

# BUILDING A MENTORING CULTURE FOR SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC CAREERS

IARU PRESIDENTS' MEETING

CAMBRIDGE, UK

23 – 25 MAY 2022

*go global*

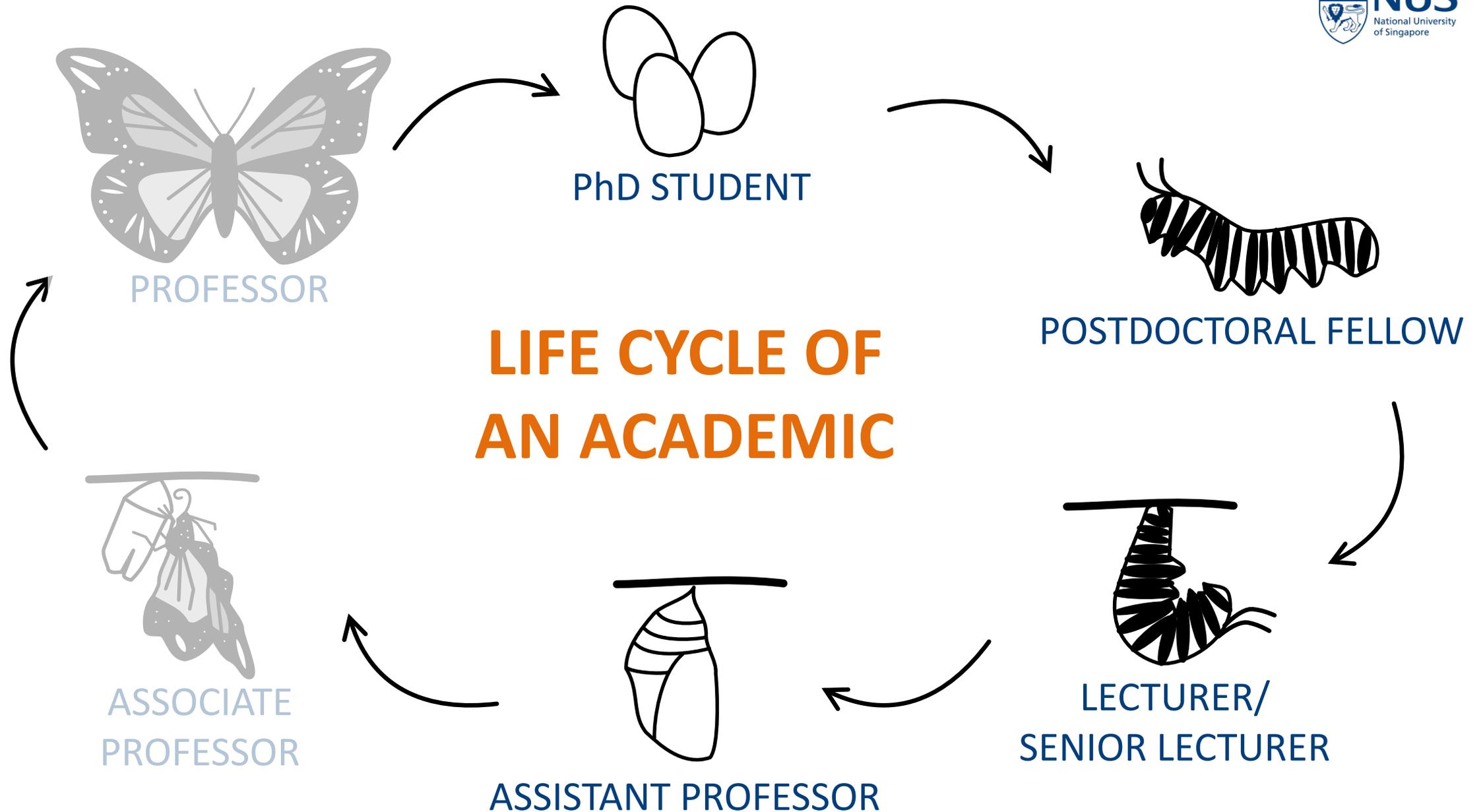
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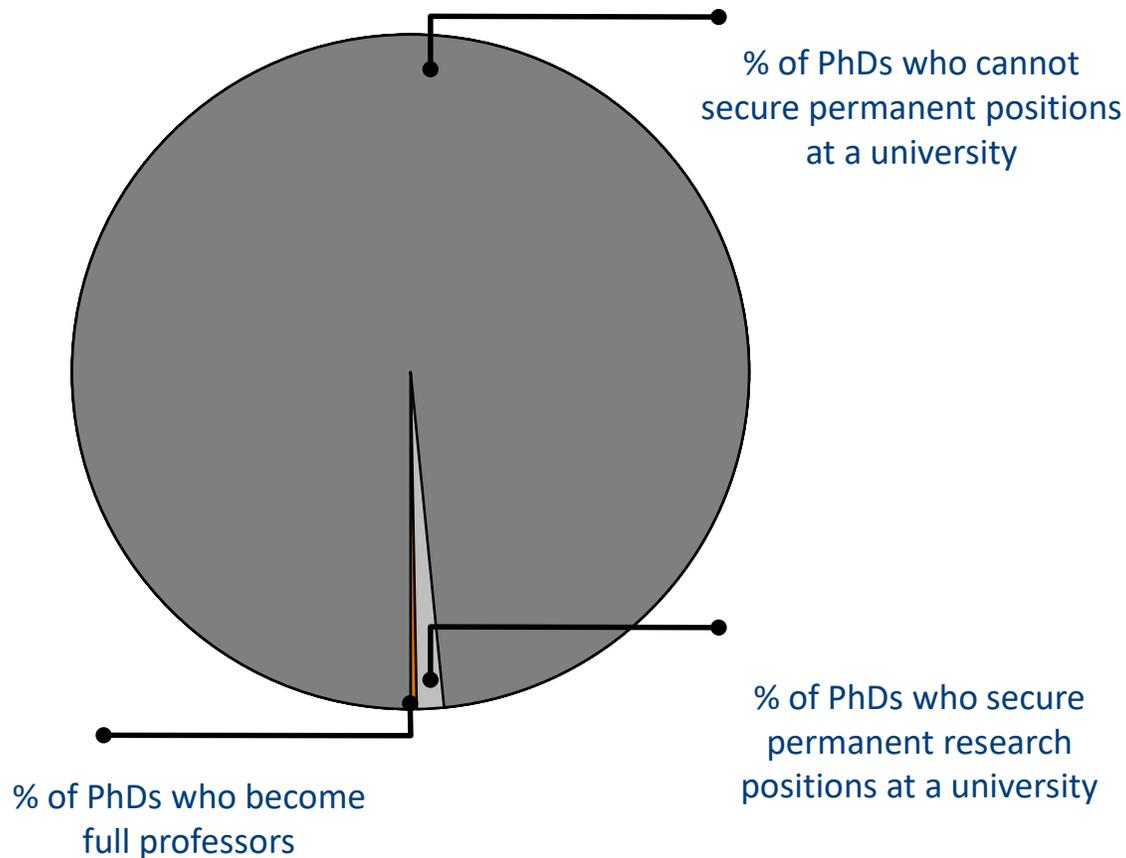
# OVERVIEW

