



“Hiroshima University CAPWR (Career Advancement Project for Women Researchers), which started from a ‘Neko-no-Te Project’,”

“CAPWR” has been supporting female researchers at Hiroshima University for over ten years now.

When raising children, there are times when you are driven to “wanting even the help of a cat (neko-no-te)”, which is a Japanese phrase meaning ‘extremely busy’. University teachers are no different. When it comes to teachers, especially female teachers, their novice period and child-birth and child-rearing periods overlap, so it is a profession where it is particularly difficult to balance work and home life.

To address such concerns, the “Female Researcher Support Model” (Special Coordination Funds for the Promotion of Science and Technology) was publicly advertised right at the end of December 2005. To participate in this, a working group (WG) was formed by female researchers at Hiroshima University early the following year. Dr. Fumiko Tajima, Professor of Graduate School of Science (at that time), who had taken up a post at Hiroshima University after researching for many years in USA, became a leader of that WG and started the “Neko-no-Te Project” to adopt the “Female Researcher Support Model”.

This project first investigated what was needed for female researchers at Hiroshima University to balance child-rearing and childcare with work, and gathered basic data concerning gender equality at Hiroshima University. Based on the results of this status analysis, the “Neko-no-Te” project WG, together with the heads of the university, had lots of discussions about what the university should and could do. This resulted in the proposal of a comprehensive “Equality Platform” (place of gender equality research and education) plan founded on the two pillars of research environment development and awareness reform.

This first Hiroshima University female researcher support plan was named “CAPWR (Career Advancement Project for Women Researchers)” by Prof. Tajima. Unfortunately, this plan was not adopted in the first year, but as a result of the plan, the foundations of gender equality at Hiroshima University were put in place. In October 2006, the “Declaration of Gender Equality” was made and the “Gender Equality Promotion Committee” was established in February 2007.

The “Neko-no-Te Project” WG was formally established as the “CAPWR (Career Advancement Project for Women Researchers)” in February 2007, and the project logo (upper left) was created by the young New York-based artist, Ms. Mika Tajima. By May 2007, activities started to bear fruit and “the Project to Support Women Researchers for Leadership Development in Hiroshima University” was adopted as a “Female Researcher Support Model” (Special Coordination Funds for the Promotion of Science and Technology). The essential parts of this are to establish a ① home/work balance support environment program and ② awareness reform program, and then develop a ③ Hiroshima University-specific human resource leadership program in order to foster female researchers.

The Gender Equality Promotion Office was established in April 2008. Due to the “Project to Accelerate Reform of Female Researcher Development System” (“Human Resource Development Program for Science and Technology”, 2010), “Career Advancement of Female Researchers through Reform of Hiroshima University System (2010 - 2014)” was adopted as a “Program to Support Research Activities of Female Researchers (2013 - 2015)”, so gender equality activities have been strengthened at Hiroshima University.

Hiroshima University’s new project proposal (2017-2022)” was adopted and is currently ongoing as an “Initiative for the Implementation of a Diversity Research Environment (Collaborative Type)” (Human Resource Development Program for Science and Technology). The English name of this program is “CAPWR (Career Advancement Project for Women Researchers)” and the CAPWR logo is used above.

The proportion of female teachers in Hiroshima University was 9% in 2006, but this figure increased to 16.7% by 2018. Hiroshima University’s gender equality promotion activities, which started from the “Neko-no-Te Project”, aimed to realize a research and educational environment that allows female and male researchers to develop and make use of their individualities, and this project continues to evolve.