

So you want to be a chair? a collaborative conversation about the tough moments

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September 2020

1. Reflecting on the nature of the job
2. Tough moments
3. Sustaining yourself as a leader

1. Reflecting on the nature of the job as chair

- Academic medicine as entrusted with the responsibility of creating a better future
- Clinical departments and their divisions as entrusted with “five plus one” academic missions
 - Advancing science
 - Multidisciplinary educational excellence
 - Clinical innovation and service
 - Community Engagement and Commitment
 - Leadership, Inclusion, and Professionalism
 - + Administrative and financial excellence

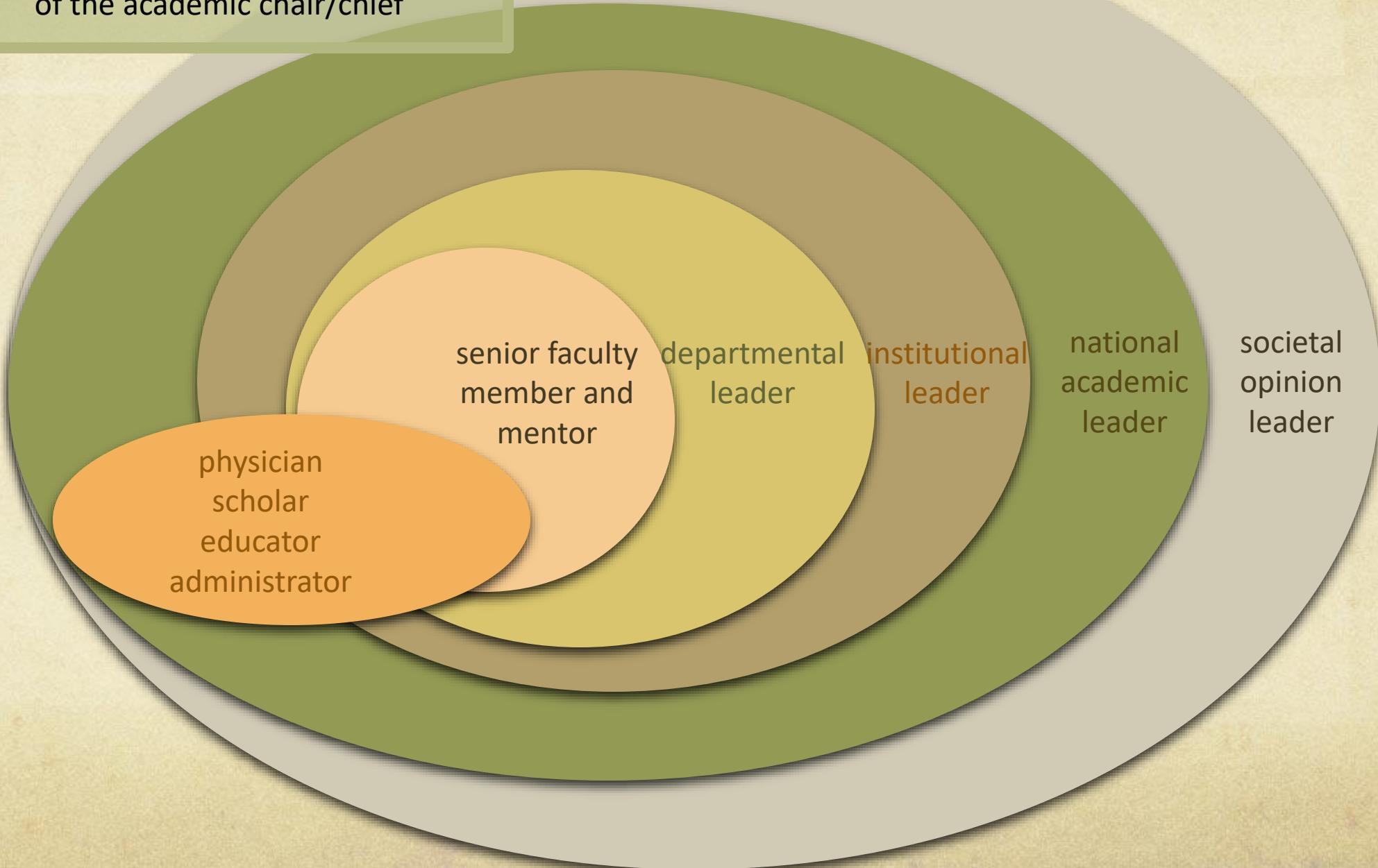


1. Reflecting on the nature of job

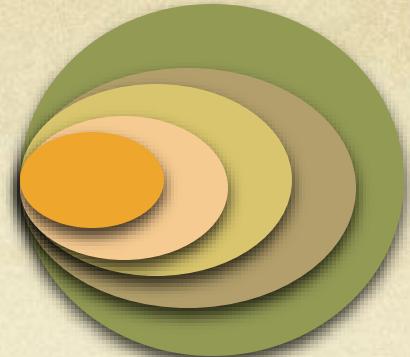


- Annual performance criteria for chairs/chiefs
 - Overall success of the department
 - Financial success of the department
 - Overall
 - Clinical
 - Success in garnering NIH research support
 - Success in program development
 - Caliber of faculty and success in recruitment
 - Success in cross-departmental projects
 - Success in garnering philanthropic support
 - Success in all aspects of good citizenship
- Different aspects of the role will have different weight, depending on the institution, context

multiple overlapping professional roles
of the academic chair/chief



the good news,
and the bad...



