

Art of Managing Polarity

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POLARITY

“An interdependent pair of values or perspectives that appear to be opposites, but actually need each other over time to function well.”

-Barry Johnson,
Polarity Management

Key Features of a Polarity

- Ongoing and unsolvable (you don't "fix" a polarity)
- Interdependent (you can't optimize one without considering the other)
- Each pole has benefits and liabilities
- Over-focusing on one side creates negative consequences
- Must be managed over time, not resolved once



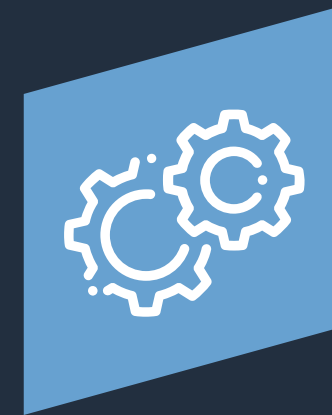
POLARITIES

**Tradition vs
Innovation**



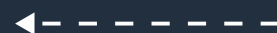
**Sustainability vs
Accessibility**

**Academic Rigor vs
Well-Being**



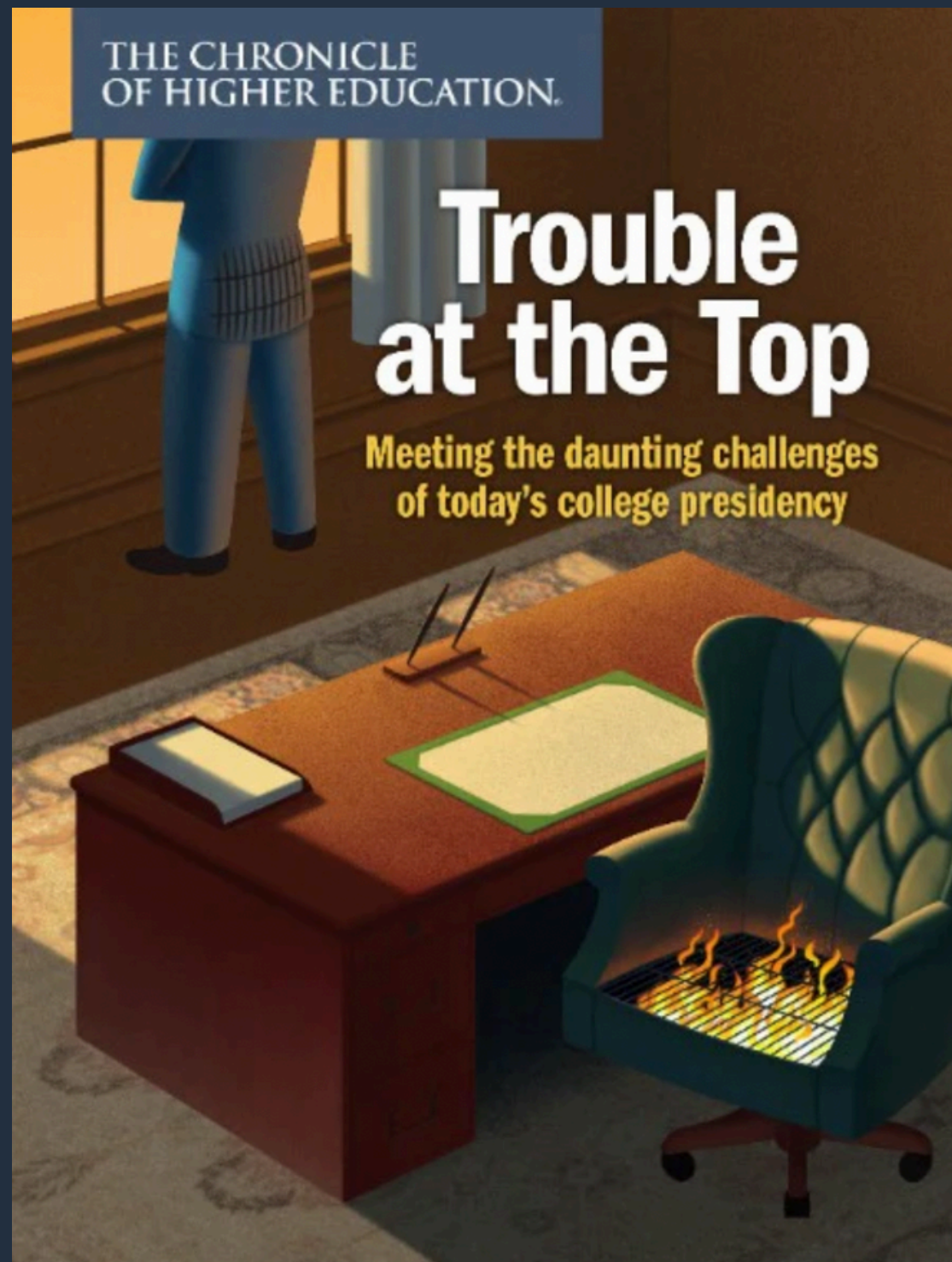
**Individual Needs vs
Community Cohesion**

