

# EXCELLENCE *in* ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

## Session Three: Leading a Vibrant Unit

By the National Center for Principled Leadership & Research Ethics  
at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

based on the work of C. K. Gunsalus

photo: Jeremy Thomas

design: Aaron Robinson



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Homework

1. Review the AUDIT you filled out for your unit; be prepared to discuss
2. Hold a Critical Friends session.

Vibrant Units (0 to 5)	Warning Signs (0 to 3)	Challenged Units (0 to 5)
Respectful dealings among colleagues, dealing with differences and disagreements openly, inclusive, welcoming	Conflict, miscommunication, and disrespect between groups; generational discord; externalizing problems; bimodal evaluations	Serious misconduct: discrimination, sexual, financial, criminal, research, etc. (arrests, lawsuits, ...)
Openness, transparency, effective shared governance	Email and/or social media wars, harassment, silos, conflict aversion	Culture that suppresses or hides problems; punishes reporting; faculty schisms, battles, flareups
Culture of excellence and quality; strong productivity	Weak or ineffective hiring, lack of diversity, frequent requests for transfers, departures	Repeated inability to hire and/or retain quality faculty; staff; absence of diversity, or even a commitment to it
Support, mentoring for faculty, students alike; recognition that different people have different mentoring needs; equitably shared workloads	Weak P&T practices; many terminal associate professors	Toxic or unwelcoming atmosphere, especially for junior faculty, underrepresented groups; students
Open discussion of ideas and research; high productivity	Declining scholarly indicators (productivity, PhDs, PhD placement, time to degree...)	Scholarly standing below university's; uneven within unit
Distributed service responsibilities, aligned with faculty strengths, with awareness of uneven	Financial disarray	Departmental business at a standstill; in gridlock; unproductive or nonexistent unit meetings
High quality of communication—willingness to listen, compromise, deal with problems openly	Ad hoc practices; irregular or unclear policies; seeking desired answers from different offices; hiding problems	Lack of transparency; hidden agendas; uneven application of policies; faculty involve students in disputes
Curricular innovations, adaptations to meet changing student, campus, career needs	Enrollment declines, lack of curricular innovation	Curricular stagnation outdated curriculum; lack of student interest in offerings
Leadership has high expectations, uses policies everhandedly, makes decisions, builds community	Conflict, miscommunication, and disrespect between groups; generational discord; externalizing problems; bimodal evaluations	Weak or autocratic leadership; different messages to different audiences; meddling by previous leader of unit
Collective vision of unit goals and priorities, aligned with institutional mission	Limited or shifting sense of unit goals and priorities	Scattered individual priorities without shared purpose
TOTAL _____	TOTAL _____ (subtract)	TOTAL _____ (subtract)



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SPENDING TIME PUTTING OUT FIRES  
SIGNALS A NEED FOR THOUGHTFUL ACTION.



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ncpre National Center for Principled Leadership & Research Ethics Academic Unit Diagnostic Tool (AUDIT), Edition A		Total Score:
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## Nothing happens in isolation



Structural, cultural, financial, interpersonal, scholarly, and leadership problems interact.

