

Book Review

Boice, R. (2000). ***Advice for new faculty members: Nihil Nimus***. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
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“The [person] who works so moderately as to be able to work constantly, not only preserves his [her] health the longest, but in the course of the year, executes the greatest quantity of work.” _Adam Smith, 1776

As a new tenure-track faculty member here at WCU, I discovered a great book in the Coulter Faculty Center’s library last spring. I just wish I had found it at the beginning of my first year. During my first semester at WCU I knew WHAT I needed to do in my first years here – teach effectively and gain tenure, but I did not truly know the HOW of accomplishing these goals. Although the new faculty orientation and mentoring programs I participated in were very useful, I was still on my own when it came to actually carrying out the work necessary to *survive and thrive* at WCU.

In this paperback, Boice provides “useful advice beginning with general ways of working in the professoriate with constancy and moderation” (p. 6). Boice also provides an appendix containing 10 abstracts of additional sources referred to in the text and also recommended by the new faculty members participating in his research projects as being “unusually interesting and useful” (p. 279).

His research at comprehensive and research universities has identified “quick starters” – the exemplary 3-5% of new faculty members who “begin with ease and acceptance” and “worked without rushing and busyness” (pp. 11-12). They personify the principles of *nihil nimus* (nothing in excess) for novice faculty. Boice’s study of quick and poor starters among new faculty members is the basis of the advice and the 10 *nihil nimus* rules he provides in this book, which is organized into three sections – Teaching, Writing, and Socialization.

Each section begins with a rationale for the *nihil nimus* approach, provides an overall plan, discusses relevant research findings, describes which of the 10 rules apply to the section’s topic, and concludes with a section summary. The body of each section has a chapter for each principle or rule that provides many specific explanations, examples, and exercises. The rules are discussed in order, from the simplest to implement to the more complex. Boice also recommends

that the rules be applied to a faculty member's Teaching duties first, then to Writing-related tasks, and then to the Socialization process that all new faculty members experience. Each chapter also discusses why new faculty members often do not apply these rules.

Since my first reading of Boice's advice and rules (and I recommend multiple readings of this book), I have applied the *Wait actively*, *Begin early* and *Work in brief regular sessions* rules as they relate to my teaching duties. As a result, I do feel much less stress this semester and believe that I am teaching more effectively. My next goal is to apply these rules to the writing process. If you are interested in research-based, tested, and useful guidelines and suggestions on HOW to become more efficient, more effective, and less stressed in your faculty position, I strongly recommend this book's rules and advice.