A Permission Slip to Say No: Sustainable Teaching in Unsustainable Conditions

Lindsay C. Masland, PhD
Executive Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for Student Success
Appalachian State University


ONKA
DATE
FEB.1
TIME
(SHARP)
GATES





Info to Know

- This session ends at 1:00 EST.
- There are polls and padlets—I will place links in the chat.
- This session will be recorded.
- Link to slides will be placed in chat at the end.

An Invitation

Might you give yourself
the gift of *not* multi-tasking?

Might you give the gift of
focusing on yourself
and nothing else
for the next hour?

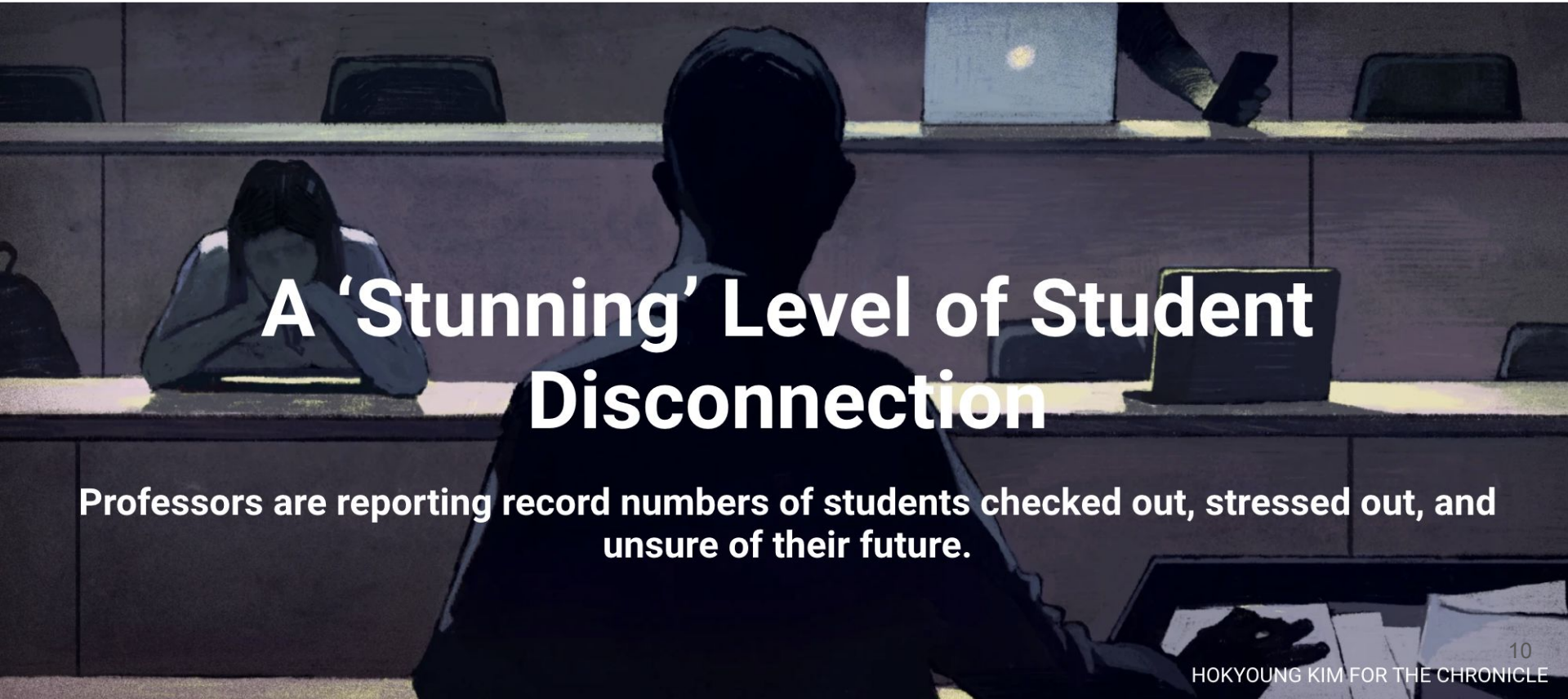
What is ONE WORD that represents how you are showing up today?

Powered by Poll Everywhere

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at **pollev.com/app**

My word?
Exhausted.





A ‘Stunning’ Level of Student Disconnection

Professors are reporting record numbers of students checked out, stressed out, and unsure of their future.

HOKYOUNG KIM FOR THE CHRONICLE

Prospective College Students Increasingly Say They Feel Unprepared for Higher Education

By *Emma Hall* | JUNE 12, 2023





Teaching in an Age of 'Militant Apathy'

Immersive education offers a way to reach students. But can it ever become the norm?

HIGHER EDUCATION

Everyone Is Cheating Their Way Through College ChatGPT has unraveled the entire academic project.



By James D. Walsh, Intelligencer staff writer

TECHNOLOGY

College Students Have Already Changed Forever

Members of the class of 2026 have had access to AI since they were freshmen. Almost all of them are using it to do their work.

By Ian Bogost

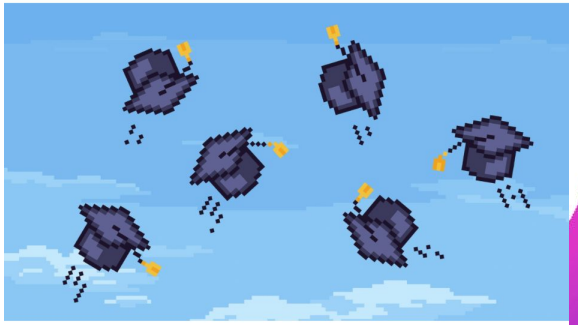


Illustration by Ben Kothe / The Atlantic

AUGUST 17, 2025 SHARE SAVE



The Great Faculty Disengagement

Faculty members aren't leaving in droves, but they are increasingly pulling away.

What Trump Means for College Budgets

Decreased federal funding and fewer international students could cause belt-tightening.



ILLUSTRATION BY THE CHRONICLE

WORKING BETTER: ADVICE

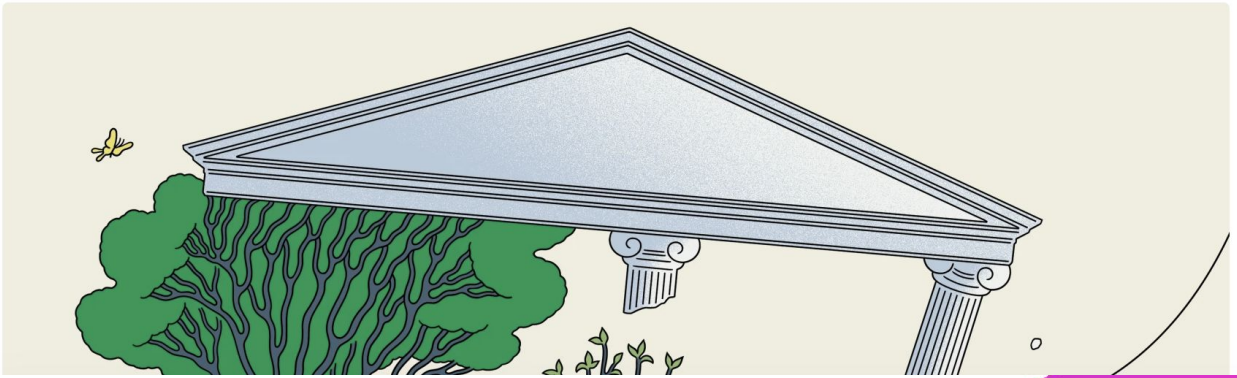
Faculty Motivation in a Uniquely Demotivating Time

It's unreasonable to expect professors to hit hurdle after hurdle and still stay in the race. Institutions are going to have to clear some obstacles.



By Kevin R. McClure

December 9, 2025





unsustainable conditions



WHAT THE EDUCATOR DOES IN TEACHING IS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE STUDENTS TO BECOME THEMSELVES.

Paulo Freire
We Make the Road by Walking

How can we do this in a sustainable way?

"As I teach, I project
the condition of my soul
onto my students, my subject,
and our way of being together."

Parker Palmer - The Courage to Teach

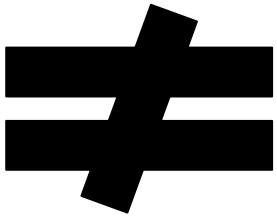
“Good teaching cannot
be reduced to technique;
good teaching comes from the identity
and integrity of the teacher.”



If we teach in ways that don't support our identity and integrity, we will be worse teachers.

Which means we won't be effective, even when we're trying to use student-centered practices.

Student-centered teaching



Teacher-irrelevant teaching

Let’s center teachers in our teaching, for our students and ourselves.

