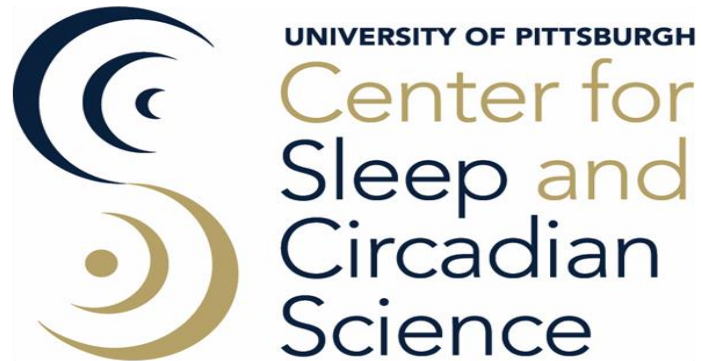


# Proactive Time Management



Martica Hall, PhD

Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Clinical and Translational Science

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[hallmh@upmc.edu](mailto:hallmh@upmc.edu)

*T32 Seminar: Professional Development*

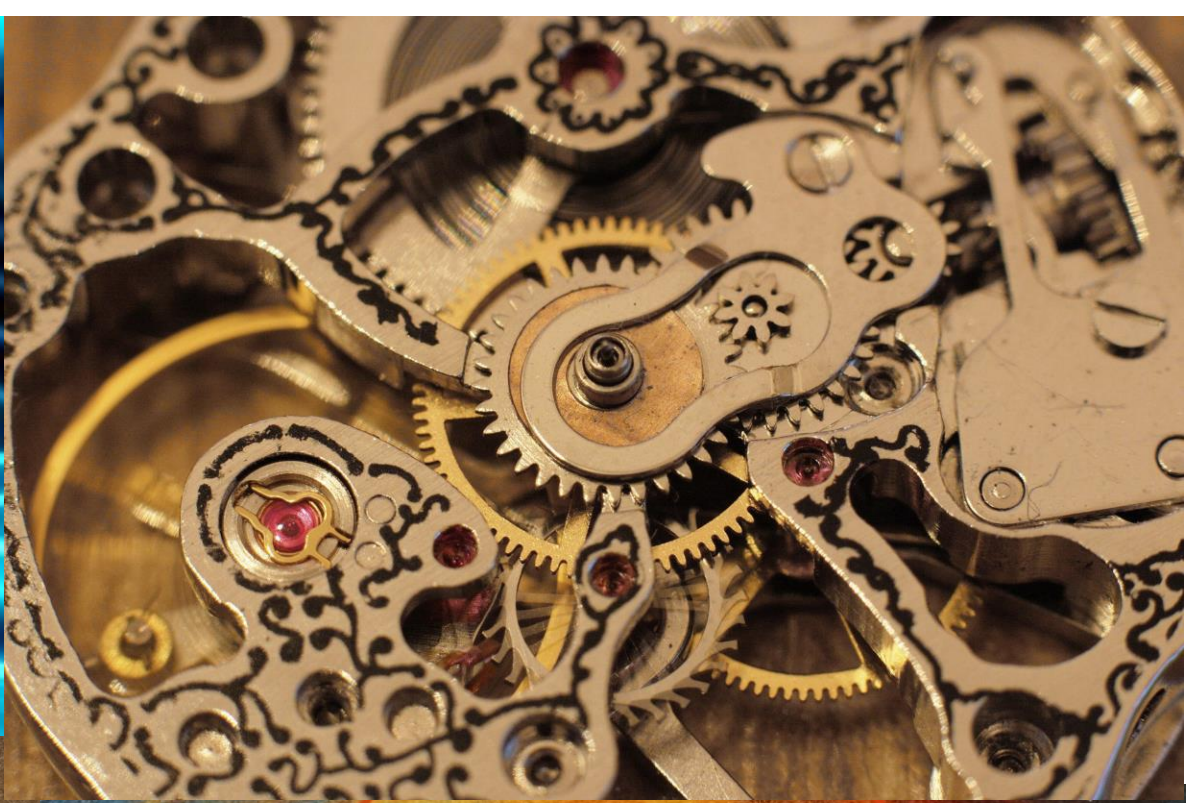
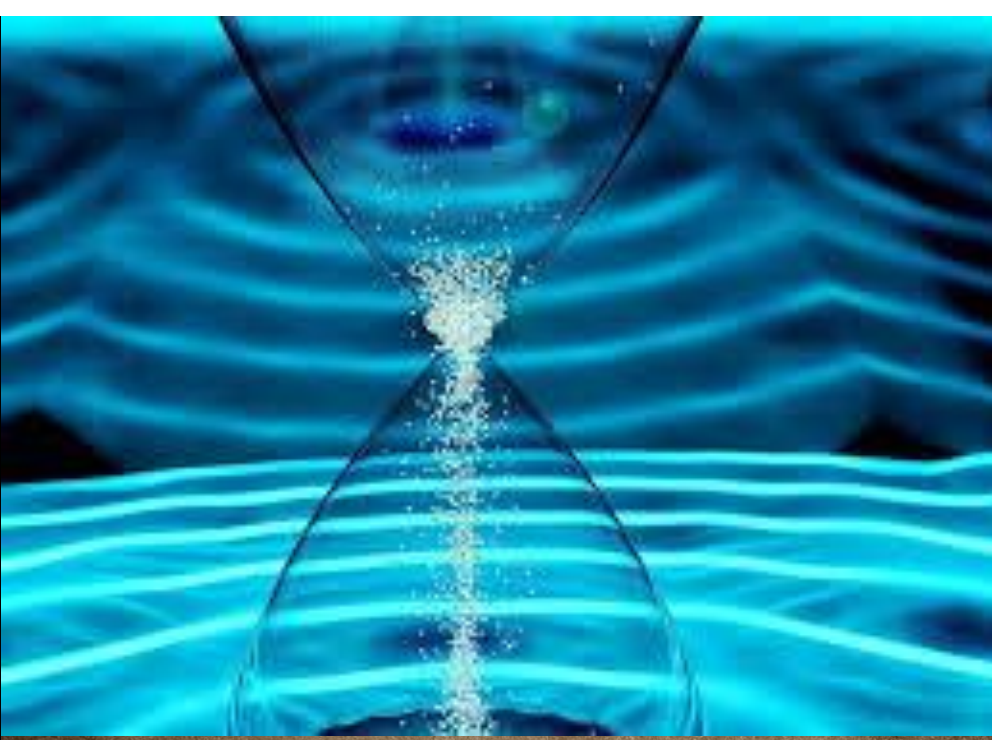
*November 1, 2019*



