



Office of Graduate Professional Development Workshop Series

My World Is Not My Doctoral Program: Re-imagining Balance During Graduate School

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Introduction



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Learning Outcomes

- ▶ After attending this webinar, graduate students will be able to:
 - Reframe what balance is.
 - Explain why one overarching definition of balance does not exist.
 - Describe at least 2 activities they can complete to begin creating a sense of school-life blend for themselves.

Land Acknowledgment

- ▶ A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.
- ▶ In particular, the University of Florida resides on land of the Timucua people and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Additionally, I acknowledge that Indigenous land was expropriated from over 120+ tribal nations as part of the Morrill Act in order to originally fund the University of Florida.

What We Know

- ▶ Graduate students often have time conflicts between school and personal life that add to sense of stress and a lowered sense of well-being (Anderson & Swazey, 1998; Stratton et al., 2006).



What We Know



- ▶ Grad students with a support network tend to
 - perform better academically,
 - experience less emotional and physical distress,
 - withdraw less frequently from ambiguous or tension-producing settings, and
 - suffer from fewer severe physical and psychiatric illness that socially isolated persons suffer (Goplerud, 1980).

What We Found: No Universal Definition

- ▶ There is *no one perfect way* to balance the multiple roles doctoral students have and *no universal standard* to which all doctoral students should strive.
- ▶ Determining the proper balance is a *personal choice* and is influenced by how **YOU** prioritize **YOUR** academic roles, family roles, and personal roles at any given moment (Haynes et al., 2012).

Instead of School-Life Balance...

- ▶ “Balance assumes that there is a zero-sum game and that you are keeping score on either side.”
 - Kathy Hobgood, Assistant Vice President for Student Auxiliary Services, Clemson University



...Consider School-Life Blend

- ▶ Fit your work into your life and your life into your work.



What We Found: Coping Strategies Matter

- ▶ There will be fluctuations in internal motivation; thus, students need to develop effective coping strategies.
- ▶ These include:
 - Learning to be flexible and adaptable to unforeseen challenges
 - Seeing the program as a challenge she can overcome
 - Using spirituality as a way to maintain balance (Haynes et al., 2012).