Each of these roles carries considerable responsibilities

- Often with significant real-time impact on others
- Often with multiple stakeholders, both vertical and horizontal
- Often dependent on the qualities of the individual leader as well as the full leadership team
- Often involving decisions with poor information, insufficient analyses, and incomplete influence on outcomes
- Often involving repercussions for the future
- Often with commitments and values in tension or in conflict

More good and bad news...

- About 68 hours/week in face to face “contact” activities, a lot of evenings
 - About 16 hours/week in preparation
 - Half of the effort spent in non-departmental institutional and national activities

How you spend your time....

- You do a lot of things
 - You do a lot of things you may not want to do
 - You do a lot of things that others cannot do for you
 - You do a lot of things where you rely on others
 - You do a lot of things where you must be prepared
 - You do a lot of things where your trustworthiness and integrity are key
 - You don't have much free time
 - You are never really “off the clock” or “off the hook”

Imagined job



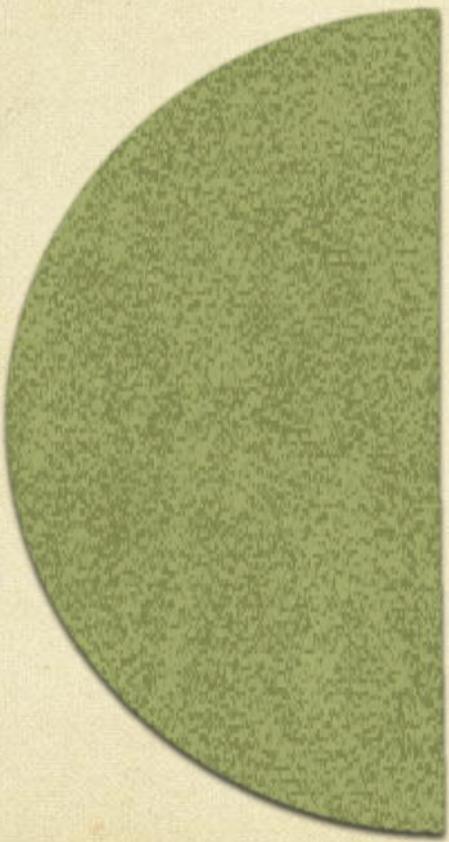
Faculty – development, hiring, recruitment, retention, promotion

Finances – revenue growth, negotiations, budget....

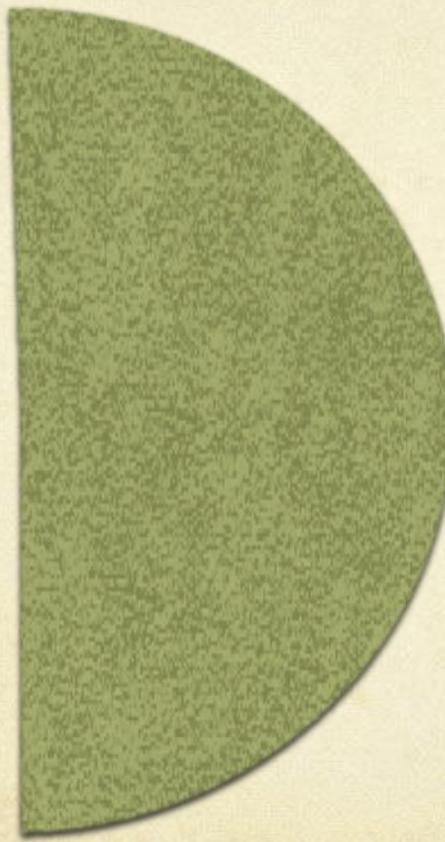
Leadership - strategic vision, values, communications....

Program oversight - research, education, clinical growth, partnerships....

Etc, etc, etc...

