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Women's Wages, Postdoc Woes, and Fabled Arctic Passage Opens in Northern Canadian Waters

Basil Bakir

Women's Wage in Academia A study published in *Academic Medicine* suggests that wage discrimination in science can be corrected by aggressive administration intervention. The study, carried out in the University of Arizona's School of Medicine, shows that wages of women scientists with doctorates in basic sciences went from 89% of their male counterparts to 97.6% after corrective action by the University administration. The study relied on actual salary records instead of surveys. This, the authors argue, makes the study more reliable than past ones.

US Postdocs Struggle to Find Faculty Slots

Postdocs in the life sciences are struggling to move up in the academic hierarchy as they find that tenured faculty slots at major research institutions are staying static even as the number of Ph.D's in the life sciences are increasing. In 2007, nearly 7,000 Ph.D's were graduated by American universities, but the number of Ph.D's in the life sciences with tenure stayed steady at 20,000 —the same number as there were in 1981. This equates to a drop in tenured Ph.D's in the life sciences from 45% in 1981 to 30% today. Analysts credit this trend to an increase in federal funding for biomedical research, which has been focused toward creating infrastructure and not toward faculty.

Fabled "Arctic Passage" Not so Mythical

Climate change is causing increased loss of ice mass in the northern waters of Canada. Analysts say this new passage may eventually be a major route for world-wide trade. Canadian claims to these waters, however, are not recognized by other nations.

Largest Academic Conference Held in San Diego

The Society for Neuroscience annual meeting took place this November in San Diego. This conference, the largest academic conference held in any academic discipline, welcomed over 25,000 attendees.

Merck HIV Vaccine Fails

A clinical trial of a new HIV vaccine being run by Merck recently failed, causing the pharmaceutical giant to halt testing. Merck hoped the vaccine would stimulate native immunity against HIV by the introduction of three synthetic HIV genes through a combination of three weakened strains of adenoviruses, a large, unenveloped double-stranded viral family. The trial tested the vaccine on a population of approximately 700 people at high risk for HIV transmission. Both the comparison and experimental groups experienced the same rate of HIV infection and the experimental group tested for similar levels of bloodborne HIV as did the comparison group.