



Office of the Provost
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

What the latest research says about...
SUCCESSFUL WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN ACADEMIA

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WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE

Burned-out adults cost an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion a year in healthcare spending in the United States. Plus, 54 percent of Americans do not use all their vacation time, leaving a collective 662 million vacation days on the table—days that would generate \$128 billion in direct spending, and an overall positive economic impact of \$236 billion for the U.S. economy.



WORK-LIFE BALANCE INSIGHTS FROM ACADEMICS

- It's easier to think of balance in **"Seasons" versus days**. There was a season where I was writing a book. There was a season where I was starting a family.
- Go easy on yourself for ordering pizza multiple times a week and catching up with friends while you're running errands. **The break you give yourself** might be the only one you'll get for a while.
- The people most stricken by work-life-balance issues are dual-earner families. Both people in the house have jobs, so there's no one whose job it is to exclusively manage the household. It really helps if you **off-load as** many of those **household management jobs** outside the family as you can stand to.
- If you can, you should try to **"segment"** between your work and non-work lives. **But when that's not possible**, it helps to think of it as a work fever dream. As unappealing as that sounds, at least you're not surprised when it extends past 6 p.m. and you **have a plan** to get through the fever.
- It is worse because I can schedule my own work, outside of class times, so I flex and I flex and I flex until I'm juggling too much and everything is behind. I've learned to set appointments for myself and timers for my focus. I keep **certain small blocks of time sacred** no matter what, no flexing, and when my timer goes off, I'm done focusing on that thing for now.

1.

WORK RELATIONSHIPS DRIVE A LOT.

- **Quality** of our relationships predicts our willingness to stay and keep struggling for balance.
- **Unresolved conflict** is a huge stressor that follows us home.
- **Strong networks** significantly increase our resilience. What does the latest research say?



2.

MINIMIZE DEMANDS, MAXIMIZE CONTROL.

- We benefit most by saying **NO** to things that demand a lot of our time without giving us much control about how we do them.
- **If we can't say no**, then negotiating more control over the details of how we do it helps us create more flexibility and adapt our balance.



3.

TIME SPENT PLANNING AND MINDFULNESS MATTER

- **Plan** time on a weekly to monthly basis.
- Planning sufficient time **for thinking** about how to do tasks is as important as planning time to do the tasks.
- Reserve **unstructured time** too to boost health and creativity.
- Practice multiple, brief **mindfulness** moments daily to encourage well-being.



4.

FEED STRENGTHS FIRST AND FREQUENTLY.

- “Fixing” ourselves is a fast-pass to over-balancing and burning out.
- Making the most of our strengths results in **greater performance gains**.
- Learning more challenging skills in our strength areas gives us **greater life-satisfaction** and makes us feel more balanced.



5.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR REAL AND OUR IDEAL MIX OF TIME?