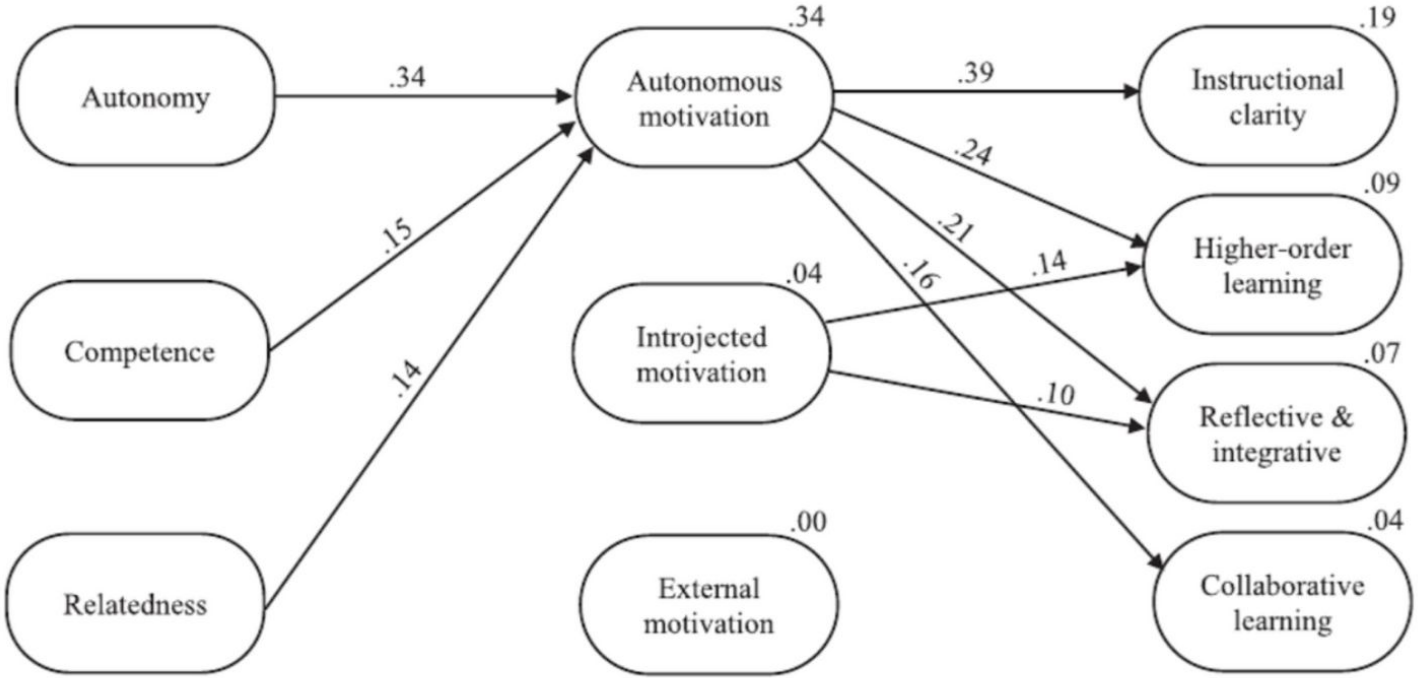
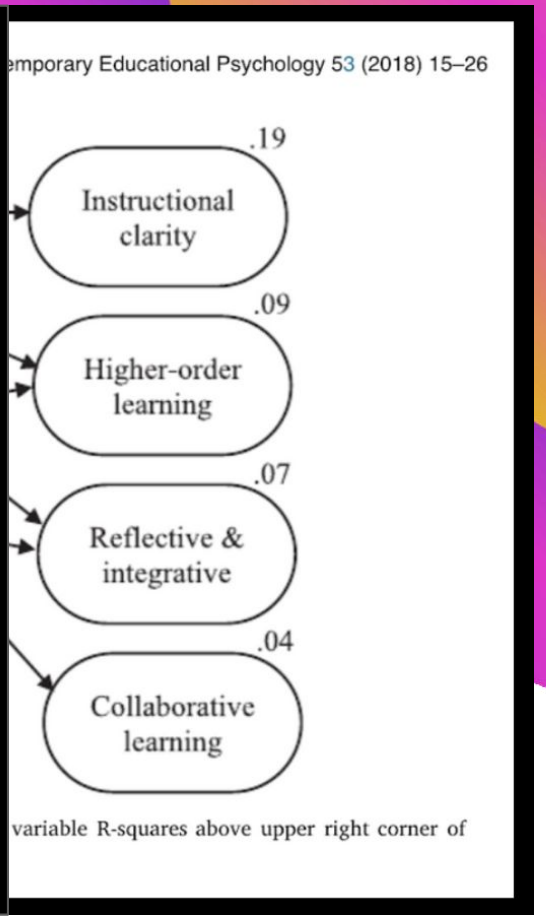
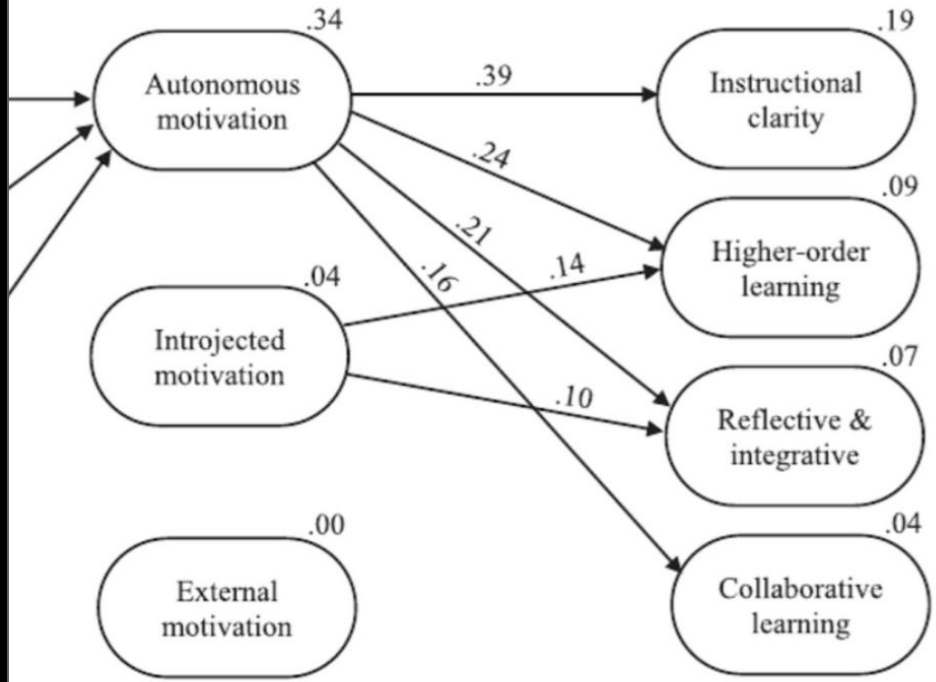


Fig. 2. Structural equation model for all faculty. Only significant paths at $p < .05$ shown, with parameters on top of lines. Latent variable R-squares above upper right corner of respective latent variables.


emporary Educational Psychology 53 (2018) 15–26
.19
Instructional clarity
.09
Higher-order learning
.07
Reflective & integrative
.04
Collaborative learning
variable R-squares above upper right corner of



aths at p < .05 shown, with parameters on top of lines. Latent variable R-squares above upper right corner of

