

The Priority Pinwheel

The daily battle to let priorities take the lead has just acquired a new challenge: your student leader position. All the “shoulds” and “musts” swirl about mightily as your leadership responsibilities are added to the mix, making it more difficult to discern what your true priorities should be.

The List

To get in touch with your priorities, first jot down all of the roles you currently play. They may include things such as: student, group leader, daughter, sister/brother, friend, part-time cafeteria server, intramural broom hockey teammate, community volunteer, and amateur guitarist.

Chances are that you’ll have quite a list! Yet, please don’t get an attack of the overwhelmed when you look at it. This list is simply meant to provide an initial at-a-glance summary of who you are and where your priorities lie.

My Top 5 Roles

Now take this list and highlight your role as a “student.” Although it may not always feel like it, this needs to come before your student leader role. Next, select the top 5 roles that will require your concentrated attention over the coming term. This doesn’t exclude your other roles, it just help define where your priorities need to be at this time.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Spinning Round

The ebb and flow of priorities makes it similar to a pinwheel, spinning a new priority to the forefront when the winds of change sweep around. For instance, your role as a sister may be more of a priority this term because your little brother just started high school and you want to be particularly supportive. Or maybe you’ve taken on a new leadership position with some specific goals to be met throughout the year. Whatever the case may be, setting priorities requires willpower

Make Yourself a Priority

Otherwise, you probably won’t be healthy, effective, or any fun to be around!

as well as flexibility. You’re anticipating your priorities right now, yet they need to be subject to change in order to make them accommodate your ever-changing lifestyle.

Being Pragmatic About Priorities

Prioritizing requires some sort of system to make it work effectively. And list making may be the easiest system of all. Try these tips:

- Before the week or month begins, make a list of everything that needs to be done within a certain time-frame. Put it on a bright piece of paper or on your “list making” pad—some-where where you know it will be.
- Use a number, color, letter, or other system to mark your “must get done,” “should be done,” and “could get done” tasks. Those marked as high priorities (or “musts”) get your primary attention.
- Update this list regularly as new priorities enter the picture. Set aside a regular time each week to alter your list, whether it’s Sundays during laundry time or over Monday morning breakfasts.
- Break a major task such as “Do a program” down into bite-size tasks, like contacting the speaker and creating publicity, to help you identify real priorities. Plus, this gives you more things to check off your list!
- And date your tasks. Anything left lingering over two weeks needs some serious, high priority attention.

