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External Evaluation Report for the Initiative to Realize a Diverse Research Environment (Advanced Type) Project (2018)

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This sheet is for reporting the results of the external evaluation related to Items 1 through 6 of the "Achievement of Project Goals" in the Report on the Results of the Initiative to Realize a Diverse Research Environment (Advanced Type) for 2018.

1) Achieve a recruitment rate for women researches of 30% of more
Remarks:
Impressive progress has been made in <u>recruitment</u> since the low of 2016 and you appear to be well on your way to hitting the 30% target in 2020. While you had a slight decline in <u>retention</u> over that same period, it is likely that improvement in retention would lag behind improvement in recruitment. If the successes with recruitment (in combination with other efforts) are making the organizational culture more conducive to diversity and gender equality (more inclusive of women), that should have a positive impact on retention and 2019 should show an uptick. I was struck by what appears to be a low rate of retention over the last six years (hovering around 17%). It would be valuable to compare the retention statistics of women researchers with retention statistics of male researchers. The degree to which retention rates for women are lower than for men likely would be an indication that the organizational culture needs to further evolve in terms of gender equity. Ensuring that the organizational culture better reflects the principles inherent in the Kobe University Diversity Statement and Gender Equality Declaration will be key to enhancing retention and thereby maintaining your recruitment gains. You can have great success in recruiting more women, but if they don't stay, your overall goals will not be achieved.

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher-ranking positions
Remarks:
The percentage of women staff doubled in 2018, to 22%. That is significant, especially given that the size of the staff shrank by 5.6% (from 53 to 50). In terms of senior professorial positions, you did not make your goal with Associate Professors. But you slightly exceeded your goal with full Professors. Understanding what factors led to success (or inhibited it) would be important. Also, it is unclear what your ultimate goal is for the percentage of women holding higher-ranking positions. Just as you've stated explicit targets for recruiting women, setting explicit goals for the number of women professors is an important component of making greater progress. Of course, building a higher percentage of women at the base of the pyramid (Associate Professors) would help increase numbers at the top (Professors) if bias does not play a role in promotions. It was a wise strategic move to promote women as Executive Advisers to the President, as this helps to advance a culture of gender inclusivity.

3) Increase the number of next generation early career researchers

Remarks:

Your strategy of implementing two international initiatives to increase the number of young researchers is exciting. No numbers were provided that could illustrate the degree to which this strategy is succeeding.

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

Remarks:

It appears that you employed three strategies for fulfilling this component: (1) making a statement of Kobe University's values and goals for all to see; (2) engaging the corporate sector; and (3) educating/engaging the university community (although it's unclear how many people participated in the forum). To build upon this progress it will be important to expand on all strategies. For example, is it time to review the Diversity Statement to see if it still reflects the University's goals/principles and whether it could be improved? Ensuring full inclusion can be a challenge as community norms and expectations (at least in the U.S. academic and nonprofit environments) are changing rapidly and there is not universal agreement about what is the proper acronym or policy. It can be hard to keep up.

In this regard, I suggest one item for your consideration. In the Kobe University Diversity Statement in paragraph two, gender identity and "her/his/their individuality" are mentioned. That terminology covers a lot of bases for those who understand and/or are watchful about the current issues relevant to non-binary/gender non-conforming people in addition to transgender people. That is very good. But then in the immediately succeeding Kobe University Gender Equality Declaration, the language is completely binary. In the U.S.A., the institutions most on the cutting edge of these issues are colleges and universities and nonprofits but there is much inconsistency. And there are significant differences of opinion about how to recognize the many different forms of gender identity and expression we're now seeing among younger people (some of which identify as neither male nor female or as both, depending upon the day) without negating the long-time reality of sexism and inequality between men and women and how that has impacted women in the workplace. I don't have the answers to this fast-evolving arena. However, I have attached a copy of a policy developed by two reputable national organizations intended for school districts below the college level but which may be helpful to you both regarding terminology and other relevant matters.

Continuing to engage/educate the University community is crucial to this effort. What more could be done there, perhaps with on campus fora or programs within key departments of the University? And continuing to involve your corporate partners in this effort could be beneficial in numerous ways. Given that most corporations are also dealing with issues of gender equality in the workplace, they may have some experience to share about strategies they've used successfully.

5) Initiatives particular to this project

Remarks:

You touched important bases with your research into other diversity education programs. These days academic and private institutions worldwide are engaged in similar efforts. There may be more to learn from additional research. I was also impressed that you examined support systems for women researches dispatched overseas. The report did not indicate what you learned and what actions were taken. One powerful tool for your consideration is to survey women researchers dispatched overseas to ask them what they want and need in terms of support systems. It also might be useful to consider a similar survey of women professors regarding the barriers they face or changes that might make the environment better (such a survey might need to allow people to respond anonymously in case people fear reprisals for sharing their views).

6) Issues to be addressed with respect to this project

Remarks:

Reports on each occurrence of an HR-related issue are very important in inspiring progress with this project. The same is true for ensuring that departments are praised for their successes and held accountable for failing to meet goals. Offering tactical assistance to those areas experiencing problems during the course of the year could be very helpful. Finally, when it comes to fundraising, you might consider something more than an annual membership fee system. Perhaps a few of your closest corporate partners might be willing to make multi-year commitments as Lead Sponsors of the Diversity Co-Creation Partner Club. Perhaps a 3 – 5 year commitment (in an amount that exceeds the annual dues and offers extra visibility) would bring in more revenues and enable you to plan longer term for the program's sustainability.

7) Remarks regarding the overall project

I applaud Kobe University for focusing on this project and for its successful efforts to date. Changing an entire organizational culture to enhance diversity and build gender equality is a huge undertaking. But it is critical to the future success of any institution as significant as Kobe University.