PART 1

The Faculty of Science and Engineering Women in STEM committee combined with the IEEE Women in Engineering to ask if we can achieve work-life balance?

We held a panel discussion with opportunities for Q&A.

Ruth Oliver (School of Engineering) asked our four panelists (Mike Heimlich and Stuart Jackson from the School of Engineering, Michelle Leishman from Biological Sciences, and Orsola De Marco from Physics and Astronomy) to talk about their own paths towards achieving work-life balance.

Panellists’ top tips for work-life balance:

- Know your limitations: know what you can achieve and be honest with yourself.
- Prioritize and structure your day – choose what is important to do first
- Choose your life partner wisely
- Don’t waste time at work

Finding balance

Think of yourself as part of a team with your partner, with your family, with your colleagues. Your bond with your partner is likely to be very important to your future happiness and success, so keep it strong. Support others in your group or department to manage their work-life balance too.

Professional staff partner with academic staff in many areas, and both contribute significantly to the University’s mission: work-life balance is important for all staff.

- Take time off - take your annual leave (plan ahead)
- Exercise – keeps you fit, and reduces physical effects of stress
- Find something that you love doing away from work. (e.g. distance running, cooking, sailing, playing with your dog)
- Enough SLEEP is crucial!
- Monitor yourself and those around you for burnout – working yourself into the ground does nobody any good!

Time management and attention management

Try to figure out a schedule that works for you: maybe reading or processing email during your commute, maybe work in the early morning before the family gets up, catch up some evenings but leave weekends free or vice versa.

Identify the important tasks for you. Plan time in your calendar for these important tasks that need focus, as well as all the urgent tasks.

You can say no! Or perhaps “I can’t do this on your timeframe”.

Get some perspective: one of our panellists claimed “Sanity as an academic is over-rated”!

Thanks to Ruth Oliver and Naila Mukhtar from the School of Engineering for organising the event!