



The Rise of American Research Universities: Elites and Challengers in the Postwar Era

Hugh Davis Graham, Nancy Diamond

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Before the Second World War, few universities in the United States had earned high respect among the international community of scholars and scientists. Since 1945, however, the distinctive attributes of American higher education—decentralized administration, pluralistic and research-minded faculties, and intense competition for government funding—have become world standard. Whether measured by Nobel and other prizes, international applications for student admissions and faculty appointments, or the results of academic surveys, America's top research universities are the best in the world.

The Rise of American Research Universities provides a fresh historical interpretation of their ascendancy and a fresh, comprehensive estimate of their scholarly achievement. Hugh Davis Graham and Nancy Diamond question traditional methods of rating the reputation and performance of universities; they offer instead an empirical analysis of faculty productivity based on research grants received, published research, and peer approval of that work. Comparing the research achievements of faculty at more than 200 institutions, they differ with most studies of higher education in measuring performance in every academic field—from medicine to humanities—and in analyzing data on research activity in terms of institutional size.

In this important and timely work, Graham and Diamond reassess the success of American universities as research institutions and the role of public funding in their development from the expansionist "golden years" of the 1950s and '60s, through the austerity measures of the 1970s and the entrepreneurial ethos of the 1980s, to the budget crises universities face in the 1990s.

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