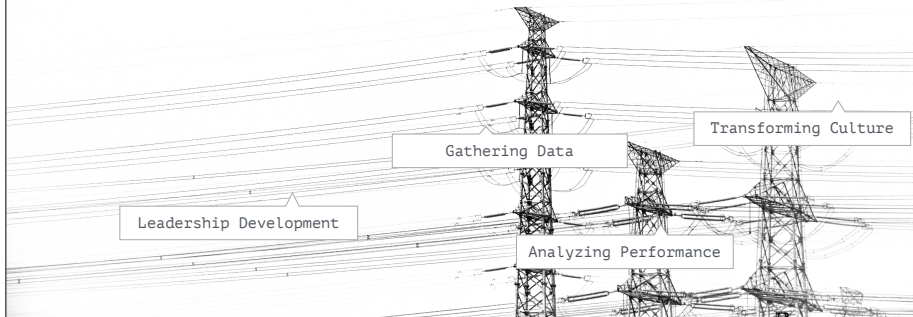
## Solutions and Approaches

### How can you stop fighting fires...



## Solutions and Approaches

### ...and build a better future?

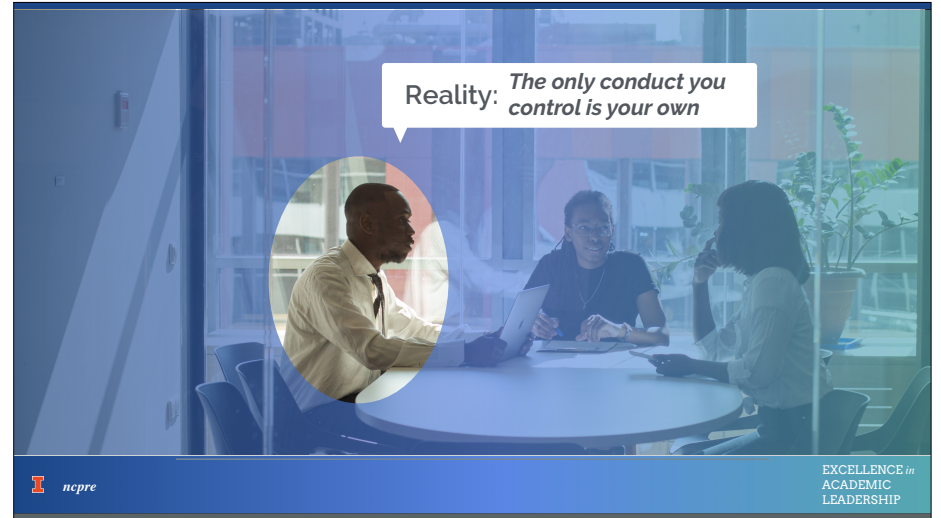


**Scenario 1:**  
*The other person is totally off base, confused, neurotic, stupid and/or just generally wrong.*

**It's likely some combination of the two.**

**Scenario 2:**  
*The other person might have a point; you could be mistaken or have misunderstood.*


*Whichever it is, you are in an unpleasant situation.*



Reality: *The only conduct you control is your own*



First...

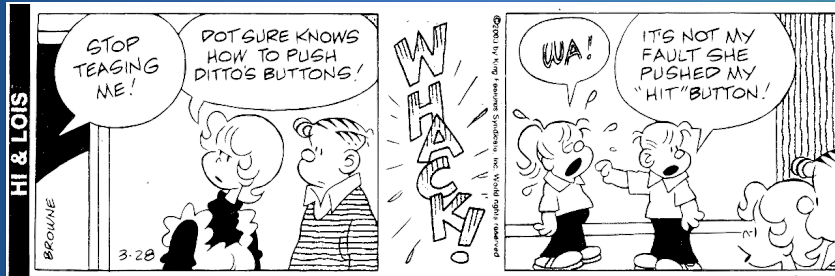


You need to know — and be clear about — some things about yourself and your situation.

## Self-Knowledge



*And aggression only escalates.*



## Pepper . . . and Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"As far as I know, Laidlaw, the customs of our corporate culture do not include hissy fits."

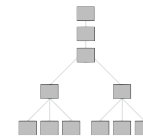
## Query:

Have *YOU* ever been persuaded by being insulted, contradicted or shouted down?

