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UC San Diego Center for Research Partners with Kim Center to Address Gender Inequity

Kim Center for Social Balance initiated national project to measure and correct workplace gender disparities

UC San Diego Extension's Center for Research and Evaluation has partnered with The Kim Center for Social Balance to address the systemic problem of gender inequity in the workplace.

"Some estimates suggest that the United States is collectively spending \$8 billion per year on gender diversity programs to address equity, but the American Sociological Association reports that 75 percent of such training is ineffective," said Georgia Kovacs, Associate Director of the Center for Research and Evaluation. "Gender inequity is not just about a pay gap. Gender inequity is about an unequal distribution of men and women in positions of power across all fields. Research suggests that improving gender equity increases company revenue and employee satisfaction. Gender equity in the workplace is good for society and the economy as a whole."

At the current pace, gender inequity in the workplace will take too long to obtain. According to a 2019 study by LeanIn and McKinsey that surveyed more than 68,500 employees at 329 companies, gender parity in the upper reaches of U.S. corporations will take more than 100 years to achieve. The Kim Center has implemented a strategic plan to speed up the process of attaining workplace gender equity.

The UC San Diego Extension Center for Research and Evaluation agrees that there is an opportunity to accelerate gains in gender equity. To that end, the Center for Research and Evaluation won a competitive bidding process to support the Kim Center's mission by providing research expertise to develop a Workplace Gender Equity Risk Assessment.

The pilot phase of the project will last five months, Kovacs said, and will include an array of San Diego-based organizations. In addition to collecting in-depth quantitative data about gender equity in the workplace, qualitative data collected through focus groups will contribute to a nuanced understanding of gender equity.

“The Workplace Gender Equity Risk Assessment is uniquely robust in overlaying employee perspectives and feedback about their daily gender-related experiences onto organization-level data such as the number of women in the C-Suite or the availability of paid parental leave,” Hei-ock Kim, executive director of the Kim Center explains. “The assessment will give leaders a fuller narrative of their gender equity levels, and allow them to target their solutions much more effectively and efficiently.”

Data collected during this pilot phase will contribute to an organization’s gender equity score. Those scores will provide insight into where organizations are succeeding and identify areas where further growth is required. The procedures developed in the pilot phase will inform future work designed to achieve widespread gender equity in workplaces across the United States.

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