

## LEARNING CORNER

### PROF. NWARU'S CAREER NAVIGATOR

#### Series 1: The Art of Career Time and Timing

# The continuity of *kairos*: when destinations are beginnings

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#### ABSTRACT

Many people may perceive the decisive breakthroughs in career trajectories, brought about by *kairos*, as singular events. This article argues, however, to the contrary - that *kairos* is not a singular event marking arrival, but a recurring rhythm embedded in the life of a living career. Drawing on my own career journeys described in earlier articles of this series, this paper reframes *kairos* as a continuous ecology rather than an episodic milestone. Each apparent culmination in my career functioned simultaneously as a foundation, quietly preparing the conditions for subsequent transitions and expanded responsibility. The article advances four interrelated reasons why *kairos* never stops: careers are dynamic journeys rather than static monuments; growth continues across professional life cycles; influence expands relationally through networks and credibility; and chronological time itself remains fertile as institutional, disciplinary, and contextual conditions evolve. Together, these forces ensure that new convergences between readiness and opportunity continually emerge for those who remain engaged, learning, and responsive. Beyond diagnosis, the paper proposes a sustained posture for navigating the continuity of *kairos*. This posture is articulated as a triad—vigilance, discernment, and quietness—anchored by courage. Vigilance preserves attentiveness after success; discernment filters expanding options in alignment with calling rather than prestige; quietness protects the inner witness amid the noise of achievement; and courage translates recognition into decisive action. The article further distills five practical lessons for sustaining readiness: celebrating achievements without complacency, reframing milestones as thresholds, investing deeply in relationships, protecting silence as influence grows, and expecting *kairos* to persist across all career stages. By conceptualizing *kairos* as an ongoing rhythm rather than a terminal breakthrough, this paper contributes a temporal and ethical framework for career development. It invites scholars and professionals alike to move beyond destination-focused narratives toward a practice of enduring readiness, in which every arrival is understood as both fulfillment and beginning.

#### KEYWORDS:

Career development, Continuity of *kairos*, Courage, Discernment, Opportunity recognition, Professional readiness, Quietness, Relational networks, Temporal rhythm, Vigilance

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**“What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.”**  
— T.S. Eliot

## **INTRODUCTION: KAIROS – A DESTINATION AND A BEGINNING**

The *Art of Career Time and Timing* has been illuminating, not merely because *kairos* describes the qualitative depth of time, but because it is a lived reality in every serious career. *Kairos* is not an abstract phenomenon - it is experienced. It is the moment when preparation meets opportunity, when conviction meets action, when timing converges with readiness. And it is inescapable for anyone who remains engaged in purposeful work.

Yet an important truth emerges as one reflects on the journey of *kairos*: it never truly ends. Many imagine *kairos* as a singular breakthrough—a funding award, a tenure appointment, a leadership role, long-awaited recognition. We often treat these as mere destinations and milestones that signal arrival. But what happens after arrival? What follows the long-pursued position, the celebrated promotion, the dream opportunity finally secured? The answer is deceptively simple: in the journey of *kairos*, every destination is also a beginning. *Kairos* is therefore not a one-time event; it is a rhythm. It unfolds in cycles across seasons of growth, transition, and reinvention. The very moment that feels like culmination becomes the soil from which the next decisive moment grows. A fellowship leads to a broader platform. A tenured position opens new responsibilities. Recognition generates new expectations. Each arrival quietly prepares the ground for the start of another journey.

Throughout this series, we have explored different dimensions of career *kairos*: how vigilance and discernment help us recognize fragile windows of opportunity; how courage enables us to step through them; how seized *kairos* multiplies reward; and how missed *kairos* leaves lingering regret. We have examined the conditions that fertilize *kairos* and the costs of ignoring it. But beneath all these insights lies a deeper continuity: *kairos* is woven into the fabric of a

living career. The central question, therefore, is not whether *kairos* will return—it sure will. As long as one remains active, learning, contributing, and developing, new *kairos* moments will emerge. The more pressing question is this: when it returns, will it find us prepared? This seventh paper turns to that enduring rhythm—the continuity of *kairos*—and explores how to live in readiness for the next beginning hidden within every arrival.

