

Contexts for agency: A framework for managing educational development work

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Abstract

Often working in multiple roles and operating at multiple scales, educational developers deal with layered tensions and a complex context that can be difficult for an individual or team to reconcile. In May 2020, the authors participated in a cross-institutional scholarly project, the Pandemic Educational Development Research Collaborative (PEDRC), designed to explore the impact of multiple crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic and our collective civil and political unrest) and associated large-scale instructional changes on educational developers and their work. The Contexts for Agency framework reflects the project's emergent theme that the circumstances in which we act have considerable influence on our decision-making. Specifically, the framework identifies *identity*, *institution*, and *impact* as critical contexts for the decisions educational developers make. The authors highlight multiple benefits to analyzing what we know—and what we don't know—about our respective contexts and offer suggestions for applying the framework using a guide for structured reflection.

Keywords: reflection, agency, crisis, sensemaking

The Contexts for Agency framework focuses attention on *identity, institution, and impact* as critical contexts for the decisions educational developers make. Beginning with a description of higher education's most recent and pressing challenges, this article situates the Contexts for Agency framework in the relevant literature, documents the phenomenological methodology that led to its development, and elaborates each element of the framework. The authors conclude with recommendations for applying the framework, providing the Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide (see Appendix) to help clarify and prioritize the many decisions educational developers must make.

This Is Not a Drill

*[Our disconcerting] realities involve social inequity, mistrust of the federal government, a questioning of the country's collective commitment to American ideals, the role of education in perpetuating inequity, the future of higher education, and the seemingly narrow reach of my own locus of control. These reflections have had an impact on my professional motivation and clarity of thought.**

(Respondent A, Log 3, May 2020)

Of course, [senior administrators] are right to set the priorities they have, and it is our department's responsibility to be of use and support the faculty at this time. No one is wrong, but it remains stressful, and I am struggling to accomplish all that I must.

(Respondent A, Log 4, June 2020)

We have self-assessed and reflected, as a team, on what has been working well and what we can improve upon to support the faculty and each other. We've done our best to periodically assess whether or not the structures we established in early- and mid-March remain beneficial and manageable.

(Respondent A, Log 8, July 2020)

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A variety of crises converged in 2020—particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and the police killing of George Floyd—illuminating what Bass (2020) calls “wicked problems” in higher education and their relationship to the goals of a more just society. Centers for teaching and learning (CTLs) and individual educational developers responded rapidly to calls for support during the swift transition to virtual learning in the spring of 2020 and the nationwide protests against police brutality throughout the following summer. The pace of change was and continues to be daunting, and educational developers are still working to meet the overlapping needs of numerous stakeholders.

Part of what has made higher education’s recent problems particularly wicked is that each began with a seemingly contained challenge yet quickly revealed systemic constellations of problems. Historically, wicked problems may have been things that educational developers felt comfortable acknowledging yet not necessarily acting upon, choosing instead to focus on things they can control. With the COVID-19 pandemic, wicked problems became urgent, mission-critical crises. In response, educational developers have been working (now more than ever) in multiple roles and at multiple scales, dealing with layered tensions and a complex context that can be difficult for an individual or team of educational developers to reconcile.

Since educational developers experienced relative success in handling these crises, institutional expectations for nearly immediate programming and support solutions to new crises will likely be the *new normal*. This new normal is disconcerting, considering that the most recent crises will certainly not be our last, as evident in the ways in which institutions have already turned to CTLs for guiding, if not leading, campus efforts related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist work. The increasingly complex challenges in higher education

warrant a revisiting of the frameworks that have historically informed decision-making for education developers.

This article strives to alleviate the inherent tensions of complex challenges by introducing a conceptual framework to help those working in CTLs clarify and prioritize the many decisions they must make. Specifically, this framework identifies *identity*, *institution*, and *impact* as critical Contexts for Agency. By considering our specific roles, our place within an organization, and the impact of our decisions, educational developers can manage the demands of complex and overwhelming grand challenges and achieve greater clarity of priority and purpose for our continuing work.