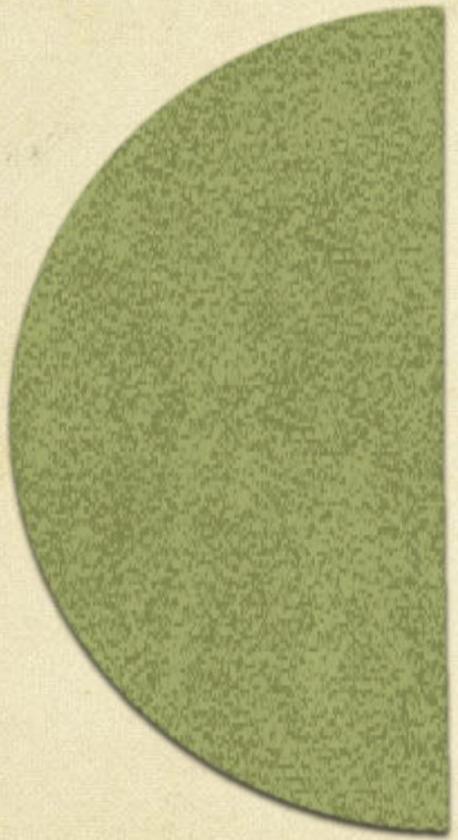


Department

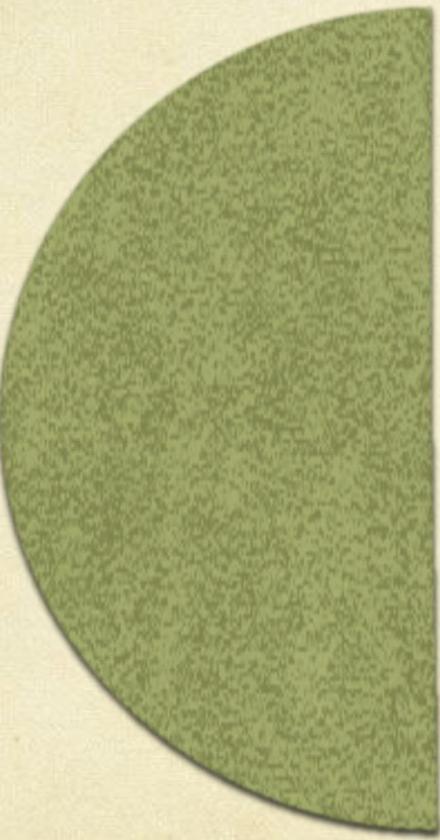


School & System





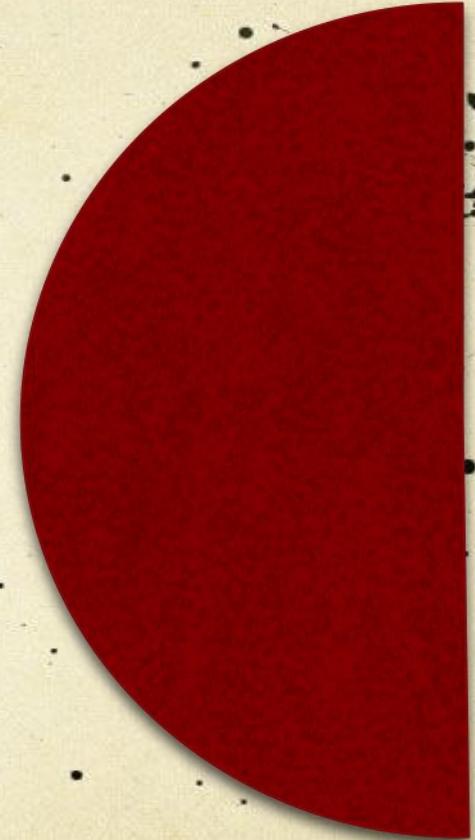
Department



School & System



Other academic,
regional, etc



National



Imagined job



Actual job

Imagined job



Actual job

- Department
- School & System
- Other academic,
regional, etc
- National





Traditional academic pathway to chair role

- Achievement as a physician-scientist or as a residency program director, and related national recognition
- Early mentorship for learning academic skills
- Early opportunities for carrying responsibility
- Attainment of milestones and movement across institutions

Emerging pathways to becoming chair

- Highly valued internal faculty member who becomes essential
- Uniquely qualified internal or external candidate who fills a specific need at a specific time in the history of a department



Necessary preconditions:

- Accomplishment and credibility in at least two (and preferably and sometimes necessarily all five) of the five mission domains
- Success in early leadership

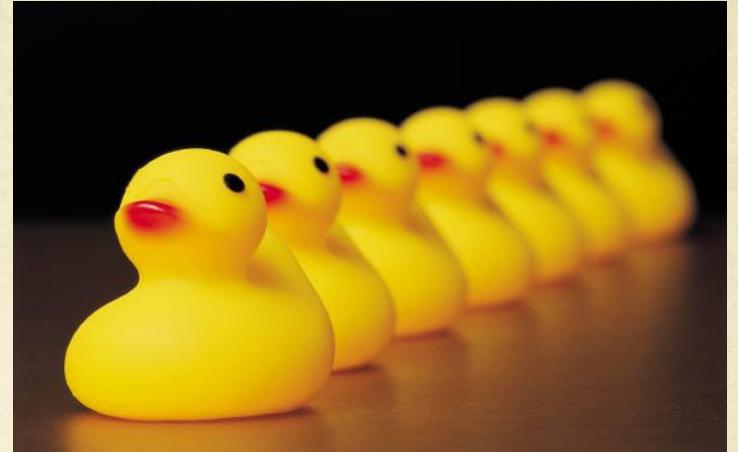
Necessary skills:

- Strong organizational skills
- Strong communication skills
- Strong decision-making, negotiation skills
- Strong team-building skills
- Strong financial and administrative skills
- Strong self-care and self-observation skills



Necessary non-cognitive attributes:

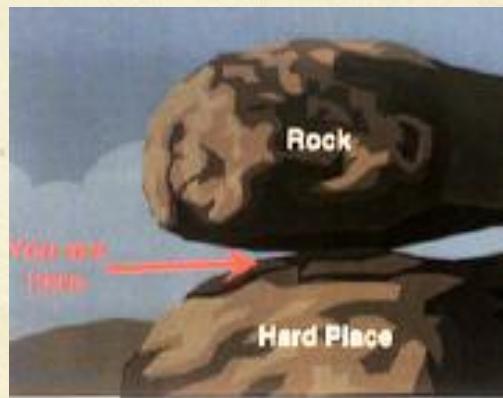
- Future-oriented mindset
- Trustworthiness, respectfulness
- Dissatisfaction with current state
- Comfort with responsibility
- Capacity for perspective-taking
- Capacity for partnering
- Capacity for managing interpersonal boundaries
- Respect for resources

