

SERIES: Are Female Researchers Enjoying More Opportunities to Demonstrate Their Ability?

Introduction of the Original Recruitment System through Establishing Quotas for Women and Its Results

Eriko Jotaki,
Office for Strategic Research Planning,
Kyushu University

In 2009, Kyushu University established a faculty member recruitment system through establishing quotas for women. By FY2011, 24 female researchers (3 professors, 15 associate professors and 6 assistant professors) had obtained employment as faculty members. By applying international open recruitment system, the university has been able to hire excellent personnel through a transparent selection process that involves external committee members. Their success in the future is highly expected.

1. Outline of Kyushu University and the background of the introduction of quotas for women

With over 2,300 faculty members, Kyushu University covers a wide range of academic fields: humanities, social science, science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, dentistry, pharmaceutical science, and design. Amongst all, in the fields of science, engineering and agriculture where female researchers are few, the numbers of faculty members consist over 40%, thereby the total proportion of female faculty members was only 8.6% as of May 2008.

In FY2006, a program called Supporting Activities for Female Researchers (hereinafter referred to as “Model Program”) is launched supported by the Special Coordination Funds for Promoting Science and Technology from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Taking this opportunity, Kyushu University started to consider support system for female researchers seriously. This resulted in establishment of the quotas for women in an intra-university competitive research funding system called Kyushu University Interdisciplinary Programs in Education and Projects in Research Development (P&P). The quotas is planned to adopt approximately 20% of the all adopted programs and projects which are led by female researchers as principal. After the introduction of this system, female researchers who had previously participated as associate researchers began to apply as principal researchers. As a result, the number of adopted programs and projects with female principal researcher increased from 2 (five years before the introduction) to 30 (five years after the introduction). Some female researchers developed their research on the basis of their achievements through P&P. In addition, they obtained larger-scale external competitive research funding, such as the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI) and the Precursory Research for Embryonic Science and Technology (PRESTO). Thus the initiative of Kyushu University promoted research activities by female researchers.

In FY2007, a project by Kyushu University entitled “Support Program for Female Researchers Who Aspire to Make the World their Stage” was adopted as Model Program. As part of this concept, Kyushu University established the **S**upport **O**ffice for **F**emale **R**esearchers (SOFR_e), with full-time, dedicated staff members. In addition, the university developed the “Hand in Hand” system¹⁾ to provide research assistants for female researchers who are busy with life events such as childbirth and child care. Other activities include support in attending international academic conferences to promote global presence of female researchers, as well as educational activities for the next generation, directed to students from elementary school to graduate school. Taking the opportunity of participating in the Model Program, the university added proportion of female faculty members and their rate of increase to the items to be considered in deciding priority allocation of research fees (Expenses for Promoting University Transform) to be distributed to each faculty. Meanwhile, the university decided to establish three on-campus child-minding facilities in FY2008, and they were opened in the following year. Thus, the environment for female researchers was improved. However these efforts did not lead immediate improvement of the proportion of female faculty members.

In prior discussions with deans of faculties on the issue of increasing female faculty members, there was a suggestion that initiatives related to recruitment should be developed by the university as a whole, since there was a limit in doing that in each faculty. When the university executives were seeking some drastic measures to respond to this proposal, they found a call for projects to participate in a program called Supporting Positive Activities for Female Researchers by MEXT, intended to accelerate the development of capabilities of female researchers in the fields of science, engineering and agriculture (hereinafter referred to as the “Acceleration Program”) starting in FY2009. They decided to utilize this program to implement comprehensive measures, and worked out a policy of establishing quotas for women. The project called “Women Researchers Promotion Program” was adopted as an Acceleration Program. In this project Kyushu University proposed the system for employing and nurturing faculty members through establishing quotas for women.

2. Method of recruitment through quotas for women

Making use of the principle of competition among faculties, Kyushu University has been successfully finding and employing excellent personnel.

The implementation method is as described below.