Background and Literature

Educational developers often serve as thought leaders, change agents, and advocates at their institutions as they simultaneously work to fulfill the teaching and learning mission of their centers. Although we have been called the “chameleons on a tartan rug” (Kensington-Miller et al., 2015) to describe our fundamental ability to change and adapt as we encourage others to do the same, perhaps there is not yet enough understanding of our work to describe the complex roles, responsibilities, and positions of educational developers (Grupp & Little, 2019). Indeed, in their well-known evaluation of the field and growth of educational development, Beach et al. (2016) close by asking *how we lead by acting as levers of change*. Little and Green (2012) developed a structural framework considering ways in which the ability to span boundaries between faculty and administrators could help educational developers navigate institutional contexts and pressures. Brinthaup et al. (2019) presented a framework that describes how CTLs can assess impact, value, and opportunities with potential partnerships. But as educational developers promote and lead change and consider opportunities and collaborations, we recognize that these

roles can sometimes be uncomfortable (Fyffe, 2018) and exhausting (Kolomitro et al., 2020). Particularly as we take on wicked, mission-critical problems in what can only be described as challenging and even unheard-of circumstances, we acknowledge that our roles in responding to and leading change will remain a constant part of our work. Informed by these previous studies, the Contexts for Agency framework helps educational developers make sense of the structural opportunities and constraints while acknowledging the emotional demands of leading change.

Purpose and Origin of the Framework

Invoking Dr. Martin Luther's King Jr.'s "fierce urgency of now," Randall Bass's pivotal 2020 essay "What's the Problem Now?" calls upon educational developers to grapple with not only the urgent problems of the learning ecosystem "but also the particular kinds of applied contexts in which they must be explored" (p. 9). The idea of educational development being stressful is hardly a new concept, but the recent disruptions to higher education have prompted an extraordinary spike in the speed and scale of our ongoing effort to support faculty and, more broadly, teaching and learning. The toll of this productivity was initially compounded by the strain of balancing remote work environments, states of civil and political unrest, shifting personal obligations, and pandemic health concerns. The confluence of these stressors with the growing sense, articulated by Bass, that the moral duty of educational developers is to leverage their power to cultivate a more just society prompted the development of the Contexts for Agency sensemaking framework. The framework acknowledges the stress of recognizing the urgency of the grand challenges before us and empowers us to recognize the opportunities of our respective complex contexts and translate them into something strategic and actionable.

Research Process

The Context for Agency framework emerged from a cross-institutional scholarly project, the Pandemic Educational Development Research Collaborative (PEDRC), which launched in May 2020 to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational developers and their work. The research coordinators, Lindsay Wheeler of the University of Virginia and Eric Kaldor of Brown University, developed a novel research methodology inspired by principles of institutional ethnography, which combines observations, reflection, and dialogue to develop practical understanding of how lived experiences are shaped by and can shape the social organization of everyday life (Smith, 1992). The selection of participants was guided by the need to represent a range of institutions in terms of geographic location, size, public vs. private funding, and student populations served. At the same time, there was the need for a level of preexisting trust among participants to engage in a novel methodology that would require very personal reflection and conversations during an incredibly stressful time. The research coordinators first identified key types of institutions and then identified participants from their professional networks to participate. Given the incredible demands on CTLs during the early months of the pandemic, the research coordinators did not recruit educational developers in *centers of one*. Ultimately, 18 educational developers from a range of 4-year institutions became researcher-participants in this IRB-approved study designed to document their work and that of their centers.

Data collection began with researcher-participants completing a series of weekly logs that included prompts for observations and reflections. Every 4–5 weeks, researcher-participants analyzed their own logs for key themes and then met with a partner to develop a coding memo that used a structured questionnaire to identify commonalities and differences as well as reflections on the process. The research coordinators then used NVivo (Version 12) to analyze the

coding memos and reported major themes and a summary of all codes to the entire collaborative. During virtual research meetings, researcher-participants discussed and worked through consensus to describe emergent findings and to join dissemination teams on individual themes. Researcher-participants then had the option to submit their individual logs to dissemination teams for more extensive analysis. To identify central themes across the group's educational development work, members of the collaborative engaged in cycles of reflection, analysis, and meaning-making individually, in pairs, as a large group, and in writing teams (Little et al., 2021).

Given the social network used for recruitment and small-N comparison approach of the project, our analysis focuses on developing phenomenological understanding of the work of educational developers and their centers during the pandemic. As a result, the lessons learned from the project are not generalizations or exhaustive descriptions to cover all educational developers or all situations. Instead, we focus on proposing practical insights rooted in our standpoint (Smith, 1992), our actual lived experiences, that should inspire colleagues in the field to reflect about their own positionality and engage with us on significant similarities and differences. The Contexts for Agency framework described in this article reflects two of the project's earliest themes: (1) identities, institutions, and the impact of actions routinely shaped how researcher-participants coped and made decisions under the pressures of the pandemic, and (2) there were multiple benefits to reflecting on these three contexts.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) remind us that frameworks provide practitioners with "a general mode of analysis of practical events. . . . and [a guide for] rational decision making" (p. 7). Accordingly, the Contexts for Agency framework is intended to guide the questions we ask to help clarify our roles as individuals within institutions, consider the impact of our decisions, manage expectations, and establish priorities for the educational development work to be done.