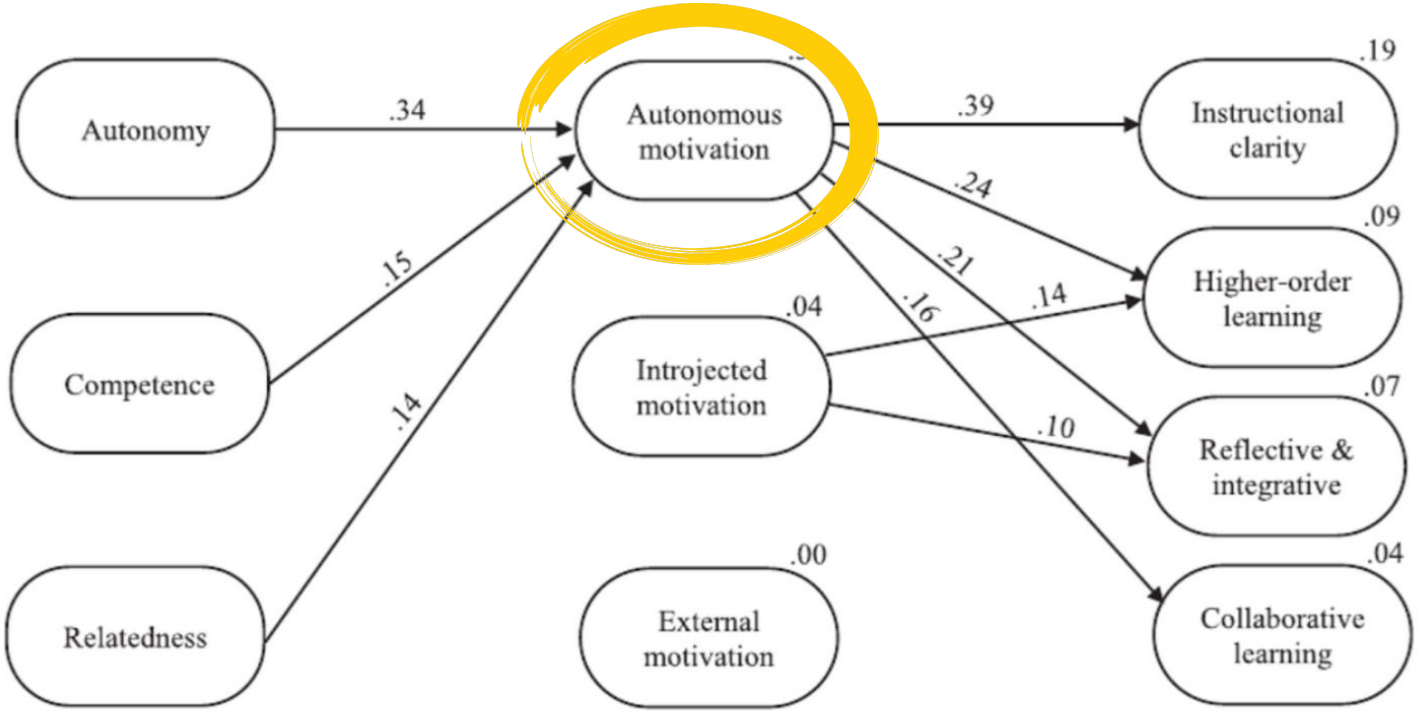


Fig. 2. Structural equation model for all faculty. Only significant paths at $p < .05$ shown, with parameters on top of lines. Latent variable R-squares above upper right corner of respective latent variables.

So what is YOUR autonomous motivation?

Why do you do what you do?

Independent Reflection

Imagine that at the end of the term, you receive an email from a student in one of your courses. They loved it.

- What do you hope that you and/or the course are praised for?
- What adjectives do they use to describe this learning experience?

We'll take 3 minutes in independent reflection.

Based on your reflection, do you have any clues as to what your *pedagogical values* are?

What values do you hope to promote in your teaching?

Authenticity	Generosity	Respect	Justice
Adventurousness	Gratitude	Responsibility	Integrity
Adaptability	Growth	Self-reliance	Love of learning
Balance	Honesty	Selflessness	Enthusiasm
Boldness	Hope	Simplicity	Persistence
Challenge	Humility	Sincerity	Support
Citizenship	Imagination	Service	Belonging
Commitment	Individuality	Empathy	Passion
Competence	Innovation	Empowerment	Sustainability
Compassion	Integrity	Equity	Liberation
Communication	Joy	Innovation	Trust
Creativity	Confidence	Open-Mindedness	Understanding
Critical-Thinking	Courage	Engagement	Spirituality
Ease	Determination	Perseverance	Playfulness
Fun	Reflection		

In one word, what is ONE of your educational or pedagogical values?

