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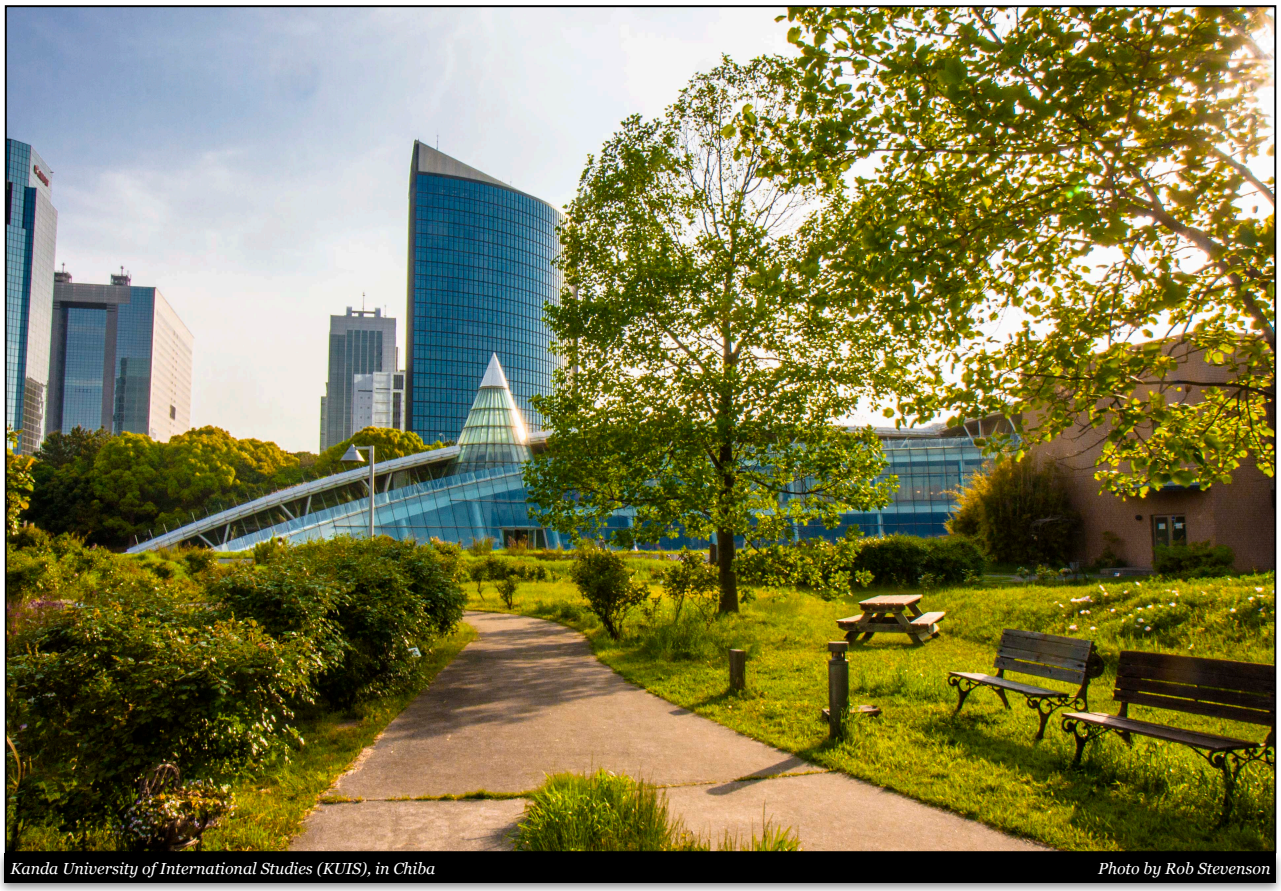
News and articles from the JALT College and University Educators Special Interest Group



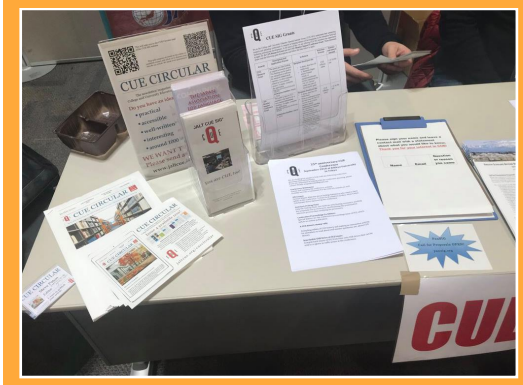
Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS), in Chiba *Photo by Rob Stevenson*

Here's to the 2018 academic year being a great one!