**Parental Expectations vs
Educational Expertise**



**Student-Centered vs
Curriculum Standards**





“the crosswinds of irreconcilable constituencies”

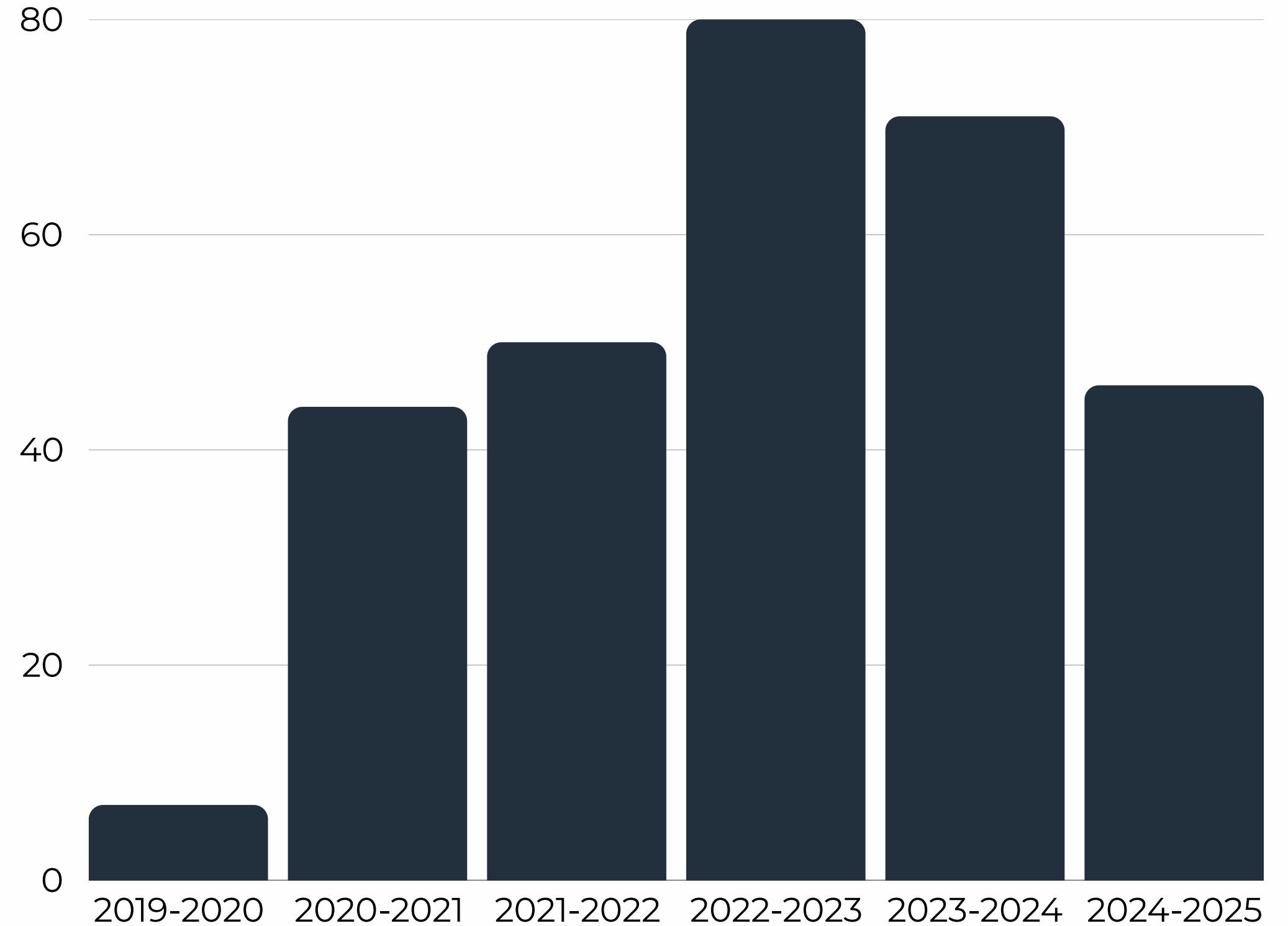
Chronicle of Higher Education, Trouble at the Top, 2023