Powered by Poll Everywhere

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at **pollev.com/app**

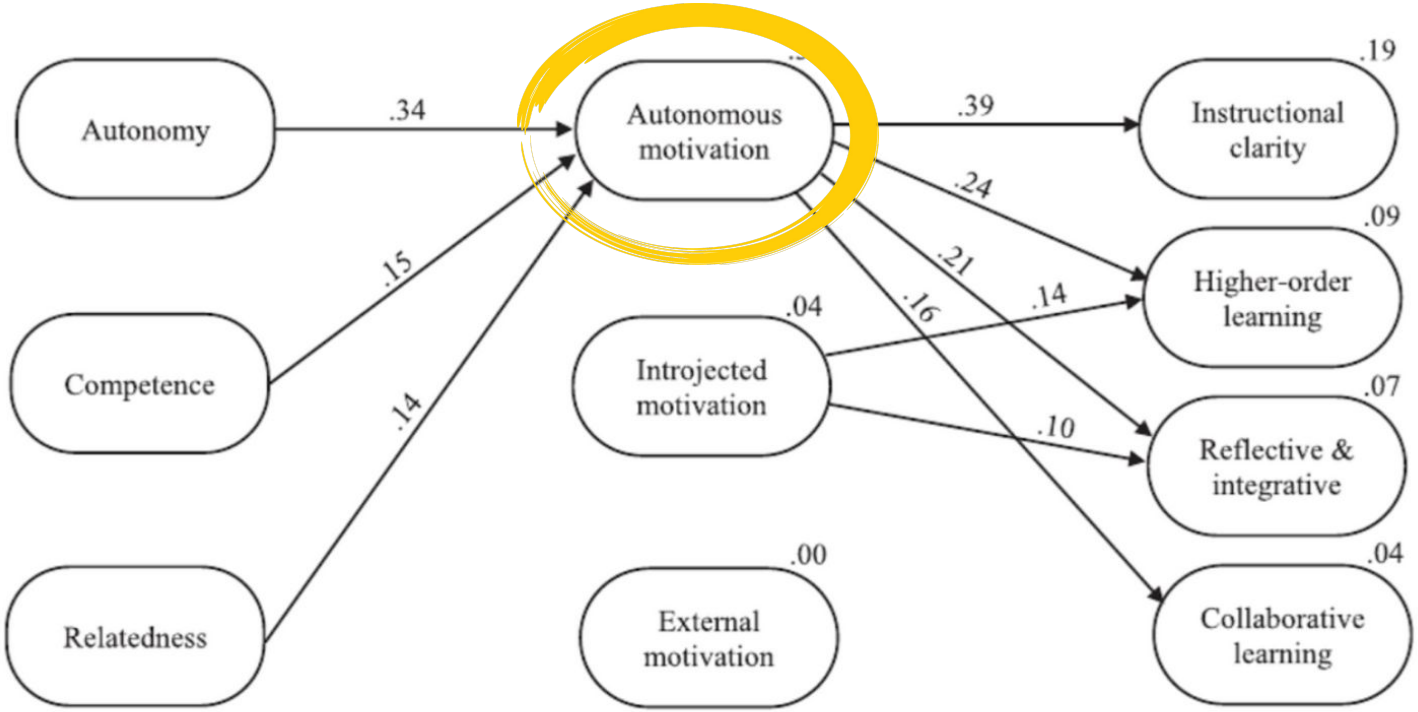
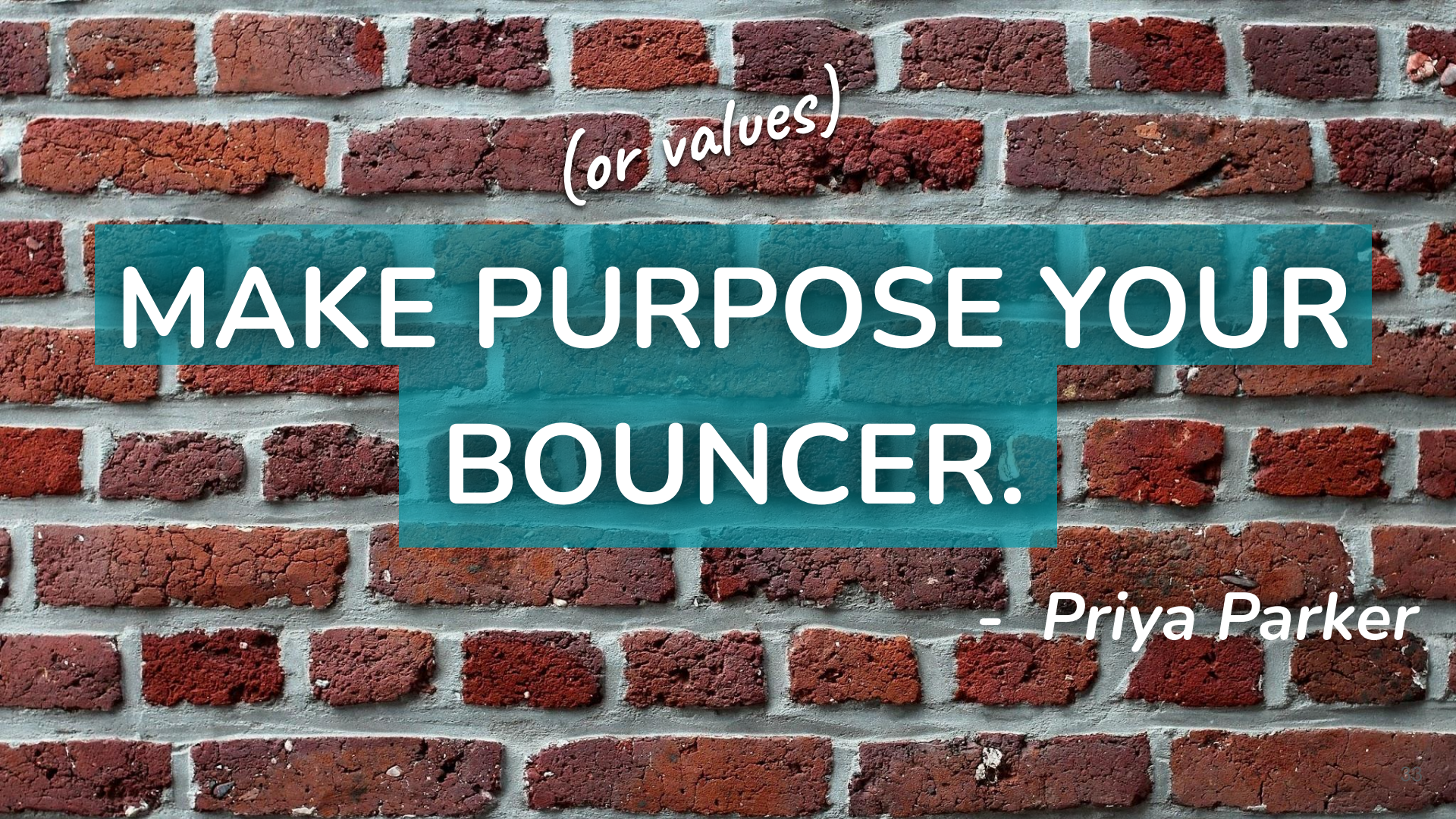
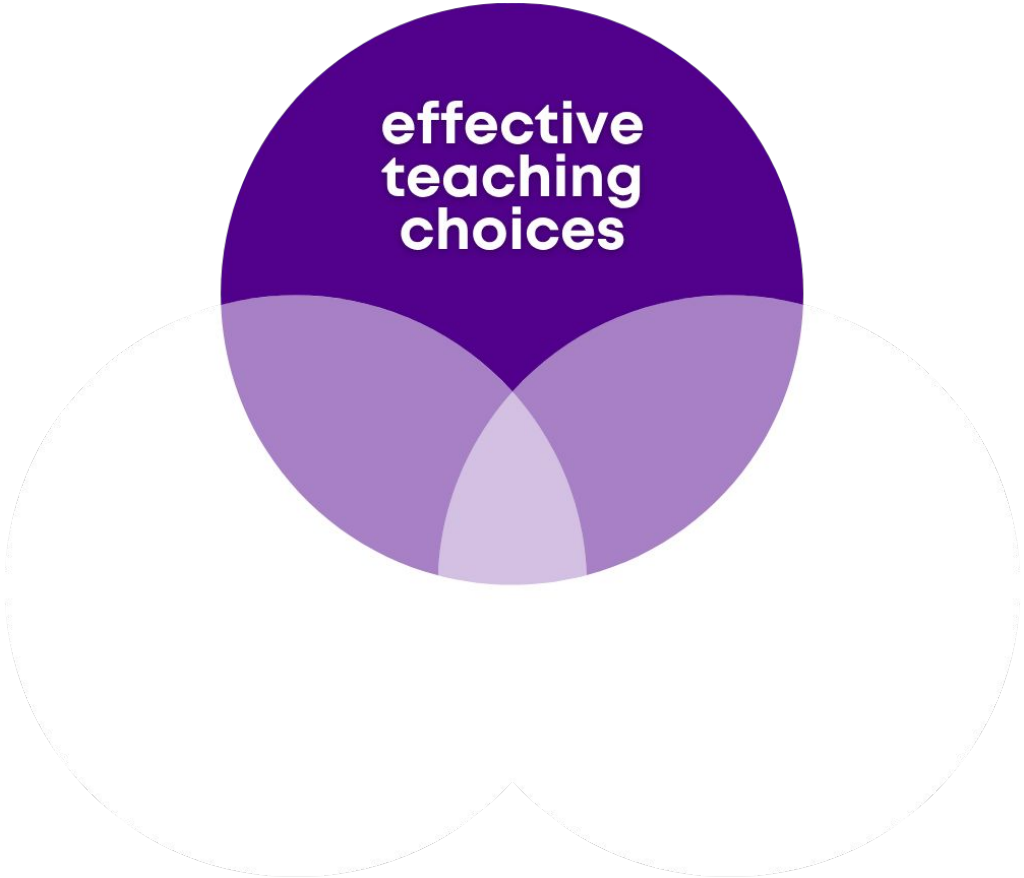
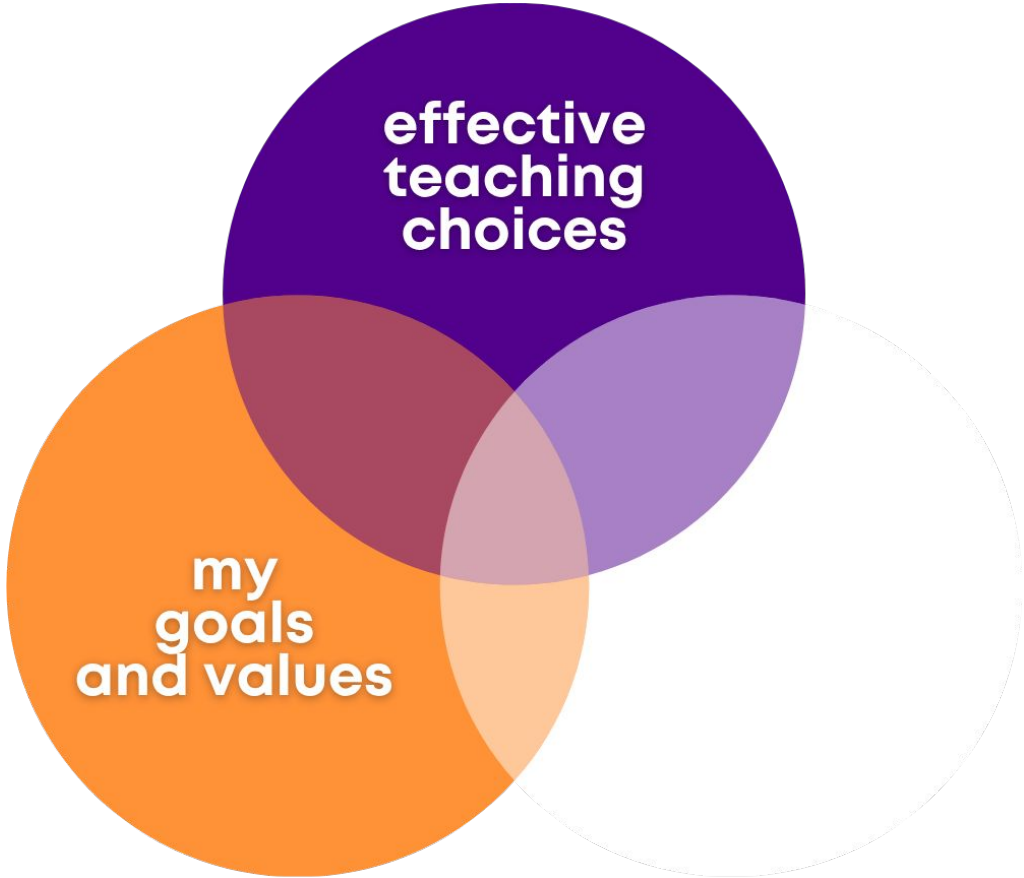


