

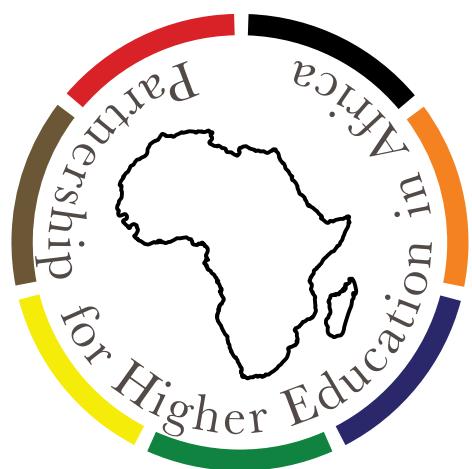
## Developing and Retaining the Next Generation of Academics in African Universities

### Funders' Perspectives



Africa  
Grantmakers'  
Affinity  
Group

Africa Grantmakers Affinity Group Retreat  
Regent Hyatt, Johannesburg, South Africa  
7 February 2008



The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa is an initiative of seven foundations:

Carnegie Corporation of New York

Ford Foundation

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

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Partnership for Higher Education in Africa  
IGEMS, The Steinhardt School  
New York University  
726 Broadway, Room 532  
New York, NY 10003  
<http://www.foundation-partnership.org>

# **Developing and Retaining the Next Generation of Academics in African Universities**

## **Funders' Perspectives**

Session Organized by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa  
Africa Grantmakers' Affinity Group Retreat  
7 February 2008

### **Introduction**

To build on the full-day workshop “Perspectives on Developing and Retaining the Next Generation of Academics in African Universities” held during the 2008 Africa Grantmakers’ Affinity Group retreat, a 1½-hour session was organized to focus on what funders are doing to support developing and retaining the next generation of academics. The session aimed to promote an exchange of strategies currently employed by funders and encourage greater engagement of grantmakers outside the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA). Participation in the all-day workshop was not required to attend this session.

### **Welcome, introductions and session overview**

Participants were welcomed by Sue Grant Lewis, PHEA coordinator, who provided a brief overview of the partnership and its interest in developing and retaining the next generation of African academics. Participants were invited to introduce themselves to the group.

The purposes of the session were to learn about each other’s work in supporting academic staff development and to identify intersections of grantmaking and interests.

### **Report on the 5 February workshop**

Participants were briefed on the discussions held during the all-day workshop, which was organized

around the perspectives of university leadership, young scholars and researchers.

#### ***Situation analysis: needs and constraints***

At the session there was a general sense of the needs and constraints concerning the development and retention of the next generation of African academics. The comments and observations of the panelists identified overlaps, but there were also local, institutional and regional peculiarities that produced unique needs and constraints. For instance, there was greater emphasis on the need for racial equity in recruiting and developing young black scholars in South Africa.

#### ***Solutions***

Numerous solutions were discussed during the panel, then small-group discussions were held to capture ideas and lessons that emerged from the plenary. Following this discussion, sections were organized to consider the regional specificities in West Africa, East Africa and South Africa. The ideas emerging from the series of small group discussions on solutions were captured and then categorized into eight investment areas.

#### ***Presenters' funding priorities***

The 12 panelists were given \$5 million worth of playing chips to invest in the eight focal areas that emerged from the small-group discussions and to

explain their investment choices. Their investments were reflected in a chart that was shared with the Funders' Group. They identified eight areas for investment:

- Building communities of scholars
- Support for graduate training
- Institutional regulatory and policy reform (bottlenecks)
- Publishing
- Mentoring and professional development
- Government advocacy and funding
- Institutional infrastructure
- Pipeline

Four presenters were on hand to share the rationale they used for investing.

*Funmi Bickersteth (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Obafemi Awolowo University):* Reform of institutional regulatory and policy bottlenecks were not high-priority areas because such reforms are internal issues that can be addressed with minimum funding.

*Erelyn Mweta Richard (Young Scholar, University of Dar es Salaam):* Building a community of scholars received considerable investment because it was viewed as necessary for the professional and intellectual development of young academics. Additional investment was placed in "Mentoring and professional development" to emphasize the importance of providing guidance to young scholars, who are often plagued with many fears.

*Paschal Buberwa Mihyo (Researcher, University of Namibia):* The rationale to support graduate training was based on a demand and supply approach: more trained graduates will result in establishing academic capacity. Training will help to develop and increase the number of quality academics as well as mitigate the brain drain. Also important are institutional regulatory reforms between universities and governments and within universities, which are necessary to build the capacity of universities through self-examination and self-regulation.