- THE PROBLEM
  - HOW WE SUPPORT FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
  - BUILDING A MENTORING CULTURE
  - LEARNING FROM & WORKING WITH IARU MEMBERS
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# THE PROBLEM

## *Vitae cyclum interruptus*



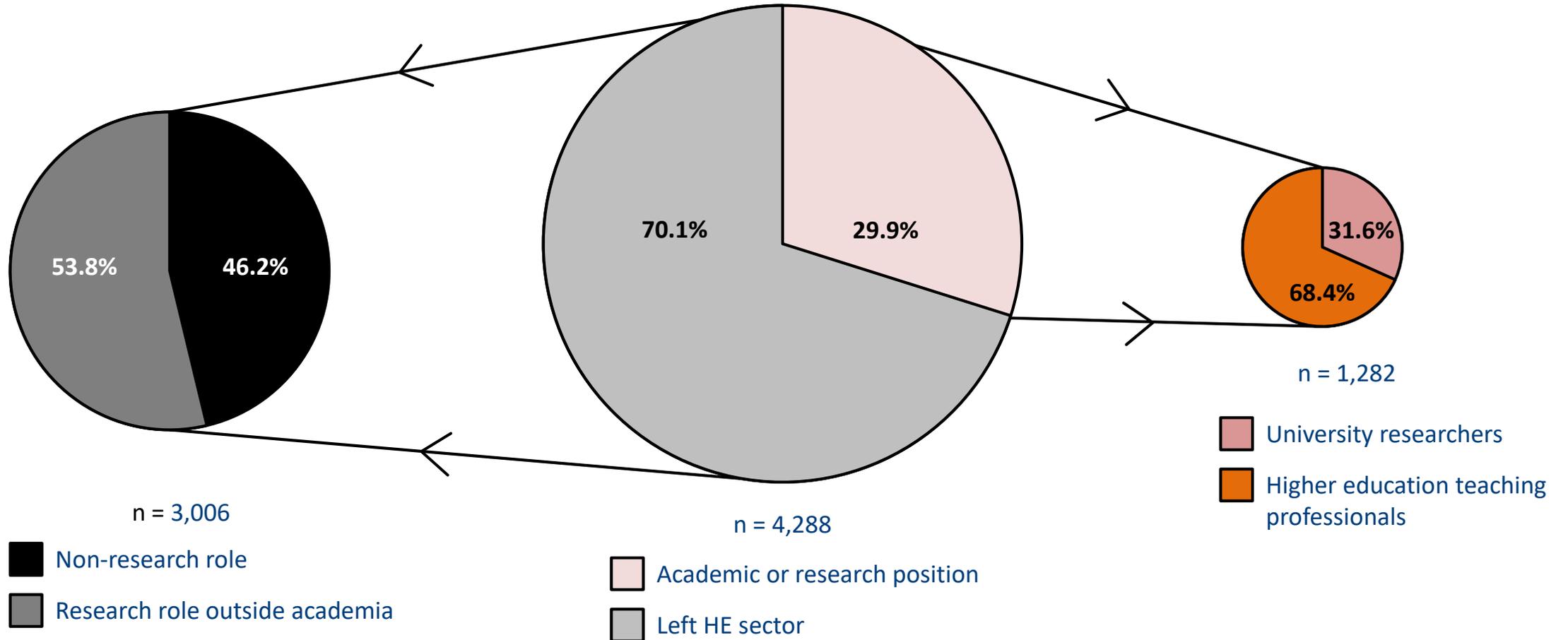
A study by The Royal Society found that **only 3.5%** of students that complete a PhD secure a permanent research position at a university.

Of those lucky few, **only 12%** (or 0.45% of the total) make it to professor level.

- Academics Anonymous, Guardian 24 Aug 2018

# EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

## 3.5 YEARS AFTER GRADUATION



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency & Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Longitudinal Survey (Long DLHE)

# WHY IT MATTERS

## Cost of training and recruitment

- High personal and societal opportunity cost in training a young academic
- Significant search and recruitment costs to institutions

## Cost of losing a junior academic prematurely

- Loss of institutional and community human capital
- Turnover is disruptive
- May impair educational quality, diversity and inclusion

# WHY DON'T ACADEMICS PROGRESS?

Insufficient resources



At challenging stage  
of life



Different needs for  
different fields



Burnout



Discrimination



Lack of direction and  
guidance



# PhDs: the tortuous truth

***Nature's* survey of more than 6,000 graduate students reveals the turbulent nature of doctoral research.**

36%

of respondents have sought help for anxiety or depression caused by PhD studies. One-third of them sought help from places other than their institution, and 18% sought help at their institution but didn't feel supported.

©nature

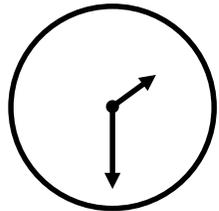
Source: *Nature* PhD Survey 2019

# OUR APPROACH

Focus on well-being & professional development over entire academic life cycle

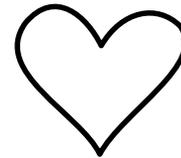
- Cultivation of young academic talent
- Guidance on optimising professional development (e.g. educator track, tenure track)
- Support through grants and welfare schemes

# WHAT WE DO



## TIME

- MTAR
- Tenure clock extension
- Special sabbatical



## WELFARE

- Provide teaching reliefs and a say in search committees
- Inclusive environment
- Diverse pathways



## FUNDING

- Start-up package
- Seed funding for tenure and educator tracks
- Writing fellowships



## EXPERTISE

- Clinics on preparation
- Educator-in-Residence Programme
- Enrichment experience

# NURTURING YOUNG ACADEMIC TALENT

## PRESIDENTIAL YOUNG PROFESSORSHIP



- Enables NUS to compete for excellent early-career talent
- Allows NUS to remain competitive in global talent recruitment
- Provides a generous start-up research grant and white space funding to kickstart career of top talents