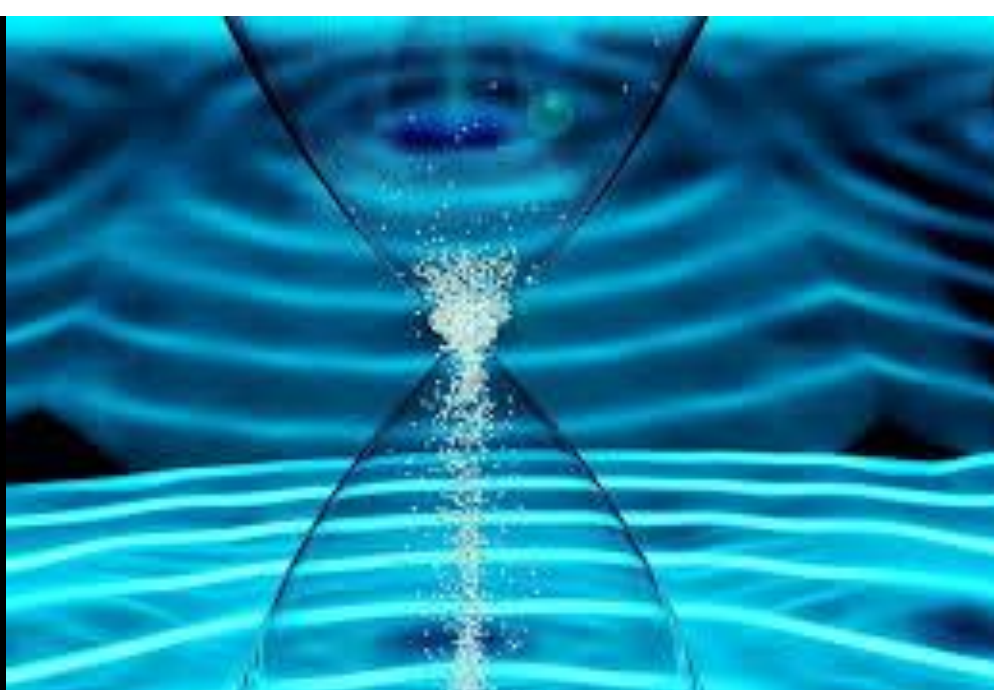
<https://youtu.be/AGWI9RF4mfl>



Is it about time?



