Patricia J. Gumport is Professor of Education at Stanford University. She serves concurrently as Director of the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research (SIHER) and Executive Director / Principal Investigator of the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI), a national research center funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Dr. Gumport’s research addresses key changes in the academic landscape and organizational character of American higher education. She has a deep and abiding interest in the forces that redefine what counts as knowledge in the academy. As a sociologist of higher education, she has spent much of the past 15 years studying how institutional practices and organizational contexts reshape the content, structure, practice, and relative legitimacy of academic fields. She has studied the conditions in which new knowledge emerges and becomes institutionalized, the professional socialization that occurs during graduate education, and the tensions arising within organizational restructuring as academic areas attempt to weather rounds of budget cuts and selective investment.

Dr. Gumport’s long-term research agenda is both theoretically and practically driven. She extends core concerns in the sociology of knowledge to the study of higher education, identifying how knowledge is cultivated and shaped by academic structures, professional interests, and macrosocietal pressures. Studying the intersection of knowledge, organizations, and environments is unusual in this field, where scholars tend to conceptualize higher education as a people-processing system. Her research is spurred on by practical problems that surface as faculty, administrators, and state officials reconsider the relative merits of curricula, academic programs, departmental practices, and public system designs. Questions over what knowledge matters most, who should decide, and how should it be organized, supported, and taught pose ongoing challenges.

In order to illuminate the nature and consequences of these challenges, Dr. Gumport conducts empirically-grounded studies of academic reorganization and institutional change. She explores what is at stake — not only for teaching and research, but for the fate of academic fields, the trajectory of faculty careers, and higher education’s contributions to society. Over time, her focus has expanded, from studying how faculty develop their scholarship and careers, to analyzing changes in the organizations and public systems within which they work. Her first book analyzes the conditions in which a new field of study emerges and gains academic legitimacy through the case of feminist scholarship. Her second book examines organizational restructuring, portraying the ascendance of industry logic and identifying its consequences within public higher education during the last quarter of the 20th century.

Dr. Gumport has presented over 125 papers and invited addresses at professional conferences and institutes in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to an extensive record of professional service, she has served as consultant to numerous foundations, organizations, and state agencies on a wide range of higher education issues, including academic restructuring, curricular change, academic planning and program review, reconciling tensions between management and governance, faculty productivity, graduate education, and interdisciplinarity. As a professor in the School of Education at Stanford, she directs the higher education Ph.D. program and teaches courses on higher education, academic management and planning, organizational theory, research design and field research methods. She received her graduate degrees from Stanford University, two master’s degrees and a PhD in 1987.