Welcome to our first issue for 2018. We hope your semester is off to a good start.
In this issue we're featuring three articles on a good variety of topics relevant to teaching in Japan's university sector, with each of them drawing on the authors' own experiences of success, surprise, and learning. The regular CUE Careers column discusses allocating time towards career planning and goals.

Are you trying anything new this semester? Perhaps some new courses, new content, new software, new approaches...? Let us know how it goes! Narrative accounts of your experiences, opinions, and impressions make great reading for the rest of us, and might save someone the time and effort of re-inventing the wheel.

Please enjoy this issue of *CUE Circular*.
Steve Paton, Editor



The CUE table and the SIG's AGM at JALT 2017.

CUE at JALT2017

The CUE SIG information table was busy as usual at JALT2017. We're grateful that officers and non-officers helped to staff it from time to time. It was also very nice to see some faces from the CUE AGM audience stop by and ask questions. Whether they came from the AGM or not, people generally wanted to know the usual stuff, mostly what CUE is all about. Since there is no academic specialty in CUE, it's always fun to explain we cover everything. People in CUE can be interested in ER, CALL, materials writing, or nothing in particular. The SIG is there to help people in any way they can, whether new or experienced, and we'd like as many suggestions as possible that members and non-members can muster. One visitor remarked on how approachable the officers are, and that's a great compliment. With over 500 members, CUE should do more than most other SIGs (and it often does), but we need to hear from more people.

Talks with visitors always get around to the following specific topics:

What sections are in the *OnCUE Journal*? (answer: not just feature articles, and not just research papers with heavy quantitative analyses; detailed descriptions of guidelines for each are available on request).

What is the *CUE Circular*? (answer: an online publication for classroom-related issues, a step or two above My Share quality and a step below formal academic writing; it also contains an advice column on job information).

Does CUE offer grant money? (answer: YES! check out the homepage which has recently been revised; the grants help people in their research, and we ask for little in return).

What kind of meetings does CUE hold? (answer: there is an annual September conference which alternates with an ESP Symposium for poster presentations; this year is a large 2-day 25th anniversary conference; CUE also assists other SIGs with their meetings).

What else can you tell me about CUE? (answer: take part as a volunteer at meetings to learn how it runs and how to network, work with OCJ or CC editors to shadow their efforts or to serve as proofreaders, help out with our anniversary conference this year and learn how such things are created, plus learn a little about CUE history).

So, approach those approachable officers, and ask or volunteer what you like. We would always like to see more people helping out to make CUE the best SIG, not just the biggest.

Glen Hill, Publications Chair

Feature articles

CUE Careers column

Feature articles

What happened when the teacher learned along with the students?

Gota Hayashi, Tokyo Keizai University and Gakushuin University

Gota Hayashi was educated in the U.S. from fourth grade until graduating from university. He received his master's degree in TESOL from Teachers College, Columbia University in Tokyo.
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This is my fourth semester of teaching a course called Self Directed Learning. It is a course in which I have students plan, conduct, and organize their own learning. For all four semesters, I have been learning along with the students, and I would like to share with you what happened during this process.

I learned that what I care about is not necessarily what the students care about.

One of the activities that I have had students do is to make their own six-word stories. My story is: Enjoy learning and apply by teaching. It does not have to be a sentence. I made mine a sentence because it is easy to remember, and it is really what I like to do. One student wrote: Playing soccer with my best buddies. Another student wrote: Have a nice time with horses.

I learned that some students might have been influenced by my examples.

For example, my six-word story started with the word enjoy, and many of my students' six-word stories started with the word enjoy as well. One student wrote: Enjoy learning English and watching movies. Another student wrote: Enjoy dancing and communicating with friends. Even if some of them might have decided to borrow a word because it resonated with them, the students' stories were still unique.

I have a lot of fun teaching the course because it is part of who I am.

An effective principle of leadership is setting an example by one's own behavior (Alston & Gorton, 2011). I am lucky because I get to do my own self-directed learning, and in class, I get to learn what the students are learning, to help myself learn and teach better. Since the students are first-year students taking Self Directed Learning as a required course, I figured that setting an example will help students learn new ways of living, which as Bandura (1986) argued requires expending much time and effort and disrupting secure routines.