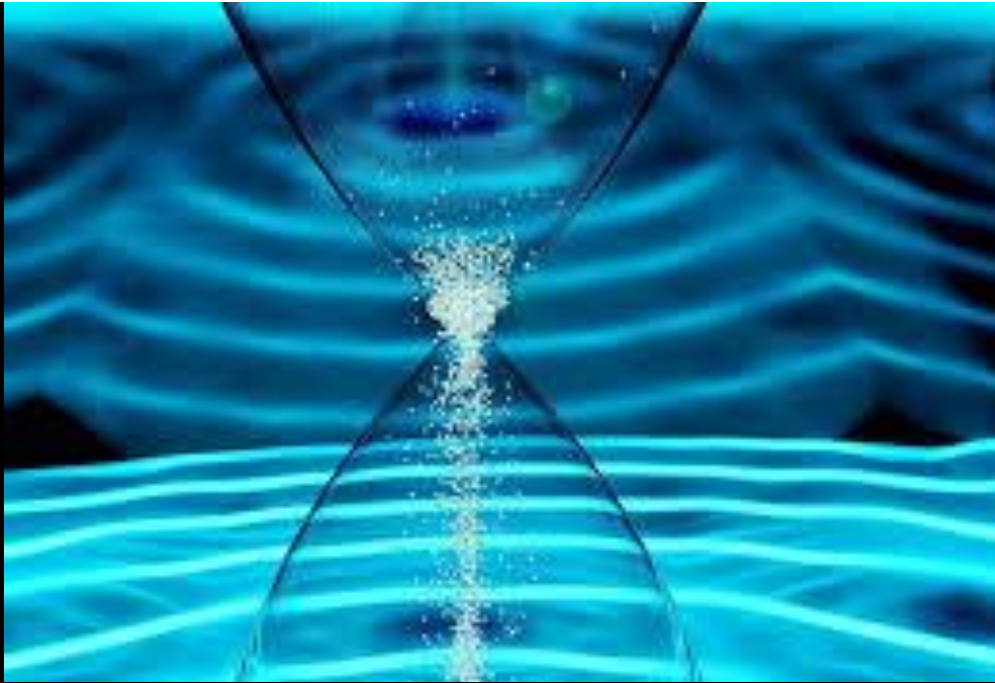




Or, is it about priorities, and strategies, and tactics?







It's all about priorities, strategies, and tactics!







**Imagine** ergonomics of spinning one ring.  
Now, two rings.

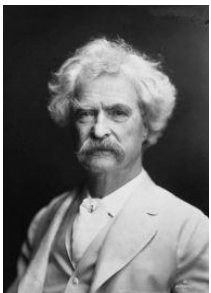
task shifting cost → 40% of time  
8 hr day → 3.2 hours, or 192 minutes

**So...**

- Make a list
- Prioritize
- Allocate time to each task.

**Avoid multitasking.**

# Eat the frog.



“If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first.”



Meetings.

### Is in-person meeting necessary?

- Brainstorming      Yes    No
- Share information    Yes    No
- In-depth discussion    Yes    No
- Delegate tasks      Yes    No

