

# Principled Academic Leadership

*Session 9: Leading in Times of Uncertainty*


*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

**ncpre** **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

1




Homework

1. Review the second version of the Professor Major video posted on the cohort webpage, watching for: what did the department chair learn in this program?
2. Meet in a group to develop a list of skills you've acquired through this cohort program that you see being applied in the second version. Report at next session.
3. Meet in a Critical Friends group.

**ncpre** **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

2

## Institutions emerged to fill a need and continue to exist so long as a useful purpose is served

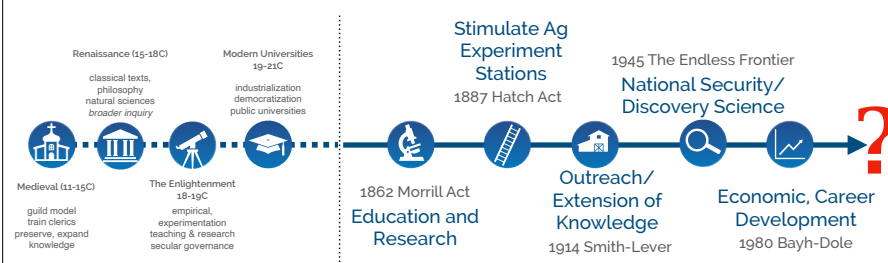


Applies to universities *and* units within universities

**ncpre** **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

3

## Changing Needs, Missions

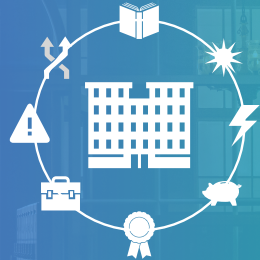


*US public policy*

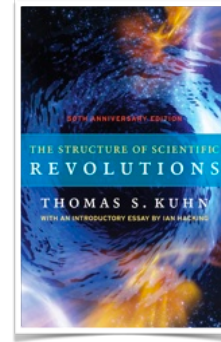
**ncpre** **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

4

## Environmental changes lead to paradigm changes



5



"When a paradigm changes,  
everyone starts over."

6

## Today's World...



Volatility



Uncertainty



Complexity



Ambiguity

7



Higher Education  
Trends

- Demographic trends: students, faculty
- Public trust and role of regulation
- Funding: government trends, private role
- Perceived value of higher education
- Changing expectations

8



## Let's Talk

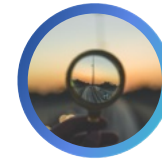


What is your role in addressing the growing lack of trust in or sense of value from higher education?

## What the Research Tells Us



Shared goals  
matter



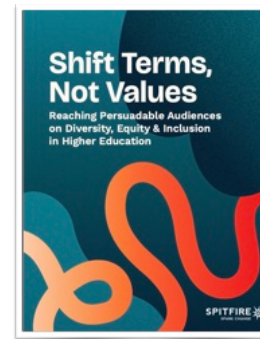
WHY  
matters



Purpose helps us make  
better decisions

**In times of uncertainty,  
core values and  
institutional mission  
matter more than ever.**

*What is your institution's mission?  
What are your core values?*



- 🌐 Speak in terms of shared values
- ⚖️ Fairness, opportunity, respect for all
- 🏛️ Collective benefits of the work
- 👤 Invite others into the conversation

## Cultures of Excellence

Our premise is that excellence is more than *what* work is done, it also encompasses *how* work is done:

with rigor, reproducibility, inclusion, and integrity.

## Cultures of Excellence

Our premise is that excellence is more than *what* work is done, it also encompasses *how* work is done:

with rigor, reproducibility, respect, and integrity.

## Key Lessons about Culture



Culture exercises powerful influences over how we relate to each other, how we work together, and how we see ourselves.



Organizational cultures evolve over time.



As a leader, what you do—as much as what you say—has the strongest influence on your unit's culture.

*Effective leadership is rooted in thoughtful approaches to building organizational culture.*

Where do  
*you* fit in this?