## **WHY KAIROS NEVER STOPS**

If *kairos* were a single breakthrough, then career life would eventually plateau into stillness. But lived experience suggests otherwise. *Kairos* is not an isolated event; it is a recurring rhythm embedded in the unfolding of a living career (**Figure 1**). Each decisive moment I encountered—from doctoral funding to the postdoctoral transition, from fellowship to tenure—felt like arrival. Yet each arrival quietly prepared the ground for a new journey. *Kairos* does not exhaust itself in one season because careers themselves do not stand still. They move, expand, and evolve. The four experiences I have shared in this series illustrate a deeper pattern: every seized moment reshaped my trajectory and positioned me for the next journey. What felt final was in fact a foundation. What appeared as culmination was preparation in disguise. Below are four reasons why *kairos* never stops (**Figure 2**).

### **Because Careers Are Living Journeys**

A career is not a static monument but a living journey. As long as one remains in motion, intersections between preparation and opportunity continue to emerge. When I secured the PhD funding, it felt like a defining breakthrough. It stabilized my doctoral years and boosted my confidence. But that funding was not the end of *kairos*; it was the beginning of a new trajectory. It gave me the platform to produce stronger work, which later made me competitive for international postdoctoral opportunities. Similarly, accepting my first postdoc abroad felt like arrival into the global research arena. Yet that move repositioned me within new networks and environments, ultimately preparing me for the fellowship that would bring me back home. And even that fellowship became a stepping stone toward the tenured position. Each moment altered direction. Each decision opened a

corridor previously unseen. Had I treated any of those moments as a final resting place, stagnation might have followed. But a living journey does not end at a milestone. It continues unfolding. *Kairos* keeps

appearing because the journey itself keeps advancing. As long as there is movement—intellectual, relational, institutional—there will be fresh convergences between readiness and opportunity.

