

A Guide to Help Mentees Make Decisions about Service

Questions	When to say yes	When to navigate carefully	When to say no
Who is asking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It could build connections or strengthen relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying “no” could negatively impact the relationships you are trying to build. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying “no” would not negatively impact professional relationships.
What is being asked?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You want to do it. • The task or opportunity aligns with your teaching or research. • Your existing expertise and skillset will make a strong contribution. • This is a one-time only opportunity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s intriguing, but there are unknowns. • The task or opportunity is tangential to your teaching or research. • You would need to enhance existing skills or expertise to contribute. • Similar service may be offered in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task or opportunity does not align with your teaching and research. • You have minimal interest. • You would need to build skills and expertise. • This service is reoccurring.
When do you have time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have time and/or need to fulfill a service requirement for promotion/tenure. • You can negotiate reduction of other activities or additional compensation to make this service a priority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee/task has little structure or accountability. • There is an unclear timeline, estimate of work, and/or expected deliverables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If untenured and you have not achieved teaching or scholarship metrics. • This will cause you to make sacrifices to important personal priorities.
Where will this make an impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional or national landscape. • Across campus or within your college. • Within your discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across campus or within your college. • Within your discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact target is unclear or limited to only a few individuals.
How does this align with your values?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your participation makes the institution stronger in ways that matter to you. • This outcome will matter in 3-4 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While this service role/activity has some alignment with personal/professional values, there is other work you prefer. • The outcome will matter in 1-2 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service activity detracts from things that are most important to you (e.g., teaching, research, family, etc.). • The outcome won’t matter in the future.

Ways to say no:

“Thank you for considering me. I need to review my obligations and speak with my [chair or mentor].”

“This sounds like a great opportunity, but I just can’t take on any additional commitments at this time.”

“I don’t feel I am the best fit for this. I recommend asking [X] because they may provide more expertise.”



Learning to say no
bit.ly/cfelearntosayno