## Layers of Challenges



Personal



Interpersonal



Institutional

## Daniel Coyle: The Culture Code



Build safety



Share vulnerability



Establish purpose

**Meet people with  
humanity, listening,  
and acknowledgement.**

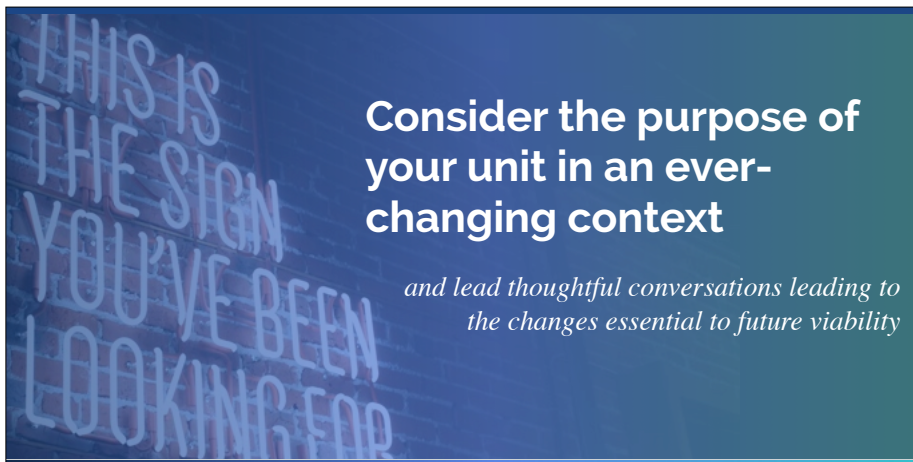
*By being transparent and demonstrating that you  
are trying to help, you cultivate moral authority.*

## Empathy, Boundaries, and Stress




Empathy pit

- 🚫 In times of uncertainty, people can be stressed, frightened, angry
- 🔥 Be aware of burnout
- 🌐 Show empathy, recognize the challenges
- ⚙️ Set boundaries, offer resources




## Consider the purpose of your unit in an ever-changing context

*and lead thoughtful conversations leading to the changes essential to future viability*


 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

21


## Respond to Changing Needs



**Current and Future Students**  
 Implications for curriculum  
 Changing metrics for success  
 New forms of support







**Early Career Faculty**  
 Implications for research areas  
 Understanding mission, role in student success  
 Centering skills for career growth


 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

22

## Data Can Be a Valuable Resource




-  Demographics and hiring patterns
-  Enrollment trends and success patterns
-  Are you *retaining* excellent faculty/staff?
-  Are service burdens disproportionate? What about undocumented forms of service (e.g. informal advising)?
-  Consider comparative data

 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

23

## Mini Reflection

- 1 What are the biggest challenges facing your unit, its faculty, staff, and students?
- 2 Are there any opportunities in those challenges?

 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

24



*Recognize your spheres of influence -  
what you can and cannot control.*

*Accept uncertainty while watching for opportunities.  
You and your colleagues are problem-solvers.*



Reallocating for  
the future

As Chair, you have been warned that you must be prepared to cut 5-15% of your budget given institutional funding challenges.

As you start towards this goal:

- How do you align the proposed changes with your unit's mission? The larger institutional mission?
- Who are the people you should consult and involve?
- When? How?

*Outline the steps you will take: what  
process will you follow?*

## Leading for the Future

- 🎯 Centering people and mission
- 🏢 Anticipating and planning for institutional change
- 🎭 Lead with courageous vulnerability
- 📖 Strive for intellectual humility
- 🏃 Plan for a marathon, not a sprint



## Aligning with Upper Leadership

# Establish Relationships


*To support your mission and goals*

Goals and Mission extend vertically

Chancellor  
Provost  
Dean


...and laterally

Faculty Staff

 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

29


# Overview




Be Strategic




Share Data:  
Changes, Effects




Focus on  
Building  
Shared Goals



Communicate  
Thoughtfully




Be Human


 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

30


# Working Toward Shared Goals



Are you engaging your faculty and do you have effective shared governance aligning with you?




Are you aligning with your upper levels of leadership?



Are you encountering alignment barriers?


★  
Work to align priorities at all levels of leadership.

 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

31

# Questions or concerns?

# Key takeaways?

 **PRINCIPLED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

32



### Homework

1. Prepare a presentation to discuss the Capstone Case at our next (final!) session.
2. Review your journal and make notes about specific action you can take or plans for how you will continue your growth as a leader.

*Thank You*