## MENTORSHIP FOR NEW HIRES



- Provides development opportunities including individualized academic mentorship, workshops on teaching fundamentals and grant writing
- Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Research Fellowship provides junior, mid-career faculty one semester of protected time

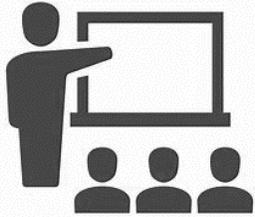
## MID-TERM ADVISORY REPORT



- Aims to provide timely guidance and constructive feedback to tenure track Assistant Professors
- Consolidates areas of improvement and identifies their strengths from feedback across the university to help them plan for tenure application

# NURTURING YOUNG ACADEMIC TALENT

## PRE-TENURE FACULTY ENGAGEMENT



Support early-career faculty's growth and development as a scholar

- Workshops, roadshows, and small-group meetings between junior faculty and senior management
- Share scholastic expectations of faculty
- Recently-tenured colleagues share personal experiences and journey towards successful academic career
- Gather feedback on challenges faced

## SCHEMES TO SUPPORT WOMEN FACULTY



- Annual Women Faculty in Academia Networking Session
  - ✓ To encourage conversations and create meaningful connections
  - ✓ Platform for women professors to share their personal experiences
- Enhancement of family-friendly policies since 2021
- Fund-raising efforts
  - ✓ Roll out programmes to empower and develop women talent in Singapore and across the region
  - ✓ Offer more endowed professorships to women faculty in STEM
- Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine through the Office for Equal Opportunities and Career Development (EOCD) seeks to create an environment and shape a culture that advances gender equality

BEYOND THE STRUCTURAL SUPPORT:

How can we build a culture that brings about greater change?

WE STILL NEED:

A way to propagate the intangible skills of navigating academia.

# NAVIGATING CAREER PROGRESS

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound (SMART) criteria must be understood and translated into action

- But many junior academics have little experience coming into a faculty position

Summative assessment and metrics used may also create perverse incentives

- Publish a lot regardless of relevance or be risk averse to try new things

Unis are large, opaque places with silos

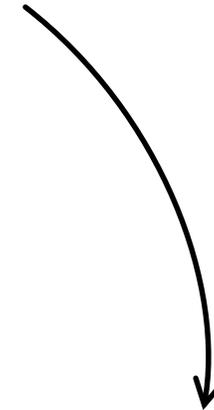
- Break down barriers, improve access and be more relatable to faculty

Incentives &  
structures



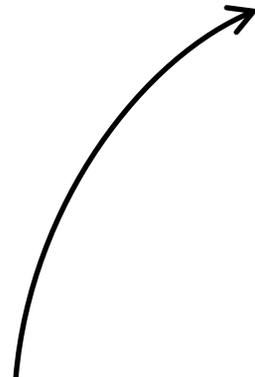
Senior academics who care for  
juniors become effective leaders

