



# **The Arc of the Academic Research Career: Issues and Implications for U.S. Science and Engineering Leadership: Summary of a Workshop**

*Engineering, and Public Policy Committee on Science, Policy and Global Affairs, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine*

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America's research universities have undergone striking change in recent decades, as have many aspects of the society that surrounds them. This change has important implications for the heart of every university: the faculty. To sustain their high level of intellectual excellence and their success in preparing young people for the various roles they will play in society, universities need to be aware of how evolving conditions affect their ability to attract the most qualified people and to maximize their effectiveness as teachers and researchers.

Gender roles, family life, the demographic makeup of the nation and the faculty, and the economic stability of higher education all have shifted dramatically over the past generation. In addition, strong current trends in technology, funding, and demographics suggest that change will continue and perhaps even accelerate in academe in the years to come. One central element of academic life has remained essentially unchanged for generations, however: the formal structure of the professorial career. Developed in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to suit circumstances quite different from today's, and based on traditions going back even earlier, this customary career path is now a source of strain for both the individuals pursuing it and the institutions where they work.

*The Arc of the Academic Research Career* is the summary of a workshop convened by The Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy in September 2013 to examine major points of strain in academic research careers from the point of view of both the faculty members and the institutions. National experts from a variety of disciplines and institutions discussed practices and strategies already in use on various campuses and identified issues as yet not effectively addressed. This workshop summary addresses the challenges universities face, from nurturing the talent of future faculty members to managing their progress through all the stages of their careers to finding the best use of their skills as their work winds down.

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