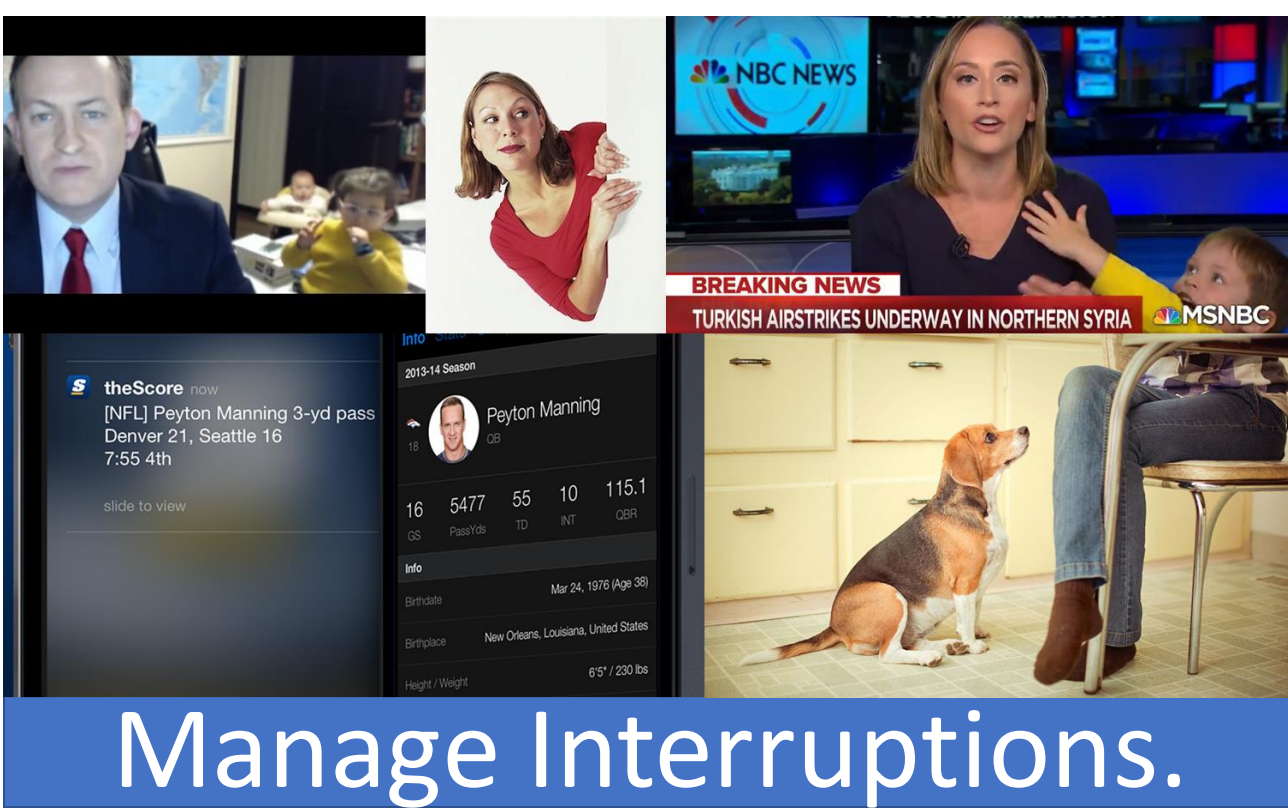
### Look familiar?

- Arrive.
- Wait.
- Exchange pleasantries → delay start
- Wait for your issue to come up
- But, is meeting necessary?

### Agenda!

- Clarity of purpose.
- Plan for how time will be spent.
- Makes clear when meeting is over.
- Without an agenda, can drag on to fill time.





## Schedule tasks

to do list → prioritize → deadline/time  
generate separate lists: work, personal

*Note: Task scheduling and managing interruptions is addressed in more detail during discussion of “5 B’s”*

# Manage Interruptions.



First two links below are video of the viral BBC dad and mom spoof, third link is video of NBC journalist being interrupted by child.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh4f9AYRCZY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ5iFyyKlCQ>

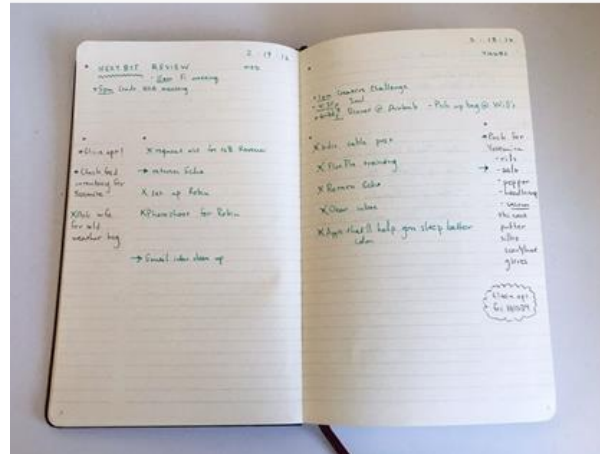
<https://www.thebiglead.com/posts/video-news-report-interrupted-by-reporter-courtney-kube-s-adorable-child-01dprvf9q5hy>





Utilize tools.

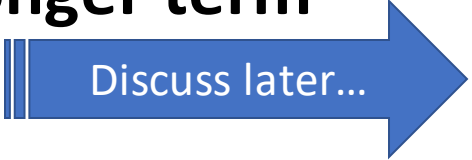
Many options...



Helpful?

- Prioritizing  Yes  No
- Long term  Yes  No
- Short term  Yes  No
- Allocating time  Yes  No

What about longer term planning?