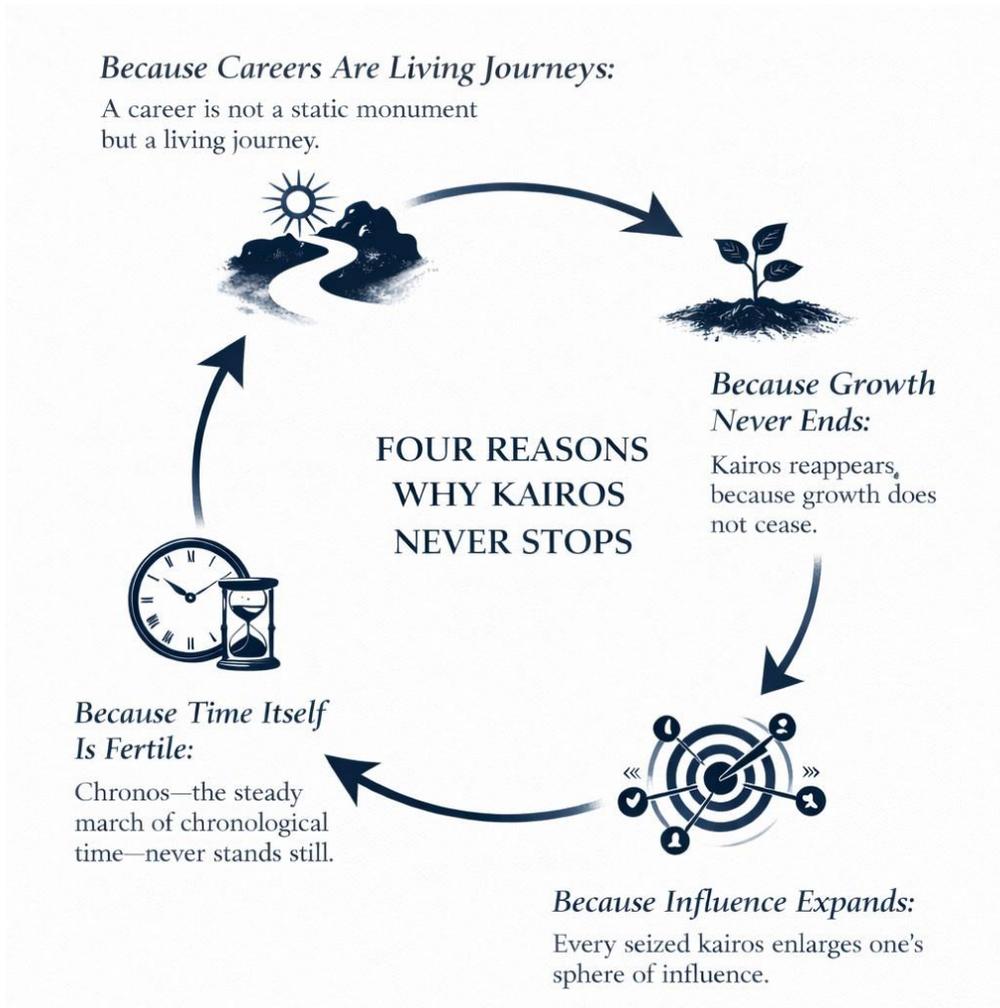


**Figure 1.** The continuity of career *kairos*

### Because Growth Never Ends

*Kairos* reappears because growth does not stop. As long as one is learning, stretching, and refining competence, new opportunities arise that match newly acquired capacity. When I applied for the doctoral funding nine months into my PhD, I had limited tangible outputs but growing internal clarity. That growth—though invisible to many—met opportunity at precisely the right time. Later, during my postdoc abroad, my research profile deepened. I mastered advanced methodologies and collaborated with world-class experts. That season of growth expanded what I was capable of handling. By the time the fellowship opportunity emerged, my profile had matured. The call

aligned almost uncannily with my trajectory. It was not accidental; it was proportional. My growth had created readiness for a larger platform. The same pattern repeated with the tenured position. Years of accumulated experience, publications, networks, and leadership prepared me for that role long before the announcement email arrived. What seemed sudden was actually the visible expression of invisible growth. *Kairos* never stops because growth never stops. Each layer of maturity births new possibilities that were previously inaccessible. Opportunity rises to meet capacity. As we grow, so does the scale and nature of the *kairos* that greets us with new opportunities.



**Figure 2.** Reasons why *kairos* never stops

### **Because Influence Expands**

Every seized *kairos* enlarges one's sphere of influence. With expansion comes exposure to new people, new institutions, and new opportunities. *Kairos* multiplies through relationships. The PhD funding elevated my standing within my department and beyond. It signaled credibility. That credibility strengthened my profile when pursuing postdoctoral roles. The international postdoc, in turn, embedded me in global networks. Through those relationships, conversations emerged that would otherwise have been impossible. The fellowship that brought me home did more than relocate me geographically; it expanded my leadership visibility. I interacted with broader academic

communities, policy circles, and research collaborators. It was within this widened orbit that the tenured position opportunity reached me—through a global email circulated among respiratory researchers. Influence expands quietly but powerfully. With each expansion, one's name travels further than one's physical presence. Invitations, recommendations, and informal endorsements begin to precede formal applications. *Kairos* continues because networks continue to evolve. Every relationship carries latent possibility. As influence grows, the range of potential *kairos* moments increases—not randomly, but relationally.

### Because Time Itself Is Fertile

*Chronos*—the steady march of chronological time—never stands still. Institutions change leadership. Funding priorities shift. Research fields evolve. New centers are established. Senior scholars retire. Emerging areas gain attention. For instance, the tenured position did not exist earlier in my department in the same form. It emerged because institutional timing aligned with disciplinary need. Likewise, the fellowship call that drew me home to my family appeared at a moment when my profile matched its vision. Even the postdoc opportunity abroad surfaced because a mentor had just announced a new position at the very moment I was exploring change. Time creates openings that did not previously exist. Conditions mature. What was impossible yesterday becomes viable today.

In summary, *kairos* hides within these four shifts—waiting for those who remain vigilant and discerning. The crucial question, therefore, is not whether *kairos* will come again. It will—because careers move, growth deepens, influence expands, and time keeps generating new configurations. The deeper question is

readiness: when *chronos* produces the next opening, will preparation, conviction, and courage be present to meet it?

