Keynote Address: Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Academia

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Challenges are vital for success and growth

“Opportunities are circumstances which propels us to succeed”
My Journey

“The journey is about turning challenges into opportunities”
My Journey

• Born into ‘bottom’ middle class income family

• Hometown: Sekondi, Western Region

• Passion: Singing

• Early education: Little to no interest

• Motivation at early age: Break family poverty cycle through singing
My Journey

**Relationships impact trajectory**

-Elizabeth Ivy Essamuah-Quansah
My American Journey

From stay home wife to MBA graduate to stay-at-home mom
My Journey

Integration

Know the laws

Mentors

Network

Fall on your expertise and sell yourself
My Journey

From stay-at-home mom to Associate VP to Ph.D. holder
My Journey

• I have arrived
Challenges in Academia for women

Some statistics

• “Half of all Ph.Ds are being awarded to women”
• “Between only 20%-33% female get tenured faculty positions”
• “…5% in fields like engineering”

*Source: (Houser, 2019)*

Key challenges

1. Insufficient academic jobs

"I got a Ph.D. in history because I wanted to be a historian," Bartram wrote. "Now I have to do something else." ... — "I didn’t feel I had the right to grieve"

— Erin Bartram (2018)
Challenges in Academia for women

Key Challenges:

2. Unconscious hiring biases:
   • Affinity bias,
   • Confirmation bias, and
   • Availability bias
3. Difficulties in getting promotion and tenure
4. Leadership opportunities: competitive environment
5. Unequal pay
6. Balancing work, life and family

Picture credit: EQUAL-IST Project Partners (2017)
Challenges in Academia for African women

7. **Immigration/working documents**
   - Limited H1B Visas
   - Green card
   - Dual citizenship versus naturalized citizenship opportunities

8. **Linguistics issues** (Eg. favor vrs. favour, literal translation)

9. **Complexities of academic culture**
Challenges in Academia for women

10. **Declined interest:**
Expectation for publications, grants, research, teaching, outreach etc.

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[https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0184130.t002](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0184130.t002)

Source: PLOS ONE (2017)
Opportunities in Academia for women

- Platform for impactful services
- Cultural immersion
- Change agent
- Give back
Opportunities in Academia for women

Community engagement
Opportunities in Academia for women

• Family time
• Volunteer opportunities
• Community outreach
• Exploration of diverse countries, culture, socio-economic, and political affairs across the globe
• Professional and personal enrichment
Opportunities in Academia for women

Africa women to emulate

Dr. Wangari Maath  Luise Nghiueuelekwa  Prof. Nana Ama Ata Aidoo
Conclusion

- Embrace your identity
- Have passion
- Take on challenges
- Collaborate
- Leave legacy
Stand up straight and realize who you are, that you tower over your circumstances.

- Maya Angelou
Reference


THANK YOU!
ME D’ASE!
ASANTE SANA!
MERCI!
SHUKRAN!