(1) The project is implemented as a university-wide initiative led by the President. Eight faculties in the fields of science, engineering and agriculture, which are subject to the Acceleration Program, form one group (hereinafter referred to as the “SEA Group”), and five other faculties that are not included in the above-mentioned fields but have a small number of female faculty members from another group (the “Non-SEA Group”). The SEA Group makes efforts to recruit five female researchers each year, while the Non-SEA Group aims to employ two to three female researchers.

(2) The project is subject to the university’s original point system, a faculty member management system introduced to Kyushu University in FY2007. Participating faculties contribute a certain number of points, depending on the size of each faculty, to put aside points to be used in this

employment program.

(3) The participating faculties together announce international open recruitment for women only. Minimum limitations are set on job positions and research fields so that it aims to call wide variety of application. The faculties flexibly adapt their future visions to fit conditions of applicants, and make selections (first selection).

(4) The university-wide screening panel holds a meeting with the participation of external experts. The panel thoroughly examines each case, taking into consideration absolute evaluations of applicants recommended by each faculty, as well as each faculty's training/supporting plans for female faculty members and initiatives to promote gender equality. After the examination, the panel decides on the successful applicants who take the posts reserved for women (second selection.) (See Fig. 1)

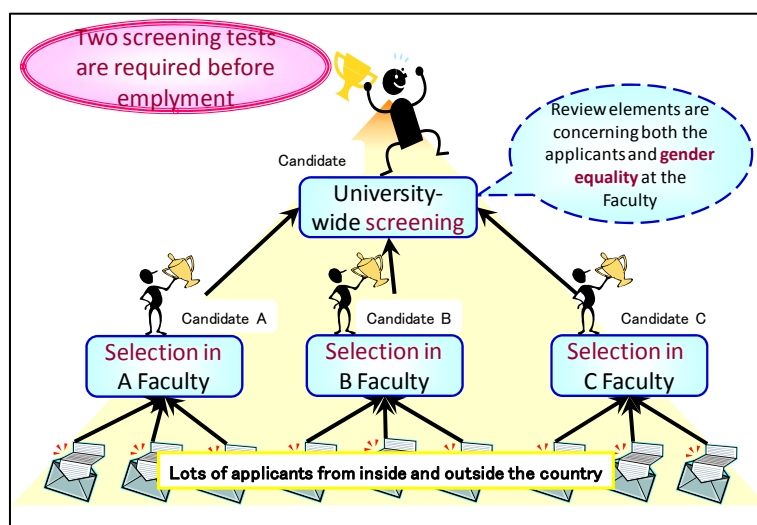


Figure 1 Screening tests for female posts

(5) Points are duly distributed to the faculties that employed female faculty members.

(6) Successful applicants work in each faculty as full-time members from the beginning. When a faculty member who was employed through this process retires or moves to another institution, her successor must be a woman. This prevents any decrease in the number of female faculty members.

3. Characteristics of the recruitment system of Kyushu University

Kyushu University explicitly stated that it would establish quotas for women and carry out selections when it applied for the Acceleration Program. Ten out of the twelve universities whose projects were adopted as the Acceleration Program (five universities in the first year and seven in the second year²⁾) carry out open recruitment quotas for women.

Open recruitment quotas for women is legally accepted as a special exception³⁾, but is at the center of some controversy. Those who oppose it say, “The actual number of female researchers is small, so the system itself will not work,” and “We cannot maintain the level of employees when applications are open only to women.” However, each university is using their ingenuity and making every effort to employ distinguished female researchers.

The initiative of Kyushu University is often highlighted due to the adaption of the point system and the quotas for women. Actually, however, a more important factor that enables Kyushu University to employ quality female researchers is that it accepts applications widely and carries out a transparent selection process that involves external committee members. In order to spread Kyushu University's employment information widely to female researchers that are small in number and encourage submission of many applications, participating faculties announce international open

recruitment at the same time. This is technique spotlights our information. The faculties also place advertisements in *Nature*, and post detailed job information of each faculty at one time on a popular academic job site, JREC-IN.

