

LEARNING CORNER

PROF. NWARU'S CAREER NAVIGATOR

Series 1: The Art of Career Time and Timing

Recognizing *kairos*: how to discern the right career moment

BRIGHT I. NWARU^{1,2}

AFFILIATIONS:

¹African Science Frontiers Initiatives
²Krefting Research Centre, Institute of
Medicine, University of Gothenburg

CORRESPONDENCE:

Prof. Bright Nwaru
bright.nwaru@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This is the second paper in the series exploring the role of time and timing in academic careers. The first paper set the context for the series and differentiated two types of time, as expounded by Greek philosophy: *chronos* (ordinary time) and *kairos* (opportune moments). The focus of the series is *kairos*. The current paper posits that career-defining moments are rarely accidental; rather, they are discernible through a set of recognizable signs that demand attentiveness, discernment, and wisdom. The paper identifies and elaborates four key signs of career *kairos*: the **inner witness** (a deep sense of conviction), the **inspiration to act**, the **testimony of others**, and the **alignment of skills and opportunity**. Drawing from philosophical, psychological, and professional perspectives, each sign is examined as both an internal and relational process that guides decision-making under uncertainty. To ground these reflections, the paper presents four personal stories spanning my experiences during doctoral training, postdoctoral opportunity abroad, a competitive fellowship that broguth me back home, and a tenured appointment. These stories illustrate how *kairos* moments often arrive quietly, disguised as ordinary opportunities, and how their recognition depends on preparedness cultivated during *chronos* time. Synthesizing theory and lived experience, the paper distills six lessons on the dynamics of career *kairos*, emphasizing that conviction often precedes evidence, energy signals alignment, preparation is indispensable, and courage is essential for translating insight into reality. Ultimately, the paper invites scholars to cultivate vigilance towards *kairos*, positioning it not as luck or impulse, but as a disciplined art of recognizing alignment and acting decisively when the moment arises. The greater challenge lies in responding with courage and clarity, which is the focus of the next article: **seizing *kairos***.

KEYWORDS:

Career-defining moments, Career opportunities, Career timing, Chronos, Inner witness, Kairos, Mentorship, Opportunity recognition, Reflective practice, Skill alignment

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“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

- *Ecclesiastes 3:1*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the second in a series examining the role of time and timing in academic career. The first paper¹, drawing on classical Greek philosophy, distinguished between *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* refers to ordinary, linear time—measured by clocks and calendars—within which minutes, hours, days, and years unfold in steady succession. It is the time of routine work, study, preparation, and incremental growth: the season of planting and patient cultivation. *Kairos*, by contrast, is qualitative rather than quantitative time. It denotes the “right” or opportune moment, when preparation meets opportunity and a decisive action can alter the trajectory of a career. Unlike *chronos*, *kairos* is rare and precious. It cannot be manufactured, but it can be recognized and seized.

The first paper also highlighted several contexts in academic life where *kairos* moments are indispensable. These are turning points in which an opportunity resonates deeply with who we are and what we have been preparing for. They are not merely job advertisements or academic calls, but moments of alignment—when skills, aspirations, and circumstances converge in a way that feels distinctly fitting. Such moments are often difficult to recognize because they tend to arrive unexpectedly, sometimes disguised as ordinary events. Yet they carry discernible inner and outer signals that can guide transformative decisions. Missing them may carry regret or unintended consequences, underscoring the need for attentiveness, discernment, wisdom, and the right posture toward opportunity.

In this paper, I focus on four signs of career *kairos*: the inner witness, the inspiration to act, the testimony of others, and the alignment of experience and opportunity. These reflections are complemented by personal narratives from key career transitions, illustrating how *kairos* manifests in practice and how

vigilance can make the difference between missing and seizing the right moment. While these four signs are central, they are not exhaustive. I therefore invite readers to share their own perspectives on additional ways in which *kairos* may be recognized beyond those discussed here.

THE FOUR SIGNS OF CAREER *KAIROS* MOMENTS

Career *kairos* moments rarely announce themselves clearly, yet they often carry distinct and recognizable signatures. Across my academic journey, these moments have rarely arrived with certainty or external guarantees. Instead, they have revealed themselves through a set of recurring signs that, over time, I have learned to trust. These signs did not eliminate risk or doubt, but they offered orientation when important decisions had to be made. In the following section, I present four signs (**Figure 1**) that have consistently helped me recognize and navigate my own career *kairos* moments. Together, they reflect how decisive opportunities are sensed inwardly, energized through action, affirmed relationally, and anchored in preparation. While drawn from personal experience, these signs offer a practical framework for discerning when preparation and opportunity converge—and when the moment calls for courage to act.

