

# Med School Watercooler

NEWS FROM FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Thursday, April 23, 2020

## Sridhar honored with U.S. Excellence in Public Health Award

Fighting collegiate hunger has been a significant part of Sippy Sridhar's educational career.

Sridhar, a fourth-year student at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, received the 2020 Excellence in Public Health Award for her efforts to combat food insecurity in college students at the local and national level.

Presented by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), the awards program recognizes medical students across the United States who advance public health and those who exemplify the USPHS's mission to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of the nation.



"College students are typically not viewed to be an underserved group, but many students experience financial hardship while pursuing higher education," Sridhar said. "I stumbled upon food insecurity (hunger) as an undergraduate student and learned that it plagues college campuses worldwide."

Full-time students do not qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, regardless of their income. According to Sridhar, financial struggles can lead to maladaptive behaviors that affect students' physical and mental health in the short term and can have long-term consequences after they graduate or drop out.

"Campus food pantries and other programs designed to aid students experiencing financial struggles are likely to have similar effects to SNAP since these programs provide comparable resources," she said.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Sridhar founded Donor to Diner in 2013. What started as a student organization that Sridhar operated out of her dorm room, Donor to Diner ultimately became a national nonprofit that aids and advocates for hungry college students through local chapters.

"Donor to Diner's chapters fill the gap with advocacy initiatives and on-campus resources tailored to fit the needs of the student population they serve," she explained.

Sridhar started medical school at USA in 2016. That same year, a survey by USA's Student Government Association revealed that 57 percent of USA students had experienced food insecurity at some point during their college careers. To aid

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these students, Sridhar and USA's chapter of Donor to Diner established the student-led campus food pantry, JagPantry.

"Most students do not have access to traditional kitchens; some do not have access to any kitchen appliances at all, which significantly limits their meal options," she said. "Since non-perishable, ready-to-eat food items can be heavily processed and nutrient-poor, I worked with pediatric gastroenterologist Dr. Daniel Preud'Homme to offer options that provided sufficient nutrients while still being practical."

Last year Sridhar collaborated with the USA Student Health Center to better identify students experiencing hunger through a short survey administered during the intake process. A large number of JagPantry's patrons are now referrals from student health, Sridhar said.

Due to the program's success, Sridhar was invited to speak at a University of South Alabama board of trustees meeting. "This talk resulted in greater awareness of collegiate hunger and increased support for our program," she said. "Several trustees donated meal scholarships after learning about food insecurity on campus."

Soon after this opportunity, Sridhar and other student volunteers were able to move the JagPantry to a larger space to better accommodate larger donations which allows them to provide a larger variety of goods. They have partnered with the Student Government Association and the Freshman Council to provide feminine hygiene products in addition to food. Since the expansion, they are working on providing personal care items and any other products their patrons request, Sridhar said.

When Sridhar founded Donor to Diner in 2013, she was one of only a few people – and the first student – to develop resources to help college students experiencing food insecurity in the United States. Now, she is a national authority on combating collegiate hunger. She has organized and presented a workshop at national conference, #RealCollege: A National Convening on Food and Housing Insecurity.

[Learn more about JagPantry and USA's Chapter of Donor to Diner.](#)

Posted by [Med School Watercooler](#) at [2:33PM](#) No comments:

**Tuesday, April 21, 2020**

## Dr. Scaffa's Tips for Working and Studying at Home

Marjorie Scaffa, Ph.D., health and wellness counselor at the USA College of Medicine, shares some helpful tips for working and studying at home. They serve as a follow-up to the [Tips for Online Learning](#) that Timothy Gilbert, Ed.D., recently presented in a Health & Wellness Chat.

### Tips for Working/Studying at Home

- **Schedule regular breaks.** Take time to mindfully drink your coffee or focus on your breathing.
- **Write a weekly goals list.** Break tasks down into smaller steps and cross them off as you go to maintain a sense of progress throughout the day.
- **Identify one to three "Most Important Tasks."** Creating a daily MIT list helps you prioritize your most important and urgent tasks.
- **Review your crossed-off items at the end of the day.** Taking stock of your achievements can help boost mental well-being.
- **Try a to-do list app.**
- **Experiment with productivity strategies** such as The Pomodoro Technique and Eat The Frog (see more information below).
- **Write your daily to-do list the night before.** You might find that being able to start work right away in the morning helps increase your productivity. Also, this practice can help you clear your mind and switch off in the evening.

