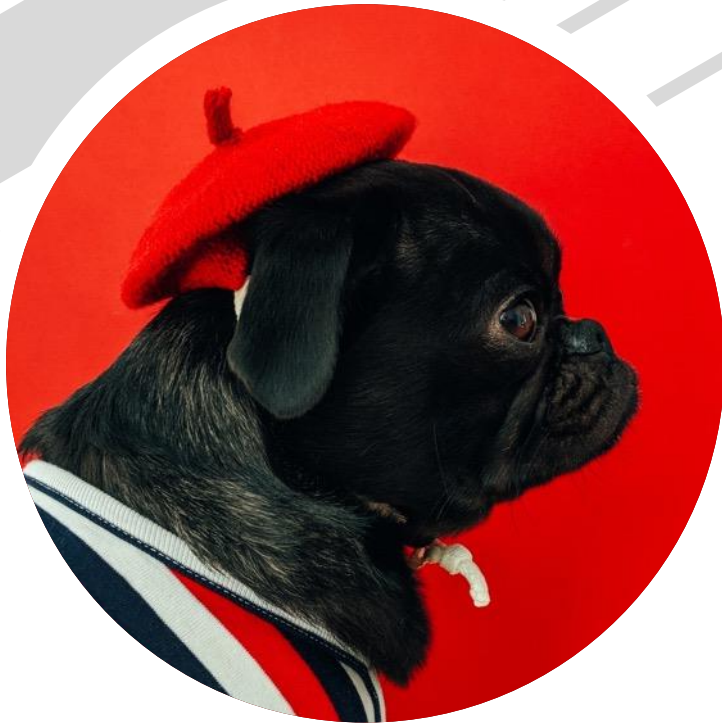




“ To really recover from burnout, we must change not just our schedules but also our thinking. **We must accept that what we produce and contribute is not our value.**”

—*Brené Brown, Ph.D.*

UH Research Professor of Social Work



“ Because higher education is a stressful environment, **prioritize** making improvements to the **quality of your life.**”

—*Dwayne A. Mack, Ph.D.*
Berea College, Professor of History

THANK YOU

We always welcome your feedback:

<http://bit.ly/UH-WLB>



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