The Inner Witness

The inner witness refers to the human capacity for reflective awareness—a quiet inner presence that observes thoughts, emotions, and experiences without being identical to them. It often appears as intuition or conscience, offering subtle guidance through feelings of peace or unease that function as an inner affirmation or restraint. Rather than an audible voice, it operates as an inward sense of discernment that supports ethical decision-making and personal direction².

Across spiritual, philosophical, and psychological traditions, the inner witness is regarded as essential to inner freedom and self-understanding. In contemplative practices, it is cultivated through mindful, non-judgmental awareness of one’s inner life³.

The Four Signs of Career Kairos Moments

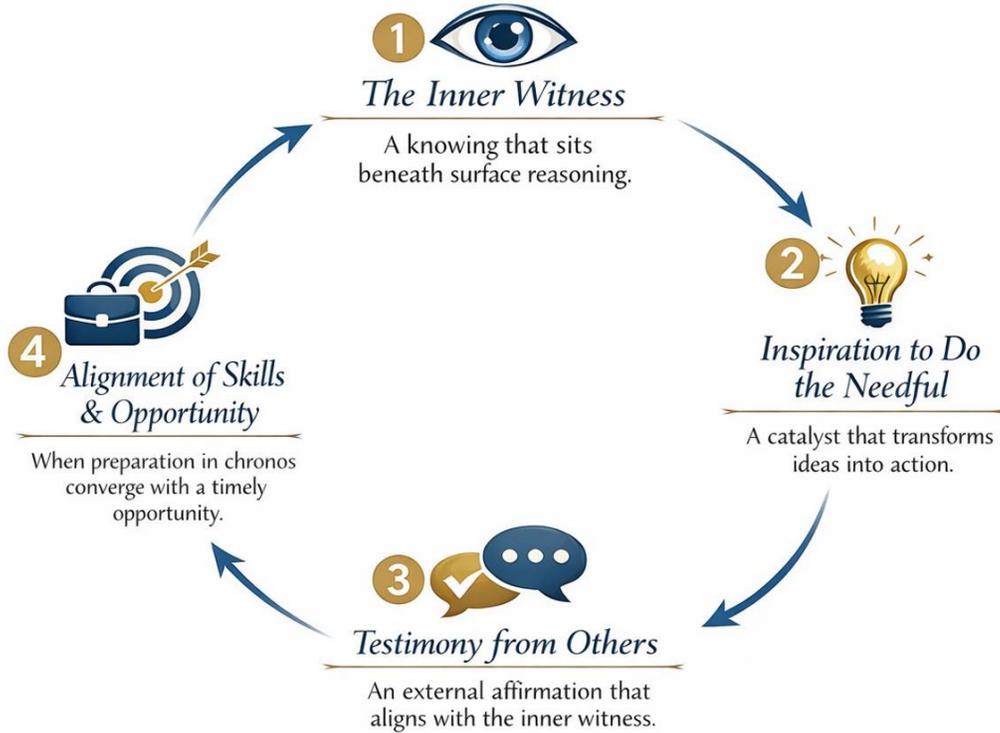


Figure 1. The four signs of career *kairos* moments as experienced in my own career

In cognitive psychology, this capacity is described as metacognition—the ability to reflect upon and regulate one’s own thinking⁴. Though framed differently, these perspectives describe the same fundamental function of consciousness. By fostering awareness rather than reaction, the inner witness supports resilience, clarity, and inner peace.

The most powerful sign of *kairos* is the inner witness: a deep, unshakable conviction that “this is mine” or “this is my time.” It is not wishful thinking or naïve optimism. Rather, it is a *knowing* that sits beneath surface reasoning. You cannot shake it off. You go to bed with it, wake up with it, and feel it in your soul like an invisible current of energy. The inner witness is not loud or flamboyant. It is subtle but persistent. It whispers in your mind even when you try to push it aside. You may doubt many things, but you cannot doubt the sense that something about this opportunity is different. You may even find yourself smiling in anticipation or imagining yourself in the role long before it becomes a reality.