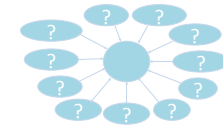
## Philosophical Centering



Mission



Role



Constituencies



Why

# Why are you doing this job?

*(overlaps with self-knowledge)*

## Vibrant Academic Units



**Student Learning**  
Appropriate  
quality, volume



**Scholarship**  
Research/creative  
work at institutional  
standards, with  
impact



**Service, Outreach**  
Contribute to  
institutional mission

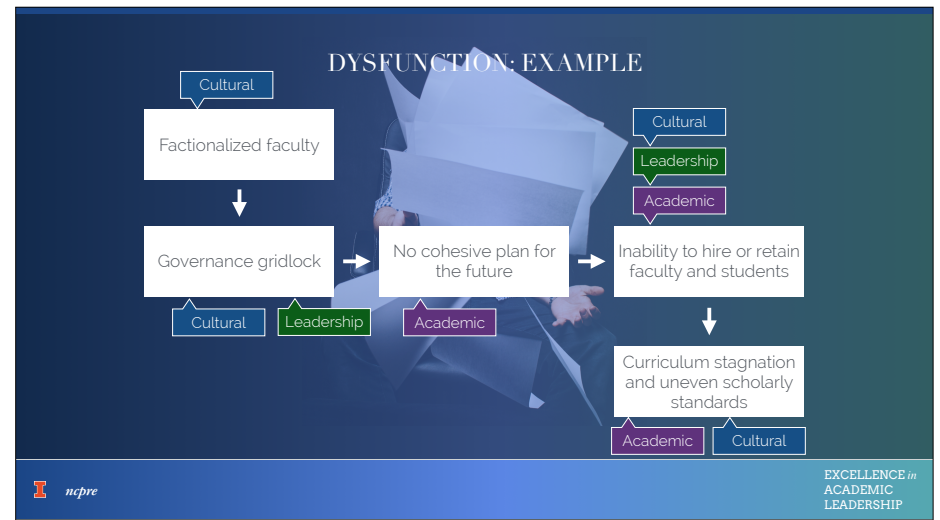
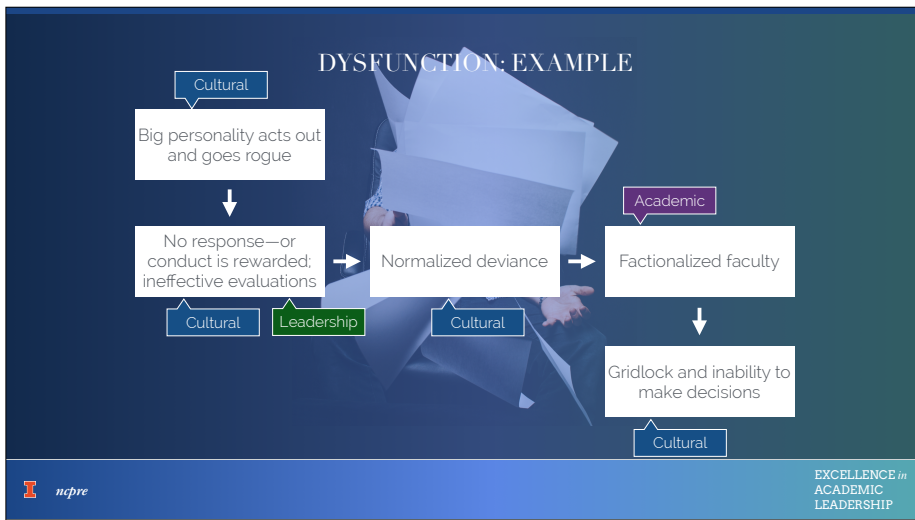
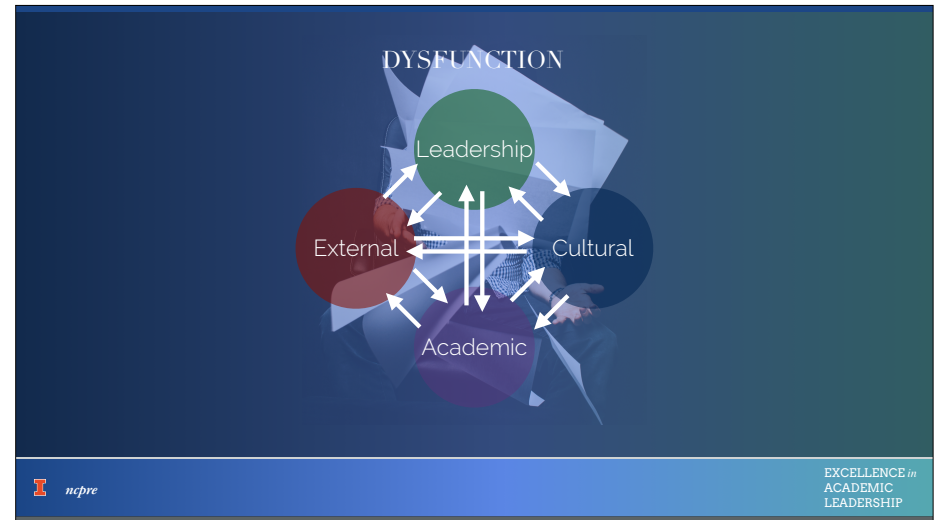


**Governance & Culture**  
Ethically, legally,  
fiscally responsible;  
healthy working  
environment

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Open discussion of ideas and research; high productivity	Financial disarray	Scholarly standing below university's; uneven within unit
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**EXCELLENCE in ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**



Dysfunction - Culture

### Quantifiable HR Measures

- ▲ Staff, faculty, student transfers
- ▲ Departures, unsuccessful retentions
- ▲ Hiring yields, failed hires
- ▲ Contingent faculty proportion, turnover
- ▲ Terminal associate professors
- ▲ Supplemental pay requests, demands
- ▲ Complaints, grievances

