

THE THOUGHTFUL YES: FRAMEWORK FOR A FULFILLING CAREER IN ACADEMIC MEDICINE

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Family Medicine Focus

Saying yes is a powerful way to explore new roles and open doors.
However, it can easily lead to overcommitment, fatigue, and dissatisfaction.¹⁻³
We inductively identified five domains of “yes” based on our lived experiences and insights
from prior publications on academic decision-making and career advancement.^{1,4}

THE **TIME-BOUND** YES

Time-bound yes covers commitments with a defined beginning and end. It asks faculty to weigh how a new obligation fits into existing workloads and personal life. This is a “conditional yes,” where one would contribute only for a specific period, such as a committee appointment for one year.⁵ Framing commitments by time helps faculty avoid open-ended obligations.

Guiding question: Does the time required for this opportunity fit within my available time?

THE **RESOURCE-LINKED** YES

Resource-linked yes applies when you can realistically complete the work because the necessary tools, funds, and support systems are in place. In academic medicine, success often depends on having the right mentorship, staff assistance, budgetary backing, or protected time. Without these resources, even the most exciting opportunity may become a burden. Evaluating resources in advance helps align enthusiasm with practicality.

Guiding question: Are the resources and support needed to complete this work available and accessible to me?

THE **INTERIM** YES

Interim yes represents a temporary commitment made to keep a project running until a permanent appointment is made. It offers a valuable chance to demonstrate leadership, gain visibility, or determine whether a role suits you in the long term. For example, accepting the position of Director of Research in an acting capacity can help you test-fit the responsibilities and gauge whether it aligns with your interests and capacity.

Guiding question: If this role aligns with goals and workload, can it become a permanent position, and if not, can I step down or renegotiate my responsibilities?

THE **TITLED** YES

Titled yes appeals because of the structure and credibility a formal title provides. Titles can elevate professional identity, clarify responsibilities, and enhance institutional presence. For academics, especially junior faculty, roles on a grant or collaborative scholarly project can yield early recognition and open doors to career advancement.

Guiding question: What recognition or growth does this title provide, and how does it enhance my academic profile?

THE **MISSION-BASED** YES

Mission-based yes presents an opportunity to accept a request because it advances the institution’s mission. Accepting this request may benefit the faculty member as a relationship-building tool that connects them with influential stakeholders important for future collaborations or requests.

Guiding question: Does alignment with the mission of the institution advance both me and the institution?

**Thoughtful yes allows for internal and external negotiation
and can transform decision-making from reaction to intention.**

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