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## External Evaluation Report for the FY2018–2023 Project Results

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This document reports the results of an external evaluation of the FY2018–2023 project results based on the attached Report on the Results of the Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced Type) Project for FY2018–2023.

1) Initiatives aimed at achieving a recruitment rate of 30% or more for women researchers

Remarks: It is highly commendable that various systems for promoting the recruitment of female faculty were devised and introduced during the project period. These include engagement by the Executive Assistant to the President in Charge of Diversity in the Faculty Human Resources Committee, formulation of disclosure rules related to retention, recruitment, and promotion-related information, introduction of a new human resources governance system, and distribution of incentives for departments depending on the increased number of female faculty. In particular, the new human resources governance system is designed to encourage proactive engagement by checking each department's awareness as a stakeholder and their attitude toward initiatives in all phases of the PDCA cycle for faculty personnel.

However, the actual recruitment rate was 23.9% in FY2023, which is a significant deviation from the target and lower than the number in FY2018 (25.3%). Therefore, it is difficult to say that progress is being made toward target achievement in numerical terms. Although the retention rate of female faculty—representing the accumulation of recruitment—increased by 2.1% over the project period, it is trending with increasing deviation from the target. There is a need to reconfirm the principles and goals and to analyze the problem situation and challenges to make the next step forward.

Since some initiatives, such as the new human resources governance system, were only introduced quite recently, I hope these systems are put into full operation and lead to concrete outcomes going forward. To this end, strong commitment is necessary from not only the Executive Assistant to the President in Charge of Diversity and Gender Equality Office but also the President, university administration, and departmental heads. I strongly hope that, under the clear commitment of the President, university-wide initiatives will be accelerated, along with the improvement of the effectiveness of these diverse systems.

There is a need to improve the way information related to statistics (e.g., department-specific

recruitment rates) and university-wide initiatives is provided on websites, etc. I hope the information is made more accessible both internally and externally and that the content is improved as well.

2) Initiatives aimed at improving the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions (promotion rate)

Remarks: The PI Training Program for International Collaborative Research, which involves dispatching women researchers abroad, along with the International Collaborative Early-career Researcher Training Program in 3), is noteworthy as an initiative distinct to Kobe University for furthering the promotion of women to higher ranking positions. As shown in the verification of program results in 5), outcomes leading to enhancement of researchers' academic achievements, such as growth in external funding acquisition, can be confirmed. It is unfortunate that there were some years where the program could not be implemented as planned due to the COVID pandemic. Going forward, I hope the project's initiatives are enhanced and expanded by capitalizing on the PI Training Program for International Collaborative Research's integration with the International Collaborative Early-career Researcher Training Program, boosting financial resources, and other means.

Although the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions inevitably fluctuates greatly year to year, it failed to reach the target in most years, and, overall, it cannot necessarily be said that the goal was achieved smoothly. However, the promotion rate was high at 33.3% in FY2023 (first half), giving hope for the future. I hope further positive impacts can be achieved in promotion by improving the overseas dispatch program as well as putting the human resources system presented in 1) into full action.

3) Initiatives aimed at increasing the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks: It is unfortunate that the International Collaborative Early-career Researcher Training Program, which involves dispatching young researchers abroad, could not be implemented in the latter part of the project period due to the COVID pandemic. Even though it has been integrated with the PI Training Program in 2), there is a need to increase dispatches and improve the program with more focus on younger researchers.

In order to increase the base of women researchers, it is important to engage female junior and senior high school students and to foster understanding among school teachers and parents. I hope the initiatives are improved even further to help raise awareness in schools and households.

4) Enhance the diversity environment and expand it beyond the university

Remarks: It is evaluated that the adoption of the Diversity Statement and formulation of the Basic

Policy and Guidelines for Diverse Sexualities and Genders at Kobe University will lead to a deeper understanding of diversity and concrete action among university members.

On the other hand, even though the Diversity Co-creation Network for promoting diversity in collaboration with external companies is expected to evolve into a platform for diversity promotion in the region, its activities have not necessarily been spreading despite the creation of the Diversity Education Program. I hope efforts are made to develop activities based on this network and to revitalize the network by increasing the number of participating companies.

The Diversity Fund, which is funded by donations, should be enhanced to support the International Collaborative Researcher Training Program. I hope the fund is enhanced in tandem with revitalization of the Diversity Co-creation Network.

#### 5) Verification of the results and evaluations of the Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers

Remarks: The overall outcomes of the Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers have been analyzed based on various indicators. This is a remarkable initiative and is considered to lead to evolution of future activities. The effects of the initiatives are suggested in terms of acquisition of external funding and academic achievements. While appropriately promoting these outcomes, I hope efforts are continued to gather and disseminate evidence from various angles toward improving the program.

#### 6) Initiatives over the entire six-year period of the project

Remarks: I imagine that during the six-year period, there were factors such as the COVID pandemic that greatly hindered overseas dispatch and made it difficult to implement the programs as intended. It is regrettable that the recruitment, promotion, and retention rate numbers for female faculty failed to reach the targets. There is a need to keep making progress toward goal achievement while constantly analyzing the problem situation and challenges.

Among these initiatives, it is highly commendable that efforts have been made to address the governance of the faculty human resources system, which is a core element, and undertake challenges toward substantial awareness raising and organizational culture reform. However, with such systems, it is important to not only develop the framework but also to make them function effectively. As stated in 1), the initiatives need to be accelerated with the entire university and its departments aligned in the same direction under the President's leadership.

Furthermore, there is a greater need than before to cooperate with other players in society. As Kobe University has diversity-related global promotion frameworks such as UNESCO Chair, I hope it will leverage its strengths derived from global networks and perspectives. Additionally, I hope that the university will, as a regional hub for innovation creation, position the Co-creation

Network as a diversity promotion platform that is essential for an innovation environment. Enhancement of the Diversity Fund is an important initiative involving citizens and companies. I hope this project will serve as an opportunity to advance co-creation with society through such initiatives.