# Sharpen the saw.

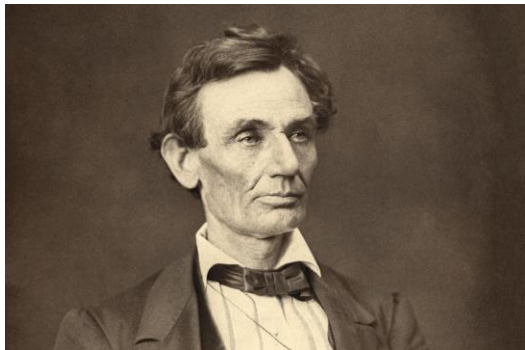


Preserve & enhance your greatest asset...

- You!

Value of “sharpening the saw”

- Self renewal, versus continuous sawing (action).



“If I had six hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend the first four hours sharpening the axe.”



# Time Management Tactics for Academics



Nick Feamster, PhD  
Neubauer Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

Distinguishing feature of a research career — particularly in academia — is the unstructured nature of the job.

Although this autonomy can be liberating, it can also result in tremendous inefficiency if one does not develop effective time-management tactics.

*Identify specific time management tactics that may be useful for academics (or anyone who works in an unstructured environment).*



Nick Feamster, PhD  
Neubauer Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago



## Plan time like plan finances.

Financial goal → financial strategic action  
financial budget

*Can I afford to go out to dinner?* Yes. **No.**

Career/personal goal → strategic planning  
time budget

*Can I afford this opportunity?* Yes. **No.**





Nick Feamster, PhD  
Neubauer Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

Perhaps the most important characteristic of time that underscores the need for effective time management is that:

**Time is an asset that you are always spending,  
and it can never be replenished or replaced.**

- Given that you are always spending time, the best you can hope to do is to always be making the best use of your time.
- A question to repeatedly ask yourself is: *“Is this the best use of my time right now?”*
- By continually asking yourself this question, you can often correct course and spend your time in the best possible way.

# Where to start? *Strategy*: Make a plan & prioritize.



**Decide what's important.**

- Personal
- Professional

**Decide what will be your top priorities.**

*“Personal health, well-being, family, and friends should come above all other goals.”*

So, know what's important and can identify top priorities. *Tactics* help you execute your plan.

## **The Five B's:**

Bits

Budgets

Buffers

Bounds

Barriers



Nick Feamster, PhD  
Neubauer Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago





Nick Feamster, PhD  
Mebaker Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Bits


Is time:

- Fixed, discrete blocks?
- Fluid?



## “Time Bits List”

- Maintain list.

Write sleep paper 

Write intro to sleep paper 

Write 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of paper 

- Before taking a break...

e.g., mins before meeting, get started on small task (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph) that involves a bigger task (intro to paper).

So, when come back from meeting, you’ve already started → Get a jump on getting “in the zone”



Nick Feamster, PhD  
Associate Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Budgets

Spend your time well.

Work nonstop?

Yes  No

Purposeful in how you spend your time?

Yes No

Spend time on work?

Yes No

Spend time on leisure?

Yes No

**Regardless,**

Have a purpose. Always have a goal (short- and long-term), and spend your time with that goal in mind. (finish a paper, achieve promotion, learn a new song)





Nick Feamster, PhD  
Walter Dill Scott Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Buffers

- Create time buffers in between scheduled activities. Recommend 50% time buffer for any activity. For ANY activity!
  - 60 minutes of analyses → buffer = 90 minutes
  - 20 minutes of email → buffer = 30 minutes
- If pack time tightly, result is → stress, lateness, frantic thought and action
- Show up early. Ensures focus versus frazzle. You don't have to "waste" time if early → engage with time bits list
- Buffer also helps "change modes" (work/personal; adversarial/pleasant interaction)



Nick Feamster, PhD  
Walter P. Reuther Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Bounds

“The academic lifestyle can go unbounded. It is always possible to write another paper, perfect lecture notes further, write another proposal, and so forth. **The sky is the limit, and the sky is boundless.** It can be tempting to continue to say yes, to keep working after diminishing returns have set in, and so forth. ***It is critical to set bounds.***”

- Do not let perfect be the enemy of the timely. e.g. reviewing a manuscript: ultra-thorough, fine-tuning and perfecting your feedback, but DIMINISHING RETURNS. “Sometimes it’s more important to be timely than it is to be perfect. Plus, being perfect is not attainable, but being timely is.”
- Use a deadline as a bound for declaring victory. Declare a date or time and stick to it. (how much time you’ll spend editing a paper; how much time you’ll spend on an email thread; etc.)





