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Karlene H. Roberts is a Professor at the Walter A. Haas School of Business, at the University of California at Berkeley. She is also Chair of the Center for Catastrophic Risk Management at Berkeley. Roberts earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Stanford University and her Ph.D. in Industrial Psychology from the University of California at Berkeley. She also received the docteur honoris causa from the Universite Paul Cezanne (Aix Marseilles III). Since 1984 Roberts has investigated the design and management of organizations and systems of organizations in which error can result in catastrophic consequences. She has studied both organizations that failed and those that succeed in this category. Some of the industries Roberts has worked in are the military, commercial marine transportation, healthcare, railroads, petroleum production, commercial aviation, banking, and community emergency services.

Roberts has consulted in the areas of human resource management, staffing policies, organizational design, and the development of cultures of reliability. Recently she has consulted with the military, in the healthcare industry, in software development, and in the financial industry. She testified before the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. Roberts is a Fellow in the American Psychological Association, the Academy of Management, and the American Psychological Society. She has contributed to policy formation for the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, the Department of Energy, and the Mineral Management Service of the U.S. Department of Interior.