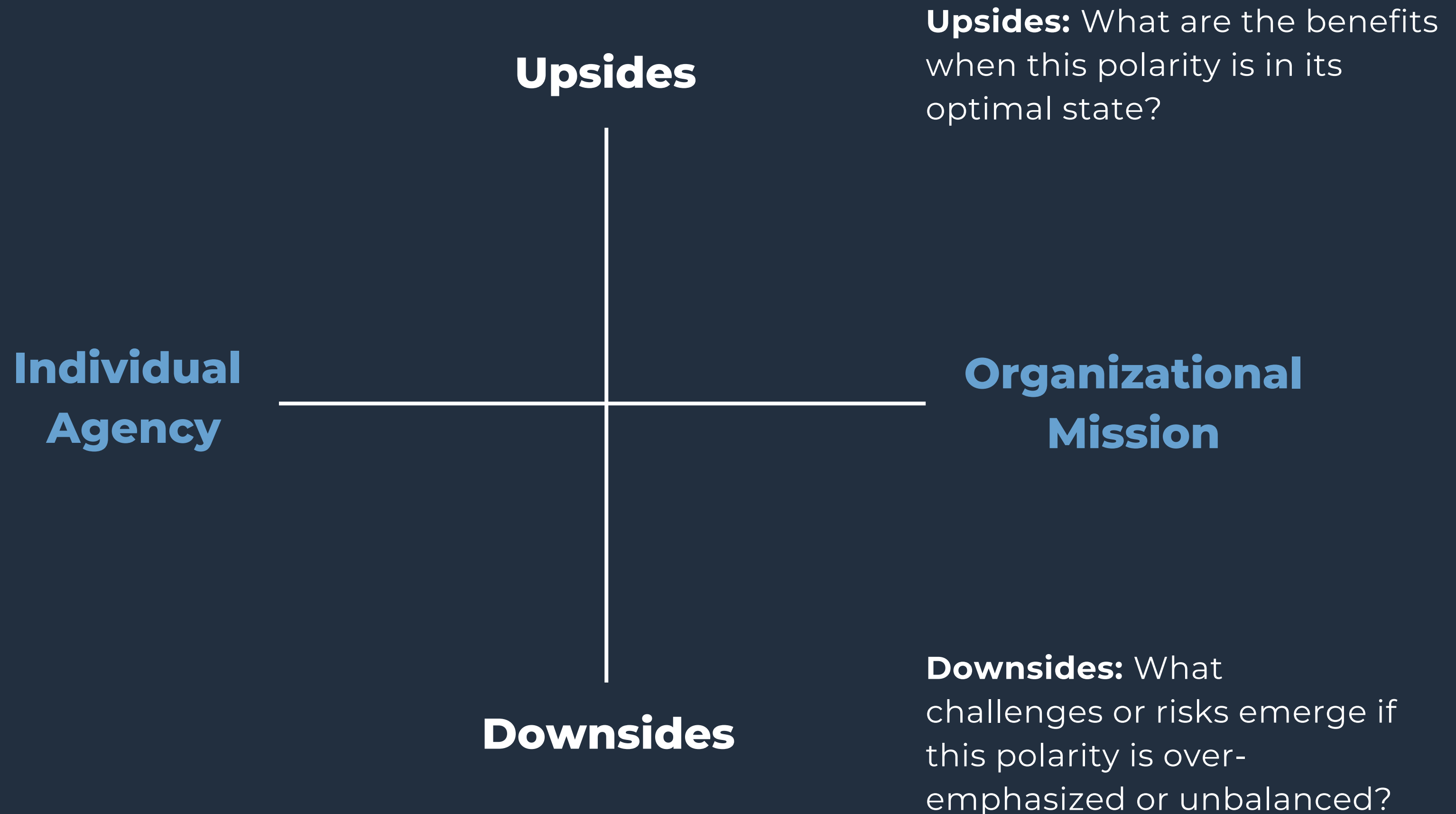
Polarity Shift



Governance Tight Rope

SAIS Head
Turnover Rates





Action Steps

- Create specific, actionable steps that will help maximize the positive aspects of each polarity. These action steps should be clear, practical, and measurable.
- Develop some specific actions to mitigate or counterbalance the negative aspects of the polarity. This might include practices or structures that prevent the downsides from taking over.

