GSIS DEI Promotion WG Newsletter No. 5

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Introduction

In Issue 4, we examined "unconscious bias," which can hinder diversity, the "D" of DEI. In this issue, we consider equity, the "E" of DEI. Equity does not mean treating everyone in the same way. It means creating conditions in which everyone can make full use of their abilities, taking into account the circumstances and barriers they face. How, then, should we judge whether support is needed and what form it should take? We consider this through concrete examples and the graduate school's survey.

"Equality" and "Equity"

A familiar illustration shows three people of different heights watching a game over a fence: identical boxes for all represent "equality," while boxes suited to each height represent "equity." The illustration alone does not tell us what support is appropriate, since this cannot be determined from outside assumptions. We need to listen to those concerned, identify the barriers they face, and clarify the purpose, criteria, and effects of the support.





Criteria for Judging Equity

On faculty positions open only to women, the Issue 2 survey drew comments including discomfort at the idea that gender may come before ability, and concern that efforts to correct disparities, though necessary, may create friction. Such concerns should not be brushed aside. Concerns about fairness and structural disadvantage are distinct issues, and both need to be considered carefully. What matters is explaining a measure's purpose, necessity, scope, and criteria, and verifying its effects.

Fixed-Term Appointments and Equity

Respondents who had experienced a career interruption, or anticipated one, often voiced anxiety about fixed-term appointments. Whether one can face a life event with peace of mind depends greatly on the appointment type and years remaining. Even where childcare leave is available, concern about having insufficient time to build a record within the appointment period can make it difficult to use. How evaluation periods account for career interruptions and approved leave is therefore also an equity issue.

What We Can Do Starting Today

Equity rests on organizational arrangements, not individual consideration alone.

Ask whether "the same treatment" means the same burden: An identical deadline does not burden everyone equally. Build in flexibility where appropriate.

Avoid requiring more personal disclosure than is necessary: Circumstances cannot always be fully disclosed. The organization should clarify what information is needed, for what purpose, and how it will be handled.

Conclusion

Equity admits no single mechanical answer; it requires us to consider both individual experiences and identifiable barriers. We should weigh the necessity of support and procedural transparency while listening to differing views. In doing so, we will work toward an environment where everyone can use their abilities fully.

Contact

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