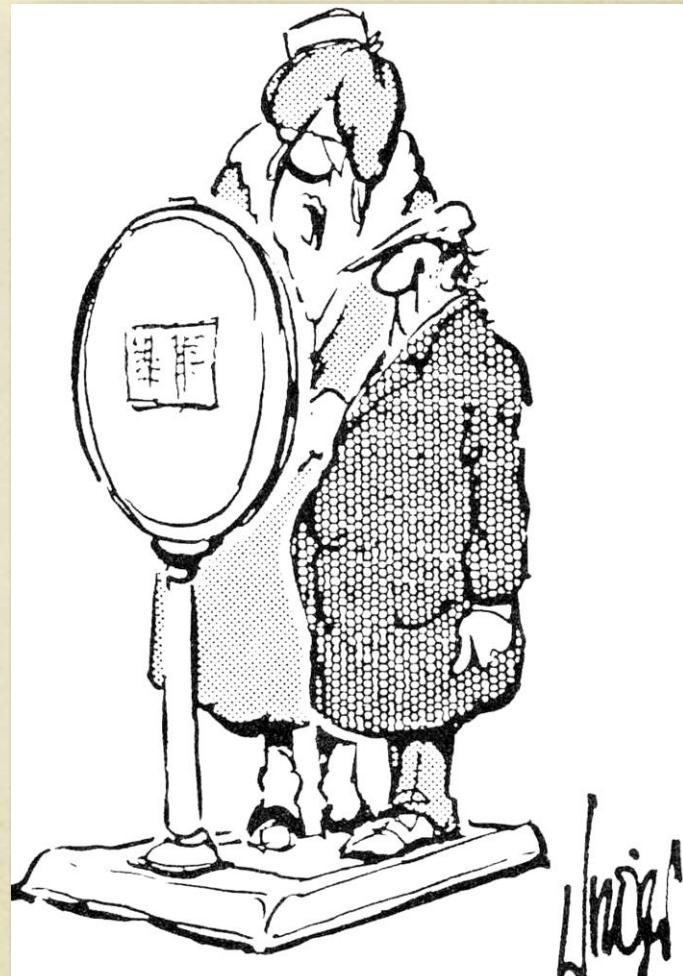


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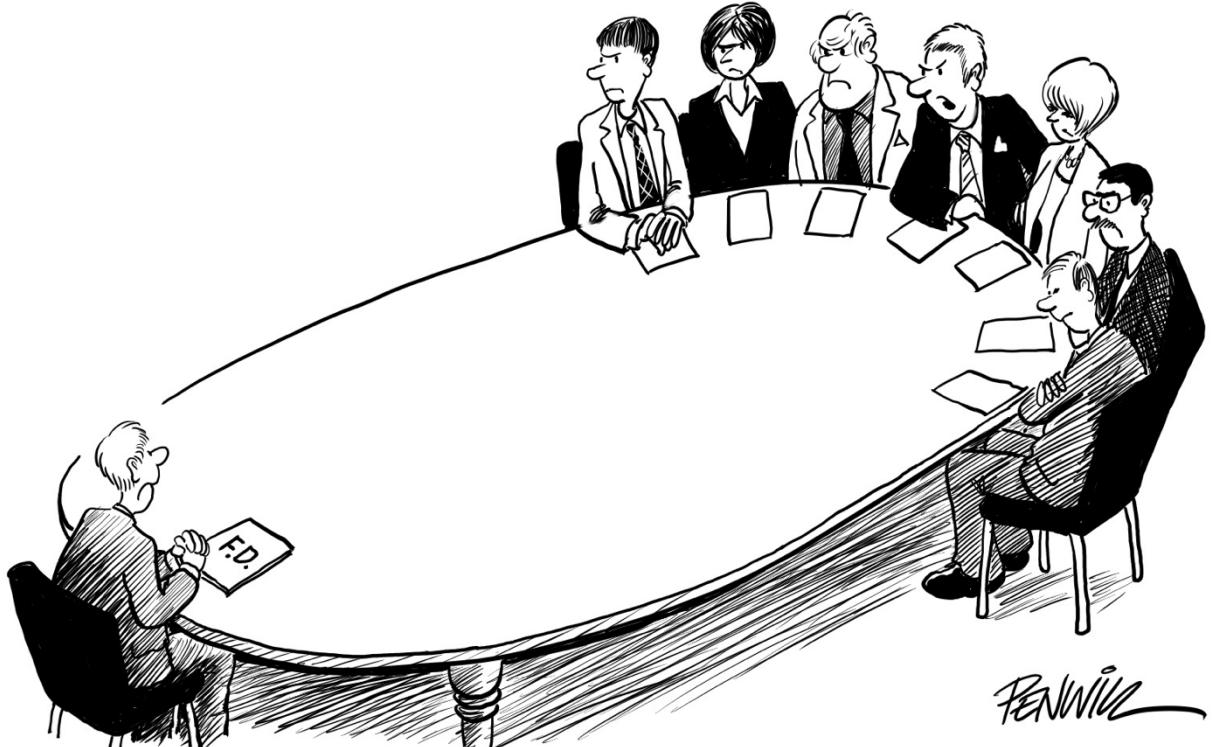
- Comfort with discomfort
- Comfort with change
- Capacity for empathy
- Capacity for generativity
- Capacity for self-sacrifice
- Capacity for self-care
- Courage and tenacity
- Patience, and impatience