I noticed patterns in students' choices.

I noticed that many students like to learn English by watching TED talks and movies and listening to music. Still others chose to study for TOEFL or IELTS, so that they can score high enough to study abroad as part of their school's program.

I learned that identifying what works can be very difficult.

The majority of students are 18 years old and are still trying to figure out who they really are and what to do with their lives (Erikson, 2000). Furthermore, although I have had more experience conducting my own learning plans, the past three semesters have been all over the place. In other words, I packed so many things I had wanted to do when I had started out with my plan the first semester. It is only recently, in the fourth semester that I have finally developed better focus and learned what works well for me.

I learned to relate better to students.

Looking at their journal entries, in which many students not only share their five weeks of self-directed learning, but also their assignments for all the courses they take, I realized how much homework they have from all the classes that they are taking, not to mention having to study for midterms and final exams.

With my plans to do my own self-directed learning, I learned that after a focused period of learning, usually at a desk, I need to get moving. For example, I really feel that integrating going to the gym as part of my plan helped me maintain the stamina to keep learning (Reason, 2010). Instead of wondering why the students were writing about dance, soccer, club activities, and part-time jobs all the time instead of other activities that involve learning to develop their linguistic proficiency, by being in the learners' shoes I learned that those activities actually help maintain their physical and mental balance.

I learned that self-directed learning is easier when other people are also doing it.

By doing the self-directed learning with my students, I learned that it gets easier with time. Reflecting on the process and updating my plan as I went along before moving onto the next phase of my plan was very helpful. Moreover, I think I would have had a much more difficult time sticking to my plans if I had not made myself accountable to my students (Young, 2017). I also hope that my students will choose to continue planning, organizing, and conducting their own learning after they finish taking my course.

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Submit an article!

What's happening in your teaching?
What's influencing your decisions?
What obstacles have you overcome, and how?
What ideas or opinions do you have that others might be interested to read?
What have you read, heard, or seen recently that's changed your approach to teaching, either in or out of the classroom?

CUE Circular aims to publish quality, interesting, practical articles about the day-to-day nature of teaching in our sector.

www.jaltcue.org/cuecircular

Successfully managing the transition into tertiary education in Japan: a personal journey

Julyan Nutt, Tokai Gakuen University

Julyan Nutt has been teaching in Japan for twenty years. His research interests include peer-assisted learning and improving motivational issues in the ESL classroom. *nutt@tokaigakuen-u.ac.jp*

Teaching part-time at a university in Japan can seem like an attractive proposition, with four months holiday a year, especially for someone already living in Japan and teaching at a less financially rewarding job. Once one or two classes are secured, and after having obtained contacts through other teachers, it is relatively easy to expand this portfolio to fifteen or sixteen classes spread over several institutions—a full-time part-timer.

At the tertiary level in Japan, the number of classes taught by part-time lecturers far outweighs those taught by full-time professors (Nagatomo, 2012), especially in language classes. The part-time faculty often teaches the bulk of the core curriculum classes, with the full-time faculty teaching the more specialized subjects. With almost all universities requiring credits in foreign language courses, the majority of classes that part-

time lecturers teach are to non-English majors. And to further complicate matters, the newest teachers are likely to be offered the lowest-proficiency classes.

A rude awakening

When I first walked into a university classroom, the lights were not switched on, students were sprawled over the desks at the back of the classroom sleeping or chatting among themselves, and barely a third of the class managed to murmur a reply when I greeted them. Students wandered into the classroom fifteen or twenty minutes late, shrugging when I asked them for an explanation. Questions were met with silence, and individually, students invariably responded with *shiranai* or *wakaranai*. Pairwork was only sustained in my direct presence, with students returning to personal chitchat as I moved on to monitor another group. Activities generally petered out after a few minutes, and students brazenly used their phones or shouted to each other across the classroom. Clearly, there were motivational issues that needed to be addressed.

Fifteen years later, when I now enter the classroom, students are seated in two rows of pairs from the front of the classroom with their textbooks out, ready to answer their names as I call the class roll on the chime of the bell. And while it still may be a struggle to have students openly volunteer answers, they are willing to when called upon. So what has happened in the intervening years?

Empathy

Non-English majors often do not like English. It can be seen as an enigma, something they have failed at in the past and cannot master. The thought of having to speak it in front of their peers can be abhorrent for them. Understanding this is paramount.