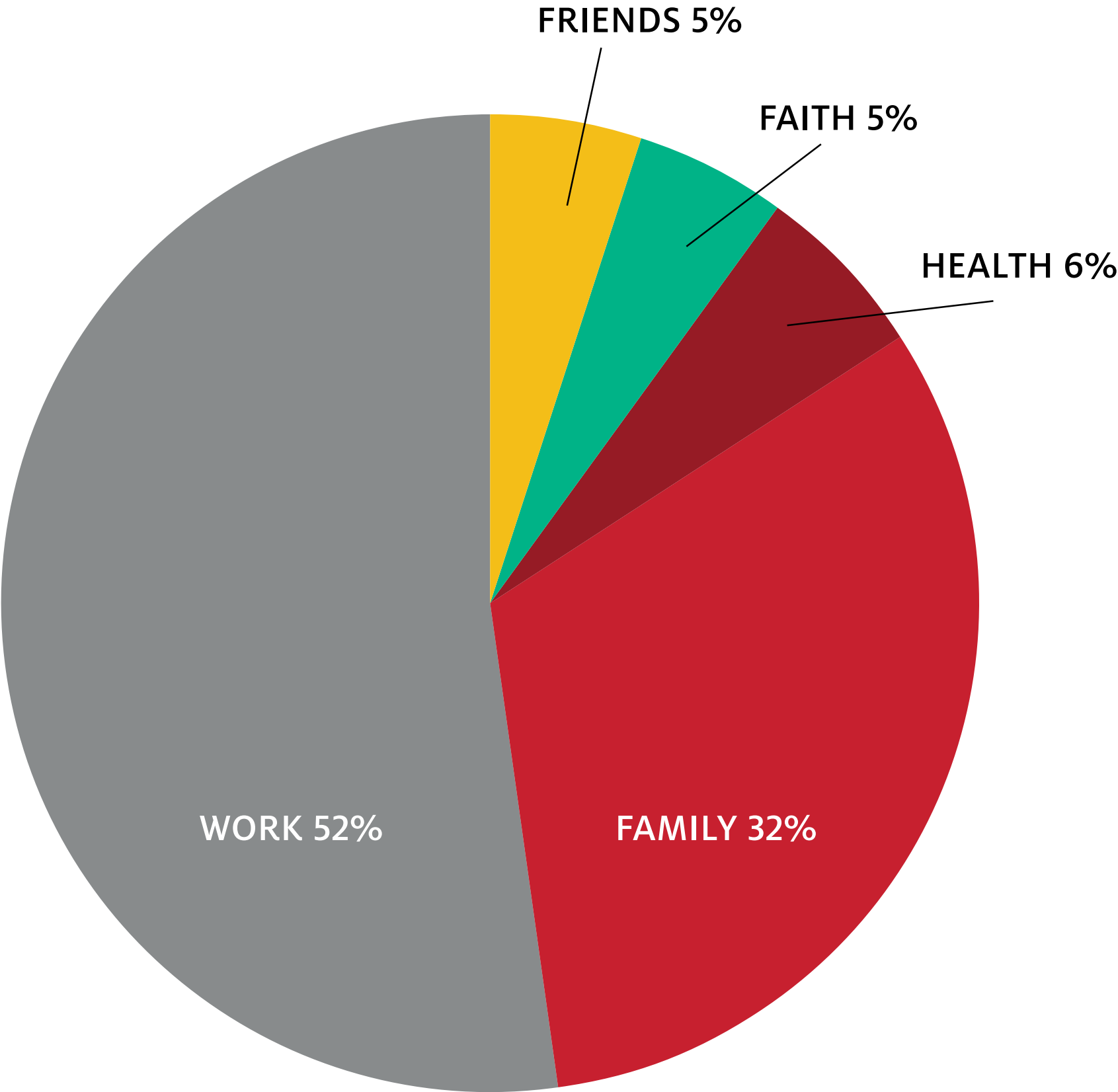
- Usually 5 value buckets: **work, family, health, faith, and friends.**
- Small gaps are better...but we can handle big gaps for short, well-defined periods.
- Large gaps (>30%) for more than 6 weeks is a **danger zone.**
- If a bucket = 0, then this a **traumatic event.**