**"There we are. What's 350
pounds divided by two?"**

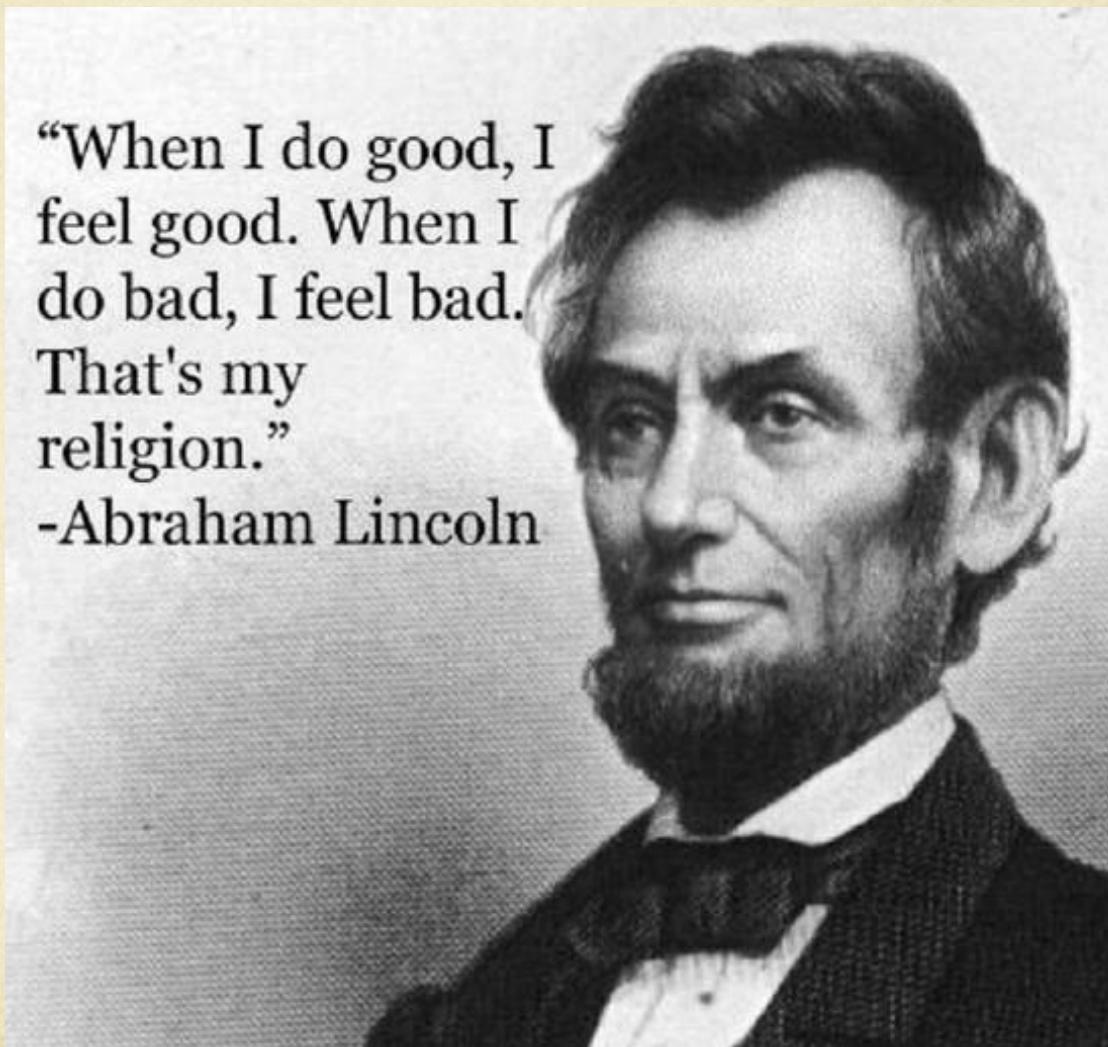


"WE DON'T WANT YOU TO VIEW THIS AUDIT COMMITTEE
AS BEING IN ANY WAY CONFRONTATIONAL"



“When I do good, I
feel good. When I
do bad, I feel bad.
That's my
religion.”

