Motivation for Workshop

- Faculty often struggle to publish enough
- Productive academic writing is a skill that can be developed
- Often overlooked in our training or we have the wrong ideas
Two Main Sources

- *Advice for New Faculty Members* by Nihill Nimus and Robert Boice
- *How to Write a Lot* by Paul Silvia, PhD

Today’s Workshop

- Research findings = writing in academia
- Research-based tips to increase your productivity & enjoyment
- Tips may seem counterintuitive to some, but obvious and easy to others. If you actually implement tips, you should see a substantial increase in your productivity.
Question for Discussion

- What prevents you from writing more?
- In other words, what barriers do you face when trying to write for publication?

Common Barriers to Writing

- “I can’t find the time to write” or “I would write more if I could just find big blocks of time”
- “I’m waiting until I feel like it” or “I write best when I’m motivated to write.”
- “I need to do some more analyses first” or “I need to read a few more articles”
- Deadlines are often less clear/strict, and it is easier to put off than teaching. Rewards are less immediate.
Prior Research: Robert Boice

- Studied new faculty members
- In their first 3-4 years:
  - Typical faculty: spent far less time on scholarly writing than was needed to meet tenure criteria
  - Quick Starters: 5-9% of new faculty who were productive enough to be in good shape for tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Types of Writers Found in Academia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular Writers:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Write for short periods of time (&lt;90 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Write nearly every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Constancy with moderation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Binge Writers:**                |
| - Write in long, intense periods   |
| - Wait until they have uninterrupted time to write (weekends, holiday breaks) or the mood to write strikes |
| - Don’t return to writing for a length of time (a week or more) |
| - Fits with notions of good writing: large blocks of time when feeling motivated and inspired, when production can be spontaneous |
Questions for Discussion

- Which do you think is the more productive and less painful way to write?
- What might be advantages and disadvantages to each?
- Do you recognize yourself as one of these types?

Results

Additional Results

- Writing patterns were associated with tenure and being a “quick starter.”

- **Binge writers:**
  - Fewer creative, innovative ideas during writing
  - Far more time wasted in warming up and reacquainting themselves with where they left off
  - Suffered from fatigue and described writing as grueling rather than enjoyable
  - Scored higher for depression

Results

![Graph showing % Times with Depression](image)

Not Just Correlation without Causation: Another Boice Study

- Experiment with professors struggling with writing

- Randomly assigned to three conditions:
  - Abstinent – forbidden from all non-emergency writing
  - Spontaneous – scheduled writing sessions, but only wrote when they felt inspired
  - Scheduled – scheduled writing sessions and used contingency management to ensure writing occurred

Results

Boice (1990), p. 80
Problem: Teaching is primary deterrent of writing productivity.

Most faculty:
- Spent ~30 hours per week on teaching duties
- Too little time on writing while simultaneously over-preparing for their classes
- Too much material for each class
  - Rushing
  - Active student participation suffered
- Mediocre student evaluations well below own expectations
Lessons Learned from Quick Starters

- Most balance between time spent preparing for class and in class
  - Quick starters = ratio under 2:1
  - Most other faculty = ratio of 4:1
- Made a few main points in class with carefully chosen examples and discussions
- High evaluations (top quartile)
- Highest student recall/understanding
- Highest student engagement
- Published most productively during first 6 years

Tip 1: Be more efficient with teaching preparation

**Limit your teaching prep time**
- Track time or set schedule for teaching prep
- Aim for 2:1 ratio

**Keep it simple, stupid!**
- Focus on getting essential key points across
- Simplify what you present
- Don’t bog students down with too many details

**Create conceptual outlines before preparing**
- Preview what you plan to do in that session, purposes and goals
- Provide broad picture, rationale, and context
  - Present in class - reduces student confusion
  - Helps you stick to the essentials, stopping before over-preparing
Tip 1 Continued: Lessons Learned from Quick Starters

**Incorporate your own research (if possible)**
- Reduces preparation time
- Conveys enthusiasm

**Collaborate in teaching, at least occasionally**
- Share teaching notes/power points and edit them
- Invite guest speakers on campus or community experts

**Pause regularly during teaching**
- Slow the pace and allow for active participation

---

Tip 2: Make a Regular Writing Schedule for Brief Daily Sessions

- Given the hectic nature of academia, time to write will slip away if you don’t actively schedule it.
- **Block out regular times to write**
  - Example: Monday – Saturday from 8:00 – 9:00
  - Treat as obligatory as your teaching schedule
  - Keep focused on writing and writing-related activities
- **Daily or near daily**
- **90 minutes or less**
  - Start smaller and work your way up if needed
- **During your peak brain power time**
Tip 2 Continued

- Use this time to complete other components necessary for publications
  - Reading articles
  - Conducting analyses
  - Setting up an experiment

- Facilitating location and eliminate distractions
  - Close office door
  - Use application to block internet access or website access

Consequences of Constancy + Moderation

- Write more hours per week
- More efficient use of time
  - Less warming up and refreshing
  - Fewer breaks
  - Less mental fatigue
  - Fewer errors
- More productive, creative, and successful writing sessions
- Can fit into busy schedules
- Less of a struggle and even becomes enjoyable
- Persistently progressing decreases anxiety and stress
Tip 3: Set Goals and Prioritize