By holding university-wide screening panel meetings, the competition principle works among faculties. As a result, each faculty exerts every effort to find excellent female faculty members on various occasions such as academic conferences. Furthermore, initiatives for the promotion of gender equality are seriously considered in each faculty, and diverse projects are carried out including the setting of numerical targets for female faculty members employment, establishment of a faculty committee to be involved in the issue of gender equality promotion, creation of a declaration, and organization of meetings of executives and female faculty members.

The original point system of Kyushu University allots higher points to higher positions. If a faculty employs a female member in a higher position like professor, it will receive higher points. This results in increased employment of professors and associate professors.

4. Employment achievement of female faculty members

Table 1 shows the number of applicants and employees under this project between 2009 through 2011. Figure 2 shows change in the number of female faculty members by positions in the eight faculties in the SEA Group. At first there was concern as to whether there would be enough applications or not, but actually, over ten times as many applicants as can be employed submit applications every year, although the number varies from year to year, or according to the number of participating faculties. According to Figure 2, in the eight faculties in the SEA Group, the number of female professors increased from 4 to 8, associate professors from 6 to 17, and assistant professors from 13 to 23. The numbers include those employed or promoted through the normal procedure. In the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Information Science and Electrical Engineering, in which faculty members are assigned to teach at the School of Engineering, which has an especially small proportion of female students, the number of female faculty members in the

Table 1 Applicants and Employees

In the fields of science, engineering, and agriculture[SEA Group]
(Every year, 5 researchers are employed in principle.)

Fiscal year (Faculties)	Applicants	Employees			Total employees
		Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	
2009 (8)	170	2	6	2	10
2010 (6)	87	1	4	0	5
2011 (7)	117	0	2	3	5

Other fields [Non-SEA Group]

(Every year, 2-3 researchers are employed in principle.)

Fiscal year (Faculties)	Applicants	Employees			Total employees
		Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	
2010 (4)	107	0	2	1	3
2011 (3)	15	0	1	0	1

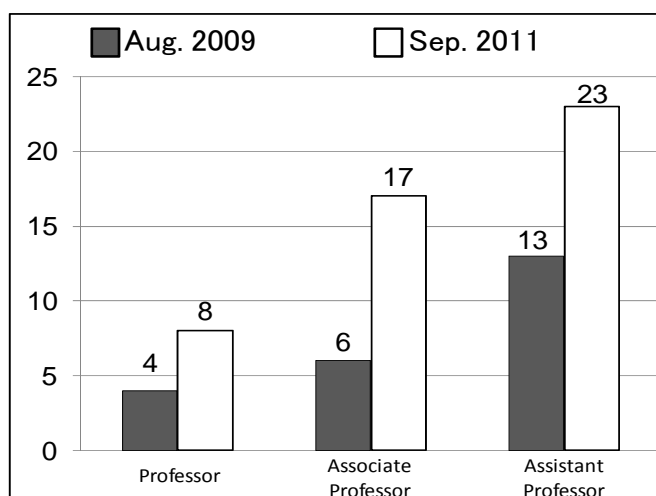


Figure 2 Change in the number of female faculty members in the fields of science, engineering, and agriculture (8 Faculties) [SEA-Group]

position of associate professor or higher was 1 in total (1 associate professor) before the start of the Acceleration Program. By 2011, the number had increased up to 8 (2 professors and 6 associate professors.) The employment situation in each field for the posts reserved for women is as follows: Engineering, 7 (1 professor, 6 associate professors); Science, 10 (2 professors, 3 associate professors, 5 assistant professors); Agriculture, 4 (4 associate professors); Humanities, 2 (2 associate professors); Medicine, dentistry and pharmaceutical science, 1 (1 assistant professor).

Female faculty members employed through this system receive research funding (first year for experimental research: 1.5 million yen; first year for non-experimental research: one million yen; second and third year: one million yen per year) commissioned mainly by the Acceleration Program (partially by the university), as well as other support based on each faculty's training/supporting plans (research funding and environment). Various skill-building seminars for female researchers are regularly provided under the themes of, for example, gaining external competitive research funding and improvement of English proficiency, thus promoting their activities in a wide range of fields.

