

STUDENT LIFE

The Importance of Finding *Your* Work-Life Balance

Prioritizing and Balance: Work-life balance is different for each individual, depending on the amount of time they need to recharge. As students and recent graduates, it is not always possible to have an equal balance of work and life at a given moment. However, we can prioritize tasks when our workloads get more intense. Flexibility in work times and location can enhance the perception of balance and positively increase family life and a healthy working environment (Hill et al. 2004). Scheduling time away from work can promote stress relief, while traveling can promote creativity (Stone and Petrick 2013). In addition, stress reduction promotes higher graduation rates and better overall health (Pascoe et al. 2019). In our fast-paced world, finding *your* own balance by prioritizing tasks, being flexible, and scheduling time off can promote a healthy and productive self.

Knowing When to Say Yes: Graduate students are presented with many opportunities for extracurricular leadership and learning, which come with the potential for personal and professional growth. However, overcommitment can have the opposite effect, quickly leading to burnout and hindering degree progress. Before saying yes to something new, ask yourself:

1. What is my current workload? Quantify the hours that you're spending on research and/or teaching responsibilities, coursework, and any other existing commitments.
2. What is the workload of the new commitment? Talk with people who have previously served in the role to get an idea of the time it takes to excel in this new position.
3. What is my desired work-life balance? Time for family, friends, and hobbies is essential for well-being. Consider how much "me time" you need to be happy and healthy.

Once you know the time necessary to accomplish your work and recharge, determine whether the new commitment fits within your available hours. But don't be too rigid! Sometimes the long-term benefits of new skills or connections compensate for being slightly too busy in the short term. Saying yes, when reasonable, exposes you to new experiences and could even shape

your career trajectory.

Scheduling Downtime and Connecting with Family and Friends: It is easy to get overwhelmed in graduate school. You may find yourself rarely sleeping, working more than 8 to 12 hours a day and all weekend. This may feel like the normal way to operate, and any deviation may

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PUTTING OURSELVES
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—Michelle Obama,
former First Lady



bring feelings of guilt. It is okay to work and then go home and rest, take "you time," and bond with family and friends. According to Heemstra et al. (2019), it is necessary to have downtime to maintain productivity. While extra work may sometimes be required, increased busyness often happens in cycles. It may sound impossible, but being efficient and scheduling downtime is the solution. For example, one of your authors accomplishes as much as possible while at work. When she leaves, she spends time with her dog; they walk, play, eat, and then relax. She finds that sticking to this schedule benefits her overall well-being. She meets project

deadlines and maintains great progress. Loving yourself is caring for yourself, and sometimes all it takes is resolve and a schedule.

Mental Health: A *Nature* article by Evans et al. (2018) reported that graduate students are six times more likely to suffer from depression or anxiety than others. As graduate students, we face a unique combination of mental health challenges, including overwork, high pressure, financial insecurity, uncertain job prospects, and isolation. Although achieving work-life balance is challenging, a UC Berkeley survey conducted in 2014 (Assembly 2014) found that most graduate students depend on exercise, hobbies, and social support for their mental well-being. However, extracurricular activities may not always be enough. Although mental health issues can be heavily stigmatized, there is no shame in seeking professional help. Consider your mental health professional akin to your primary care physician or personal trainer, except that this person specializes in promoting your mental well-being. Most university campuses have counseling services and other mental health resources that you can utilize. Developing healthy habits now will serve as a good foundation for future mental well-being. Remember that you are not alone, and many graduate students face the same issues. If you see one of your peers struggling, reach out and offer support. And don't forget, graduate school will be over soon!—MSB, HQ, AD, JH

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RESEARCH BRIEFS

Spotlight on Blow Flies



While the familiar greenbottles and bluebottles still form the heart of this familiar family of flies, it has been the warehouse of a variety of odds-and-ends groups that seemed to fit better here than elsewhere.

Greenbottle and bluebottle flies represent some of the shiny jewels of the insect world. Unfortunately, these flying gems are often found in the most disgusting of places, from rotting garbage to piles of dung to decomposing corpses. This is probably why the budding entomologist does not show off their bright metallic green and blue blow flies the same way they do shiny metallic beetles. But blow flies do get respect, especially from the forensic entomological community, for their role in carrion ecology and the information they can provide to criminal investigations.

The Calliphoridae of old is not the Calliphoridae of today. While the familiar greenbottles and bluebottles still form the heart of this familiar family of flies, it has been the warehouse of a variety of odds-and-ends groups that seemed to fit better here than elsewhere. In recent years, we have seen a number of these distinctive side groups of blow flies moved up in status to their own families. Cerretti, Stireman, Badano, Gisondi, Rognes, Lo Giudice, and Pape provide compelling molecular and morphological evidence to split off our old friend the cluster fly and its relatives into a new (or better stated, a resurrected) family, the Polleniidae.

The Neotropical family Mesembrinellidae has been recognized as distinctly different from the core of the Calliphoridae for a while now, moving from subfamily to family status. Whitworth and Yusseff-Vanegas have produced a wonderful monograph on these beautiful flies. They include detailed photographs of the male and female genitalia of the 53 species, and photos of type specimens and the labels on their pins. If you have been down to the Neotropics, you may have seen some of these large and brilliant metallic gold-and-blue flies. If you want to know more about them, check out this publication.

Closer to home, the familiar bluebottle and greenbottle flies in our backyards

are now much easier to identify than ever before, thanks to Jones, Whitworth, and Marshall, with the publication of their web-based pictorial key to the blow flies of North America. Many of you may be familiar with the excellent insect photography and books by Steve Marshall. Marshall received the C. P. Alexander Award from the North American Dipterists Society last year at the 2018 International Congress of Dipterology. This award recognizes him as the “Greatest Living North American Dipterist.” His excellent insect photography skills are evident throughout this new pictorial key. Note that an interactive pictorial key to the North American cluster flies (*Pollenia*) was published in 2012 and can be found at the same Canadian Journal of Arthropod Identification website. A variety of interesting pictorial keys to different kinds of insects can be found there; it’s well worth checking out, if you have not looked at this site before. —GD

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“THESE RESULTS DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING IN PLACE A **GENETIC MONITORING PROGRAM** DURING RELEASES OF TRANSGENIC ORGANISMS TO DETECT UN-ANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES.”



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