

HIGHER EDUCATION AND LIFE PARADOX

Paradoxes are “positive opposites.” Both sides are necessary, but they may appear to be in contradiction at times. Getting the best of both is the key to achieving the higher purposes of individuals and groups.

Classic Paradoxes in Higher Education

Tradition/Change Challenge/Support Autonomy/Collaboration Focus on core/Diversity of experience Structured/Unstructured Students’ needs/Professionals’ needs Unique exploration/Consistency Intellectual/Sensitive	Centralized decision-making/inclusive decision-making Accountability/Autonomy and creativity Consistency/Flexibility Big vision/Details Decisive leadership/Responsive leadership Alignment/Academic freedom Applied, Holistic/Basic, Reductionist
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Other Well-Known Life Paradoxes

Self-expression/Self-control Retreat/Engage Reflect/Act Patience/Urgency Immediate problems/Long range issues Tend to self/Tend to others Work life/Home life Work/Play	Risk/Safety Letting go/Holding on Flexibility/Control Tradition/Innovation Decentralized/Centralized Hesitation/Certainty Spontaneous/Organized Effort/Ease
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A sampling of paradox in organizational life and leadership, including universities:

- Plan your time *and* Be flexible and accessible.

- Be direct in expressing feelings, opinions *and* Be restrained.

- Be visionary *and* Keep your boots on the ground.

- Aim at consensus and collaboration *and* Be decisive and autonomous.

- Be dynamic *and* Be thoughtful and patient.

- Be self-assured *and* Be humble.

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- Be efficient and nimble *and* Be spacious, lingering and reflective.