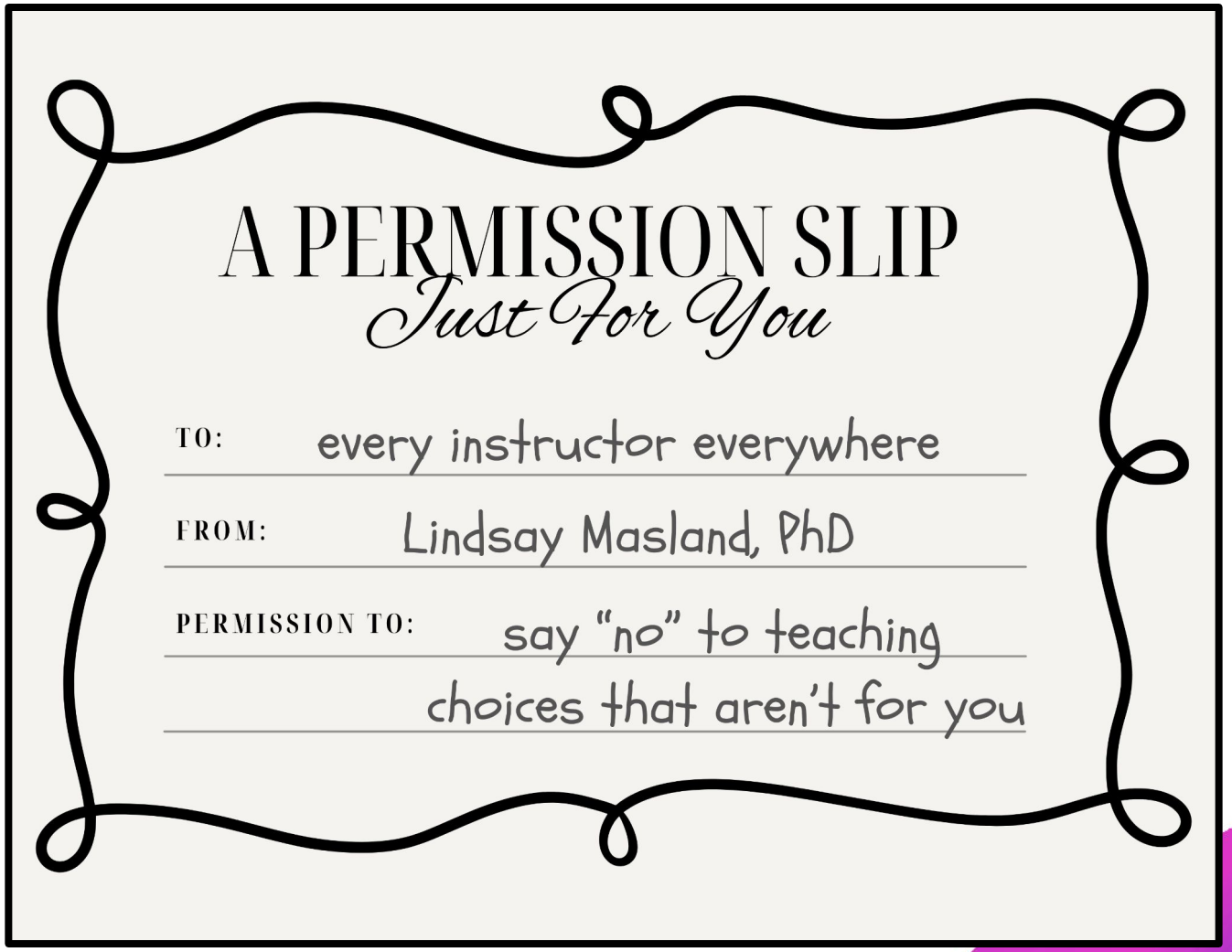
Fig. 2. Structural equation model for all faculty. Only significant paths at $p < .05$ shown, with parameters on top of lines. Latent variable R-squares above upper right corner of respective latent variables.

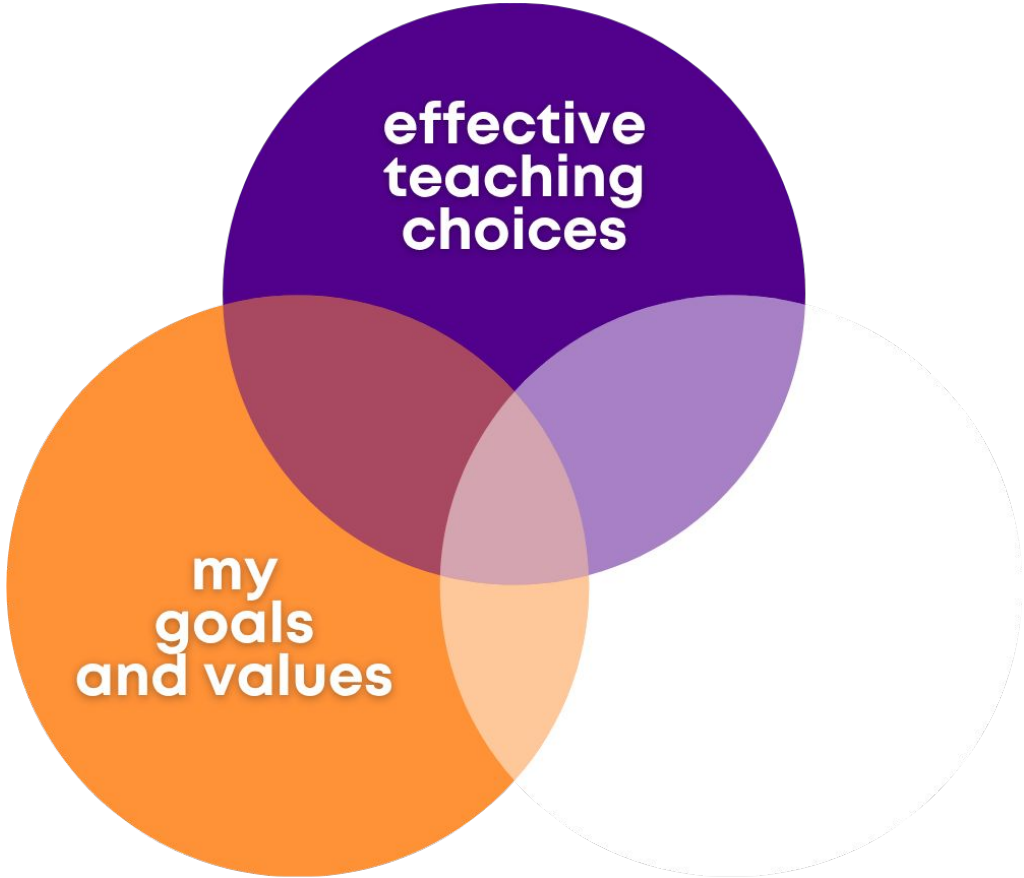

(or values)
MAKE PURPOSE YOUR BOUNCER.
- Priya Parker

Your values become the bouncer that determines what to include and what to exclude in your teaching.


effective
teaching
choices


effective
teaching
choices
my
goals
and values


A PERMISSION SLIP
Just For You
TO: every instructor everywhere
FROM: Lindsay Masland, PhD
PERMISSION TO: say "no" to teaching
choices that aren't for you


effective
teaching
choices
my
goals
and values

Chat Response

Given a value of

BELONGING,

What are some things an instructor *should do* in their teaching?

What are some things they definitely should *not* do?