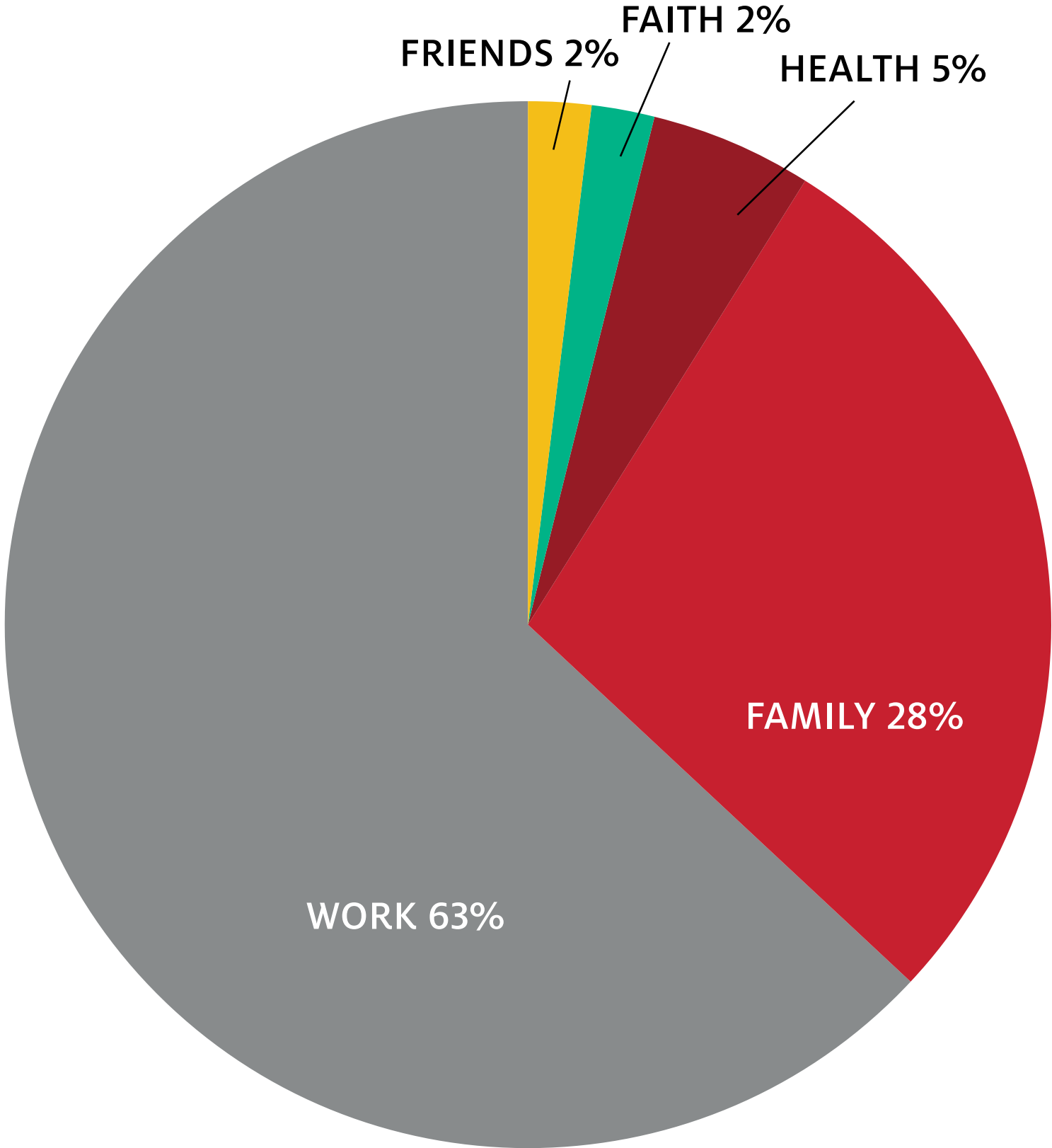
MIND THE GAP

• Total Gap = 23% which is <30% but...

IDEAL MONTH



REAL SEPTEMBER



WHAT DOES THE LATEST RESEARCH SAY

about successful work-life balance in Academia?

IN SUMMARY, BALANCE GETS EASIER WHEN WE:

1. Get high-quality relationships at work.
2. Say NO to high-demand, low-control work.
3. Plan how to use time each week/ month.
 - Allow time to be bored and mindful.
4. Feed strengths first and frequently.
5. Mind the gap between real and ideal balances.

BUY A WAY OUT OF BURNOUT BUTTONS

PREVENT	COPE	RECOVER
Good sleep	Use more social support	Find formal therapy
Mindfulness	Formally add unstructured/ thinking to your schedule	Take an official rest/time out
Keep near ideal balance	Monitor your balance gap	Start a formal plan to close your balance gap
Quality relationships at work	Maximize time working with work buddies	Get coaching to resolve conflicts or recover relationships
No low-control tasks	No more high-demand, low- control tasks	Reduce high-demand tasks
Do career planning to leverage strengths	Re-engineer work to rely more on your strengths	Find ways to feed a neglected strength



KEY UH WORK-LIFE BALANCE RESOURCES

Provost's Work-Life Balance Catalogue:

uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/benefits/work-life-balance

HR's Wellness Program and Perks:

uh.edu/human-resources/PowerUP-Wellness

Employee Assistance Program:

uteap.org

Counseling and Psychological Services:

uh.edu/caps

Promotion and Tenure Tools:

uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/faculty/promotion-tenure

Family Friendly Resources @ UH Facebook Group:

facebook.com/groups/FamilyResourcesatUH



WHAT DOES THE LATEST RESEARCH SAY

about successful work-life balance in Academia?



To really recover from burnout, we must change not just our schedules but also our thinking. **WE MUST ACCEPT THAT WHAT WE PRODUCE AND CONTRIBUTE IS NOT OUR VALUE.**

-Brené Brown, Ph.D.

UH Research Professor of Social Work

WHAT DOES THE LATEST RESEARCH SAY

about successful work-life balance in Academia?

Because higher education is a stressful environment, **PRIORITIZE** making improvements to the **QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE.**

-Dwayne A. Mack, Ph.D.

Berea College, Professor of History

THANK YOU

We always welcome your feedback:

bit.ly/UH-WLB

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