In December 2011, interim assessment on the Acceleration Program was carried out by MEXT. Kyushu University received the highest Grade, S (out of S, A, B and C), with a comment referring to increased employment of women in higher positions.

5. Achievements gained through this recruitment system

In selection process, applicants are required to make a presentation at the university-wide screening panel (second selection). Through this, executives of the university and faculties as members of the screening panel recognized the outstanding capabilities and strong presence of female researchers. This recognition gradually spread to other staff in the faculties as well, which resulted in an increase in female faculty members employed through normal procedures. Besides, as female faculty members employed through this recruitment system work very actively, they are attracting attention both within and outside of Kyushu University. Some are working as board members at academic societies, Senior Scientific Research Specialists at MEXT, members at the Science Council of Japan, and members of councils in MEXT and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. While one index in the evaluation of research activities is the situation of obtaining external competitive research funding such as KAKENHI, 15 faculty members who were employed in 2009 and 2010 by the SEA Group gained KAKENHI with as many as 15 projects in FY2011 (new and continued ones in total). This number of KAKENHI projects far exceeds the average of researchers in Kyushu University. In addition, they also received research funding through PRESTO and the Funding Program for Next Generation World-Leading Researchers (NEXT Program). The total amount of research funding obtained by the 15 teachers in FY2011 largely surpasses one hundred million yen. It is an achievement beyond all expectations.

As the items to be examined during the selection process include each faculty's organizational initiative, the dean of each faculty must make a presentation at the university-wide screening panel meeting on the subject of the acceptance system of female faculty members and ongoing projects

related to the promotion of gender equality. This serves as an opportunity for information sharing among faculties and development of various projects by synergy effect.

While in Kyushu University some faculties adopt a renewal contraction system every five years (or a few years) for faculty members. Little consideration had been given to female faculty members concerning childbirth and child care at the time of reappointment examinations held before the start of the Acceleration Program. In the process of detailed discussions on the recruitment of female faculty members, some faculties pointed out the necessity to establish some rules related to the issues. In FY2011, a university-wide system for special renewal contraction application was established, and some faculties have already adopted the system.

6. Future development

When applying for the Acceleration Program, Kyushu University introduced open recruitment for women only and quotas for women, based on the policy of “employing the most excellent personnel among women.” While Kyushu University has over 2,300 faculty members, there are over 100 open recruitments per year. Among them, job offers exclusively for women account for less than 10%. Even though the proportion is very small, the university gradually transforms, inspired by the introduction of this system. Before the start of the Acceleration Program, the proportion of female faculty members had remained at the 8% level for years. After the start, the number has been steadily increasing, and reached 10% in FY2011.

Discussions tend to center on the setting of the quotas for women and conducting open recruitment only for women. However, the important point is not the selection process but how much they can work effectively after being employed. Although Kyushu University employed a larger number of excellent female faculty members than originally planned through the Acceleration Program, the proportion of female faculty members is still smaller than other universities, and the consciousness of gender equality is not sufficiently deeply rooted. It is necessary to continue university transform and create a better working environment for female faculty members to work longer. Continuous support and follow-up activities are also an important issue.

The Acceleration Program led to the appointments of the first female professor and associate professor in some faculties. They serve as a realistic role model for young researchers and students, showing that women can also become professors if they work hard. As most of the newly employed female members work as actively as male members, female researchers' abilities are now being recognized.

The author will conclude this article by providing an answer to the question, “Are female researchers enjoying more opportunities to demonstrate their ability?” When university posts are decreasing in number nationwide, the decision of Kyushu University to set quotas for women, and employ female faculty members including those in higher positions, have undoubtedly increased positions and opportunities for them to display their great ability. It is true that the number of female faculty members employed by Kyushu University is small when considering the number of female researchers Japan-wide. The opportunities provided are also insufficient. However, taking

visible measures to increase the number of female researchers is an important first step. The author expects that, using opportunities augmented by the Acceleration Program, a greater number of female researchers will develop their skills and work actively.

While the author was writing this article, she heard the news that half of the members of the new French Cabinet are women. Effective measures to promote women's activities are to establish stages where they can utilize their capacities and provide successful role models.

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