For me, this inner witness has always been the clearest marker of *Kairos* in my career journeys. It has given me courage when external circumstances seemed unfavorable and when mentors themselves were cautious. Without it, I might have ignored opportunities that ended up defining my career. Every scholar must cultivate an awareness of their inner self if they must navigate the fluidity of career *kairos* moments. By mastering the structure of their inner witness, they take charge of the *kairos* moments that present themselves in their career journey.

Inspiration to Do the Needful

The energy of inspiration is a vital psychological and existential force that stimulates creativity, purpose, and meaningful action. It is often experienced as a heightened state of awareness in which individuals feel energized, connected, and aligned with values that transcend immediate self-interest. Contrary to motivation, which depends on sustained effort, inspiration functions as a catalyst that transforms ideas into action by linking imagination with execution⁵.

Psychological research describes inspiration as a state that increases openness, confidence, and persistence, enabling individuals to approach challenges with enthusiasm and resilience⁶. This energized state is accompanied by a reduced focus on obstacles, allowing new possibilities to emerge. Philosophical and spiritual traditions similarly portray inspiration as a flow of “in-spirit” energy—a sense of participation in a larger source of meaning or potential⁷. Although inspiration initiates movement and vision, it is in and by itself transient. Motivation, discipline, and supportive environments are required to translate it into sustained achievement⁸. When cultivated and supported, the energy of inspiration enhances well-being, deepens purpose, and serves as a powerful bridge between inner values and outward accomplishment.

When *kairos* moments arrive, they often come with unusual energy and clarity of thought. Suddenly, tasks that would normally feel heavy, leading to procrastination or eventual relinquishment — applications, interviews, writing proposals — are approached with ease and flow. You are motivated to “do the needful” with a sense of purpose. This inspiration aligns one’s thoughts and actions. You find yourself composing sentences that flow naturally, ticking the right boxes with ease, and sensing what needs to be emphasized. It is as though your whole being is synchronized for this one task. Even small details fall into their rightful places. In such moments, it is as if you are not simply writing or speaking for yourself but being carried by a larger force that propels you forward. You rarely feel the usual friction of procrastination or confusion. Instead, there is a composure, a focus, and a determination that surprises even you.

Testimony from Others

The academic career is not a solitary journey; but one that is sustained by continuous interaction with peers, mentors, supervisors, and collaborators across disciplines and institutions. These relationships form an ecosystem of vital support that fosters intellectual development, professional socialisation, and personal resilience⁹. In its most positive expression, such networks provide guidance, constructive feedback, encouragement, and opportunities for collaboration and growth. They help researchers navigate uncertainty,

manage setbacks, and respond productively to criticism and failure¹⁰. Through shared experiences and collective problem-solving, academic networks cushion the inevitable challenges of scholarly life and enable researchers to progress with confidence, perspective, and sustained purpose¹¹.

Kairos moments in the academic career journey are rarely recognized in isolation. Often, the networks around us — peers, mentors, colleagues — affirm what we sense within. They can see our alignment with the opportunity and encourage us to pursue it. Their words may feel almost prophetic, as if they can see the future we are about to step into. Sometimes, their encouragement is explicit: “This position is clearly yours.” At other times, it is implicit, in the form of surprise or admiration for the quality of our work. Such testimonies can serve as external confirmations, strengthening the inner conviction we already feel. Not every opportunity comes with such external voices though, but when they do, it is worth paying attention. They may be the very push we need to silence doubt and act boldly.

Alignment of Skills and Opportunity

An academic career, like any professional pursuit, is shaped by the dynamic interplay between skills and opportunities; neither operates effectively in isolation. Skills, however advanced, have limited value without opportunities for their application. Conversely, opportunities that arise in the absence of adequate skills are easily squandered. While skills require continuous development and refinement throughout one’s career, opportunities are intermittent and often scarce. In today’s competitive job market, individuals with strong skill sets frequently outnumber available positions and prospects. Yet the unpredictability of opportunity does not diminish professional responsibility. Regardless of immediate prospects, it remains the duty of every academic to invest deliberately in building relevant skills and capacity. Such sustained preparation ensures readiness, enabling individuals to engage fully and effectively when opportunities do emerge.

A *kairos* moment often emerges when skills, experience, and preparation converge with a timely opportunity. It can feel as though years of training,

practice, and growth have been quietly leading to this point. The alignment is often striking: the opportunity appears almost tailored to who you are and the skills and experiences you have been building overtime. This does not mean one always feels fully ready—few people ever do—but it does mean recognizing oneself in the opportunity, as if looking into a mirror. While peers and colleagues may apply for the same opportunity, there is a clear sense that your profile, skills, experience, and aspirations uniquely resonate with the opportunity and the moment. This convergence, of preparation and opportunity, is perhaps the most objective marker of career *kairos* moments, where inner conviction is grounded in practical reality.

