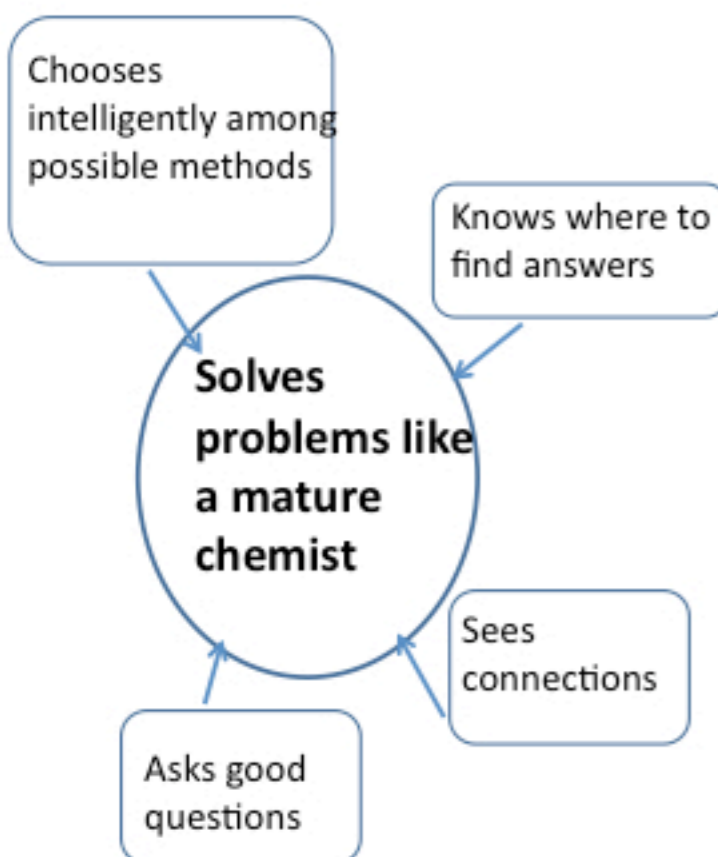# Finding the Center

"**Ester knows how to approach problems as a mature chemist would;**

she knows how to ask good questions, and she knows where to go to start getting answers, whether they are found in the literature, found in conversation with other chemists, or found through experimentation in the laboratory"

Chooses intelligently among possible methods

Knows where to find answers

Solves problems like a mature chemist

Sees connections

Asks good questions

The Ideal Student: Using Faculty Writing to Capture Central Program Outcomes

WHY?

- Faculty resist designing assessment goals and strategies in the abstract.
- Faculty list too many student outcomes
  - Without prioritizing (primary/secondary)
  - Without identifying core goals
  - Trying to be comprehensive

HOW?

Write a recommendation letter for an ideal student in your program who is a new graduate. Include some of the following:
  - What kind of person will this graduate be?
  - What will this graduate be able to do?
  - What will this graduate know?
  - What skills will s/he have?
  - How will s/he behave?
  - What will s/he value?

THEN. . .

- Dissect sample letter for SLOs.
- Identify commonalities and the differences among program faculty letters.
- Diagram the interlocking of goals and the priority of certain ones (left panel).
- Critique letters from other programs
- Catalyze discussions of affective learning goals ("works well in groups," "cheerful" "intellectually mature") (right panel)

Identifying Affective Student Learning Outcomes (e.g. LEAP Personal and Social Responsibility)

"Ester will be an excellent group-member, contributing her own knowledge and skills while also learning actively from her peers.

Ester will also be a stellar TA, as she is not only likeable and easy to get along with, but she is very talented at explaining things from a variety of perspectives. She is patient when working with others, and is so cheerful as she goes about her tasks

that she makes those she works with, peers and younger students alike, want to do their very best for her sake and for their own sake."