Nick Feamster, PhD  
Associate Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Bounds (continued)

- Beware of **time thieves**. Particularly those that masquerade as “productive activities” Interrupt-driven activities steal our time in fits and spurts.
  - Beware threads without a purpose. **EXAMPLES?** Just clear from deck, delete.
  - Beware threads that will resolve without your involvement.
  - Beware emailing all day (and night?) If you wait for certain periods of day and start from most recent, you can clear desk quickly and efficiently.
  - Beware sticking with email, when it may not be the most efficient mode of response (don't stick with email just because communication started that way).

## Email Thief



“Most of time, responding to email is a Sisyphean task.” N. Feamster, PhD

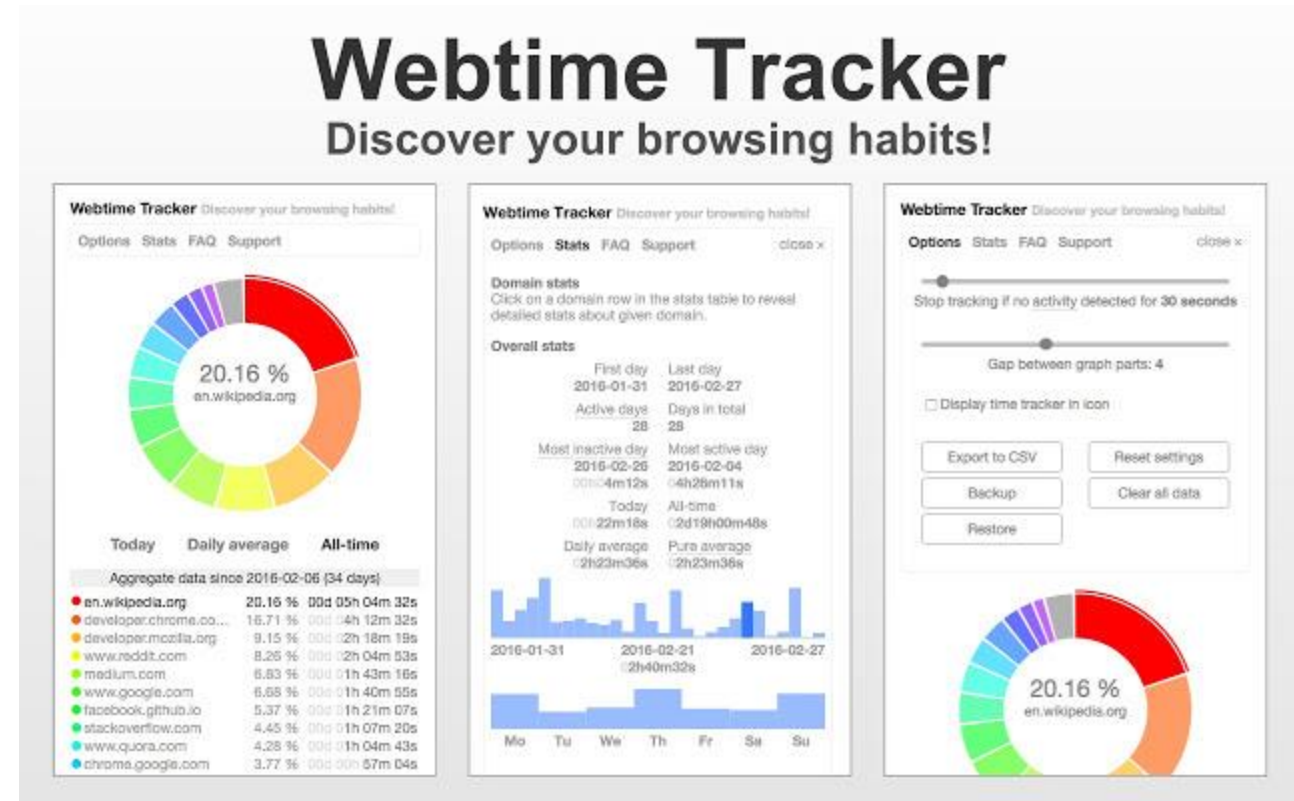


Nick Feamster, PhD  
Webster Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Bounds (continued)

- Be purposeful about online and other passive “leisure” activities. OK to browse, but leisurely doesn’t have to be aimless.
- Track time: Stay Focused, Webtime Tracker (self control, productivity app) → do an accounting, may even decide to give up some activities when you realize how much time you are spending on them.
  - Have a purpose – set a reasonable short-term goal (even for vegging out), how long do you want to do this for?
- Be purposeful about online and other passive “leisure” activities. OK to browse, but leisurely doesn’t have to be aimless.