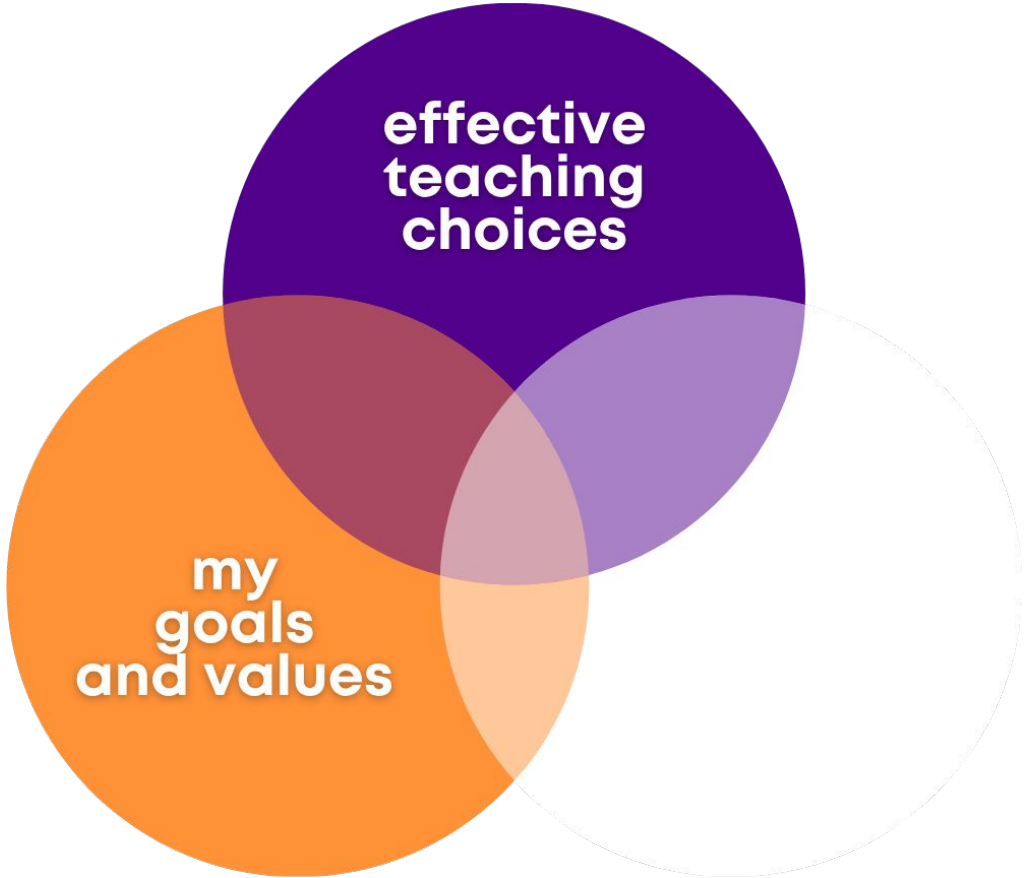
Chat Response

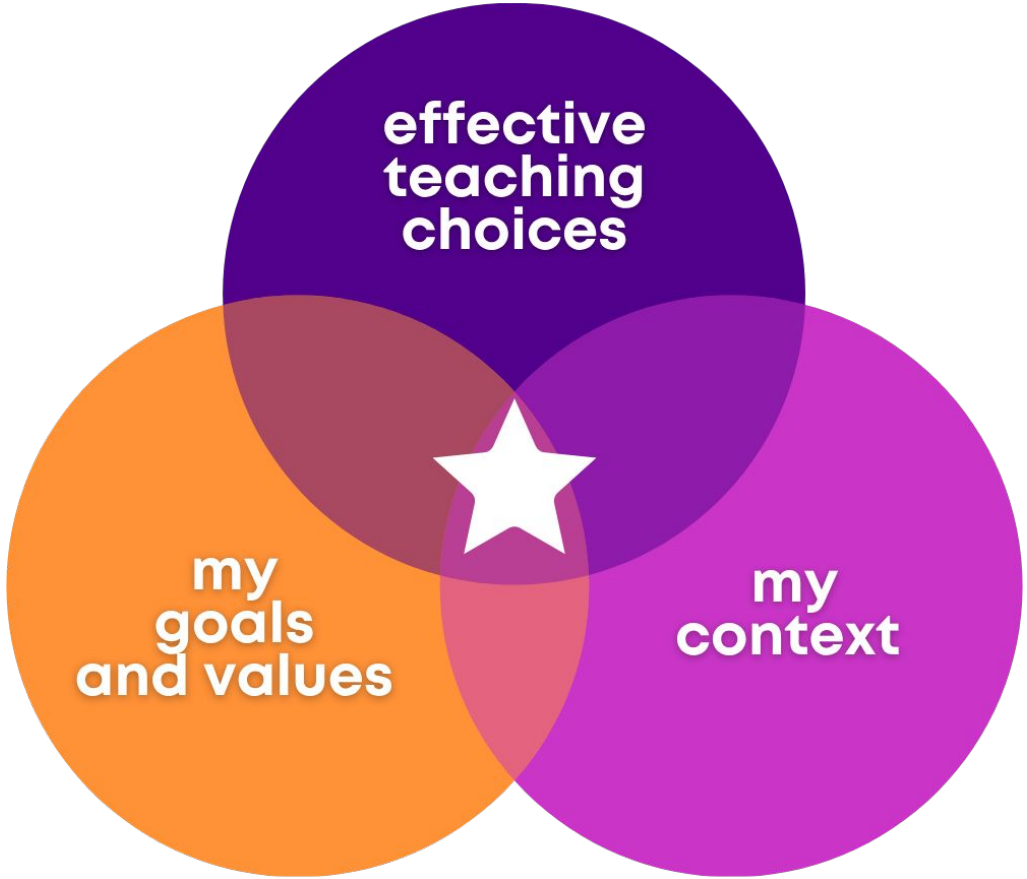
Given a value of

CREATIVITY,

What are some things an instructor *should do* in their teaching?

What are some things they definitely should *not* do?


effective
teaching
choices
my
goals
and values


effective
teaching
choices
my
goals
and values
my
context

effective teaching choices

my goals and values

my context

affordances



constraints



What is your context?

Institutional Realities

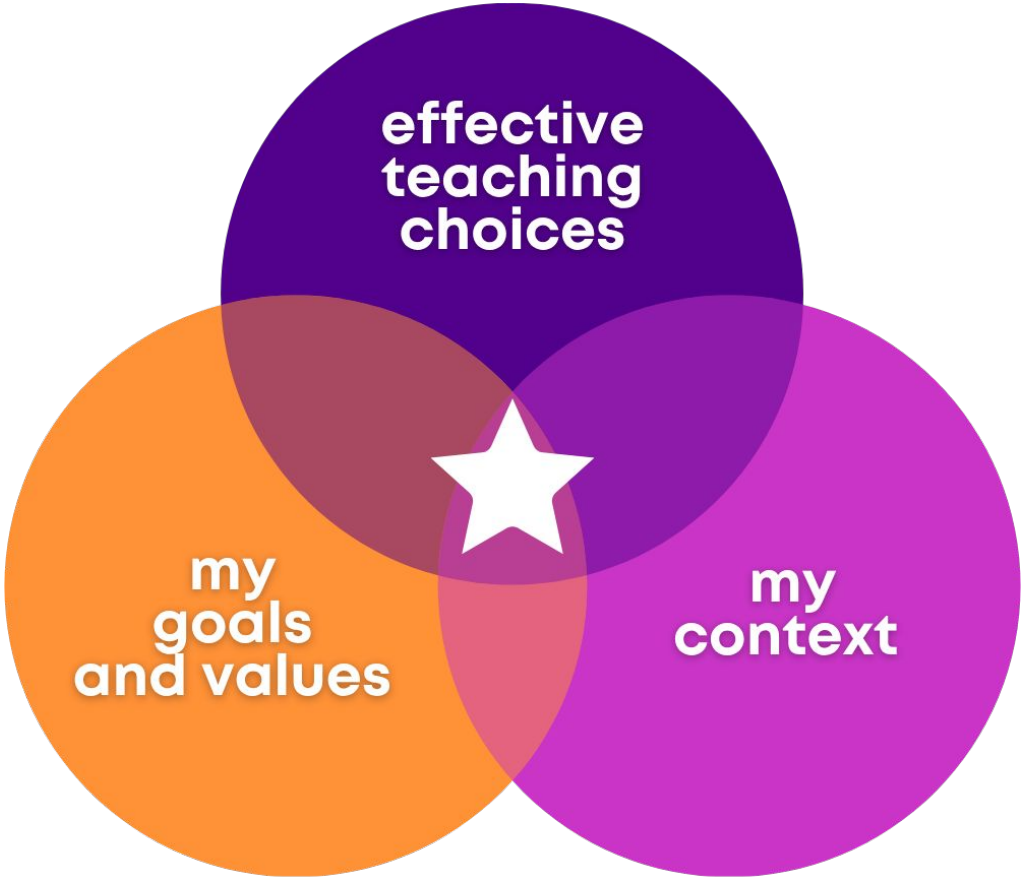
- field/domain
- college expectations
- dept expectations
- accreditation requirements
- modality of course
- size of course
- student expectations
- student characteristics

Personal Realities

- experience
- confidence
- resources
- network/support/ mentors
- family needs
- health and wellness needs
- living location
- other commitments