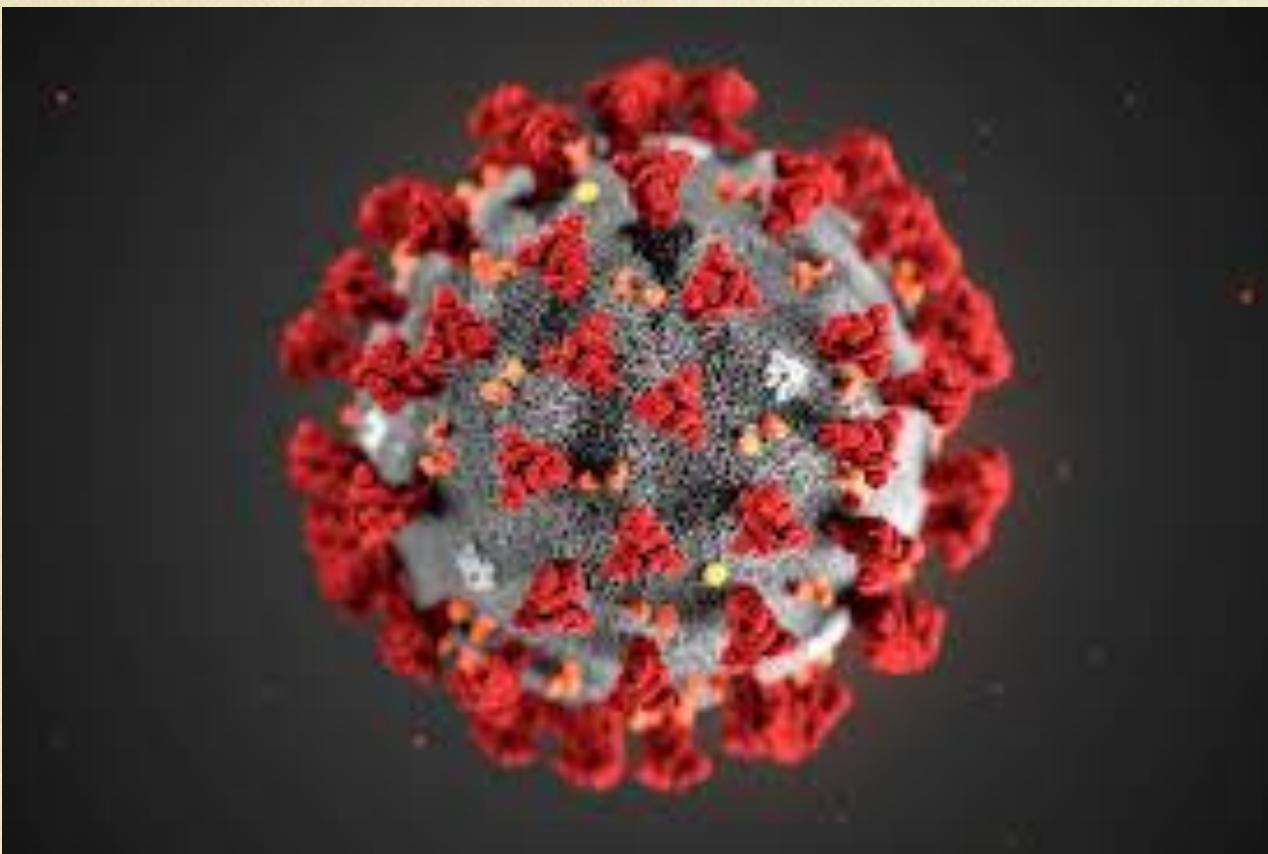
-Abraham Lincoln



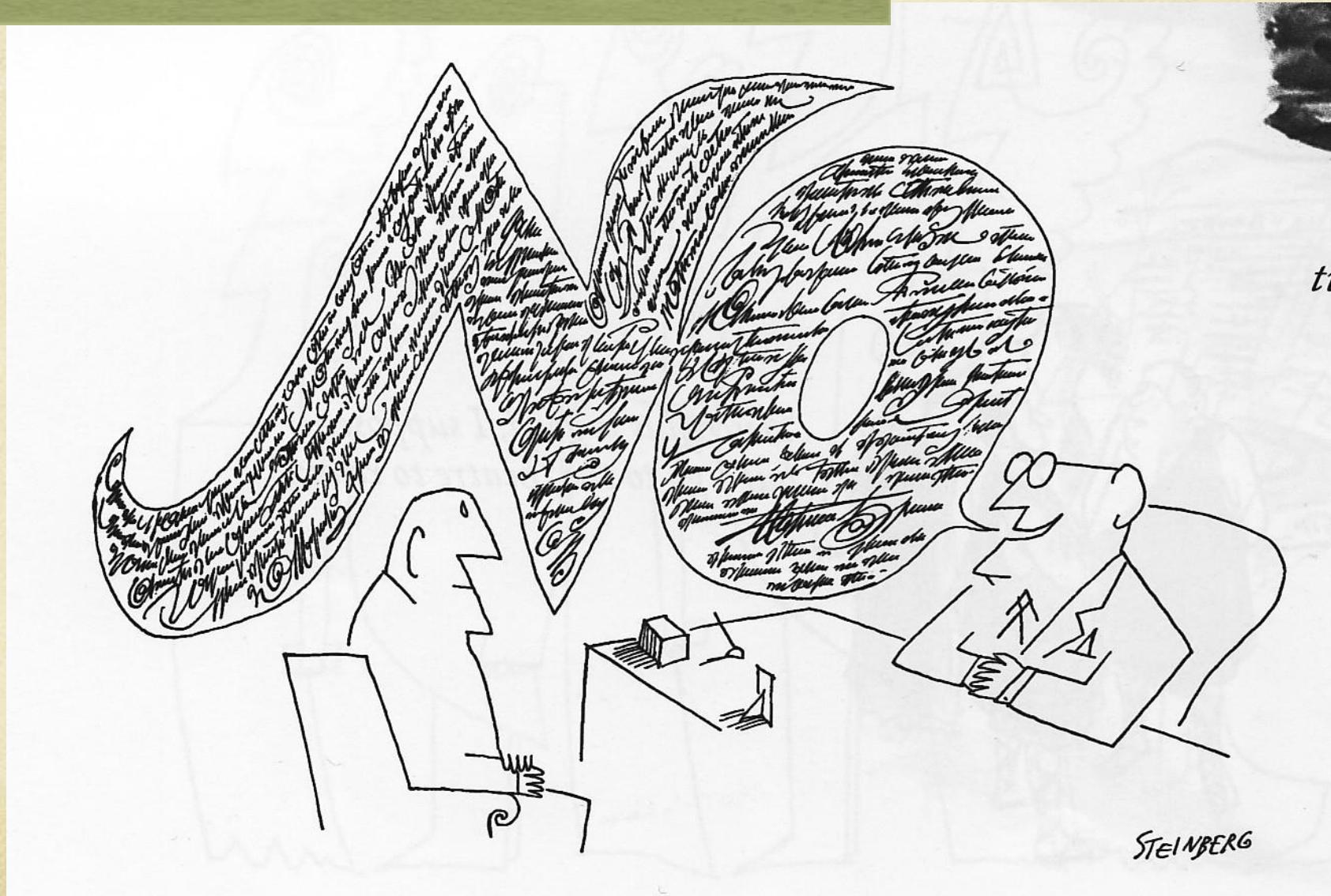




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Conversations with the dean or CEO or...