Empathy should not just be limited to an understanding of the students' difficulties with language learning. Students are individuals and should be treated as such. As teenagers, they are negotiating difficult periods in their lives, which may cause an increase in disciplinary issues. Trials conducted by researchers from the Department of Psychology at Stanford University revealed that "experiments... show that...an empathic approach to discipline...motivates better behavior" (Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton, 2016). I have found that attempting to understand why students are being disruptive or unresponsive works better than the more punitive approach of removing them from the classroom.

The authoritative parent

There are as many styles of parenting as people, but Diana Baumrind (1971), the renowned clinical and developmental psychologist, loosely categorizes them as permissive-indulgent, permissive-neglectful, authoritarian, and authoritative. Briefly, permissive-indulgent parents are caring and affectionate, but lack discipline; permissive-neglectful are distant and uninterested; authoritarian are autocratic

and intolerant; and authoritative tend to be firm but fair.

It does not take too much of a stretch of the imagination to realize that these parenting categories can be translated into similar teaching styles (Bernstein, 2013). We all know the permissive-neglectful lecturer who delivers the same lecture year in, year out, or the authoritarian teacher who dismisses students for minor transgressions. I admit that in my preliminary years I sometimes fell into the latter category. Struggling to manage unruly students, it was easier to remove them from the class than to find the reasons for their disruptive behavior. Now I am definitely in the authoritative camp, and I let the students know what is expected of them from day one. With occasional reminders throughout the course, disruptive behavior has been kept to a minimum. As part of the orientation on the first day of the course, with a stern face, I seat the students as I want them and then write a list of rules for classroom behavior on the blackboard and the repercussions of infractions. I explain this first in English, then in Japanese, and then have the students write them down and explain that this is an agreement between us. Then with a more light-hearted approach, I explain that actually I am a "nice guy" and that as long as they follow these simple rules, which are the basics of courteous behaviour, we should all get along fine. Then we invariably move on to a fun activity involving the whole of the class, myself included, where students can get to know each other. The die, however, has been cast.

Nurturing self-efficacy

Any university teacher who has taught a course to non-English majors in Japan will at some point have been told: "Eigo dekinai." Many students believe this. Albert Bandura, a leader in the field of self-efficacy, encapsulates it well: "People's beliefs about their abilities have a profound effect on those abilities.... People who have a sense of efficacy bounce back from failures" (quoted in Goleman, 2005). Instilling this in the classroom is, in my opinion, the biggest hurdle to overcome once classroom management issues are under control.

There are three simple methods that can accomplish this: set achievable goals, provide real-time feedback, and give real-time remedial assistance. When students are working on pair practice or grammar exercises, continuous assistance is often required on a more individual basis. Eliciting answers from the students and avoiding spoon-feeding the answers instills a sense of self-efficacy. The cycle is completed at the end of each class by providing a ten-minute quiz. The aim of the quiz is not so much to test the students, but rather to reinforce the self-belief that they have learned something in class.

Using L1 in the classroom

The place of L1 in the classroom has long been debated (Auerbach, 1993). Personally, I think there is no debate, especially with beginner to elementary level classes. Class time is managed more efficiently if complicated tasks are explained in the students' native tongue (Cianflone, 2009). I find it exasperating

that beginner-level textbooks have explanations directed towards the students in a language at a much higher level than that of the task itself.

An additional benefit of using L1 is that students see you as a language learner. Students are more than happy to point out my mistakes, for which I am grateful. By leading by example, students can be encouraged to attempt language structures that they may not have full confidence in using.

I am not insinuating that classes should be conducted in L1, in fact the opposite. When addressing the class as a whole, I believe that L1 should be kept to a minimum and only used in the aforementioned situation—judiciously, and dependent on the needs of the class.

Pair rotation and peer-assisted learning

At the lower level, English conversation classes require repetitive pair activities. Less motivated students, who work with their peers, often fail to see such activities through to completion. To overcome this, after each activity, I have the students change partners, by having one of the pair move to the seat in front of them, alternating the rows that are required to move each week. This system (or similar systems) should be implemented on the first day after orientation, in order to let the students know what is expected of them.

An added benefit of pair rotation is peer-assisted learning. Even in streamed classes, there can be a wide range of English abilities. I found in a previous study (Nutt, 2014) that students are often reluctant to ask the teacher when they do not understand for fear of losing face, so students can benefit from teaching each other, and not only the student being taught, but also the "student" teacher gains a better understanding through the teaching process. This is particularly valuable when doing grammar or vocabulary exercises.

