Workshop Description:
The US and the European Union have adopted gender equality policies to eliminate
discrimination in higher education, especially by increasing the numbers of women in higher
level professorships and in the sciences where men still dominate. But this push to
institutionalize gender equality among academic elites comes at a time when elite status is
the gold ring universities are increasingly chasing themselves, aiming to be judged
“excellent” in international competition.

This workshop explores the tensions that arise from the increase in attention to promoting
both gender equality and international inequality. The global shift toward entrepreneurial
universities, committed to international competition and ranking researchers on the basis of
their economic contributions, creates new regimes of value and exclusion. The widespread
diffusion of a transnational norm of gender equity to researchers, departments, universities
and systems of higher education that are all competing for ever higher stakes adds a degree
of complexity to this social construction of excellence. Although the struggle among
countries and their universities for global influence increasingly defines the context in which
gender equality policies are now being developed, the reverse is also true: a global
commitment to gender equality as a social norm shapes the political context in which
universities and national higher education systems attempt to be recognized as
internationally outstanding.

This workshop is sponsored by the European Union Center of Excellence, with support from the
Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.