"Mind your own business! This is how I like it."



Just a few issues from the past week or so...

negative tenure decision

“threats” to two significant programs

“harmonizing the message” issue

website overhaul

explaining, again, that mental illness exists

a “perverse formula” reimbursement issue

year-end budget closure

strategy document

a “routine” audit

a political “alignment” problem

new clinical metrics

repercussions of division chief selection

space/resource reallocation

new compensation plan proposal

faculty recruitment

impaired/ill medical student concern

stacked book, journal, grant deadlines

vital faculty retention

fundraising tasks

annual evaluations of senior faculty and staff leaders

new university requests

implementation of new academic affairs guidelines

a “consensual relations” issue

plus, all the things I can’t say...

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*what I have lost sleep over

a “consensual relations” issue

plus, all the things I can’t say...

Collaborative Conversation



What have the toughest moments been, so far, in your chair career?

What made these experiences so difficult?



Accurate information

Communication

Resources

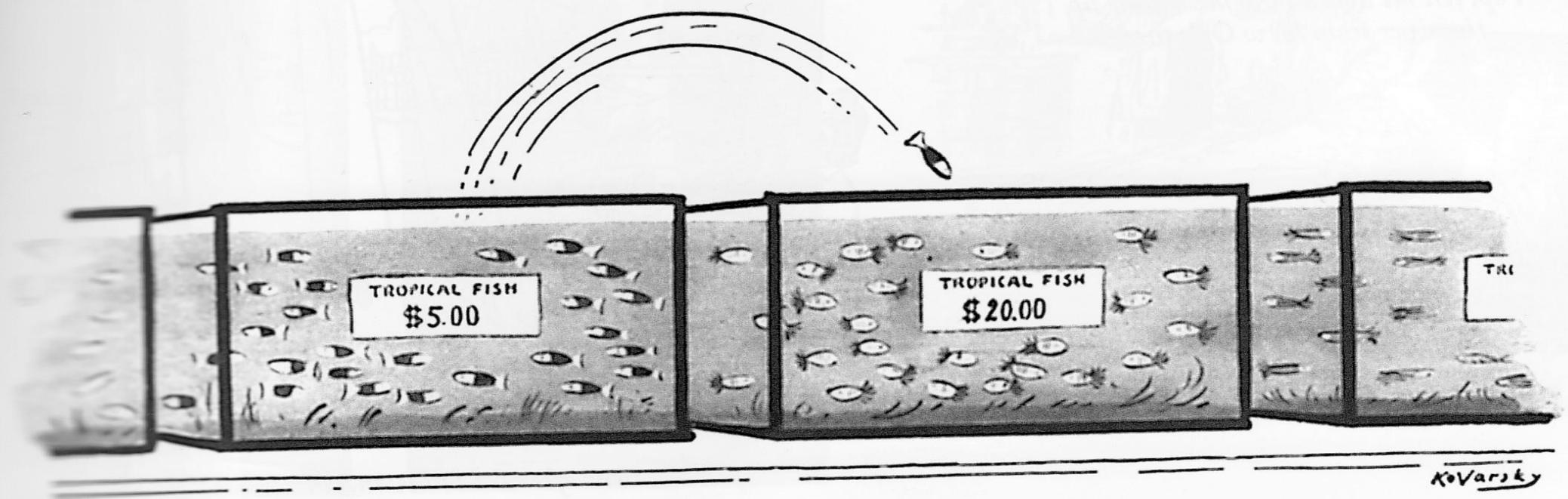
Layers

Principles Time

Precedents

New or triangulated data

Consultation & external intervention



If you aren't rich,
you should always look useful.

Louis Ferdinand Celine

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PRODUCTION CONCEPT ART
RYAN MEINERDING
2013



- Approximately 158,000 faculty in academic medical schools in the US, a country of more than 328 million people
- Entrusted with transforming human health, entrusted with the future
- Academic medicine, and academic psychiatry in particular, has special responsibilities in our neighborhood and our world
- Who you are and the work you do truly matters





