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**Abstract**

American research universities play an important role in the ongoing campaign to improve the status of women academics. During the last four decades, the practice of producing 'status of women' reports has been widely developed as part of the policy and management repertoire to understand the barriers women academics may face in their institutions. In this study, we attempt to unfold the institutional determinants of producing such reports. The findings suggest that the most important determinant is the existence of a permanent and institutionally sanctioned commission on women at the university level. This type of institutional commitment to matters of women academics proves far more important than the presence of policy entrepreneurs or programme support such as the NSF ADVANCE initiative. The primary policy implication is that universities should invest in and maintain formal institutional structures that focus on the particular needs of women academics. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)