

FY2022 External Evaluation Report for the Program "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced type)"

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This memo will repeat and build on recommendations made in my 07/04/2022 document. For that evaluation I relied on the “Report on the Results of the Program "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment" (Advanced type) for the FYs 2020–2021” and the goals listed below. For this follow-up evaluation I reviewed “Measures to Address the Findings of the FY’s 2020-2021 External Evaluation (Report)” and “Report of the Results of the Initiative for Realization of a Diverse Research Environment (Advanced Type) Project for FY 2022”.

For this evaluation my feedback is appended to what I submitted in 2022. I am grateful and humbled for this opportunity to again provide feedback.

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

From reviewing both papers noted above, in addition to the earlier materials it is clear that significant steps have been taken to create a climate for greater inclusivity and the recruitment of more female researchers. While falling short of this goal, and slipping farther behind, since last years report the University has taken the proper steps to begin socializing the University community and leadership to the importance of this goal. Many structural measures have been undertaken to help reach the 30% goal for recruitment of women researchers. There has been more robust communication of both the goal and making the case for the importance of the effort. There have been steps taken to mitigate implicit bias which can act, even unintentionally, as a barrier to inclusion. The creation of the Basic Policy and Guidelines for Diverse Sexualities and Genders is a huge step in making visible the commitment of the University to honoring and understanding the broader community you wish to serve. I was gratified to see these efforts even as I was dismayed at the raw numbers. But I think the kind of structural change Kobe University is seeking is years-long, even generational. In every effort to dismantle structural and attitudinal discrimination, in this case , sexism and misogyny, the resistance will be substantial. The resistance is why these systems endure. My overarching reaction is that the University keep pressing the case for inclusion and continue to make the case from the highest levels of leadership. I would encourage the ongoing efforts around broader dissemination of the goal University and community-wide, in addition to signaling that across university leadership, this goal is understood

and supported. This broad observation continues to cut across all areas of my evaluation. While I will not presume to understand the full range of cultural resistance or possible objections to the goal of realizing diversity in the research environment, what I can observe across many male-dominated cultures is an entrenched patriarchy and resistance to equally valuing the contributions, talent, and intelligence of women. Perhaps some focus groups of young women at the college level would help to both learn of their ambitions and why or why not they would consider Kobe University for their ongoing education. As Kobe University makes gains in removing or addressing structural impediments to your diversity goals, it will be necessary in an ongoing and fully visible way to make plain that this initiative has the full support and commitment of university leadership. It is clear that you have taken steps to demonstrate this commitment and I feel confident that, over time, you will see the numbers reflect the change you seek.

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions

This goal, as with number 1, this goal will be impacted by the perception around meaningful and intentional commitment. There was clearly effort made to achieve this goal through a number of public initiatives, including the Diversity Forum. These efforts are laudable and should be continued and become a routine part of your efforts. Having such spaces signals that the University has an authentic commitment to this goal. It appears that there was an effort to evaluate this goal with the input of impacted staff, but I am unclear if staff, especially staff who left the University were interviewed as to their experience. If not, such interviews would likely glean very valuable information and if the interviews did occur having some synopsis of what was reported would be helpful. I would also encourage interviews with current women on staff to identify, what, in their view might impede promotions and the publication of key parts of what you heard in such interviews. It is also unclear from the reports if in fact the University was able to glean from the networking and forum what factors which may be contributing to the failure to meet targets for the number of women associate professors. Knowing what those factors might be, either structural or cultural, will again be essential in making progress in this area.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

The programs you piloted have provided some key learnings that you are responding to in real time. You recognized that the age limitation might be a barrier to participation and so are expanding it. The effort to reach young researchers will require a years-long commitment and the humility to learn as you go. It seems clear you are doing just that. I appreciated that you are making

these efforts visible, i.e., the website and through on-campus events. An on-going commitment to this outreach will bear results, but it will take time and patience. Seeding your efforts with girls coming up through junior and high school will not only create a pipeline, loyalty to the university and a greater pool of new leaders, but it will also inevitably have a boldening effect on your efforts. A younger generation will likely be more insistent on change and less patient with the status quo. This infusion of young leadership will hasten the cultural shifts that must occur for the university's important initiative and goals to be realized.

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

From my report last year: "This strikes me as an area rich for growth and impact. The report acknowledges that there have been inconsistent efforts in elevating the University's diversity efforts. The failure to fully exploit the many tools to make very clear the commitment to realizing gender diversity at the university can and must be corrected, as the report notes. The good news here, is that this is an area very much within the control of university leadership so that a course correction can occur, and this area of weakness addressed. As noted earlier, real and perceived cultural barriers, resistance, or even laggard response or engagement all can combine to signal that this very important initiative doesn't have the full heart, mind and soul of university leadership. While it may sound trite, it is in fact the case that meaningful cultural shifts begin at the top. How leadership shows up, responds, engages and speaks is often the clearest indication of whether a shift in culture is possible and the necessary shift in attitudes, required."

It seems all of this still applies and is recognized in the report. As we are now out of COVID, which had a serious impact on these efforts, it will be expected that significant progress can be made in this area in the coming year.

5) 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 2020 and FY 2021 External Evaluations" here)

While falling short of your numerical goals, it is clear that some very significant efforts have been undertaken to set the University up for gains in this area. It was gratifying to see both structural and institutional efforts to live into the value of greater inclusion of women in the life of Kobe University. My overarching response is to encourage you to build on these efforts and to do all you can to determine what factors still act as impediments to your goals. I restate below the comment I made last year:

Do not underestimate the power of story or narrative. In multiple places in the 2018-2019 Report, it was noted that a survey would be undertaken to gather more information. I strongly encourage

the use of survey instruments at multiple points in the life of the initiative. Perhaps one soon to get a baseline “climate survey”. What is life like now at the university for women professors or researchers? Forgive me if this has already been done, but even so, to renew it every 2 years or so could be a powerful additional data point for your efforts. Additionally, elevating the voices of women staff through your newsletter or other vehicles could have an impact beyond just the one article or story.

I submit these evaluation comments with great humility and gratitude. If you wish more information or any clarification, please do not hesitate to let me know. It is my honor to be a part of this critical effort.