I definitely believe that women in the academic world should be role models for other women in the academic world.

**WOMEN ACADEMIC RESEARCH ISSUES**

World-wide, there are some unconscious and subtle gender-biases that women face in all careers – and have to prove their mettle to hierarchy-based decision makers on their superior work and even more so, because they are the ‘fairer’ sex – which is so obvious and prevalent in the corporate and academics; which has led to coining the term ‘glass ceiling’. Under these circumstances, proving that gender-bias is prevalent is very difficult because we live in a society where even though a woman may be holding a senior position at work and has work related commitments – when she returns home, she is bound to play the dual role of a ‘home maker’, ‘mother’, ‘wife’, ‘daughter-in-law’ and many more – which is not so binding on the husband – who has been working ‘hard’ at office and needs to relax on returning. Also, when the children fall sick, it is invariably the ‘mother’ who has to take care. To add to these are the maternity leaves that a woman employee needs when she is on her path to motherhood. These scenarios are slowly changing – but it will take quite a while to turn the tables around.

Particularly, when we look at academics and research, it is surprising to note that although half of all PhDs’ are awarded to women – very few senior academic positions are awarded to women. The discouraging statistics are that women get paid lower salaries than men in academics for reasons quite unknown to us. These biases – unconscious and some conscious occur at both the hiring and promotion stages in academics, like other careers. Although, it is not the case with our University as we have a very strong leader, our Pro-Chancellor, SIU: Dr. Vidya Yervadekar and our Vice Chancellor, SIU: Dr. Rajani Gupte, our role models and strong pillars of support.

The difficulty in breaking these seemingly invisible barriers is due to the decision makers, themselves being unaware of their being incapable of making unbiased, merit-based decisions and seem to be influenced by preference for people similar to themselves or their noting characteristics that seem valuable in their own preferred candidates, or being unaware of choosing based on their personal preferences or mind sets.

I really do not know how much of a positive role legislature can play in bringing about gender-equality in academics; and whether we as women, really need that to help us – but, a mindset change is definitely wanting and that we need to emphasize on ‘merit’ rather than ‘gender’ is my view.

It is my view that sometimes bringing up these issues of bias – may make people in power more defensive about their decisions and could bring about more trouble than help to solve this issue, which is a deeper – a more unconscious one, according to social scientists.

1) **WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE TO BE THE CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN FACE IN ACADEMIA?**

As in all other lines of work, women struggle to overcome time issues, energy and effort towards creating quality research, as the demands on their time are several more than what their male counterparts face. They have to move from the inequalities they face at the home front and juggle similar inequalities at work too.

2) **WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN WHO ARE ENTERING THE RESEARCH FIELD?**

I would like to reassure young women that there is a change taking place as more and more women are steadily and surely occupying positions of power in Academics – and this change will ensure that merit-based equality is ensured. I strongly feel, women have it in them to support other women and it is through this unity amongst women that we
can face and overcome these obstacles of gender-bias. Although it will be difficult to find senior female academic support for research, it is not impossible, and it will be the die-hard fighting spirit of women that will overcome this eventually. We really know how to multitask, balancing the inequalities at home and work, because we are emotionally far more intelligent and our caring sides overcome several such frictions.

It will be up to us, women, to create a footprint in the research field by opening up avenues for each other.

Another thing that might help young women in research is collaborating with each other and coming up with joint papers and articles, which will surely help in bridging the gap, as men are not so open as women to working with other males.

3) HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN CLOSE THE GENDER GAP WITHIN ACADEMIA?

We can think of having a statute that ensures a gender-equality in research and promotions based on encouraging and supporting women to publish their research in journals by having Institute-based goals for gender-equality and even reasons why the goals could not be met – if so.

Women can help other women by mentoring them to work independently and create quality research.

International research organizations can help by granting more grants to women – till a balance is struck, so that women get more opportunities to do quality research.

With social networking gaining so much prominence, we, women should use it to form groups to help one another in academic publishing and research.

4) HOW CAN PUBLISHERS COLLABORATE WITH INSTITUTES ON CREATING GENDER-BALANCE?

Publishers can play a role in collaborating with Institutes of repute on creating a gender-balance, by ensuring that they publish papers and articles based purely on merit. Publishers can also encourage and host symposiums for women to network and share their interests in research on somewhat common topics and award women to work towards such papers – which is sure to be a path breaking step in creating gender-balance, is what I feel personally. Also, publishers should encourage a diversity of editorial boards, so that bias is somewhat minimized, if not eliminated.