



How Can Academic Department Chairs Remain Scholars?

Gmelch, W. (2019). Chairs as scholars. *The Department Chair*, 30, 1-3.

If you are a department chair, you know the challenge of trying to remain a scholar in the midst of seemingly endless paperwork and almost constant interruptions. Walt Gmelch compares your plight to that of the Roman god, Janus, whose two faces look in different directions simultaneously. As chair, you are constantly pulled in two directions—wanting to continue as a scholar, where you probably feel most comfortable, and needing to fulfill administrative responsibilities. How can you manage your schedule so that you have time to prepare for class, keep up on your discipline's literature, and conduct research?

Gmelch suggests conducting a "scholarship time audit," by completing such statements as "I find time for scholarship when..." and "I lose time for scholarship when..." From the audit you can learn what you need to do to open your schedule for quality research time. In addition, he makes the follow specific suggestions for managing your time:

1. *Negotiate with your dean.* Work out a deal with your dean where you realign expectations for a half-time appointment, get support to help maintain your scholarship while chair, and negotiate sabbatical leave upon returning to faculty.
2. *Consult with faculty.* Let them know that you will be away certain times during the week to work on your scholarship.
3. *Rely on your staff.* Rely on staff to handle "administrivia" and to shield you from needless interruptions.
4. *Nurture your scholarly network.* Coordinate a research/writing team of graduate students and faculty members.
5. *Enter with a research agenda.* Keep track of your research ideas and plan collaborative efforts with new and untenured faculty.
6. *Purge unnecessary administrivia.* Concentrate instead on addressing the department's "high-pay or make-or-break functions."

7. *Find a scholarship hideout.* Find a place free of distractions where you can devote a half-to- full day each week to scholarship.

8. *Block your time.* Block out time for class preparation, scholarly reading, and research.

9. *Schedule sessions of timeless time.* Block out time to "get your head in the right frame of mind."

10. *Push the pause button.* Stop keeping busy.

11. *Get offline.* Reduce internet interruptions and constant checking of e-mail.

12. *Find flow time.* Set clear goals, control your time, limit distractions, and focus energy on your skills and ideas.

If you apply these strategies, you will set a good example for new and untenured faculty on how to manage their time and be productive scholars.