*Wisdom Tettey (Researcher, University of Calgary):* A lot of resources went into building a community of scholars because it encompassed other important categories such as publishing. Graduate train-

ing was seen as key in mobility of people. Those who leave the country are seeking quality graduate training, and with the provision of quality training, institutions can attract people to in-country graduate studies.

### ***Discussion of investment chart***

#### *Why was investment in mentoring limited?*

Mentoring was viewed as an aspect of building a community of scholars and not perceived as isolated. The more critical area of support, given limited resources, was to improve the quality of graduate education and, by extension, the students. Moreover, investments in mentorship required a concerted effort to engage senior scholars who are capable of providing the necessary support to graduate students. An investment in mentorship would result in de-emphasizing other investments that primarily targeted, engaged and benefited young scholars. Evelyn Richard, however, thought that the focus should be spent on training and mentorship rather than institutional infrastructure.

#### *Why were no investments made towards the pipeline?*

Focus was placed on higher education rather than pipeline issues because higher education issues seemed a greater priority. However, it was generally agreed that the pipeline is an important area of investment in developing young scholars. Brij Maharaj, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), argued that universities must be relevant to the local context and realities. Attention to the pipeline is important because there is a need to build an appreciation for academia among youths.

### **Relative merit of investing in institutions rather than individuals**

There was a brief discussion on grantmaking of institutions or individuals and the relative merit of each. Rather than dichotomizing the issue into institution versus individual, it was agreed that consideration should be given to what is the most effective means of accomplishing the goal. If one desires institutional capacity building, institutions are more important because funding to individuals may not necessarily lead to institutional capacity

building. Moreover, attention to individuals alone will not address the structural issues affecting universities. However, there is need for an interlocking system. Funding individuals is significant because attitudes, behavior, cultures and traditions shape institutions. When individuals receive scholarships or funding, it changes their perspectives and subsequently affects institutional culture. However, when individuals study abroad and return to their home institutions, too often they find these institutions to be dysfunctional or limited in their capacity to support them and eventually decide to leave. Finally, the decision of whether to invest in institutions or individuals is dependent on availability of funds as investments in institutions are more sizable than in individuals.

### **Funders' interests and perspectives**

Representatives of grantmakers were given the opportunity to share their interests and work in higher education in Africa with specific attention to developing and retaining the next generation of academics.

#### *International Foundation for Science (IFS) Eva Gerson, Head of Finance and Administration*

IFS was established to stem brain drain. To date it has only funded individuals, young scientists who are employed in an institution in a developing country. It has conducted tracer studies and impact evaluations on its program. The nature of IFS investment in individuals accounts for its success. The research grant can include small equipment, supplies and field study costs. The funding is given to a successful applicant and a research team is built around the grantee. Upon completion of the individual's research, the equipment is awarded to the home institution. Therefore, institutions stand to benefit from equipment and teams that come from these grants. In addition to research grants, IFS provides capacity-enhancing support to individuals that require further training to undertake the research projects. Successful applicants are offered travel grants to conferences to present their research, mentorship, workshops in research methodologies, scientific paper writing and research

management. It is notable that all grantees have remained in academia and research or have science policy positions, thereby building the capacity of their institutions.

#### *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*

*Nicole Genereux, Senior Partnership Officer  
[http://idrc.org/index\\_en.html](http://idrc.org/index_en.html)*

The entry point for IDRC is its support of research teams and its focus not only on creating a community of scholars, but also in developing the research capacity of its grantees. As an extension to its support, IDRC also supports grantees within institutional capacity building initiatives. A specific IDRC project to note is the Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health Program Initiative, which brings together experts and individuals from both health and agriculture sectors. Grants are awarded to young researchers; however, the program is institutionalized because the research is translated into part of the university's curriculum. IDRC places research topics on a prospectus, teams decide which research project will be developed, and then a call for proposals is issued. While this is a preferred mode, unsolicited proposals are also funded within the four main areas of research. Capacity building includes providing equipment and training in research methods. IDRC is currently conducting an evaluation of its approach to capacity building. In addition, the IDRC has partnered with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to support international research alliances that will build the capacity of young researchers in developing countries.

#### *Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) Deborah Diserens, Director, Program Development <http://www.faimer.org/>*

FAIMER provides fellowships for health professions faculty in Africa, South Asia and South America. Fellowships focus on promoting scholarship and advancing fellows as scholars and academics. FAIMER is especially concerned with

developing scholarship in health professions education and creating networks of educators. Fellows are selected through an application process that must be supported by their university administrators. Fellowships are awarded to individuals with the expectation that Fellows will positively affect their home universities with the ultimate goal being to improve health care in countries through improving education. Curriculum innovation is supported. Apart from building the capacity of the health profession and health professions educators, FAIMER is pursuing research on the factors that contribute to the international migration of physicians. It conducted a study of graduating medical students in Africa to identify what they thought about staying in or leaving their respective countries. The results of this evaluation will be available in the near future.