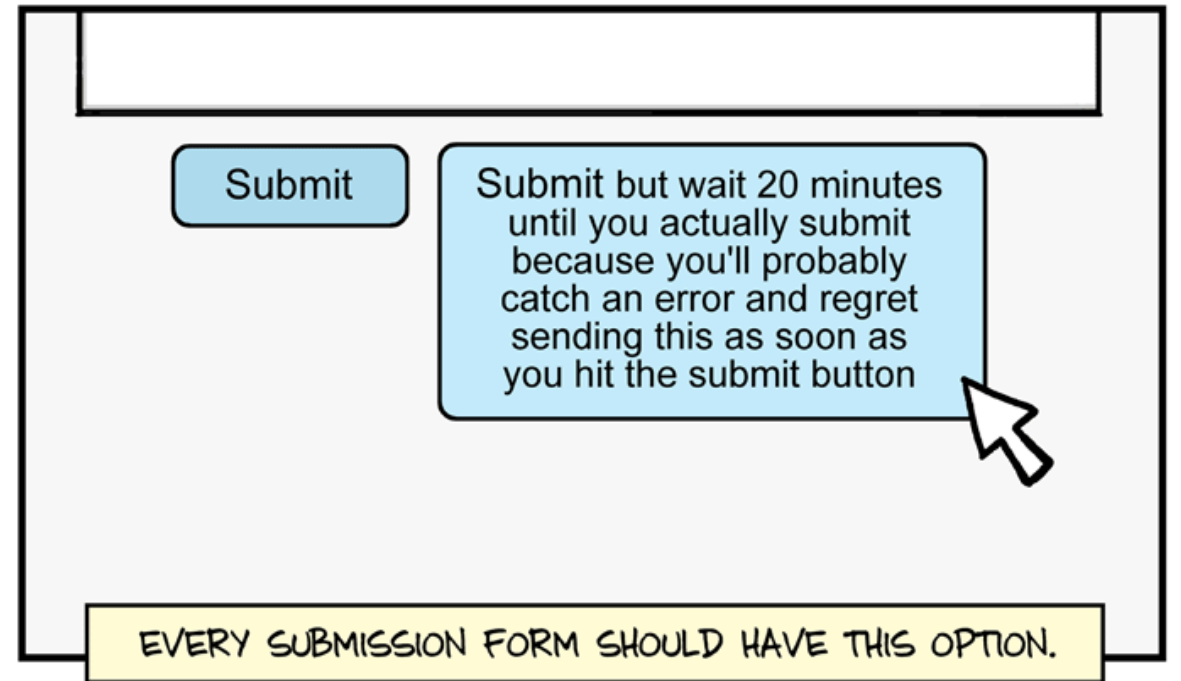
Strategy: Reflection

- ▶ Spend 15-30 minutes and reflect on the following questions:
 - How and why did I apply to graduate school in the _____ program?
 - Do I really want to do this?
 - ◇ Why? What do I need in order to meet my goals that I described in the first question?
 - ◇ Why not? What would it take to get a yes?

Reflection adapted from the [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity](#).

What We Found: Perfectionism Hurts

- ▶ Graduate students have high standards that can lead to perfectionism.
- ▶ High standards is what led them to grad school, but it started to affect their personal lives too.
- ▶ This created added stress and affect their ability to do well in any aspect of their life (Prikhidko & Haynes, 2018).



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Strategy: Vary Your Standards

1. Identify 1 myth or unwritten norm.
 2. Vary or lower the standard around that norm.
 3. You cannot choose: attending class, writing your thesis/dissertation, or self-care (sleep, eating, exercise, etc.).
- ▶ Myth: Every class presentation must have amazing graphics and images to be successful.
 - ▶ Lower Standard: This week, my classes will have a simple white background and black letters. I will save time and not search for images.

Activity adapted from the [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity](#).

What We Found: Goals Help

- ▶ Goal-setting should be adjusted each semester for realistic social, economic, and personal expectations (Haynes et al., 2012).
- ▶ Short-term “mini-goals” or milestones can include items like
 - conference presentations
 - manuscript submissions
 - professional association involvement
 - other academic-related activities



Strategy: Roadmap & IDP

- ▶ A great place to start includes the "[Chart Your Course: A Strategic Roadmap for Graduate Student Success at UF](#)" available on the OGDG website under the Planning Resources tab.
 - Different roadmaps for doctoral students and masters students
- ▶ The [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) is a tool to assess your skills, map your goals, and plan your strategy for successfully completing your graduate program of study.

What We Found: Support Networks Help

- ▶ Building a support network of friends, family, and other doctoral students can help avoid unnecessary stress or friction and provide ways for students to blend school and life (Haynes et al., 2012).
 - Strategy: families and friends can attend departmental social functions (if allowed) and attend public events held on-campus with their students.



Questions/Discussion

References

- ▶ Anderson, M. S., & Swazey, J. P. (1998). Reflections on the graduate school experience: An overview. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 101, 3-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.10101>
- ▶ Goplerud, E. N. (1980). Social support and stress during the first year. *Professional Psychology*, 11(2), 283-290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.11.2.283>
- ▶ Haynes, C., Bulosan, M., Citty, J., Harris, M. G., Hudson, J., & Koro-Ljungberg, M. (2012). My world is not my doctoral program...or is it?: Female students' perceptions of well-being. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 1-17. <http://ijds.org/Volume7/IJDSv7p001-017Haynes329.pdf>

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- ▶ Prikhidko, A., & Haynes, C. (2018). Balancing graduate school and mothering: Is there a choice? *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 313-326. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4109>
- ▶ Stratton, J. S., Mielke, A., Kirshenbaum, S., Goodrich, A., & McRae, C. (2006). Finding a balanced life: Factors that contribute to life satisfaction in graduate students. *Journal of College & Character*, 7(8), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1217>

Additional Resources

- ▶ Hansono, L. (2020, Sept. 10). *Skill #8: Overcoming academic perfectionism*. [Webinar]. National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity. <https://www.facultydiversity.org/webinars/academicperf20>
- ▶ Rocquemore, K. A. (2012, Nov. 7). The costs of perfectionism. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2012/11/07/start-series-essays-about-dealing-academic-perfectionism>
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