Disproportionate distribution of enrollment re: faculty

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Dysfunction - Leadership

### Quantifiable Measures

Bimodal Evaluations (e.g., publications, student evaluations)

Financial Disarray

Ad Hoc-ery

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### Indicators

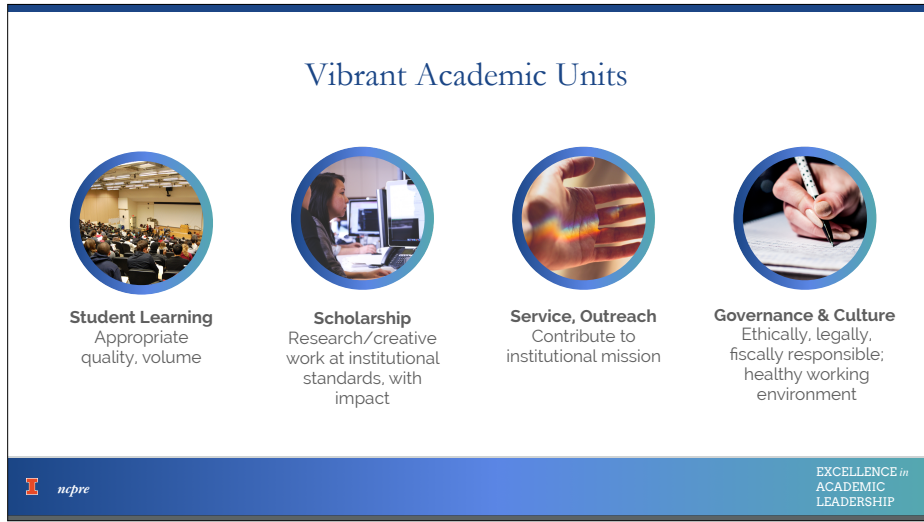
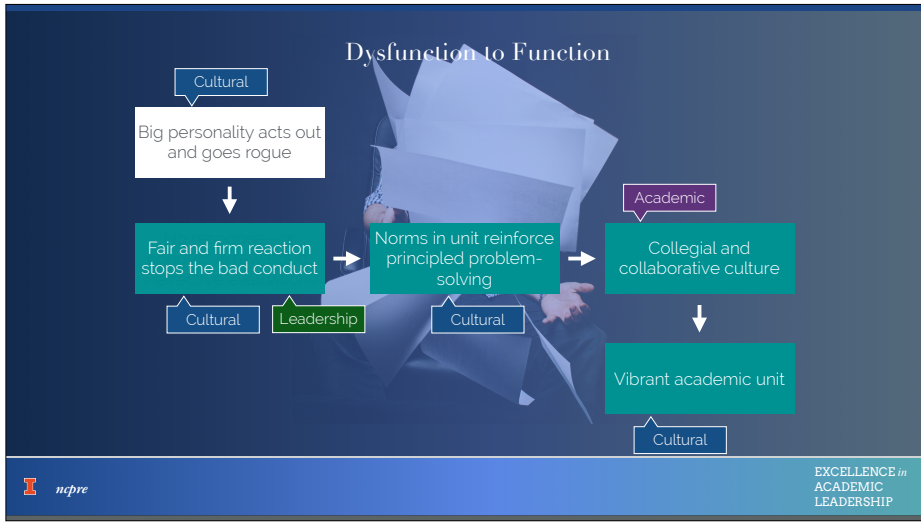
Quantifiable	Qualitative/Subjective
Hiring (quality, yield)	Leadership shortcomings
Retention, transfers	Silos, internal factions
Enrollment trends	Ad hocery
Demographics	Random hiring pattern
Scholarly productivity	Lack of cohesion
Complaints, grievances	Favoritism, in/out groups
Financial elements	Conflict, conflict aversion
Serious deviations	Social media and email wars

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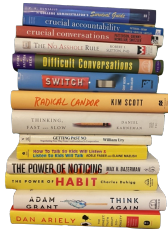






Homework

1. Create a **ONE MINUTE or shorter** elevator pitch for your unit, connected to its purpose and mission.
2. Find a book to read that matches your interests, growth interests.



Creating a Culture of  
Excellence

1. Mindset
2. Collegiality
3. Create a shared vision of success
4. Provide needed resources
5. Reward excellence
6. Support revitalization and reinvention by unit members

*Questions or concerns?*

*Key takeaways?*