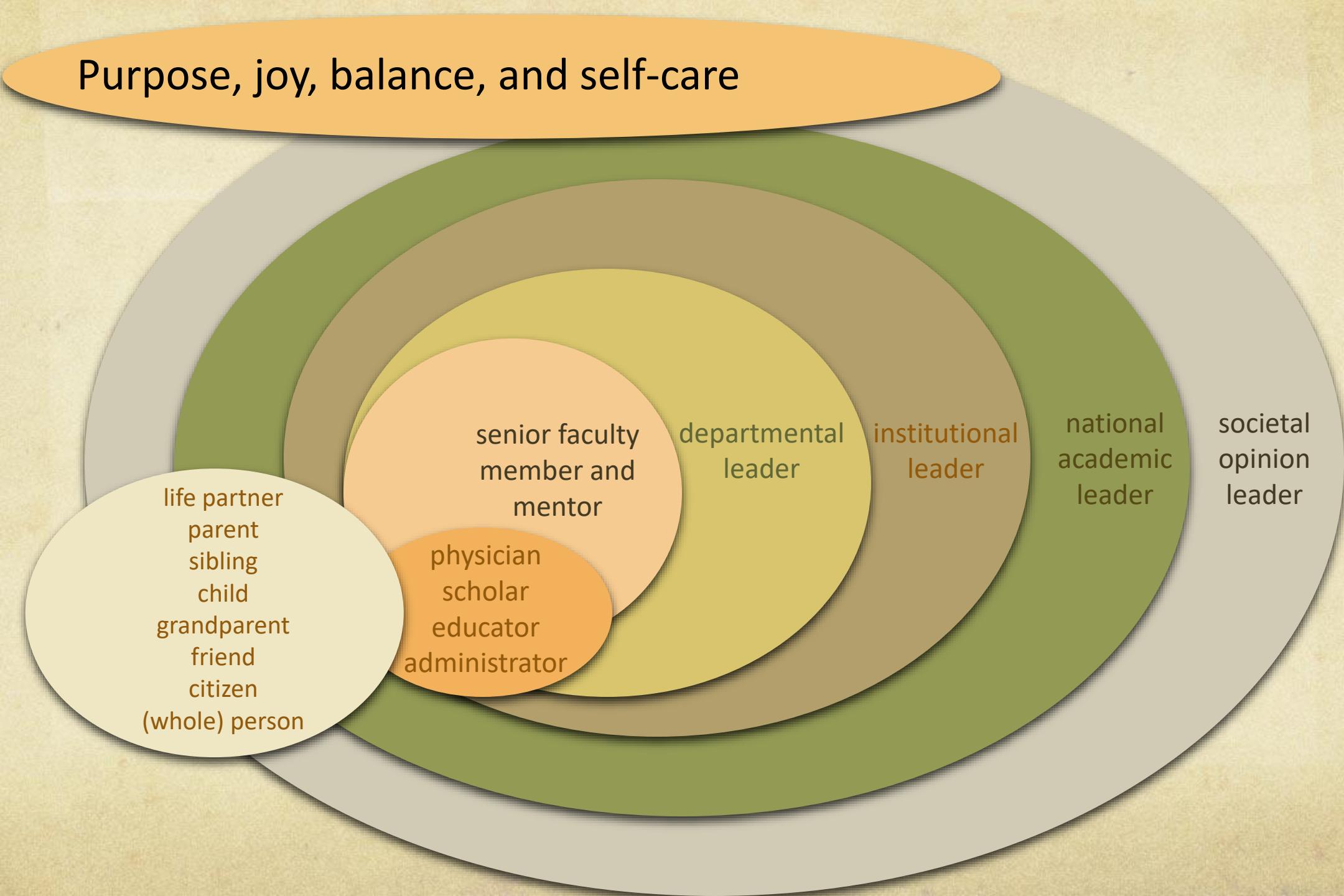
Never doubt that a small
group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can
change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing
that ever has.

Margaret Mead



It is really, really important to take care of yourself

Purpose, joy, balance, and self-care



life partner
parent
sibling
child
grandparent
friend
citizen
(whole) person

senior faculty
member and
mentor

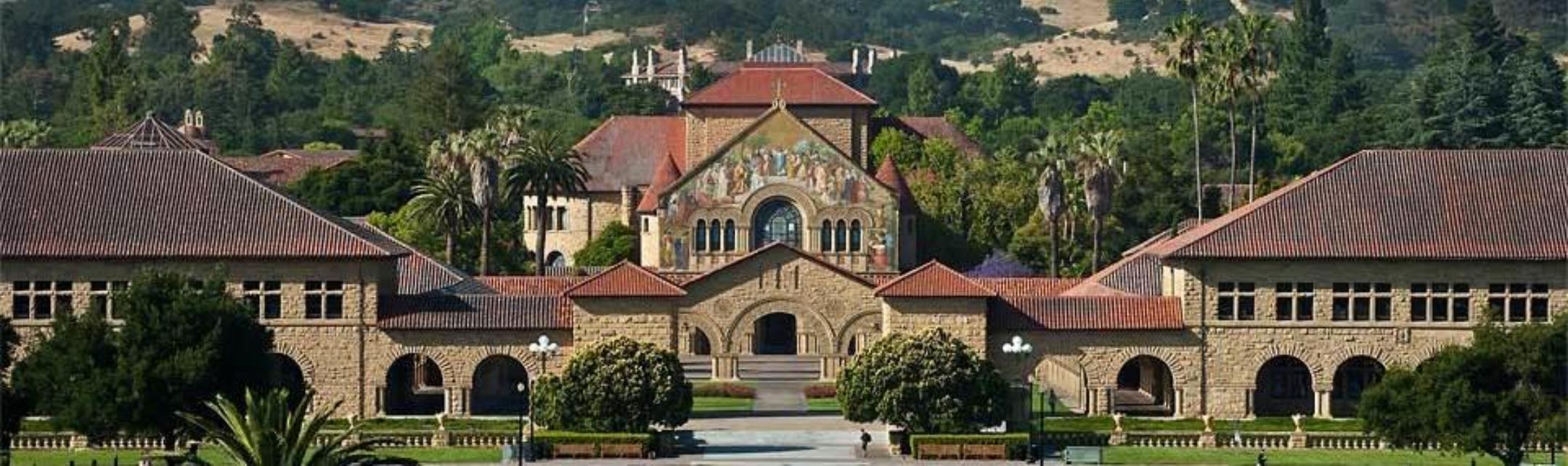
departmental
leader

institutional
leader

physician
scholar
educator
administrator

national
academic
leader

societal
opinion
leader



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