

# Creating Space for What Matters: A Weekly Planning Template for Faculty



A Free Resource by NCFDD

# Faculty life often feels like a relentless balancing act.

Between teaching, grading, meetings, research deadlines, mentoring, and the constant churn of emails, it's easy to feel like you're constantly moving but rarely catching up.

The truth is, you don't need more hours in the day. **You need a way to make the hours you already have feel more intentional.**

This weekly planning template was inspired by strategies practiced in NCFDD's Faculty Success Program (FSP). These are the same kinds of structure and reflection tools that help faculty reduce overwhelm, protect their writing time, and bring more calm and clarity to their weeks.

You can start using it right now to bring a little more focus (and a little less chaos) to your academic life.

# The 5-Step Weekly Planning Ritual

Academic culture often rewards visibility and responsiveness over depth and focus. The result is a cycle of reactivity: you're constantly busy, but rarely satisfied. You're not behind. You're working within a system that normalizes overwork and undervalues planning.

This 30-minute process helps you move from scattered to centered. It's a weekly reset that gives your time direction, not just activity.



## 1. Review your semester goals.

Look at your big-picture priorities. What outcomes matter most right now — a manuscript, proposal, syllabus redesign, or rest? Reconnecting to your goals ensures your week aligns with your purpose.



## 2. Identify your writing or research focus.

Ask: "What's one meaningful step I can advance this week?" It might be revising a paragraph, analyzing data, or organizing citations.

**Progress beats perfection every time.**



## 3. Map your fixed commitments.

Add classes, meetings, office hours, and family obligations first. Seeing your "non-negotiables" makes space for realistic planning, not wishful thinking.



## 4. Block your writing and focus time.

Protect at least two dedicated writing sessions. Even short bursts (30 minutes) build consistency. If you're just starting out, consider beginning with two sessions a week and grow into a daily writing habit over time.



## 5. Set your Top 3 Priorities.

Organize them under Research | Teaching | Life.

*Examples:*

- *Research: "Look into 3 alternative funding sources."*
- *Teaching: "Revise lecture slides."*
- *Life: "Take Saturday fully off."*

# Your Weekly Planning Template

Here's an example of how your weekly plan might look once you've identified your top priorities and writing blocks. The goal isn't perfection; it's progress. At the end of this document, you will find a blank template for your own use.

## My Top 3 Priorities

Research	Teaching	Life
Revise journal article draft Submit internal grant LOI Analyze survey data	Finalize midterm feedback Prepare guest lecture slides Grade student projects	Schedule daily walks Plan weekend family time Meal prep for the week

MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI
		Review student projects	Writing Block	
Writing Block			Finalize grant LOI	Admin tasks
		Writing Block		
Class prep	Writing Block			
Lunch break/walk	Lunch break/walk	Lunch break/walk	Lunch break/walk	Lunch break/walk
		Mentoring		Writing Block
	Research team check-in		Analyze survey data	
				Reflect

Reflections: Protected three writing sessions — kept two out of three!  
Saying “no” to one extra service request freed up space for grant prep.  
Planning Sunday evening helped reduce midweek stress.

# Reclaiming Time, Reigniting Purpose

Thousands of faculty across disciplines have discovered that it's possible to work differently, with more clarity, consistency, and calm. These voices come from faculty who've learned to protect their priorities, set boundaries, and make steady progress toward what matters most using tools and programs like FSP.

## Prepping for the Future While Balancing Work/Life



*"I am now managing my time in order to be prepared. I reflect more on planning activities and preparing for the future. I finally understand the importance of self-care, particularly sleep and able to balance my personal and professional life.*

*The most valuable part of the Faculty Success Program was sharing comfortably with others in a similar spaces. FSP is worth the time spent. You will learn skills you may or may not know, but apply them in different ways."*

**Doris Titus-Glover, PhD, MSN** | Assistant Professor | University of Maryland School of Nursing, Baltimore

**Key Insight:** Learning to intentionally plan and prioritize self care allows you to move from reactive busyness to balanced, future-focused productivity.

## Less Anxiety = More Productivity



*"The strategic planning training has helped me feel more in control of my time and work, has helped me prioritize my tasks accordingly, and has improved my well being by helping me feel less anxious on a daily basis. I have become more consistently productive in my research and teaching, and I am grateful for this program for that."*

**Prateekshit Pandey, PhD** | Assistant Professor | University of California, Santa Barbara

**Key Insight:** With more strategic planning, you can gain control over your time and reduce anxiety, ultimately leading to sustainable productivity.

## Learning to Lead a More Balanced, Purposeful Academic Life



*“The Faculty Success Program was not only validating, but it also inspired me to live the life I desire as a faculty member. I am in control, and I make time for the things that are important to me, which include my family, friends, and career. The most impactful aspect is that learning these skills in this program takes time, but I need to begin practicing them to identify areas for improvement. I won't know that if I do not put the strategies into practice. FSP will give concrete ideas and research-based solutions on how to be the best version of yourself in higher education.”*

**Catelyn A. Bridges, PhD | Assistant Professor | University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

**Key Insight:** Sustainable progress in academia comes from practicing intentional habits, not chasing perfection.

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## Want to Make This Your New Normal?

If you've completed your first weekly plan, congratulations! You've already done something many faculty never do: you took control of your calendar.

The Faculty Success Program builds on this one simple habit, turning it into a 10-week system of structure, accountability, and community support. It's where faculty move from reactive to intentional, from isolated to supported, and from overwhelmed to thriving.

### FSP Participants Report:

- 94% improved writing productivity
- 89% better work-life balance
- 97% overall satisfaction

If you're ready to sustain this progress with coaching, structure, and a supportive community, we'd love to welcome you.

**Learn more about the Faculty Success Program!**

[Explore the Program](#)



# Your Weekly Planning Template

Here's your ready-to-use template. Use it digitally or print it out each week. Each box helps you plan intentionally, not reactively.

## My Top 3 Priorities

Research	Teaching	Life

MON                      TUE                      WED                      THUR                      FRI


Reflections: What worked? What do I want to adjust?