Elements of the Contexts for Agency Framework

The Contexts for Agency framework builds upon the understanding of *agency* established in Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, whereby *agency* refers to our individual capacity to execute our own actions. Notably, this capacity is influenced by the social environments in which we function.

Recognizing that how we act is influenced by several "interactive determinants" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175), our analysis of researcher-participants' logs revealed three distinct contexts that participants used to guide their decision-making, each of which is defined below:

- *Identity* refers to the specific personal or professional role in which we are motivated to act. The numerous roles we all inhabit are varied and context specific (e.g., *instructor, director, caregiver, citizen*). Consideration of this context prompts questions such as *What can I realistically achieve in my professional role? What perspectives might I be missing as I think about X?*
- *Institution* refers to the specific organizational context in which we are operating. Institutional contexts include our respective CTLs, colleges/universities, and broader communities. Consideration of this context prompts questions such as *Are there laws or university policies that guide our response to X? Are there other departments on campus with whom we need to partner to achieve Y?*
- *Impact* refers to the consequences of the decisions we make. This context includes considerations of who is affected and how, and it prompts questions such as *Will this program actually help faculty achieve what they are trying to achieve? Are we addressing a symptom of distress or the actual cause of distress?*

These three themes were identified through an inductive process that began with reflective journaling of educational developers from a variety of contexts. The three quotations with which we begin this

article, all written by the same respondent, provide a sample of the observations that thread through the journal logs of the educational developers who participated in this study. The participants pondered major events in the context of their own identities, including “professional motivation and clarity of thought.” They navigated the stress and the institutional implications of meeting priorities set by institutional administrators. They wrestled with questions of impact, both on faculty and themselves, and how those measures might shift over time.

While the contexts of identity, institution, and impact are distinct, they are deeply interconnected. The contexts are subject to change, and they bear constant influence on our individual agency. This influence warrants reflection, and the proposed framework offers a grounding structure for mapping what we know—and don’t know—to help educational developers prioritize and make decisions.

Meeting Bass’s (2020) challenge of “recognizing learning and education as a wicked problem, rather than a tame or solvable one” (p. 6) will require educational developers to be intentional in our efforts to recognize and leverage the complex contexts of our agency. We propose the Contexts for Agency as a grounding framework that can help educational developers to better understand the changing ecosystem of higher education and the meaningful actions practitioners can take to reshape it.

Identity as a Context for Agency

Our personal and professional identities are the primary context for our agency. They are multifaceted and worthy of analysis to ensure that we remain aware of the perspectives we bring to our work. The frames of reference we use to help make decisions are grounded in our specific roles (e.g., coordinator, director) and virtually all facets of our biological and social identity (e.g., age, race, gender, orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, years of experience in professional role).

Identity as a context for agency appeared frequently in the journal logs of the participants. “[My] privilege is irrefutable,” wrote one. “Yes, of course I work hard, but lots of people work hard and don’t have the opportunities or guidance that came with the circumstances into which I happened to be born” (Respondent A, Log 4, June 2020). Perhaps particularly in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, it became impossible not to consider the role of identity in the amount of control educational developers had over their professional and personal lives. Educational developers also found that their professional roles had an impact on their daily work. “The work of my own center, instead of the needs of our faculty (in a direct way), seems to be taking over my priorities this week,” reflected a participant, whose leadership role in a CTL required attention to enabling others to provide faculty support (Respondent B, Log 6, July 2020). It was also commonplace for journal logs to reflect the merging of individuals’ personal considerations, particularly the “pink collar” character of much educational development work (Bernhagen & Gravett, 2017).