However, an unfortunate situation arises when a *kairos* opportunity presents itself and the necessary preparation is absent. In such cases, the moment passes not because of poor timing, but because of insufficient readiness. This highlights a fundamental responsibility in academic and professional life: the need for every professional to deliberately invest time and resources—during *chronos*—into developing relevant skills, competencies, experiences, and insights. It is through this sustained, often unseen work—of years and months—that one becomes capable of meeting *kairos* when it arrives, allowing opportunity and preparation to finally come into alignment.

FOUR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH *KAIROS* IN MY CAREER JOURNEY

The four personal stories that follow below capture my lived experience of navigating the fluidity of *kairos* moments in an academic career (**Figure 2**). They are not presented as prescriptions, but as reflections—snapshots of moments when preparation, opportunity, conviction, and courage converged in ways that were not always obvious at first glance. In the stories, the signs of *kairos* discussed above revealed themselves gradually: an inner witness that spoke before evidence appeared, an unusual flow of energy, external affirmation that came later, and a striking alignment

between skills and opportunity. Together, these stories illustrate how career-defining moments rarely announce themselves loudly; they often emerge quietly, disguised as ordinary possibilities. By sharing these experiences, I hope readers will recognize echoes of their own journeys—their doubts, intuitions, hesitations, and breakthroughs. My intention is that these stories lend language to experiences many have already lived and serve as gentle guides for discerning and acting upon *kairos* moments in their own careers.

Personal Story 1: The PhD Funding Application

As far as I could recall, it was during my PhD that I consciously encountered my first clear career *kairos* moment. In Finland, where I was studying, prestigious doctoral funding positions were periodically announced. These were rare and highly competitive, offering up to four years of secure funding. Every PhD student longed for them, and supervisors considered them a mark of excellence for their protégés.

At the time, I was only nine months into my PhD. Most successful applicants were further along, with publications and more results to show and support their applications. By conventional wisdom, I was not ready. I had no publication up to that point and was still navigating the project preparatory works. When the positions were announced, I consulted my supervisor. She suggested I could try, but noted that expectations were not high since it was my first time of applying, plus the fact of the competitive nature of the funding. To her, it was more an exercise in learning how to write a strong application for the future.

But within me, something stirred. The moment she mentioned it, I felt a strong inner witness: *this is yours*. It was not wishful thinking; it was certainty in action. I left her office energized, my mind already racing with ideas. The conviction was so strong that procrastination was almost impossible. Every moment — walking, eating, even bathing — brought new insights for the application. Sentences formed in my mind without invitation.

Four Personal Encounters with Kairos in My Career Journey



Figure 2. The four personal stories that capture my lived experience with *kairos* in my career

I poured myself into the application with unusual intensity. Every word, phrase, and paragraph carried the energy of conviction. I submitted days before the deadline, leaving my supervisor little time to review. To her, it was simply a trial run. To me, it was destiny.

The decision day came. Supervisors sat on the selection panel, though they could not evaluate their own students. That afternoon, my phone rang; it was my supervisor — a rare occurrence. I already knew what she would say. Her first words were unmistakable: “Bright, congratulations! You got the funding. Wow, I did not expect you would make it. The panel was impressed with your application. I had no idea you had put so much into it. I am so happy for you.” Her surprise confirmed what I already knew. The result was not an accident or luck. It was the fruit of *kairos* — the inner witness, the inspiration to act, the testimony of others (after the fact), and the alignment of my growing skills with the opportunity. That application became a turning point in my doctoral journey, setting me on a stable path and boosting my confidence in recognizing *kairos*.

Personal Story 2: My First Postdoctoral Move Abroad

After completing my PhD, I stayed on with my supervisor for another year. She had plans for me and wanted to keep me longer. Yet, as the months passed, I felt a growing conviction that it was time to move on. My inner witness spoke clearly: *your kairos is elsewhere*. I began exploring other opportunities abroad. Along the way, I reached out to a previous mentor to request a recommendation letter for a position I had applied to. In the course of our conversation, he surprised me: “I’ve just announced a postdoc position. If you are interested, I would be glad to have you.”