**MENTORING  
CULTURE**



Junior academics thrive  
Enhanced retention

Academics who have benefited  
create new mentoring  
relationships



**#1**

**Higher education under pressure  
to do more with less**

**#2**

**Falling proportion of PhDs who will  
secure academic positions**

**CONTEXT &  
CHALLENGES**

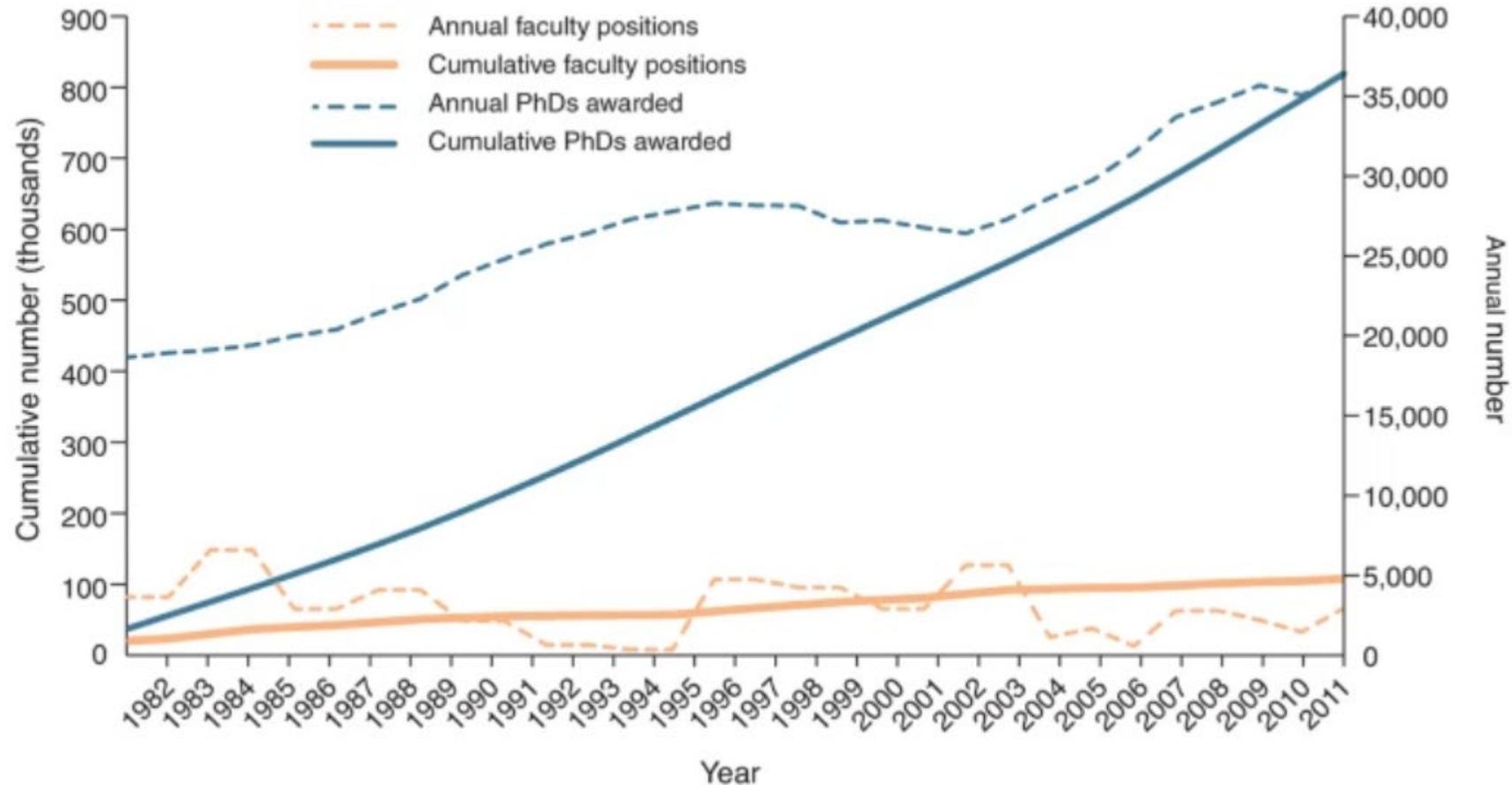
**#3**

**Need a critical mass of able and  
willing mentors**

**#4**

**Problems finding mentors for niche  
and emergent fields**

# TOO MANY PHDS RELATIVE TO PERMANENT ACADEMIC POSITIONS



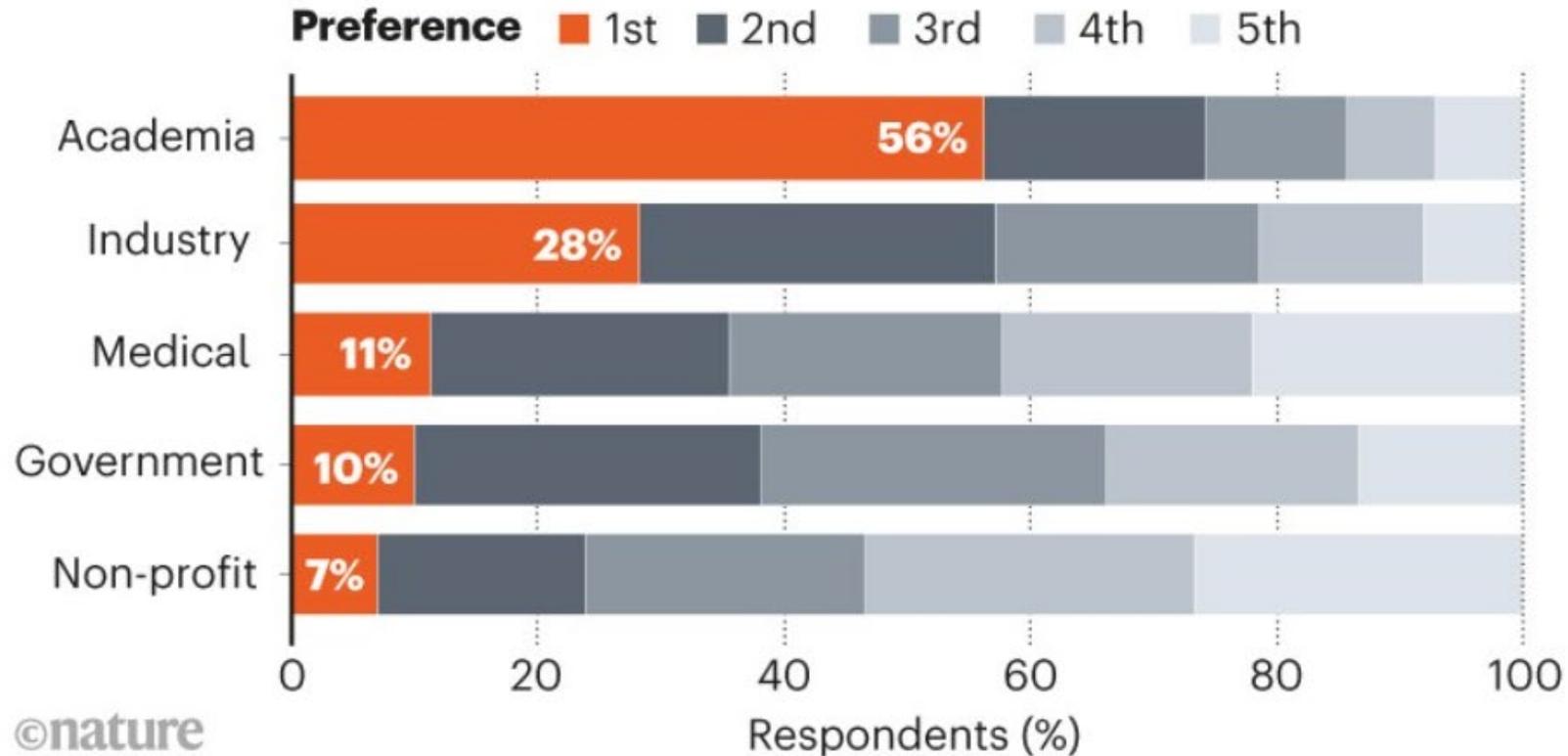
Schillebeeckx, M. et al. The missing piece to changing the university culture. *Nat Biotechnol* 31, 938–941 (2013).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.2706>

# ACADEMIC DREAMS

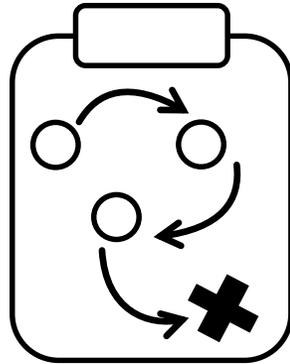
PhD students around the world continue to aspire to careers in academia despite a global job crunch. Industry — a growing job sector for PhD scientists — rates a distant second.

**Q: Which of the following sectors would you most like to work in (beyond a postdoc) when you complete your degree?**



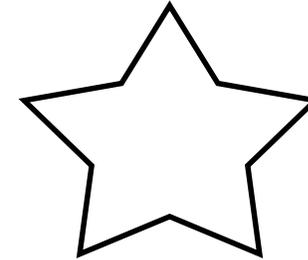
# NUS PROPOSES

## PLAN



- Mentoring collaboration across IARU universities
- 1-year exchange residency
- Shared resources

## BENEFITS



- Tap comparative advantage of partners
- Exposure to different cultures and networks
- Enrich faculty

# DISCUSSION: IT TAKES A VILLAGE

- How feasible is this across IARU universities?
  - ✓ APRU Asia-Pacific Women in Leadership (APWiL) Mentoring Program
- Sharing best practices among members
- Possible implementation hurdles?

# THANK YOU!

*go global*



# TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH

## (OPTIONAL SLIDE)

- Ensure leadership is engaged and empowered to support faculty to reach full potential
- Develop an aspirational, shared vision for the future and frame all conversations around it
- Get everyone involved. Activate all levels to brainstorm innovative changes and help achieve the vision
- Create a sense of urgency for bold action and build momentum throughout the university
  - ✓ Share success stories about other institutions to inspire action