While the world is falling apart around us, while our young children are in and out of daycares that can’t ensure their (and thus our) safety, while the hours grow longer and longer and the to do list becomes ever more unmanageable, we are also tasked with remaining the voice of calm in all of the chaos. It’s exhausting, and it’s surely not unrelated to the fact that so many of us are female—not to mention the way that race, class, and sexuality add to this. (Respondent C, Log 9, August 2020)

Identity as a context for agency is anything but static, and it is informed by the evolving, overlapping facets of who we are and our lived experience. Even our cognizance of the ways in which we are multifaceted is part of this context. Many of our decisions warrant the application of unique combinations of perspectives and call for us to recognize the reach or limit of our own locus of control. Educational developers can consider identity as a context for agency by asking:

- *Can I contribute to a solution here? If not, am I in a position to advocate for collaboration?*
- *Can I (individually)/we (as collaborators) realistically accomplish what's being proposed?*
- *Is this a problem that introduces emotional/psychological stress for me?*
- *What perspectives do I need to hear to make a fair decision? Are all the voices that should be represented being heard?*

Institution as a Context for Agency

When considering institution as a context for agency, it may help to imagine concentric circles, each representing one's role, CTL, division, college/university, or university system. Each circle has its own noteworthy attributes (e.g., reputation, student demographics, campus climate, budget, union presence, institution size and Carnegie classification, geographic location), distinct stakeholders, and specific needs.

The realities of our institutional context affect our individual agency and the impact we may have, and educational developers must recognize the overlapping, sometimes competing priorities of stakeholders within our institutions. As one participant reflected:

I don't know what kind of systemic change can make the difference people are saying they need. This makes me wonder why we are even bothering in any of our work. Despite my institution's reputation for supporting social justice and social change, are we really just reproducing the fundamental economic and political structures of inequality? (Respondent D, Log 2, May 2020)

We must also consider the formal and informal structures (e.g., policy and culture, respectively) that will accelerate or impede our work. For example, institutional culture has been dramatically affected by the collective fatigue of faculty, staff, and students dealing with the recent years' challenges. As one participant responded:

There is so much “can 2020 just stop already” sentiment and frankly, I get it! It has also started to feel like so much to juggle as a center and how we support faculty and when we take a stand with social justice issues and so much more. I am not sure where to focus! (Respondent B, Log 4, June 2020)

Considering the institutional context for agency allows us to see how our work fits into the broader mission and scope of the institution. It also allows us to frame our responses to recent challenges as new opportunities to earn institutional recognition, forge new interdepartmental collaborations, or strengthen relationships with formerly reluctant partners to ensure the survival of our institutions and the success of our students. For example, the recent necessity of immediate action empowered educational developers to enact a brand of innovation and resourcefulness that might have taken years of effort to achieve in some institutions. As one participant wrote, “I feel proud of my unit and invigorated by some cross-institutional interactions” (Respondent C, Log 10, October 2020).

As we contribute to our institutions’ responses to ongoing challenges, it is important to maintain a sense of interconnectedness and appreciate the expectations and needs of those with whom we partner, particularly in our own administrative reporting lines. While meeting our campuses’ emergent teaching and learning needs, we must balance “playing reactive, supportive roles” and “assuming proactive, leadership responsibilities” (Blumberg, 2010, p. 71). Educational developers can consider institution as a context for agency by asking:

- *How important is this decision to the students, faculty, and institution we serve?*
- *Are there other strategic collaborators on campus? Who are the stakeholders? What are the politics involved?*
- *What unique resources and expertise do I or my unit bring to the initiative?*
- *How does this work match our unit’s goals? Our institutional mission? Our strategic plan?*

Impact as a Context for Agency

Impact as a context for agency examines the effect or influence we have, and it builds on both identity and institution in that it recognizes how educational developers' efforts might best meet the complex needs of various stakeholders. As we consider the anticipated and unanticipated consequences of our decisions, educational developers need to see "interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains" (Senge, 2006, p. 75) in our respective institutions. During the height of the pandemic, one educational developer found that "this work around promoting asynchronous strategies was highly entrepreneurial—it was not assigned, I saw a need and acted" (Respondent D, Log 1, May 2020). Both the identity and the institution created a space in which an educational developer could make professional choices based upon considerations of impact.

The various forms of educational development work have corresponding scales and timelines of impact. Consider how individual consultations are tailored to specific requests. They may directly affect individual faculty members, indirectly affect students, and yield evidence of impact in a relatively short amount of time. In contrast, educational development programs are designed with a shared priority in mind, having a broader scale of influence yet less direct, immediate evidence of impact. Appreciating as much is an important aspect of this context for agency. As one educational developer wrote, "This is one of the reasons why I love this field—our impact is SO wide. But it's also a lot of pressure in moments like this one" (Respondent C, Log 8, July 2020).

