

Initiatives at Tezpur University for Women in Science Professions

Policies/Incentives that the University has (to attract/retain/promote women in science)

Women constitute an important component of work force and their contributions and achievements in various professional organizations / bodies are well recognized. Nonetheless, their representation in various spheres of science remains a cause for concern in the country particularly when we consider their excellent high school and degree examination results, where more often than not girls outshine boys. This is particularly relevant in science and technology institutes of higher learning, which place greater demand with respect to time and effort. Analyses reveal responsibilities associated with matrimony and motherhood constrains their professional pursuits.

Tezpur University established in the year 1994 has witnessed a marked increase in strength of women faculty and girl students. The University taking cognizance of its responsibilities towards women faculty and students has formulated several policies and taken initiatives with the objective to

- Encourage women professionally
- Provide safe and secure working and residential environment
- Access to support infrastructure

The following are some of the policies operational over the last five years towards realization of the afore mentioned objectives.

Professional Development of Women

The University has adopted the practice of nomination and representation of women faculty to all academic and administrative bodies. For instance, the position of Dean R&D is being held by Women faculty consecutively for the last five years. Similarly the IQAC Cell (Internal Quality Assurance), Equal Opportunity Cell as well as Vigilance Office are headed by women faculty.

There is a permanent Cell for addressing issues related to harassment of women at work place in line with Government of India directives. The cell is active and has taken up several issues and provided solutions. The University has a UGC supported Women's Studies Centre, which is initiating studies on issues relating to women, particularly of north east India. Furthermore, there is an Equal Opportunity Cell, which has been organizing gender sensitization and counseling programs and supported programs focused on entrepreneurship development and health awareness.

In order to encourage deserving women faculty members to continue in science, the University provides special incentives including promotion, fast-track

promotion. Preferential allotment of on campus housing is being provided to women employees should they opt for it.

Access to support Infrastructure

Recognizing the importance of safety and security issues particularly with respect to women employees and students, care has been taken to provide safe working environment with round the clock security arrangements covering the entire campus. Best possible arrangement has been made in terms of child care and children's education by establishing a crèche, a play school and a Kendriya Vidyalaya within the University campus. It is notable that the health care facility of the University includes full time lady doctors and consultant Gynaecologist, consultant radiologist and consultant paediatrician. The University has a Gymnasium with state-of -the art facility. There is also a Yoga centre with trained and experienced instructors. All basic amenities are provided in the marketing complex within the campus.

Recommendations

Following are some of the other measures which are likely to be useful to retain and promote women in science and may be deliberated upon

- *Employment – 33% percentage reserved for women candidates for entry into science.* This will reduce the gap between the number of men and women pursuing science. This will also allow for more women taking up high level positions in the scientific hierarchy.
- *Grant earmarked for travel expenditure of women scientists / faculty in order to encourage them to attend seminars and conferences, etc.* Such a special consideration will help the women scientists to augment their knowledge with the recent developments in their areas of interest in which they feel they are lagging behind because of the time spent for raising their family and/or other family related stresses.
- *Special consideration for allowing air-fare to students / research scholars.*
- *Flexible working hours, particularly for women with babies or small children.* Working women can be considered for flexible working hours during the day to accommodate the feeding schedule of babies/infants/toddlers.
- *Re-employment opportunity after career break-up on valid grounds.*
- *Provision for preferential accommodation, immediately on joining.*

Concluding remarks

In general, in this University, there is no discrimination against women pursuing their career goals in science. Moreover, several on-going healthy practices in the university are encouraging women to excel in their chosen field of work. Tezpur University is already taking initiatives to implement some of these recommended steps in a phased manner.

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