*ELMA Philanthropies Services (Africa) Pty. Ltd.  
Bernadette Moffat, Executive Director  
[http://www.elmaphilanthropies.org/cape\\_town.html](http://www.elmaphilanthropies.org/cape_town.html)*

ELMA's interest in higher education is based on the idea that trained scholars are important for developing Africa. The foundation is exclusively interested in human resources for health and education. For example, it is collaborating with the Clinton Foundation on Human Resources for Health, focusing on training midwives and nurses in Zambia.

*Discovery Foundation  
Bernadette Moffat, Trustee  
<http://www.discovery.co.za>*

Wearing a second cap, Ms. Moffat spoke on the activities of the Discovery Foundation. It established a fellowship program to promote medical specialists and academic medicine. The foundation is particularly concerned with the aging medical academic establishment, where the average age of professors in medical schools is 66 years. The foundation has three fellowships and one excellence award: (1) rural fellowships to support medical specialists in rural settings; (2) academic fellowships for postgraduate medical research, also for

stemming brain drain; (3) sub-specialist fellowships to support registrars seeking sub-specialist training; and (4) institutional excellence awards for organizations or institutions that demonstrate innovation and excellence in service delivery in human resources for health care. Due to the novelty of the program and lack of public presence, applications for some of the fellowships has not been strong.

*W. K. Kellogg Foundation  
Gloria Somolekae, Program Director  
<http://www.wkkf.org>*

In the 1980s, the Kellogg Foundation invested extensively in human resource development through scholarships, but in the 1990s the foundation shifted its support to rural development and poverty alleviation. The foundation has not completely abandoned the scholarship programs but has placed greater priority on rural development. Substantial investment has been made in training health professionals. Kellogg is also concerned with issues affecting children. The foundation will fund a program that focuses on training midwives and nurses in Malawi. This project complements support for community development rather than serving as a means for nurses and midwives to earn more. Foundation work is limited to southern African countries. It is flexible and the foundation can support universities.

*H. F. Guggenheim Foundation  
Karen Colvard, Program Director  
<http://www.hfg.org/>*

The Guggenheim Foundation provides postdoctoral research grants and dissertation writing support. It has a small grant program with the African Institute of South Africa for young scholars in Africa. The goal is to develop knowledge about the origins and control of violence. The foundation focuses on Africa because it believes that young scholars are no longer imprisoned in paradigms of colonialism and Marxism. Instead they are looking at their cultural contexts as a means of understanding the challenges facing their respective societies. The foundation has an affirmative action program at the University of Pretoria. It supports individuals

rather than institutions because it believes individuals, not committees, do the best research work. However, the grants are small, and overhead and administrative costs are not covered.

Kole Shettima, The MacArthur Foundation  
Gloria Somolekae, W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Wisdom Tettey, University of Calgary, Canada

### **Identifying opportunities for collaboration**

Brij Maharaj (UKZN) commented on how many scholars do not have the information shared by the foundations. He urged foundations to go beyond bureaucracies and inform middle-layered persons, as little information about these initiatives trickles down to heads of departments.

There was agreement that this session of sharing provided an opportunity for funders to get a sense of intersecting interests and potential opportunities for synergies. It is hoped that specific partnership will emerge through post-concurrent session discussions.

### **Closing**

The discussion ended at 1:00 p.m.

### *Session participants*

Funmi Bickersteth, Deputy Vice Chancellor,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria  
John Butler-Adam, Ford Foundation  
Ria Collingwood, PHEA Office  
Karen Colvard, H.F. Guggenheim Foundation  
Raoul Davion, The MacArthur Foundation  
Deborah Diserens, Foundation for Advancement  
of International Medical Education and Research  
(FAIMER)  
Claudia Frittelli, Carnegie Corporation of New York  
Nicole Genereux, International Development  
Research Centre (IDRC)  
Eva Gerson, International Foundation for Science  
Andrea Johnson, Carnegie Corporation of New York  
Suzanne Grant Lewis, PHEA Office  
Brij Maharaj, University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Paschal Buberwa Mihyo, University of Namibia  
Bernadette Moffat, ELMA  
William Moses, The Kresge Foundation  
Katherine Namuddu, The Rockefeller Foundation  
Evelyn Mweta Richards, University of Dar es  
Salaam, Tanzania