EXAMPLES?







Nick Easman, PhD  
Walter P. Reuther Professor of Computer Science,  
Director of Center for Data and Computing  
University of Chicago

# Barriers

Establish time for specific activities and be ruthless about enforcing barriers between those activities.

- Unless emergency, ruthlessly protect your scheduled time. “do you have a minute?” *nothing* ever takes a minute. Even if interruption is brief, it creates a context switch/disrupts flow.
  - Is this rude? What about your goal for that period of time?
- Ruthlessly protect your personal time. *During non-work time, devote your complete attention and energy to not doing work.*
  - Interruption with request/demand. Can it not wait? Your personal activity can’t wait until Monday morning.
- Ruthlessly protect your personal space.
  - *Establish place at home where work is off limits. (e.g., phone in bedroom) Helps establish time barriers. Physical barriers protect personal time.*
  - *Establish activities where not reachable: that time is yours.*
- Learn how to say “no”. It can be difficult to know when a task will be enriching or superfluous. Overachievers may have difficulty saying no and quickly find themselves overcommitting.
  - Overcommitment → catastrophic. NO matter how well you manage your time, there will be no way to fit all of the tasks into a fixed number of hours.
    - No strategies
      - Trusted colleagues → is it ok to say no? multiple opinions reduces impact of bias or ulterior motives
      - Catalog “no’s” → “what’s in your wallet?” How long is your list?

## Generate Examples



5-year plan

2-year plan

1-year plan

Quarterly plan

Monthly plan

Weekly plan

Daily plan

**Long-term planning.**

**How do you define long-term?**

**Which plans drive which?**

**How prioritize?**

\*\*\*

*Does career stage affect plan/activities?*



GOAL ACHIEVED



## Five Year Plan

5-year plan

2-year plan

1-year plan

Quarterly plan

Monthly plan

Weekly plan

Daily plan

\*\*\*  
*Does career stage affect plan/activities?*

**Long-term planning.**



Long-term planning.

# Five-Year Plan

Goals	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03	Year 04	Year 05
E.G., Obtain faculty position.					
E.G., Buy a house.					



Long-term planning.

# Two-Year Plan

Goals	Year 01				Year 02			
	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04	Q01	Q04	Q03	Q04
E.G., Submit K Award (01)								





Long-term planning.

# One-Year Plan

Goals	Year xx			
	Q01	Q02	Q03	Q04
E.G., Submit paper on xx	Revise per co-author feedback, submit			
E.G., Submit paper on xx		Complete manuscript & circulate to co-authors	Revise per co-author feedback, submit	
E.G., Submit paper on xx			Complete manuscript & circulate to co-authors	Revise per co-author feedback, submit



Long-term planning.

# Quarterly Plan

Goals	Quarter xx		
	Month 01	Month 02	Month 03
E.G., complete paper on xx	Finish analyses	Write Results	Write Discussion

