

Date: 4 January 2021

External Evaluation Report for the Program "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment" (Advanced type) for the FYs 2018–2019

Name: Saniye Gulser Corat

This document reports the results of an external evaluation of the FYs 2018–2019 project results based on the separate “Report on the Results of the Program "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment" (Advanced type) for the FYs 2018–2019.”

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

Remarks: It is unfortunate that the target for the recruitment rate set for 2019 (27.6%) has not been achieved with the actual rate standing at 23.3%. It would be useful to know what these percentages mean in actual numbers. In any case, this could be seen as a temporary slowing-down in response to the fact that the rate was higher against the target in 2018. In many organizational settings, initial success, especially if it is higher than predicted, can lead to some hesitation and even some unconscious resistance to move too fast. What is important is that the Director-in-Charge and the GE Office Director have responded swiftly and have initiated consultations with the senior management of the University and the department heads. These consultations would prove to be more effective if the end result of the discussions can include new targets set with the department heads within the parameters of what they consider realistic. Setting targets together with the decision-makers at the department level would enhance accountability of the department heads. A complementary measure could be to introduce a system of “public acknowledgment of success” of the departments that achieve the targets. This could even be a simple mention on the University website. Another incentive could be to nominate the department heads that achieve their targets as “Gender Equality Champions” for a set period of time and task them to act as “Peer Mentors” for departments that are having problems meeting their targets.

2020 was especially challenging for recruitment and retention in all sectors, and particularly for women, as COVID-19 brought to light the fact that gender inequalities persist in the private sphere and these inequalities took their toll on working women as they struggled to balance work life with child care and domestic chores. How women researchers responded to these trends has not been specifically analyzed yet but we can expect some negative effect on women researchers and women in academia. Consequently, it is very important that Kobe University identifies and responds to these challenges in a timely and effective manner in order not to fall behind the targets.

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions

Remarks: Good progress has been achieved in relation to this objective. However, I agree with the observation that perhaps the target was not set high enough and the pace of implementation was such that there was self-correction by the system.

What is most remarkable is the progress in the number of women in administrative positions. I commend Kobe University for giving “Executive Advisor to the President” positions to the GE Office Director and the Career Center Director. This is a clear indicator of the importance attached to GE and diversity by the top official of the University and it provides excellent role-modeling for all levels. Having five women Vice-Presidents (out of how many Vice-Presidents?) is a remarkable achievement that should be widely publicized and applauded.

It is important to find out the reasons for the decline in the percentage (and number) of women Associate Professors as this presents problems in the medium-term for the pipeline. More information on the reasons for the decline would be useful for me to reflect on possible actions/measures to recommend.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks: Level of achievement of targets has progressed according to plans and positive and encouraging results have been achieved. It is also worth noting that the strategy of international cooperation with countries around the world is very forward-looking as it broadens the base of collaboration with countries on all continents rather than focusing on a few usual suspects.

I am especially impressed and encouraged with the efforts of outreach to junior and senior high-school girls.

Several research initiatives that I led at UNESCO as the Director for Gender Equality have demonstrated that there is a decline in the number of girls and women who go into science and technology studies and careers. This decline has serious consequences in the development of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, as they re-produce and exacerbate existing gender disparities and gender bias. Two reports I published in 2019 and 2020 on this subject have created a global dialogue and led to some positive action on the part of the technology sector. But, existing efforts are not sufficient to counter the trends. In that respect, this work with high school girls is very much needed and should be expanded.

The two UNESCO reports I mention above can be accessed via:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367416.page=1>

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374174>

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

Remarks: I reiterate my comments from my previous year's report. I also applaud the actions and the achievements in this fiscal year. I would like to stress that collaboration with the private sector is critical, not only to raise funds, but also to learn from each other and to establish synergies.

I would also recommend broad-based dissemination of the Kobe University Diversity Statement with a Call for Participation from all stakeholders with perhaps one-or-two concrete commitments. Both the Statement and the Diversity Education Program should also be publicized in the media, especially social media.

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

Remarks: Both the results and the metrics developed to verify and evaluate the results are very useful and encouraging. In such initiatives, one of the key elements of success that is identified by both scholarly and action research is the fact that measurement, verification and evaluation are critical elements to gauge progress – or lack thereof – in order to move forward.

It is commendable that Kobe University has taken all elements into account and represents a success story in identifying the elements and steps in the implementation of such an initiative.

I also congratulate all involved for the transparency and academic integrity in reporting the results while identifying bottlenecks in a factual and honest manner. Success is also learning from shortcomings, not only from accomplishments.

6) Issues to be addressed with respect to this project (Please add comments regarding “Measures Addressing Issues Identified in the FY 2018 External Evaluation (Report)” here)

Remarks: I feel very honored and proud to be involved in this timely and very important initiative by Kobe University. I would like to congratulate sincerely all those who are involved in planning and implementing it.

We are going through an interesting period in our common history. While changes in technology are outpacing our ability to absorb new developments, we are also being forced to slow down due to the pandemic. Both of these developments – i.e., technological shifts and the pandemic – are also bringing to light the fault lines in our efforts to promote gender equality and broader diversity.

I look forward to this timely collaboration with Kobe University to continue our reflections.