A final word

In the fifteen years I have been teaching in tertiary education, some of the most rewarding classes I have taught have been the lower-level, non-English major classes. The moment when the switch clicks, as a student finally grasps a grammar concept and understands that they can "do" English, is a pleasure to witness. It is in these classes where we can see the biggest improvement in students' confidence in their English ability. I do, however, have one final word of warning: make it clear from the very beginning what you expect of your students. Woe betide the teacher who tries to implement a new, strict regime halfway through the semester. They are unlikely to be met with a positive response.

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SkELL as an L2 writing resource

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As most of us know, prior to university, Japanese learners of English have spent much of their English class time translating between English and Japanese. Through this process, students come to be heavy bilingual dictionary users (Hirata, 2017), as they focus on exchanging word meanings across the two languages. Although L1 translation is an important part of vocabulary learning, there are many other aspects of "knowing" a word (Coxhead, 2006).

To help students better navigate the lexical demands of the writing process, I have introduced the use of language corpora into my L2 writing courses. This process, of learners exploring language use through corpus research, is referred to as "data-driven learning" (Boulton, 2011), and although there is a wealth of information to be gained through this approach, it is, in truth, a time-consuming task for learners. However, corpus tools can be manageable for learners, particularly when based on a corpus system that is suitable for foreign language learners (rather than language

researchers) and when the research tasks are directed and purposeful.

Although I have introduced several corpora to various groups of students, SkELL (Sketch Engine for Language Learners: http://skell.sketchengine.co.uk/) has been the most practical for the following reasons. One, it is a no-cost, web-based resource. Students can access it freely and conveniently, avoiding the hassles of login IDs or passwords. Teachers do not need to do any class set-up or secure a budget to pay for the service. Most of these benefits do not exist with other online corpora, making SkELL a great resource for first-time corpus users.

The second reason I would recommend SkELL is its simplicity. Hardly any explanation is necessary for learners to begin using it. The interface is extremely user-friendly, with its three search functions readily apparent to learners. Learners can review contextualized usage of target words through example sentences and through word sketches that summarize an item's common collocates. They can also explore synonyms via word clouds that display words with similar usage distributions to the queried item. For novice users, these three query options make it both a practical classroom tool and an independent learning resource.

In what ways can SkELL be exploited as an L2 writing resource? To begin with, SkELL is a useful paraphrasing tool. Lexical substitution (replacing a word with a synonym) is important for effective paraphrasing, and with the "Similar Words" function, students can find appropriate lexical substitutes. In the example below, "prepared" and "productive" were discovered via this function, while the phrasal verb "deal with" was identified as a collocate of "setback" through Word Sketch.

Original: *Studies show that people who fail but then keep trying anyway are better equipped to respond to setbacks in a constructive way.*

Paraphrase: *According to research, people who fail but continue to try are better prepared to deal with setbacks in a productive way.*

SkELL is also useful for creating thematically-related word webs. As a pre-writing technique, word webs help students develop a vocabulary set for composition or expand their lexical options in specific topic areas. Suppose a student plans to write about creativity in Japanese education. Referencing the word cloud generated by SkELL for "creativity" offers words such as imagination, innovation, flexibility, awareness, passion, talent, and courage. A click on any one of these words connects to a word sketch, where learners can quickly explore collocates for that particular term. To put the information they discover to practical use, students can write original sentences based on the usage patterns they have observed, which can also serve as an effective writing preparation task. Finally, this same referencing process can also be used to encourage greater lexical variety in

student writing by prompting receptive vocabulary and encouraging writers to make greater use of their lexical knowledge. Often students know other appropriate words but are unable to recall them easily while writing.

When it comes to composing a text, learners typically use their dictionaries to locate the words they need (Quinn, 2013). However, rather than depending on dictionary entries for individual items, collocations can support learners in constructing more accurate, natural sentences. For example, instead of this statement: "The person must create a very new idea" (for the idea to be recognized as a creative contribution), the student can query "idea" in Word Sketch to find word combinations such as "introduce an idea" and "original idea" that can be put together for a more natural-sounding sentence: "The person must introduce an original idea…" Importantly, through this process, learners are encouraged to compose their texts based on chunks of language, rather than discrete lexical items.