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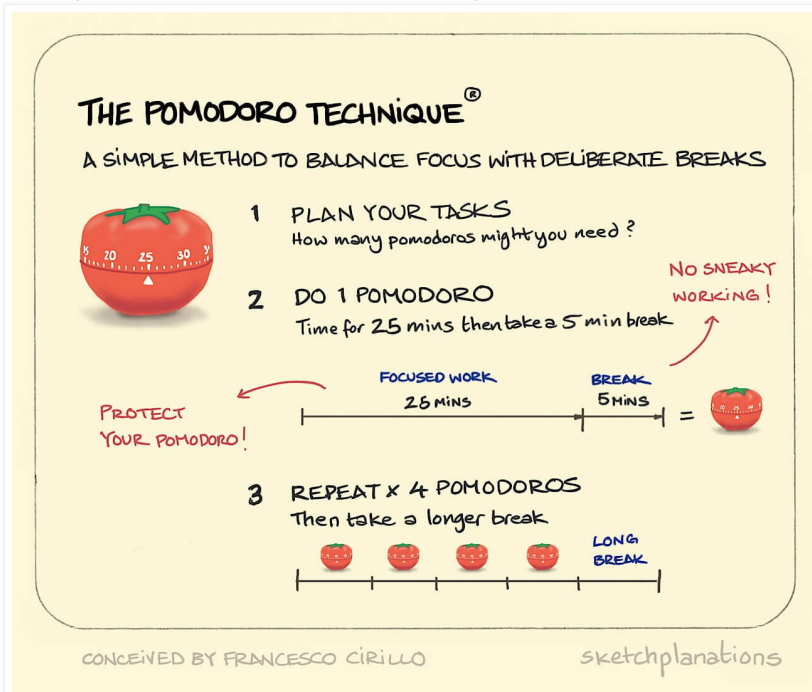
- **Tidy your work space at the end of the day.** Research finds that cluttered environments interfere with your ability to focus.
- **Develop a regular sleep schedule.**
- **Create an end-of-workday ritual.** You might find it helpful to create an end-of-day ritual such as listening to your favorite music, spending time with family (in person or virtually), meditation, or taking a walk.
- **Create weekly traditions** and schedule activities to look forward to. Strengthen family/friend routines through traditions such as "Board Game Fridays" and "Movie Night Mondays."
- **Be kind to yourself.** You have a lot on your plate. Be mindful of your inner critic, and remind yourself that you can only do the best you can.

### Productivity Strategies

In order to improve your productivity while you work/study at home, you might try either the Pomodoro Technique or the Eat the Frog Method, or a combination.

#### The Pomodoro Technique

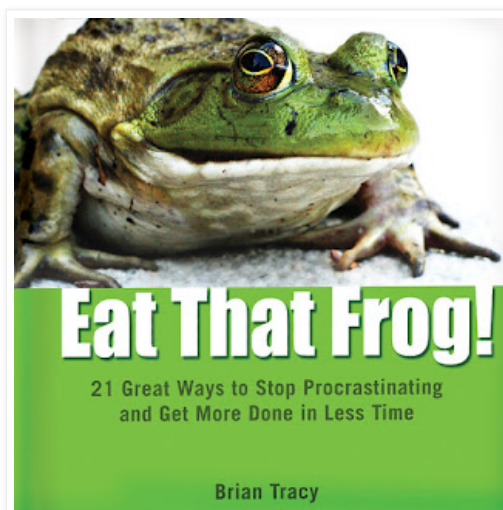
Was developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. He called it the Pomodoro Technique because the timer he used was shaped like a tomato.



#### Eat the Frog Method

Was developed by Brian Tracy (2001) based on a Mark Twain quote: "If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first."

- Decide on your Most Important Task (MIT) - "the Frog"
- Pick something realistic you can check off your to-do list in 1 to 4 hours.
- If your MIT is going to take more than half a day, break it down into smaller subtasks that will take 4 hours or less.
- Resist the temptation to plan ahead (for example, a whole week). Stay focused on today.
- Commit to and prepare for (set up) your MIT the night before.



- Do your MIT first thing. Focus all of your mental energy on your MIT.

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