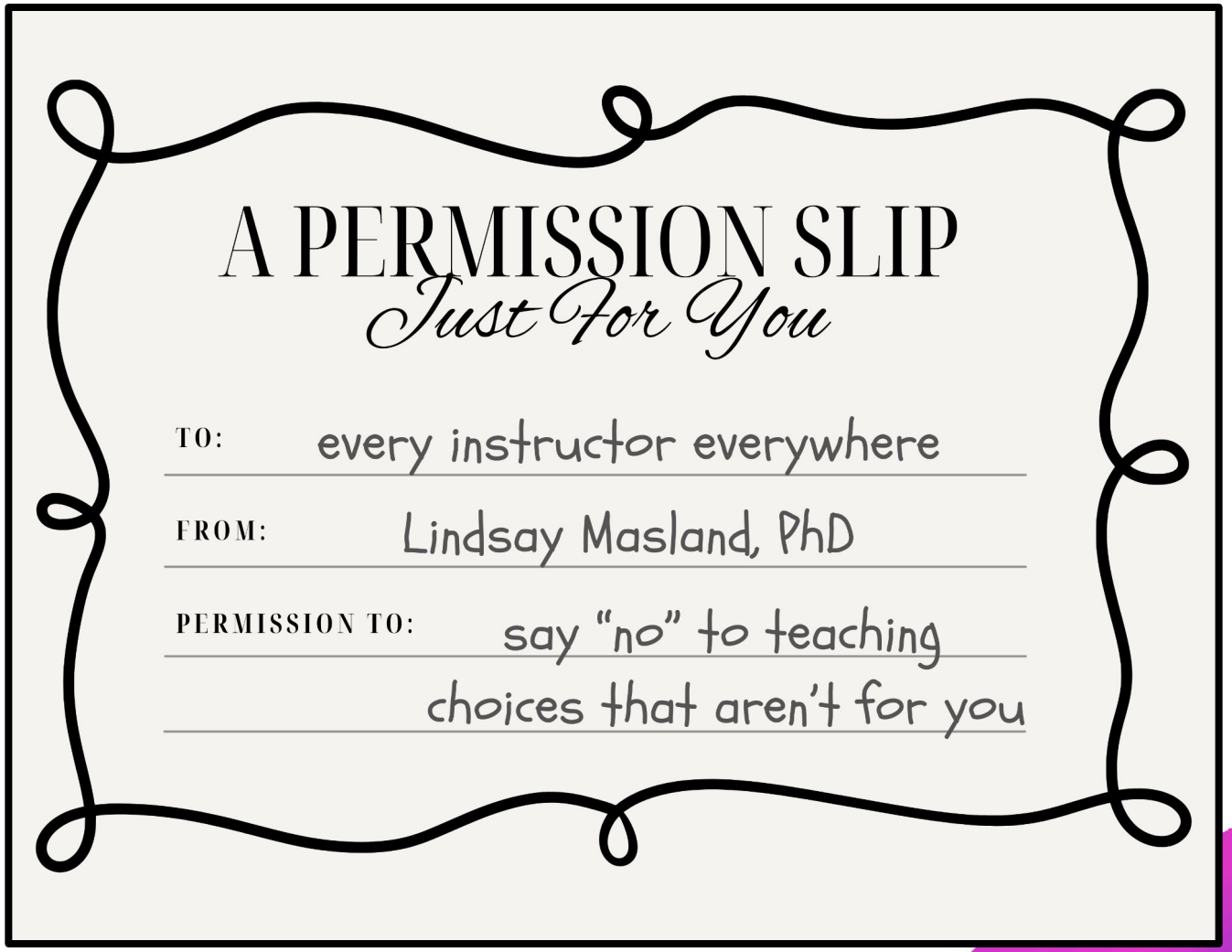
Sociodemographic Realities

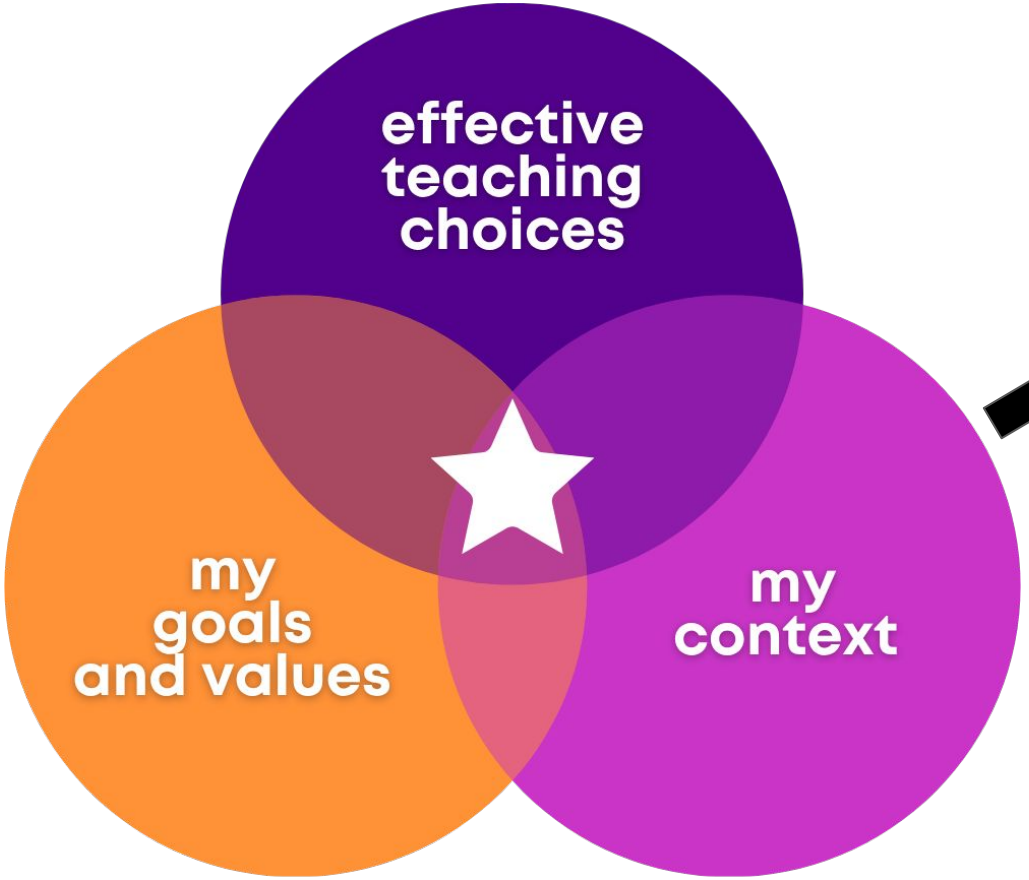
- gender
- race
- ethnicity
- language
- religion
- ability/disability
- class
- nationality
- sexuality