### THE POSTURE FOR “WHAT NEXT” IN *KAIROS*

If *kairos* never stops, then arrival is never the final destination. A funding award, a successful move abroad, a prestigious fellowship, a tenured appointment—each feels decisive. Yet after the celebration fades, a quieter question emerges: *What next?* The temptation after a breakthrough is subtle. We may cling to stability, defend what we have built, or assume that the hardest risks are behind us. But my own journey—from doctoral funding to postdoctoral transition, from fellowship to tenure—has taught me that every *kairos* seized demands a renewed posture. The very success that confirms readiness can also dull attentiveness. The posture required for “what next” is not ambition alone, nor restlessness, nor anxiety about the future. It is the triad that has surfaced throughout this series: vigilance, discernment, and quietness—anchored always by courage (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** The posture for future *kairos* moments

### **Vigilance: Staying Awake After Arrival**

Vigilance keeps us awake in seasons of comfort. When I secured my PhD funding, it would have been easy to relax into security. The award validated me. Yet vigilance pushed me to keep growing, writing, and positioning myself for broader horizons. That attentiveness prepared me to recognize that my *kairos* after the PhD was not to remain indefinitely in familiar surroundings but to move abroad. Likewise, during my successful postdoc abroad—immersed in world-class research—it would have been tempting to settle. But vigilance revealed a deeper misalignment: professional progress was thriving, yet my family life was strained. Without alertness to that inner signal, I might have mistaken success for sufficiency. Even after the fellowship that brought me home, vigilance was required to notice the unexpected email announcing a tenured opportunity. It was a mass email; many likely ignored it. Vigilance made it personal. Arrival can breed complacency. Vigilance protects against missing the next opening hidden within present stability.

### **Discernment: Choosing Among Many Doors**

With each *kairos* seized, options multiply. Discernment becomes essential. After my PhD funding, multiple academic possibilities were unfolding before me. After my postdoc, further collaborations and extensions were possible. When the fellowship emerged, I faced a delicate decision: remain in a prestigious environment abroad or risk returning home for a competitive opportunity and a reunion with my family. It was not a choice between good and bad—but between good and aligned. Discernment helped me weigh not only professional prestige but personal wholeness. It filtered ambition through calling. The tenured position posed a similar test. My previous supervisor urged me to stay. The work we were doing was strong. Yet discernment recognized that the tenured opportunity represented a larger convergence of timing, institutional vision, and long-term impact. As influence expands, so do invitations. Not every open door is *kairos*. Discernment ensures that the next step aligns with conviction rather than ego, with purpose rather than pressure.

### **Quietness: Hearing the Subtle Witness**

Achievement can be noisy and distracting. Congratulations, expectations, and responsibilities all create external sounds. Quietness allows us to hear the subtle inner witness that has guided every decisive turn. In my first funding application, the conviction came in quiet moments—sentences forming while walking or bathing. During my postdoc, the realization that it was time to move on did not arrive through public applause but through internal unease. The decision to apply for the fellowship was prepared in silence, shared only with a trusted mentor. The conviction about the tenured role surfaced the moment I read a simple email. *Kairos* rarely shouts. It whispers. Without cultivated quietness, its signal is drowned by the noise of achievement.

### **Courage: Acting Again**

While vigilance notices, discernment filters, and quietness hears, it is courage that acts. Every *kairos* moment in my journey required risk—applying early for funding, leaving comfort for uncertainty abroad, returning home despite fear of disappointing a supervisor, accepting tenure despite competing loyalties. In *kairos*, recognition alone changes nothing. Action transforms possibility into reality—and that action requires courage. Thus, the posture for “what next” remains constant: stay awake, choose wisely, listen deeply—and when the moment comes, leap again—with courage.

## **LESSONS ON THE CONTINUITY OF KAIROS**

So, what next after your latest *kairos* encounter? The answer is not to wait passively for one ultimate breakthrough, as if a final summit exists beyond which no further ascent is required. Rather, it is to cultivate readiness for the ongoing rhythm of *kairos*. My own journey—from early doctoral funding to postdoctoral transition, from fellowship to tenure—has convinced me that *kairos* is not episodic and eventful; it is a continuous journey. Each season calls for a posture that sustains momentum without losing depth. Here are five guiding lessons drawn from my own lived experience (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 4.** Lessons on the continuity of *kairos*

### **Celebrate, but Stay Vigilant**

Celebration is necessary in *kairos*. When I received the PhD funding, it marked validation, stability, and joy. When I secured the fellowship that reunited me with my family, it felt deeply redemptive. When the tenured appointment came, it was a defining professional affirmation. Yet in each case, celebration could not become complacent—it was necessary. The PhD funding was not the end of striving; it was the beginning of greater expectations. The postdoctoral success abroad could not lull me into ignoring the inner signal that something needed to change. Even tenure, often perceived as arrival, required continued attentiveness to growth and leadership. Celebration honors the milestone. Vigilance protects the future. Windows of *kairos* rarely announce themselves loudly; they often open quietly while we are still enjoying the last victory. Therefore, celebrate in the moment, but stay vigilant in the journey.