The position was only for one year, but there was a possibility of extension. Many would hesitate, but I knew instantly that this was my *kairos*. The conviction was strong, and the opportunity aligned with my skills and research interests. I applied, was offered the position, and I accepted the offer. That decision became one of the most fruitful moves of my career until date. I found myself working with world-class experts, advanced tools, and methodologies in an environment that stretched me intellectually. The

experience boosted my research profile beyond expectation, opening doors that would have remained closed otherwise.

Looking back, I realize that had I ignored the inner witness urging me to move on, I might have stayed in comfort but missed growth. Recognizing the *kairos* moment, and responding with courage, made all the difference.

Personal Story 3: The Fellowship Opportunity That Moved Me Back Home

My postdoc position abroad was the kind of role many researchers dream of. Yet, beneath the excitement, I carried a heavy burden—my family and young children were far away, in another country. The distance weighed on me—the many travels and the emotional farewell with those little ones broke me genuinely. Although I liked my postdoc position and the challenges it brought to my career, skills and experience, I felt incomplete having my kids far away from me. I knew I needed to find a way to bring family and work closer together.

At first, I hesitated. Leaving so soon after starting the position felt wrong. My boss had great plans for me, and I worried about what he would think if I sought another opportunity after less than two years. Would he feel betrayed? Would it damage my reputation? These doubts troubled me. But the inner witness grew stronger. I felt pulled toward change, even though it was inconvenient and uncertain. Then, in the midst of all these, came the opportunity: a fellowship was announced at my previous institution. It was prestigious and extremely competitive. At first glance, doubt whispered again: *Is this really for you?* Yet the more I looked at the call, the more I saw myself reflected in it. The alignment was extraordinary. My skills, my research trajectory, and my personal needs all converged in this one opportunity.

For days, I could think of anything else except the fellowship application. The conviction was so strong it occupied my whole being. I decided to apply, and I poured myself into the application, working with unusual focus and energy. This time, I did not even share my plan with my current boss, nor with anyone else. It was too sensitive. Instead, I prepared quietly and later sent a draft to one of my previous trusted mentors.

Her response electrified me: “Bright, what an excellent application you have written. I think those who designed this call had you in mind. Congratulations in advance.” Her words confirmed what I already knew. They gave me courage to polish every detail until no stone was left unturned.

When the results came, I was the only one awarded the fellowship in my topic area. Once again, the *kairos* signs had aligned: inner witness, inspiration, external testimony, and perfect fit. But here was the crucial part: recognition alone would not have changed my situation. The breakthrough came because I acted, despite fear of what my boss might think, despite uncertainty about leaving an excellent environment. Courage to act turned recognition into reality.

Personal Story 4: The Tenured Position After My Fellowship

The most dramatic *kairos* moment of my career came years later. One ordinary day, about to move to take up the fellowship position, I was at my desk alongside a colleague when an email arrived. It was a mass announcement sent to respiratory researchers worldwide from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. A tenured position in respiratory research was about to be advertised. Interested researchers were invited to send a brief statement.

My colleague and I looked at each other. We agreed to respond. But for me, it was not just a casual interest. The moment I read the email, the inner witness spoke clearly: *this is yours*. The conviction was immediate and deep. That same day, I sent my expression of interest. Hours later, I received a reply directly from the centre director, inviting me to e-meet. My colleague, who had also applied, waited for his reply. It never came. That silence, too, felt like a sign. When I met the director, our conversation flowed as though we had known each other before. The connection was natural. Even before the position was formally announced, I was invited to visit several times. Each visit strengthened the bond, closed the gaps of difference, and deepened my sense that this was my *kairos*.

Eventually, the position was officially announced—with a world-class package that was competitive anywhere in the world. My previous supervisor urged me to stay

with him, reminding me of the great work we were doing. Saying no was not easy. But a *kairos* moment cannot be ignored. I accepted the tenured position. Looking back, it was one of the best decisions of my life. The timing, the alignment, the signals—all pointed to the fact that this was more than just a job. It was destiny meeting preparation. Each day that passed, months and years that followed, all confirmed that the conviction I had got to accept the position and the courage to take it up were my *kairos* in action.

