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External Evaluation Report for the FY2018–2023 Project Results

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This document reports the results of the external evaluation of the FY2018–2023 project results based on the attached Report on the Results of the Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced Type) for FY2018–2023.

I very much appreciate the data and analysis of the data provided, but it is somewhat difficult to provide a comprehensive evaluation without some narrative regarding Kobe University's own assessment of what it has achieved and how the efforts have impacted the culture toward achieving the ambitious goals noted below. While I understand the limits of anecdotal information, it does help me to be informed by your perspective as to what changes you've observed as the initiatives have unfolded. Regardless, I am grateful for this opportunity to provide a final evaluation on your laudable efforts.

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

Remarks: Under 1. Project Goals and Action Plan, Table 1, it is clear that for each of the initiatives at least some significant progress has been achieved in relation to one of the four goals. As I have previously noted an effort like this, to address persistent inequities is not for the impatient nor the faint of heart. To make such an effort durable requires putting in place new structures and the work of then shifting longstanding cultural attitudes. The achievement of goal 1, and initiative (A) on this chart is to be commended. To see the progress on goal 2 will inevitably lead to eventually meeting goals 3 and 4. This is very gratifying to see and would be a place where hearing from you about the impact on university life and culture from these changes would be fascinating.

The human resources governance structure and the resulting accountability and incentive structures clearly had the intended impact in reaching the recruitment goal. It is worth noting that the structure of governance was altered to create greater accountability and coordination. This kind of willingness to alter course when necessary is notable. The Gender Equality Office and the supporting structures and roles are a very strong signal to the broader university community of the importance of this work. There appears to be a clear commitment by the highest levels of leadership within the university given that the Executive Assistant to the President attends key committee meetings and appears to be a strong advocate for the goals and work. The open records of these efforts is also key to accountability and success.

Perhaps most significant is the requirement that individual departments are required to provide information on hiring, promotion and retention rates, with a mechanism for direct review and accountability. The incentive spending structure then ties progress and results to the bottom line for departments. This is an essential piece and obviously yielded strong results.

It is worth noting that during the heart of this effort, we saw a world-wide pandemic, the lasting effects of which are still not fully known. But surely the COVID-19 pandemic impeded the efforts of the University to achieve its goals. I think is made most clear in the figures under point iii. Visualize the hiring, promotion and retention rates of women

faculty. In FY 2018 the actual hiring rate exceeded goal and then was flat. There can be no doubt that COVID-19 impacted this trajectory.

2) Improve the rate of women holding higher-ranking positions

Remarks: There is clearly progress toward this goal and an obvious commitment to invest the time and resources to achieve the goal. Again, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted progress. Nevertheless, a number of assistant and associate professors were able to engage in a cross-cultural/cross-institutional experience to enhance their growth and vitality. This effort dovetailed with an intention to build overseas support, which can now be leveraged post COVID-19.

It seems that the rates regarding promotion, while varied, are trending in a positive direction. The overall goal has been met since 2020, which is noteworthy for longer-term success.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks: With the implementation of the Human Resource Exchange Program and the Early Career Researcher Training Program, it seems that the university is on track to meet this goal. As with all of this work, laying the foundation for enduring change is key and so much more critical than slap-dash or half-hearted attempts at change. Now that these foundational elements are in place, they can be fully leveraged to achieve the goal.

The goal of seeding a next-generation of researchers will have an outsized impact on the overall goals and targets. Once a new generation enters the market and becomes embedded in the university faculty, the culture will undoubtedly shift, making up any ground lost to either COVID or entrenched sexism.

The focus on mentoring is also key. Young female students will see there is a path for them in STEM and that is critical to bringing in a new generation of researchers.

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

Remarks: The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated to my mind. Once the broader community is aware of these efforts and feels invested, it is impossible to turn back or fall short. The adoption of the Kobe University Diversity Statement is not just lip-service. It places an important public marker and creates a climate of shared accountability. Likewise, the Diversity Fund demonstrates a broader commitment and investment and a larger set of stakeholders in the success of these efforts.

The education program as a joint partnership with the private sector is an impressive manifestation of the work of the initiatives and will be a critical component of short and long-term success. This is the kind of culture-shift work that seems likely to benefit not just the university, but also the entire sector. It is gratifying to read about.

5) Verify the outcomes and evaluations of the overseas support programs for women researchers

Remarks: This section really makes plain the difference investment and support of women can make in their overall success. This is where the data are so clear and

important. But for these efforts, women faculty would not have the greater success. It is a clear indication of the efforts brought to bear, paying off.

6) Regarding the project initiatives undertaken over the six-year period

Remarks: It is clear that the goals and initiatives are on a trajectory to achieve all the university set out to do. Clearly, the work continues, but it appears that the foundational pieces are in place for longer-term success. I have enjoyed being a part of the process and observing the growth and success of these efforts.