### **Reframe Every Achievement as a Threshold**

Every milestone is both arrival and departure. The doctoral funding became the platform that strengthened my profile for international opportunities. The postdoc abroad became the preparation ground for a competitive fellowship. The fellowship itself positioned me for visibility that eventually intersected with the tenured role. None of these were endpoints. Each was a threshold—an entry into a larger arena of responsibility and possibility. To live in the continuity of *kairos* is to ask, at every achievement: *What is this preparing me for?* Success is not merely reward for past efforts; it is the infrastructure and womb for a future calling.

### **Invest in Relationships**

At higher levels of one's career, *kairos* often flows through people. My postdoctoral opportunity emerged through a mentor I had previously known. The fellowship application was strengthened by a trusted

former supervisor's encouragement. The tenured opportunity reached me through global professional networks. In *kairos* journey, relationships are not transactional ladders; they are living channels through which opportunity travels. Credibility built over years of integrity and excellence quietly positions one for unexpected invitations. *Kairos* frequently arrives disguised as a conversation, recommendation, or email from a trusted colleague. Invest deeply and authentically in people; the ecology of *kairos* is simply and deeply relational.

### **Protect Quietness Even More**

As influence grows, noise multiplies—meetings, recognitions, expectations, competing opportunities. Yet every decisive *kairos* moment in my journey began in quiet conviction. The certainty to apply for funding early. The inner unease urging me to move abroad. The persistent pull toward the fellowship. The immediate clarity upon reading the tenured position announcement. Without protected quietness, these signals would have been drowned out by external voices. Silence sharpens discernment.

### **Expect *Kairos* Until the End**

*Kairos* does not retire when we reach seniority. It evolves. Each stage of my journey revealed that as long as one remains active, learning, and contributing, new convergences of timing and preparation will arise. The scale changes. The responsibility deepens. But the rhythm continues. The question is never whether another *kairos* will come. It sure will. The enduring task is readiness—until the final chapter closes.

## **CONCLUSION: IN *KAIROS*, DESTINY DOES NOT CONCLUDE**

As I look back across the seasons of my own journey—the early doctoral funding secured against expectation, the courageous move abroad for my first postdoc, the fellowship that brought me home to my family, and the tenured position that reshaped my long-term trajectory—I see a single thread running through them all: *kairos* never stops. Each moment felt decisive. Each felt like arrival. Yet none was final. The PhD funding felt

like a breakthrough. It was, but it also became preparation. The postdoctoral move abroad felt like expansion. It was, but it also exposed new tensions and deeper longings. The fellowship felt redemptive and restorative. It was, but it also positioned me for broader influence. The tenured role felt like culmination. It was, but it too opened new responsibilities, new expectations, and new horizons yet unseen. Every milestone was both fulfillment and a foundation. Every harvest contained seed. That is the deeper art of career *kairos*. It is not merely about recognizing one defining opportunity or seizing one dramatic moment. It is about cultivating a life that remains ready for the rhythm of many to come. *Kairos* is not an isolated event scattered randomly across a professional lifespan. It is woven into the fabric of purposeful work. It appears when preparation matures, when conviction stirs, when timing aligns. And then, once embraced, it quietly prepares the next convergence. The closing of this article and indeed this series is not an ending. It is itself a *kairos*—a fragile window of reflection and decision. What posture will you now take? Will you carry forward vigilance, so you do not sleep through your next convergence? Will you practice discernment, so that not every opportunity distracts you from the right one? Will you protect quietness, so that the inner witness is not drowned by the noise of achievement or fear? As long as you remain within the walls of your career—learning, contributing, daring—*kairos* will continue to appear. It may not always arrive dramatically. Often it comes disguised as an email, a conversation, an inner unease, or a persistent conviction that refuses to fade. Be ready. For in *kairos*, destiny does not conclude. It unfolds—one fragile window at a time. For me, I have learned to be vigilant and, of course, discerning.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None declared