- Goals are motivating. Goals enable people to:
  - Plan properly
  - Carry out instrumental actions
  - Feel proud when the goal is accomplished
- Goal setting is part of the process of writing
  - Sylvia (2007) devotes 1 writing session per month to setting goals

Tip 3A: Set Project Goals & Prioritize

- Write a list of your project goals – individual projects that need to be written
  - Revising and resubmitting a paper
  - Starting a new manuscript
  - Book chapter
  - Reviving an old project
  - Submitting a grant proposal
  - Writing a book
- Set priorities by closeness to completion, deadlines, or other relevant factors
Tip 3B: Set Concrete Daily Goals

- Set concrete goals for each day of writing
  - Write at least 400 words
  - Read three articles related to my grant proposal
  - Print the first draft I finished yesterday, read it, and revise it
  - Write the first three paragraphs of the discussion section
  - Brainstorm and then make an outline for a new manuscript

- Proximal goal setting enhances motivation, perceptions of self-efficacy, self-satisfaction, and task persistence
  - When all the sequential components of a project seem doable, we are more likely to undertake it and stick with it

Questions for Discussion

- Given the tips so far, what are your specific next steps?

- What goals can you set for this week?

- What challenges to implementing these tips might occur?
Tip 4: Monitor + Chart Progress

- Research on self-regulation shows that it isn’t enough to set a goal and make it a priority
- You must monitor progress
- Motivational effects of monitoring:
  - Keeps your goals salient and focused on your ongoing project
  - Self-observation alone can cause desired behaviors
    - You don’t want to enter in your tracking sheet that you accomplished nothing
  - Gives you feedback about progress
  - Helps you set better goals for more realistic estimates

Tip 4: Example Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>NSF Grant</td>
<td>Finished Project Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>NSF Grant</td>
<td>Completed draft sections on x, y, z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>NSF Grant</td>
<td>Completed draft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 4</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>NSF Grant</td>
<td>Revised XX sections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Read reviews; read 3 articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 6</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>NSF Grant</td>
<td>Final Revisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Performed additional analyses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Performed additional analyses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Revised draft for additional analyses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>SAI Paper</td>
<td>Read three articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 11</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Revised lit review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>JSS Revisions</td>
<td>Revisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 13</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>SAI Paper</td>
<td>Made an outline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>SAI Paper</td>
<td>Lit review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Unmet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Felt unmotivated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>SAI Paper</td>
<td>Draft of data and methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>SAI Paper</td>
<td>Read 4 articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sylvia (2007), p. 41
Tip 5: Use Carrots and/or Sticks to become a Regular Writer

- Self-reinforcement and contingency management – rewards and/or punishment – are long established ways to reinforce desirable behaviors
- Must be enforced to be effective

- Rewards for writing are delayed
  - Reward yourself immediately when you reach a goal and use these rewards as motivators
  - Rewards comparable to size of accomplishments

Tip 5 Continued

- People may be more inclined to avoid loss than to strive for rewards
- Use the free website [www.StickK.com](http://www.StickK.com) to set a long-term goal with weekly check-ins.
  - Commit a sum of money to achieving your goal
  - If you fail, you pay a sum to a charity or an “anti-charity” – an organization you really don’t want to have your money
Tip 6: Accountability to Others

- Utilize mentors
  - Creates accountability, enforceable deadlines, and motivation

- Quick starters encouraged more observation and criticism of their work, especially early in the planning process

Tip 6 Continued

- Create or join a writing group
  - Research finds that it tends to increase productivity
  - Creates accountability
  - Reduces isolation, offers support system, strengthens confidence
  - Meet colleagues and opportunities for collaboration
Tip 6 Continued

- Traditional writing groups: meet monthly and read, critique, and provide feedback to manuscripts.
- Writing accountability groups: meet briefly weekly; set concrete, short-term goals and monitor the group’s progress.
- Write-On-Site: people meet to write to force accountability.

Questions for Discussion

- What are some specific ways that you’re going to use these tips to increase your accountability?
- Do you foresee any challenges to these strategies?
**Tip 7: Write Mindfully**

- Start with outlines & planning
  - Research shows that this helps you stick to writing
- Calm attentiveness to the present moment

- Dominant patterns of thinking about writing amongst struggling new faculty
  - They were perfectionistic
  - Dwelled on prospects of criticism and rejection
  - Thought of writing as unbearably difficult and unrewarding

---

**Barriers to Writing**

- “I can’t find the time to write” or “I would write more if I could just find big blocks of time”
- “I’m waiting until I feel like it” or “I write best when I’m inspired to write.”
- “I need to do some more analyses first” or “I need to read a few more articles”
- Deadlines are often less clear/strict, and it is easier to put off than teaching. Rewards are less immediate.
Questions or Comments?

“Brief sessions generate momentum, motivation, and substantial amounts of output. Inspiration and motivation come far more reliably in the wake of working than in advance of it.” - Boice (2000)

Email tomorrow:
- Slides
- Link to a short evaluation

Questions/comments: lahunter@email.arizona.edu

Thanks!