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External Evaluation Report for the Program "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced type)" for the FYs 2020–2021

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This document reports the results of an external evaluation of the FYs 2020–2021 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 2020–2021."

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

Remarks:
 ➢ Actions taken to improve the recruitment rate of 30% or more for women researchers are good steps in the right direction, however, they do not seem to be sufficient to attain the targets identified by the program. For example, publishing the rates of the recruitment, promotion and retention rates of women on the university website is important for public accountability. Accountability would be enhanced if the Gender Equality Office could also publish a list of concrete commitments and specific actions by the university (or those departments that fall short of the targets) to address the shortcoming(s). In this way, when the rates are published periodically, there could also be a short analysis of actions that were taken and that have proven to be effective, thereby providing good examples.
 ➢ Would it be possible to organize short awareness/training sessions to accompany the handouts distributed by the Gender Equality Office to demonstrate unconscious bias examples? Some decision-makers may not have the time to read and digest the material in the handouts. A short session - even in the form of a brown bag lunch informal meeting may prove to be more effective.
 ➢ Participation of the Director of the Gender Equality Office in the Faculty Human Resources Committee is important. This participation should be made permanent.

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions

Remarks:
It is encouraging to read that "there were five women researchers in senior management roles in FY 2020 including the Director of the Gender Equality Office in her capacity as an advisor to the President, already exceeding the target set for the final year (FY 2023)

of the "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment" program".
However, Graph 3 indicates a sharp decline in 2020 (7.32) followed by an improvement to 14.4 in 2021.

What were the reasons for the sharp decline? What actions were taken to bring about the improvement?

It is important for the annual reports to provide some analysis of the reasons for progress or lack thereof so that the evaluators have a better understanding of the context and the factors for the changes – both positive and negative.

2020-2021 presented serious challenges for travel and collaboration as a result of the pandemic. It is very encouraging to read that Kobe University has shown agility and has compensated with online collaboration. Difficult times call for innovative measures. It is very positive that Kobe University researchers have implemented innovative measures through online collaboration and have ensured the continuation of the program.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks:

This component of the program seems to be under-performing. IN FY 2020, only one researcher participated and in FY 2021, there was no application.

- ➢ I would suggest a few different courses of action to improve the implementation of this component:
- ➢ Increase the eligibility age to 50 or 55 – women often take a career break to have and to raise children so they may fall behind in the career ladder. Up to age 45, they may also have school-age children whom they may not be able to leave behind to go and pursue their research in another country. After 50, it is more likely that they will have grown children who can take care of themselves or maybe away at the university.
- ➢ The second course of action is to review where you publicize this opportunity. It maybe useful to use more varied networks to reach a broader base of applicants.
- ➢ Last, but not least, there may be a need for better support systems for researchers to use this opportunity.

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

Remarks: This component was identified as one requiring enhanced and renewed efforts by the FY 2018 and 2019 evaluations. It is very encouraging to read in the last report that several actions have been already been put into implementation to improve the situation. It would be important

for the University to continue its efforts to broaden the partnerships for enhancing the diversity environment as well as the contributions to the Diversity Fund. I would recommend re-visiting the actions identified in the FY2018 and FY 2019 evaluations report and explore if there are other actions that can be taken to work on 4-2-2 to 4-2-5.

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

Remarks:

In the FY 2018 and FY 2019 report, there are important recommendations for the verification and evaluation, including soliciting views of dispatched researchers about support systems and highlighting/publicizing the research. Hopefully, these suggestions would be put into concrete action in the current financial year so that the results can be reported on the next annual report.

It maybe a good idea to disseminate presentation sessions through social media so that they are not limited to one-time presentations but can be accessed on different platforms at all times.

6) Issues to be addressed with respect to this project (Please add comments regarding "Report on the Status and the Results of the Actions Taken in Response to the Findings of the FY 2018 and FY 2019 External Evaluations" here)

Remarks:

There are many actions in the "Actions and Results" column of the Tables in the "Report on the Status and the Results of the Actions Taken in Response to the Findings of the FY 2018 and FY 2019 External Evaluations" that indicate either the fact that a discussion was held but there is no further explanation on what the outcome of the discussion was; or the actions are future-oriented, ie., it is indicated that the action was discussed and will be executed at some unspecified time in the future.
For the next annual report, I suggest that all the actions are explained with concrete results and if the action is to be taken in the future, a concrete timeline should be provided.

In general, I believe Kobe University is making real and important progress in promoting and implementing diversity. 2021 was still a year very much affected by the limitations of the pandemic and I am confident that progress in 2022 will be efficient and impressive.