Once students are comfortable using SkELL, I often refer them to the site through my teacher feedback for the purpose of encouraging self-correction. Often preposition- and collocation-type errors can be quickly resolved through a corpus query, while problems with general lexical usage may be retrievable if the student is willing to spend more time researching. In either case, SkELL is a good resource for lexical-oriented errors that are not especially complex.

For those who are experienced at conducting corpus research, SkELL is likely to be too basic in its search options and capabilities. For language learners, however, these limitations are its advantages: SkELL is able to respond to many learner-oriented vocabulary problems and queries, while also delivering results that are manageable and accessible to non-specialists.

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CUE Careers

In this regular column, Michael Parrish and Richard Miller offer insights on the employment market for college and university language teachers in Japan, as well as general career guidance, advice, and strategies.
Contributions from readers with specific areas of expertise, or regarding specific issues or changes in the job market, are encouraged.

Michael Parrish and Richard Miller are the current co-coordinators of the Job Information Center at the JALT National Conference, and are former editors of the Career Development column in *The Language Teacher*.

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Setting priorities for the academic year

This installment of the CUE Careers column comes at the beginning of the academic year, a good time to think about goals for the coming semester and year.
In another column, I have written about various ideas for career advancement and planning (Parrish, 2015), primarily focusing on networking and publishing opportunities. Miller (2012) advocated using the SMART goals framework in career planning, which is a valuable tool for implementing goals and increasing the likelihood of attaining them. Each of the activities suggested in our previous columns have merit for building a strong CV; however, two aspects we have not discussed are how to budget time and how to prioritize implementation of your career development plans.

A good first step is a personal time audit, which requires that you log how you spend every quarter- or half-hour block of time each day for one week. You will find surprising areas where time is wasted or used inefficiently, as well as useable gaps of free time which can be repurposed to pursue your career development goals. Even ten to fifteen spare minutes per day can add up to hours of productive time over the course of a semester. Then, once your schedule is mapped, block off exclusive time for specific tasks—exercising or studying or writing— and be strict with yourself (and your colleagues) about not allowing other activities to creep into your schedule.

Having determined your available time, the next step is to choose the specific goals or activities that will provide maximum benefit in your particular circumstances. There are many interesting activities and worthy goals that would benefit an educator's career, but it is impossible to pursue them all. How do we choose?

Business consultant Peter Bregman (2011) uses the analogy of an all-you-can-eat buffet to describe the choices and demands on our time. There are many tempting items, but if you try to enjoy them all, you end up bloated and unsatisfied. He suggests you choose three to five main focus areas in your life, such as "spending quality time with family",

"improving health", or "broadening professional expertise".

The particular choices of focus do not matter. They will vary by individual; however, they should relate to both your professional and personal life. Your choices should not be too broad and should be achievable within a one-year time frame. Focus areas can be things you would like start or develop in yourself, or things you are already doing and would like to maintain and continue. Remember, these core focus areas do not represent goals in and of themselves. Rather, they are categories within which your goal setting will be structured. These component goals may arranged in the SMART goals framework, and will, by nature, vary in scope and completion time. Once the main focus areas are decided, determine an approximate allocation of time to each of the areas, and avoid committing time to activities that do not apply.

As an example, my focus areas for the next year are:

a) Improve my research and publications
b) Serve my students well
c) Spend quality time with my family
d) Pursue volunteer activities
e) Maintain my fitness and health

In planning a day or week, try to assess the extent to which any given activity will further your core goals. Of course, there are many other things I might like, or could choose— binge watch Game of Thrones, study Swahili, build an investment portfolio— but they are not my most important areas of focus for the coming year.

At times, daily exigencies pop up and distract you, and sometimes these problems cannot be ignored or postponed. But it is worth the extra effort to maintain focus on your primary goals. You will have to learn to politely say "no" to interesting opportunities or worthwhile projects, just because they do not fit your current allocation of time and areas of focus. Alternatively, you can plan to adjust your focus areas periodically, adding and deleting items, or redistributing time allocated to each area.

To plan and achieve your goals for the coming year, keep the words of time management expert David Allen in mind: "You can do ANYTHING, but you can't do EVERYTHING" (as quoted in Hammonds, 2000).

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Resources

Peter Bregman's 18-Minute Planner: http://peterbregman.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/18MinutesKit-1.pdf

David Allen
https://gettingthingsdone.com/

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