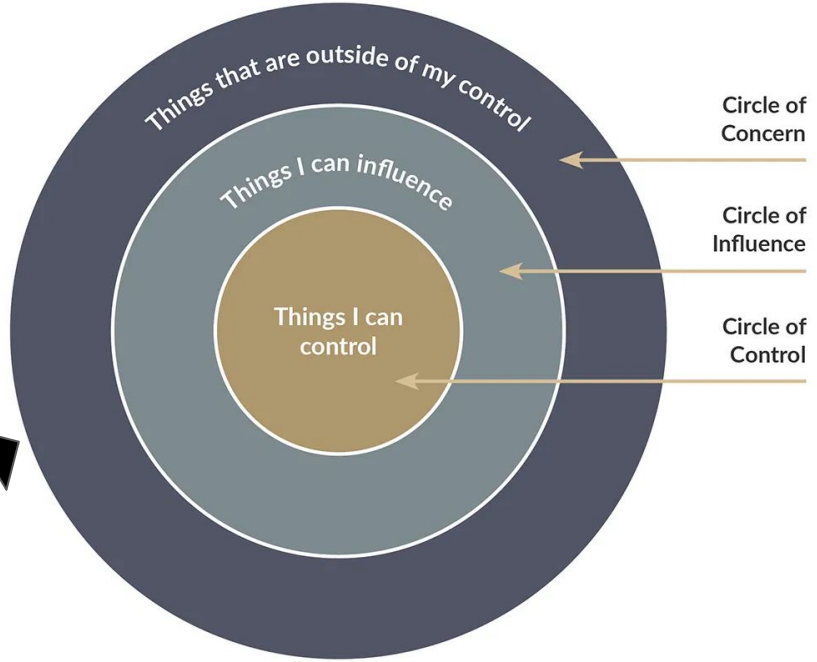


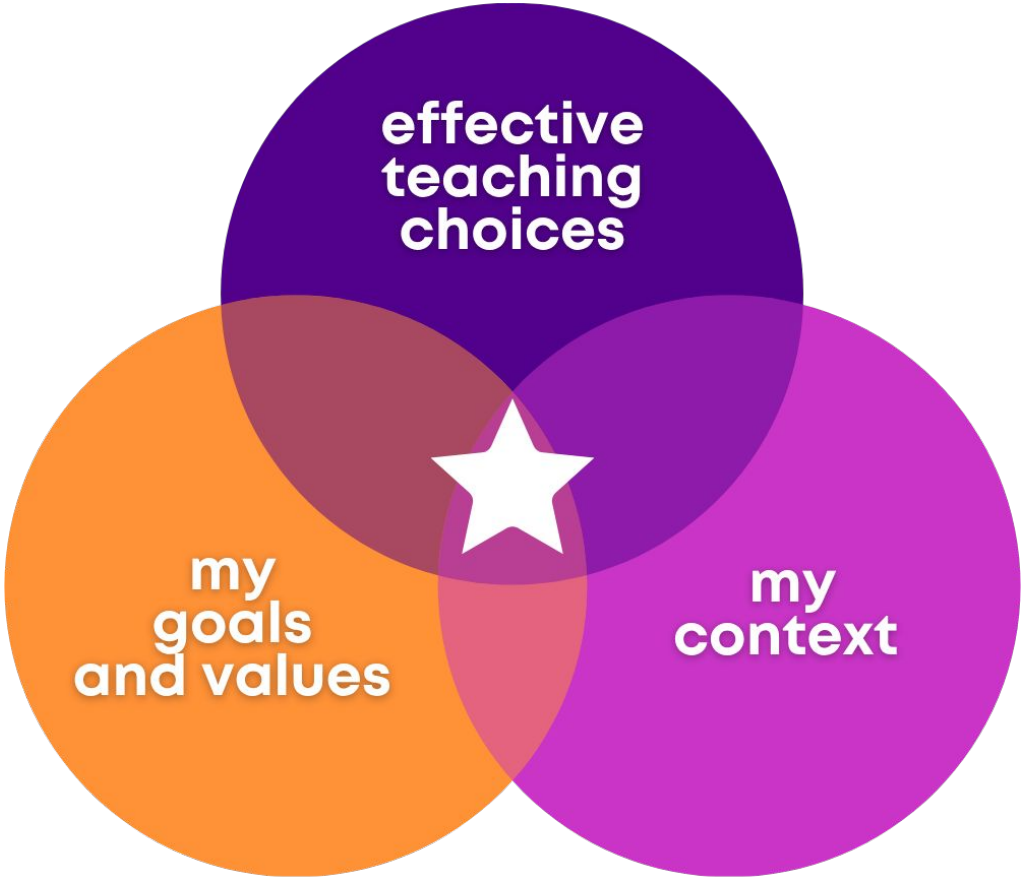
So, the task isn't simply to align your teaching choices to your teaching values.

It's to align your choices to your values ***as much as your context will allow.***


A PERMISSION SLIP
Just For You
TO: every instructor everywhere
FROM: Lindsay Masland, PhD
PERMISSION TO: say "no" to teaching
choices that aren't for you


effective teaching choices
my goals and values
my context


Things that are outside of my control
Things I can influence
Things I can control
Circle of Concern
Circle of Influence
Circle of Control



In unsustainable conditions, good enough is good enough.

Chat Response

Returning to the value of

CREATIVITY,

Are there any choices that become less sensible if you are teaching a 50-person course?

If you're a part-time faculty member on a yearly contract?

Your context and values are the boundaries within which your student-centered teaching should operate.

"Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously."

-Prentis Hemphill

If my values are ABC and my context is XYZ, what does effective, sustainable teaching look like *for me*?







Invitation for After the Session

Locate a teaching artifact of your own (syllabus, teaching philosophy, assignment instructions, etc.) Using the highlighter/annotation tools, do any of the following:

- **Identify anything that <u>does</u> align to your intended values**
- **Identify anything that <u>does not</u> align to your values**
- **Identify values you may not have realized you hold**
- **Use different colors for different values**
- **Reflect on whether your current teaching choices are wise, given your context**

But you’re suggesting individual solutions to a systemic problem . . .

Crash Course on Systemic Solutions

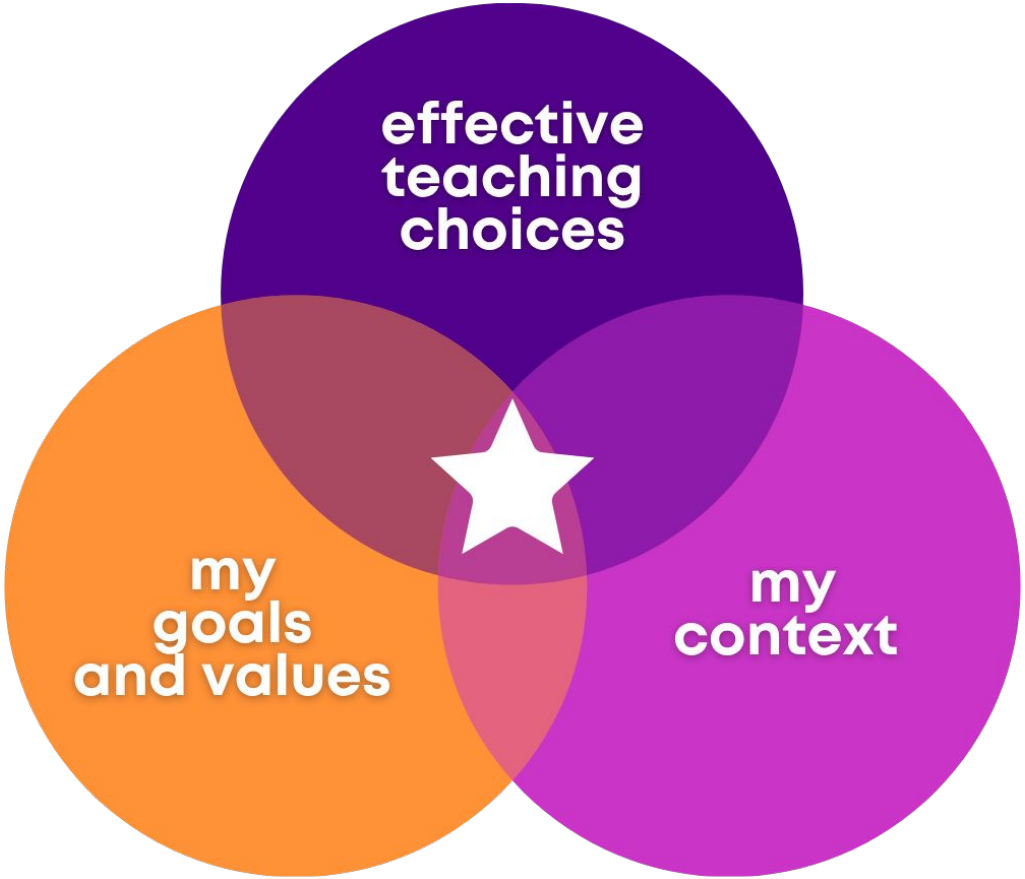
pay faculty
for their labor

compensate faculty
using the *currency*
of the realm

create accurate
definitions of
faculty excellence
(and the policies to match!)

pay close attention
to workload

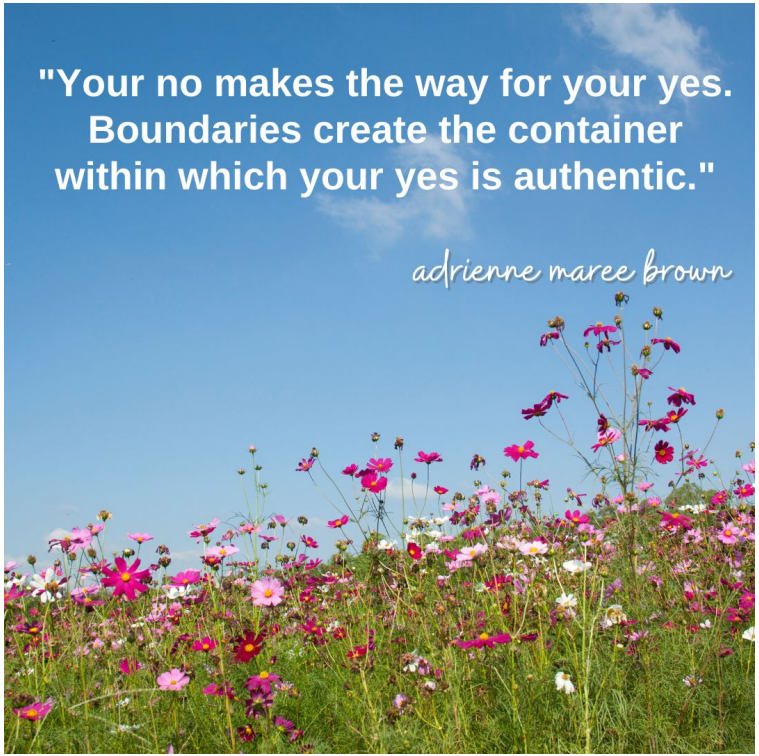
This IS a systemic problem, but that doesn't mean we should wait for the system to clean up its act....



We can still make sure we aren't making our own lives harder.

Good enough is good enough.

Effective teaching can not mean saying yes to everything






LIVE MUSIC
THURSDAYS

WHAT THE EDUCATOR DOES IN TEACHING IS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE STUDENTS TO BECOME THEMSELVES.

Paulo Freire

We Make the Road by Walking

But we deserve to become ourselves, too!

Share your thoughts with me now or

via email: maslandlc@appstate.edu