The actions we take to address a specific challenge ultimately affect other priorities. This affirms another key aspect of impact as a context for agency. Our individual, intersectional identities and our institutional contexts prompt complex questions about how and where to gauge the impact we have. At the individual level, what constitutes a necessary support for one group of stakeholders may impose a prolonged, unsustainable strain on another. At the department level, what

constitutes a great success for one unit may impose a considerable toll on another. A new initiative might be developed and deployed simultaneously with little opportunity for assessment and improvement—the priority of immediate impact outweighing consistent and efficient impact. As one educational developer wrote:

And it's overwhelming to have to build the plane as we fly. We are having to make modifications to the process as we go, which we then have to retrofit for facilitators who are starting their cohorts before we even finish the first pilot. (Respondent E, Log 3, June 2020)

As the pandemic and recent civil unrest continue to affect higher education, educational developers strive to simultaneously meet institutions' immediate needs for scaled support, anticipate the impact of our response, and assess the efficacy of our effort. Our ability to predict and strategize for the impact of our work is both crucial and impossible to do completely. With this understanding, educational developers can consider impact as a context for agency by asking:

- *Who, precisely, will feel the impact of this decision? How, and for how long, will they be affected?*
- *Is this a short-term intervention or a long-term solution to our problem?*
- *Is the proposed work complementing or competing with the work of another unit on campus?*
- *What are possible unanticipated consequences of our current course of action?*

Applying the Framework

In their journal logs, educational developers wrestled with decision-making and sensemaking of their choices in ways that led to the development of the Contexts for Agency framework. In the

complicated semesters to come, a structured and reflective approach to mapping the contexts for agency can help educational developers in several ways.

Mapping our contexts for agency facilitates sensemaking, helping us process both the impact and the toll of our work. An emergent theme of the PEDRC project highlighted participants' experience of stress when engaging in work outside of their typical roles and collaborating with departments in new ways to better serve their institutions. For many, this meant struggling to meet constantly changing demands, keeping a relentless pace, and dealing with an inability to predict what was coming next. As one educational developer wondered, "How can I better recognize the issues that I do not have control over and stay clear of them emotionally and in terms of my limited time for additional projects?" (Respondent D, Log 7, July 2020).

This quotation highlights the necessity of pausing to take stock and recognize the challenges with which we are dealing, distinguishing between the emotional labor and the structural opportunities/constraints of our work. The Contexts of Agency framework and the associated reflection guide promote analysis and discussion of the extent to which we have agency within the contexts of identity, institution, and impact in order to make more informed decisions.

Mapping our contexts for agency can also help us prioritize key decisions and feel less overwhelmed. This claim is partly grounded in the acknowledged psychological benefit of recognizing those things over which we have complete control, some control, and no control (Irvine, 2008). With this in mind, reflecting on our contexts for agency—particularly those for identity and institution—can help us focus on what we can realistically accomplish, set reasonable goals, and identify sensible starting points.

To facilitate this mapping effort, we offer a Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide (see Appendix). The provision of this resource is grounded in what we know about how "complex and highly connected knowledge structures allow experts to access and use their knowledge

more efficiently and effectively” (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 51). Specifically, this guide provides an appropriate *organizing scheme*, which strives to scaffold and replicate what some PEDRC research participants experienced organically in dialogue with colleagues, including within their units:

My department is incredibly open to challenging discussions. . . . [We] readily and explicitly acknowledged the civil unrest in which we are operating, and this was coupled by a recognition of the potential impact on our collective and individual work, as well as the establishment of channels to share perspectives, resources, avenues of support, and opportunities for action/activism. (Respondent A, Log 3, May 2020)

This quotation highlights several benefits of recognizing the contexts in which we are operating and the impact of our individual and collective efforts. Thinking about educational development work is hard, especially during times of crisis, and leveraging a formal reflection guide—such as the Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide—can help both individuals and centers make connections among points of personal reflection and prioritize starting points for the work that we do. What follows is a description of specific ways in which individuals and centers can use this guide.

Though the researcher-participants in this project engaged in months of reflective logging, the following strategies for applying the framework are likely to bring similar clarity in far less time. These distinct approaches to mapping our contexts allow us to prioritize our immediate tasks and responsibilities in those spaces in which we actually have agency.

- *Individual reflection.* Educational developers can map their contexts for agency to process their own response to periods of intense stress/productivity, help establish priorities, and identify strategic collaborators.