KAIROS LESSONS FROM MY PERSONAL STORIES

Taken together, these four personal stories reveal *kairos* not as a single dramatic event, but as a recurring pattern in a career shaped by attentiveness, preparation, and courage. Across different career stages—from doctoral training to tenure, the same principles surfaced, each time with greater clarity and consequence. In the following sections, I have extracted six key lessons (**Figure 3**) I could derive from the journeys of *kairos* demonstrated from my personal stories above. Together, these lessons show that *kairos* is not luck or impulse. It is the disciplined art of recognizing alignment—and having the courage to act when preparation, opportunity, and inner knowing converge.

Conviction Precedes Evidence

In every *kairos* moment I experienced, inner conviction arrived before external confirmation. When I applied for the PhD funding after only nine months, logic said I was not ready. When I left a secure postdoc path for a one-year position, the risk was obvious. When I applied for a competitive fellowship abroad or responded to a mass email about a tenured position, nothing guaranteed success. Yet in each case, the inner witness spoke first: *this is yours*. *Kairos* rarely waits for credentials to look perfect. If one waits until doubt disappears or consensus forms, the moment often passes.

Energy Flows Where *Kairos* Is Present

A consistent marker of *kairos* was the unusual flow of energy that accompanied it. Applications written under *kairos* felt effortless yet intense, absorbing my attention completely. Inspiration displaced procrastination. By

contrast, even attractive opportunities outside *kairos* felt heavy. This pattern repeated itself—from doctoral funding, to fellowships, to tenure. Energy, not comfort, proved to be the more reliable compass when *kairos* manifests itself.

External Affirmation Echoes Inner Knowing

Encouragement from others did not create my conviction, but it often confirmed it. My supervisor's astonishment, my mentor's prophetic reassurance, and the immediate responsiveness of the centre director all served as echoes of what I already knew inwardly. *Kairos* does not depend on applause, but affirmation often follows action—sometimes only after the risk has been taken.

Kairos* Rewards Preparation in *Chronos

None of these moments was accidental. Each success rested on years of quiet preparation: skills developed, papers written, methods learned, relationships built. *Kairos* is generous, but not indulgent. It meets those who have prepared faithfully in *chronos* time. Opportunity without preparation produces regret; preparation without opportunity produces waiting. *Kairos* is their meeting point.

***Kairos* Often Arrives Disguised as the Ordinary**

A casual conversation, an email announcement, a short-term contract—*kairos* rarely announces itself with spectacle. The tenured position began as a mass email. The pivotal postdoc emerged in a routine conversation. The extraordinary often hides within the ordinary, demanding attentiveness, discernment, and wisdom rather than drama.

Courage Converts *Kairos* into Reality

Recognition alone changes nothing. Each *kairos* moment demanded courage: applying early, leaving comfort, risking misunderstanding, saying no to good opportunities for a better-aligned one. Fear was always present—fear of failure, of disappointing mentors, of reputational damage. Yet *kairos* does not negotiate with fear. Conviction without action remains unrealized potential. Courage is what transforms *kairos* from insight into destiny.

Kairos Lessons from My Personal Stories of Kairos Moments:

Kairos is not as a single dramatic event, but a recurring pattern shaped by attentiveness, preparation, and courage.

