



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

By Hugh Davis Graham, Nancy Diamond



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## The Rise of American Research Universities: Elites and Challengers in the Postwar Era By Hugh Davis Graham, Nancy Diamond

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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- Sales Rank: #2565210 in Books
- Brand: Brand: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Published on: 1997-01-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.03" w x 6.00" l, 1.39 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 328 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

[The authors] argue that ratings based on reputation reflect yesterday's reality and understate the quality of some universities while overstating others.

*(Miami Herald)*

Provides a historical perspective on the annual snapshots by such periodicals as *U.S. News and World Report*... Fluid, concise, [and] compelling.

*(Journal of American History)*

An important contribution to our understanding of what actually happened during that amazing period in the history of higher education that began with World War II.

*(Issues in Science and Technology)*

A serious contribution to our knowledge of American research universities. Students and researchers of American higher education will want to read this book, as will public policy makers and administrators.

*(Journal of College Student Development)*

#### From the Back Cover

Before the Second World War, few universities in the United States could compete as research institutions with their European counterparts. Since 1945, however, America's top research universities are the best in the world. In *The Rise of American Research Universities* explains how this remarkable transformation occurred and offers a new, empirical, per capita assessment of the productivity and quality of faculties across the disciplines at more than 200 public and private institutions. From the impact of federal funding and decisions made by administrators at individual universities to the rigorous comparison of institutions, the findings in this book offer important insights into the history and future of the American research university.

#### About the Author

**Hugh Davis Graham** was the Holland N. McTyeire Professor of American History at Vanderbilt University. **Nancy Diamond** is a visiting assistant professor of history and a research associate at Temple University.

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