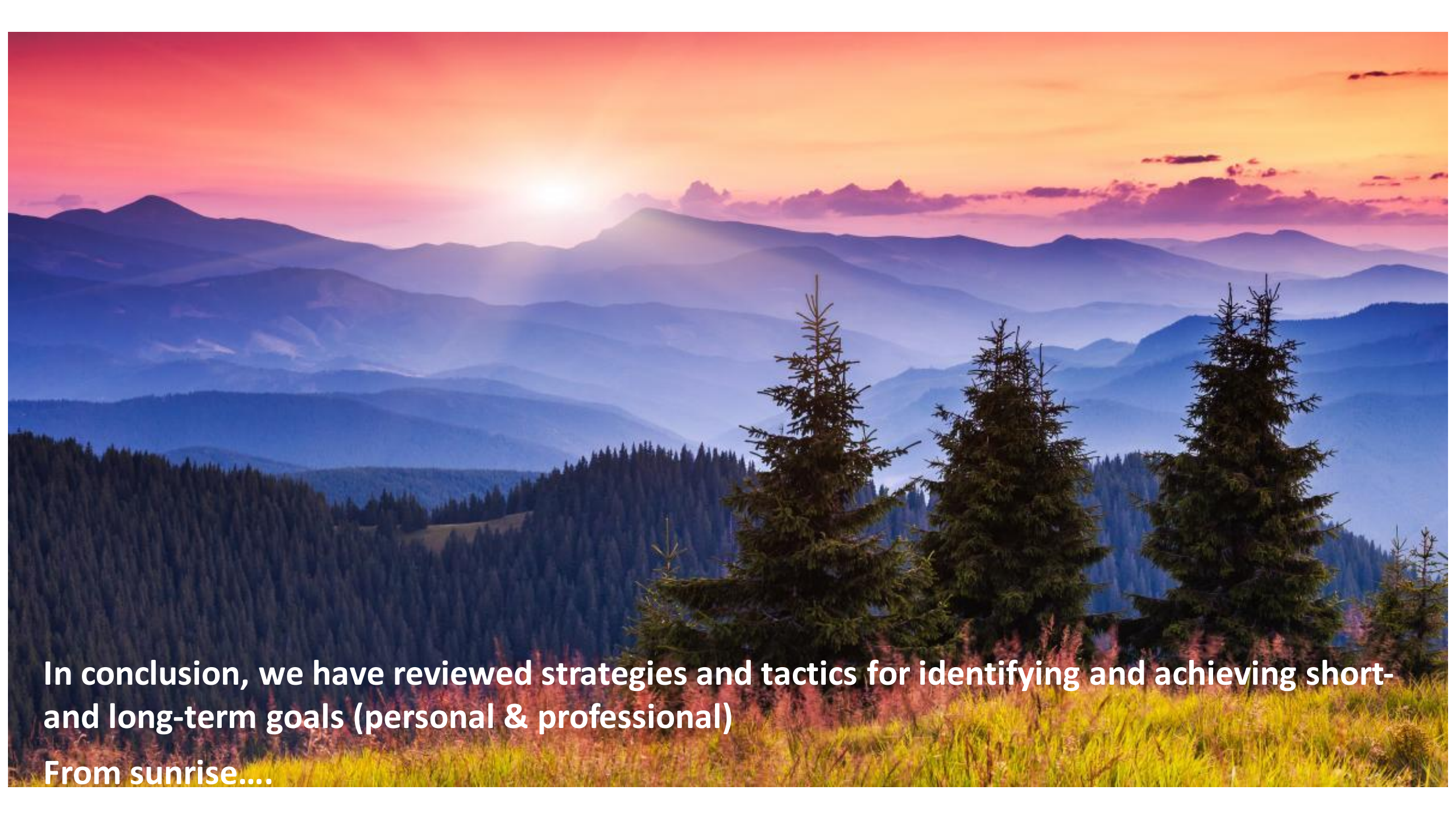


Long-term planning.

# Monthly Plan

Goals	Week 01	Week 02	Week 03	Week 04
E.G., run analyses	Write syntax	Check distributions, missingness, transformations, interpolations	Run analyses related to aims, check & verify results, create tables & figures	Write up Results section
E.G., garden ready for winter	Rake leaves	Clean, dry, store outdoor furniture & pots	Clean front beds	Clean back beds





**In conclusion, we have reviewed strategies and tactics for identifying and achieving short- and long-term goals (personal & professional)**

**From sunrise....**



...to sunset (or, “Good Night Time”)



Use these strategies and tactics to...



Award Calculation (U.S. Dollars)  
 Salaries and Wages  
 Fringe Benefits  
 Personnel Costs (Subtotal)  
 Materials & Supplies  
 Travel  
 Other  
 Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs  
 Publication Costs

**NOGA!!!!!!**

\$147,164  
 \$41,383  
 \$188,547  
 \$58,200  
 \$2,700  
 \$45,900  
 \$28,170  
 \$1,350

Federal Direct Costs  
 Federal F&A Costs  
 Approved Budget  
 Total Amount of Federal Funds Obligated (Federal Share)  
**TOTAL FEDERAL AWARD AMOUNT**

\$304,900  
 \$175,375  
 \$500,335  
 \$500,335  
 \$500,335

AMOUNT OF THIS ACTION (FEDERAL SHARE)

\$500,335

SUMMARY TOTALS FOR ALL YEARS			
YR	THIS AWARD		CUMULATIVE TOTALS
1		\$500,335	\$500,335
2		\$481,820	\$481,820



**It's all about priorities, strategies, and tactics!**




**And...**





Priorities, strategies, and tactics lead to you an exciting and fulfilling career!





## Additional Discussion