- *Team reflection.* Before or during a staff meeting, teams may individually reflect on their contexts for agency before engaging in a planning session.
- *Performance check-ins.* Supervisors and direct reports can use the Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide to prepare for conversations regarding performance or goal setting.
- *Peer coaching or mentoring consultations.* Educational developers might ground “critical friend” conversations in considerations of the framework.

Regardless of your approach, remember that mapping the contexts for agency will likely be an iterative, nonlinear process. Such reflection requires both self-awareness and emotional intelligence, as there is often a higher degree of emotional labor to our work during times of crisis and major transition. Lastly, it is essential to remember that those affected by our decisions are operating within their own contexts for agency.

Conclusion

Thank you again for this opportunity to reflect. I haven't completed one of these yet without feeling at least a little more agency about this whole situation.

(Respondent C, Log 8, July 2020)

In describing the Contexts for Agency framework, we do not claim a novel redefinition of identity, institution, or impact, nor do we claim that reflection is a novel step in decision-making. Rather, this framework offers an approach to sensemaking and thoughtful response for educational developers dealing with a confluence of stressors in a period of unprecedented disruption and with the recognition that the problems that most deserve our attention are complex, ambitious, and wicked. Though developed during an incredibly chaotic time, the

Contexts for Agency framework and reflection guide are designed to transcend the specific crises of our current moment. Future research will propose specific protocols for using the Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide (see Appendix) as an individual, in peer consultation, as an organizational unit, or to organize a conversation between a supervisor and their direct report. The utility of this framework rests in its application, advancing the pragmatic effort of educational developers to engage in the grand challenge of transforming the learning ecosystem.

Biographies

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Appendix

Contexts for Agency Reflection Guide

The Contexts for Agency framework identifies **identity**, **institution**, and **impact** as contexts for the decisions we face in our roles as educational developers. This reflection guide may be used for individual reflection, team reflections, performance check-ins, and/or mentoring consultations. For each element of the framework, we recommend selecting the questions that most resonate with you and modify them to fit your particular situation as needed.

Steps	Questions to guide reflection
Define the work to be done (e.g., the task at hand, the decision to be made, the priorities to be set)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the most important tasks or pressing issues for you now?</i> • <i>Are there key questions or decisions you are already thinking about?</i>
Describe how the intersecting contexts of your identity factor in your approach to this decision(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can I contribute to a solution here? If not, am I in a position to advocate for collaboration?</i> • <i>Can I (individually)/we (as collaborators) realistically accomplish what's being proposed?</i> • <i>Is this a problem that introduces emotional/psychological stress for me?</i> • <i>What perspectives do I need to hear to make a fair decision? Are all the voices that should be represented being heard?</i> • <i>Does this decision align with or challenge my moral framework?</i>
Consider how the context of your institution influences the task and/or your decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How important is this decision to the students, faculty, and institution we serve?</i> • <i>Are there other strategic collaborators on campus? Who are the stakeholders? What are the politics involved?</i> • <i>What unique resources and expertise do I or my unit bring to the initiative?</i> • <i>How does this work match our unit's goals? Our institutional mission? Our strategic plan?</i> • <i>Are there laws or university policies that guide our response to X?</i> • <i>Are there other departments on campus with whom we need to partner to achieve Y?</i>

Steps	Questions to guide reflection
Reflect on the context of impact for your decision(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who, precisely, is impacted by this decision? How, and for how long, will they be impacted?</i> • <i>Will this actually help faculty achieve what they are trying to achieve?</i> • <i>Is this a short-term intervention or a long-term solution to our problem?</i> • <i>Are we addressing a symptom of distress or the actual cause of distress?</i> • <i>Is the proposed work complementing or competing with the work of another unit on campus?</i> • <i>What are possible unanticipated consequences of our current course of action?</i> • <i>Does this work consider scalable solutions with a lens of equity and address issues of systemic oppression for particular groups?</i>

Additional suggestions for using this resource:

- **Individuals:** Dedicate time to reflect on relevant questions, identify important themes, and talk to others.
- **Peers:** Discuss key themes and insights from their personal reflections and look for commonalities and differences across their reflections.
- **Teams:** Reflect individually, then in pairs/small groups, then discuss and develop strategic plans with the entire team.
- **Supervisors:** Use as reflection prompts for performance check-ins, for similar meetings, or to present their own strategic thinking.