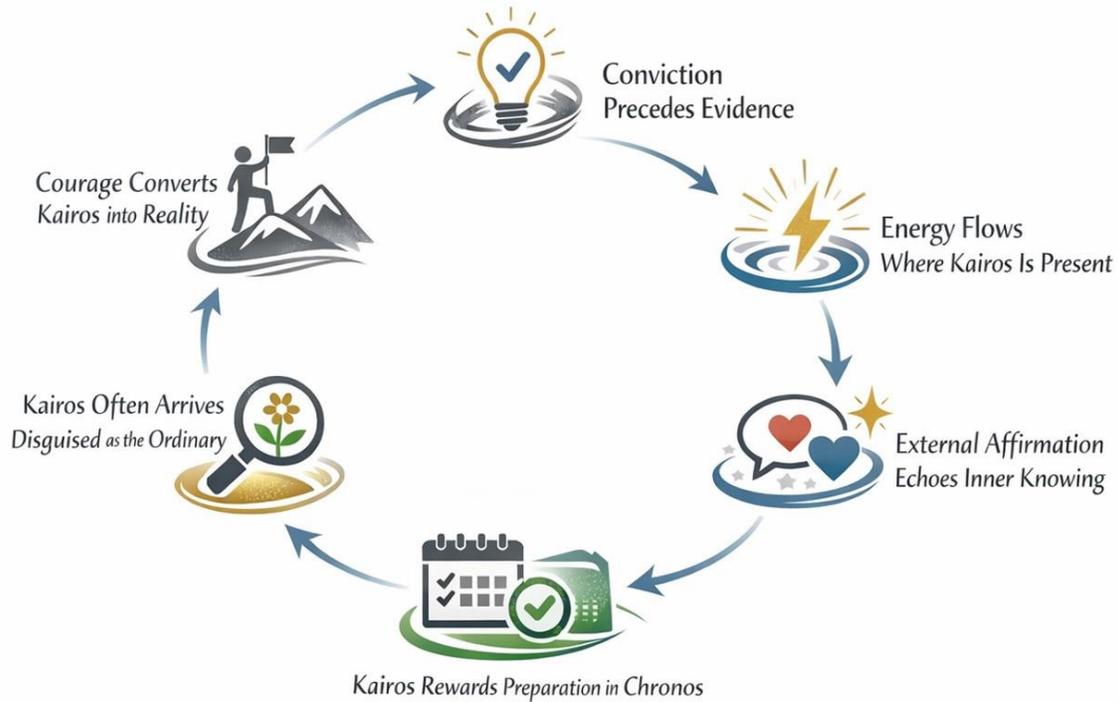


Figure 3. Key lessons learned from recognizing and acting on *kairos* in an academic career

FURTHER REFLECTIONS: STAYING VIGILANT IN KAIROS

Recognizing *kairos* is both an art and a discipline. It is an art because it involves intuition, subtle signals, and the mystery of conviction. It is a discipline because it requires attentiveness, reflection, vigilance, and readiness. Why vigilance? Because *kairos* moments rarely announce themselves with fanfare. They seldom come labeled as “career-changing.” Instead, they often look like ordinary opportunities, buried in emails, conversations, or unexpected calls. Missing them is easy; so is dismissing them. Staying vigilant means cultivating a mindset of attentiveness. It involves (Figure 4):

- **Listening Inwardly.** Pay attention to the quiet stirrings of conviction. Do not dismiss them as irrational. Your inner witness may know more than your rational mind.
- **Observing Outwardly.** Notice the encouragement of peers, the alignment of your skills with new

openings, the way ordinary moments spark extraordinary energy.

- **Reflecting Regularly.** Journaling, mentorship conversations, and intentional pauses help you connect patterns and see when something is more than coincidence.
- **Being Ready to Move.** Vigilance without readiness leads to frustration. Keep your CV updated, your skills sharp, and your mind open so that when *kairos* appears, you are not scrambling to prepare.

The greatest danger is not that *kairos* will fail to come but that we will fail to notice it. And the second danger is that even when we notice it, fear will hold us back. My journey has shown me that *kairos* moments are both fragile and powerful. Fragile, because they can be missed in an instant. Powerful, because when seized, they can alter the trajectory of a career and a life. To stay vigilant is to live with a posture of openness: open to inner conviction, open to unusual energy, open to the voices of others, and open to opportunities that may

not fit neatly into our plans. Vigilance keeps us from sleepwalking through *chronos* and positions us to recognize *kairos* when it arrives. If time and space allow,

I will aim to develop more extended paper on the fragility of *kairos*, vigilance in *kairos*, and distractions that hinder us from staying vigilant.

Cues to Staying Vigilant in Kairos

Recognizing kairos is both an art and a discipline.

