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External Evaluation Report for the 2018–2019 Project Results

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This document reports the results of an external evaluation of the 2018–2019 project results based on the attached Report on the Results of the Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced Type) Project for 2018–2019.

1) Achieve a recruitment rate of 30% or more for women faculty

Remarks:

(i) It is highly regrettable that the goal of achieving a recruitment rate of 30% or more for women faculty was not achieved.

(Commendable aspects)

- Of the five departments with a retention rate of 10% or less for women faculty (Advanced Economics and Business Administration Research Discipline, Science Discipline, Engineering Discipline, System Informatics Discipline, Maritime Sciences Discipline), the Engineering Discipline has made active efforts, resulting in a female recruitment rate of 30.8% (data from 2019; the same applies hereinafter).
- Requests have been made to the executive division and departmental heads, and discussions are being held.

(Issues)

- The high recruitment rate of women as academic researchers and assistant professors represents two opposite aspects. The positive aspect is that active efforts are being made to recruit young women researchers, while the negative aspect is that young women researchers are experiencing more instability in employment and finding it difficult to continue research while dealing with life events (e.g., childbirth). Follow-ups of individual researchers should be conducted regularly after their recruitment.

(ii) It is highly commendable that the visualization of gender data, such as retention rate, was completed in late 2019.

(Commendable aspects)

- The data on the website is easy to access from the Gender Equality Office's top page.
- Figures and tables are provided for each faculty and are easy to understand.

<http://www.office.kobe-u.ac.jp/opge-kyodo-sankaku/data/data/index.html>

(Issues)

- For further improvement, adding a caption (goal, achieved grade, comparison, etc.) to each figure and table would make it even better.

- Providing the following figures and tables would make the website even better:

A graph that enables comparison between the percentages of student and faculty

A graph that shows changes in the percentage of women faculty (currently only the numbers are provided)

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions (promotion rate)

Remarks:

(i) It is commendable that the promotion rate of women faculty has exceeded the target of 20%. However, the disparity due to position classification has not been reduced.

(Issues)

- The fact that the percentage of female professors varies greatly by department has not been sufficiently addressed.

- Four of the aforementioned departments with a retention rate of 10% or less for women faculty have no or one female professor, while the Science Discipline has three female professors. University-wide efforts should be made to promote women to professorships and/or recruit female professors. In order for the opinions of a minority to be reflected in organizational decisions, a percentage of at least 30%, or at least three persons in numerical terms, is necessary. Thus, in the current situation, it is assumed that women's opinions are hardly reflected in departmental decisions. Even the faculty with the lowest percentage of women students, that is the Faculty of Engineering, has a percentage of 15.9%. Therefore, there is a significant imbalance between the percentage of women students and the percentage of women faculty. This means that the women students do not have a role model to follow, and there are concerns that this may make it difficult to gather female candidates as birthrates decline even further.

(ii) Overall, it is commendable that the percentage of women holding executive positions is increasing.

(iii) It is highly commendable that the target for women faculty dispatched overseas has been achieved.

(Commendable aspects)

- In late 2018, the Preparatory Program for Participating in the PI Training Program was launched as a preparatory program for long-term overseas dispatch, and eight researchers, including assistant professors, have participated in it. Moreover, the researchers are from various fields and

not concentrated in a particular field.

- One lecturer who participated has been promoted to associate professor, serving as an effective role model.

(Issues)

- Domestic and international travel has been greatly restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but this has led to developments in online research exchange. Going forward, new ways to promote international exchange, such as through supporting online collaborative research, should be considered.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks:

- (i) It is highly commendable that the International Human Resource Exchange Program has been consistently implemented, and that its outcomes are published and shared through reports, etc.

- (ii) It is commendable that consistent efforts are being made to reach out to junior high school and high school girls. Relevant initiatives include open events for high school girls who have aspirations for studying in STEM areas and the Kansai-kagakujuku for junior high school girls.

(Issues)

- It would be even better if the effects of these initiatives targeting junior high school and high school girls were shown in data, such as data on their future course of study.

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

Remarks:

- (i) It is highly commendable that all the goals have been achieved.

- (ii) It is highly commendable that the university intends to build on the Diversity Fund's target of 50 million yen to ensure project continuity. However, the fund's achievements are unclear. The leaflet is very well designed: it is easy to understand and contains the Kobe University Diversity Statement.

(Issues)

- The status of the fund raised is difficult to grasp. In an article of the Kobe University Fund, it is stated that a donation of 6.03 million yen was made in 2019, but a link to this article is not provided on the Gender Equality Office's website. In order to allow verification of future achievements, fund-related data and outcomes need to be visualized.

https://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/documents/info/kikin/kikin_houkoku2019.pdf

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

Remarks:

(i) The data confirms that the research achievements of participants of the Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers have been increasing, which is highly commendable.

(ii) It is commendable that an article on the Presentation Session for the 2018 Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers and Support for Collaborative Research is posted on the website.

(Issues)

- Most users of the Long Term Overseas Visit Program for Young Researchers are men. The relationship between this program and the Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers should be made clearer.

https://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/NEWS/info/2020_02_20_01.html

6) Overall remarks (please also write any remarks regarding the Measures Addressing Issues Identified in the 2018 External Evaluation)

Remarks:

(i) Most of the issues identified in the 2018 external evaluation have been addressed. This indicates a determination to tackle the issues, and represents a highly commendable attitude. Further efforts are expected regarding issues that have not yet been addressed, including those that were identified again in the present evaluation report.

(ii) Overall, the program has made achievements such as improvement in terms of internationalization and research capabilities. It is commendable that these achievements are consistently leading to the empowerment of young female researchers.

(iii) The realization of Society5.0 and the SDGs is an international challenge as well as a challenge for Japan's industry, universities, and government, and requires a collaborative approach involving both STEM and non-STEM fields. The Basic Act on Science and Technology was revised to include provisions pertaining to non-STEM fields. Initiatives should be implemented even further toward creating a research environment that will not only lead to the development of women researchers in STEM fields but also promote active exchange between women researchers in both STEM and non-STEM fields.