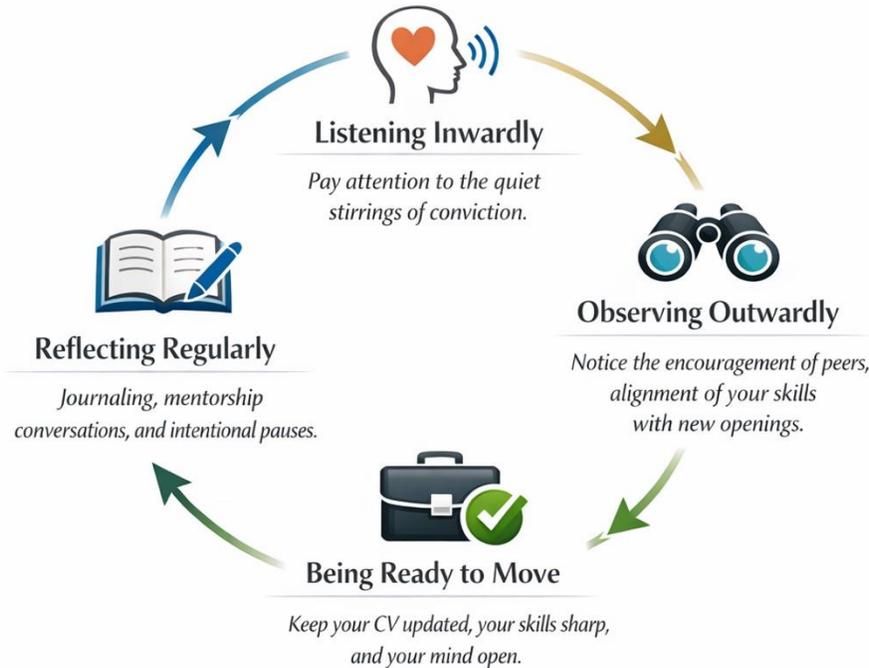


Figure 4. Cues to staying vigilant during *Kairos* moments

CONCLUSION

Kairos is not a singular, dramatic interruption in an academic career, but a recurring pattern shaped by attentiveness, preparation, and courage. By examining four signs of career *kairos*—the inner witness, inspiration to act, testimony from others, and the alignment of skills with opportunity—and grounding them in personal narratives, the paper demonstrates that career-defining moments are both recognizable and actionable. They rarely announce themselves loudly; instead, they often emerge quietly within ordinary contexts, requiring discernment rather than spectacle.

Across the different stages of my career, the same principles consistently surfaced: conviction preceded evidence, energy flowed where alignment existed, and preparation undertaken in *chronos* time enabled

responsiveness when *kairos* appeared. Yet recognition alone was never sufficient. Each moment demanded courage—the willingness to act despite uncertainty, fear, or the risk of disappointing others. Without action, *kairos* remains unrealized potential. Recognizing *kairos* therefore requires more than intuition; it demands vigilance. Such vigilance is cultivated through inward listening, outward observation, reflective practices, and sustained readiness. The greatest risk is not the absence of opportunity, but inattentiveness to it, or hesitation when it arrives. By remaining alert to subtle signals and prepared to act, scholars can avoid sleepwalking through *chronos* and instead position themselves to seize *kairos*—those fragile yet powerful moments capable of reshaping careers and lives. Recognizing *kairos* is only the beginning. The greater challenge lies in responding with courage and clarity. This is the focus of the next article: **seizing *kairos***.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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REFLECTION EXERCISES: RECOGNIZING KAIROS

Reflection Exercises: Recognizing *Kairos*

The exercises in this section are designed to help you cultivate awareness of *kairos*. Recognizing *kairos* is a matter of discernment and attentiveness: learning to listen to the inner witness, observe where energy flows, discern external affirmations, and assess the alignment between your skills and emerging opportunities. These exercises invite you to slow down, look inward, and revisit past and present experiences with fresh insight.

By engaging honestly with each exercise, you will sharpen your ability to distinguish ordinary moments from career-defining ones and prepare yourself to respond with clarity and courage when *kairos* appears. Use this space thoughtfully; there are no right or wrong answers—only deeper awareness.

Exercise 1: *Kairos* Journal

- Recall a moment when you felt an “inner witness.” Then answer the following questions:
 - What happened?
 - How did you respond at the time?
 - Looking back, what made it a *kairos* moment for you?

Exercise 2: Signals Inventory

The four signs of *kairos*:

1. Inner witness (conviction)
 2. Inspiration to act
 3. Testimony of others
 4. Alignment of skills and opportunity
- Which signs do you notice most easily?
 - Which ones do you tend to overlook?

Exercise 3: Energy Mapping

- Choose a current project or opportunity.
 - Does your energy flow naturally into it? (Yes/No)
 - What might this signal about whether it is a *kairos* opportunity?

Exercise 4: Testimony Check

- Who are the 2–3 people whose voices you trust most?
- Reflect: How have their encouragements confirmed something you sensed inwardly?

Exercise 5: Alignment Matrix

- Take a critical look at your skills and experiences vis a vis your current/future opportunities
 - Do they align? (Yes/No)
 - To what extent do they align? (Perfectly/Somewhat/Not at all/I am not sure)

Exercise 6: The Ordinary-as-Extraordinary

- Recall a time when an ordinary event (email, meeting, conversation) turned into a career-defining moment.
 - What made you notice it?

Exercise 7: *Kairos* Vigilance Pledge

- Write your personal pledge to stay vigilant for *kairos* moments