

MTAWA ANNUAL MEETING, RESEARCH EXCHANGE, AND WORKSHOP



MTAWA

Mentoring Network for African Women in Academia

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN ACADEMIA

Friday June 7–Saturday June 8, 2019
Homewood Suites, Perimeter, Atlanta, Georgia, USA
MEETING REPORT



MTAWA

JULY 1, 2019

MENTORING NETWORK FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN ACADEMIA

[HTTPS://MTAWAINC.ORG](https://mtawainc.org)

Meeting Overview

MTAWA (The Mentoring neTWork of African Women in Academia) is an organization that establishes and builds networks for African women in academia in support of their academic and professional growth and success. By convening groups of African women professionals, scholars, and students, we provide much needed information, mentoring and support. Ultimately, MTAWA's vision is to increase the number of African women with advanced degrees and improve their representation in key leadership positions across multiple sectors. The theme of this year's meeting was Challenges and Opportunities for African Women in Academia. The meeting included breakout sessions, informal research exchange, and a workshop on negotiation.

Audience

The meeting was open to all members of MTAWA and others who could be members of MTAWA including: African women with terminal degrees or equivalent qualifications in their profession; persons who through employment, professional attainments, education, or experience are interested in the advancement and success of African women; and, African women already enrolled in/seeking to enroll in graduate or professional programs. The meeting comprised a highly engaged group of participants representing several different institutions (Auburn University, Centers for Disease Control, Emory University, Floyd Medical Center, Purdue University, and Towson University), disciplines (adult education, biomedical sciences, chemistry, engineering, university administration), and countries (US, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Nigeria) were represented.

Key Take Homes

1. **Early Career Mentees:** General need for mentorship. Mentoring relationship needs to be mutually beneficial. Work-Life Balance is especially challenging due to expectations related to being in early career stages.
2. **All Mentees:** Need for cultural training especially for incoming graduate students or early career mentees.
3. **All (Mentees, Mentors):** Need to be aware of unconscious biases in others' responses and in own response to others. Consider opportunity to create a cultural awareness.
4. **Mentors:** Need for a peer mentoring platform specifically for mentors (student mentees have an active group through WhatsApp). Mentors preferred LinkedIn. Early career mentees are also included in this group.
5. **All (Mentees, Mentors):** Important to identify negotiables, know your BATNA (dynamic) and the ZOPA, have data, and know your negotiating style and modify it if necessary.

-----*Day 1*-----

Welcome, Network Update, and Acknowledgements (Prof. Margaret W. Gitau)

Prof Margaret Gitau gave an overview of MTAWA, provided an update, and articulated the organization's strategic objectives through 2023. Participants were encouraged to help with member recruitment, particularly with respect to mentors. Prof. Gitau also acknowledged the workshop speakers, the workshop organizing team, and key contributors of financial and technical support. A related presentation is available at: <https://mtawainc.org/news-2/>

Breakout Session (Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo):

Participants shared their perspectives and discussed different topics that are of interest to the membership and African women in academia in general, including: mentoring and being mentored; early career challenges and opportunities; and, work-life balance. A related presentation is available at: <https://mtawainc.org/news-2/>

Keynote Address (Dr. Elizabeth Essamuah-Quansah)

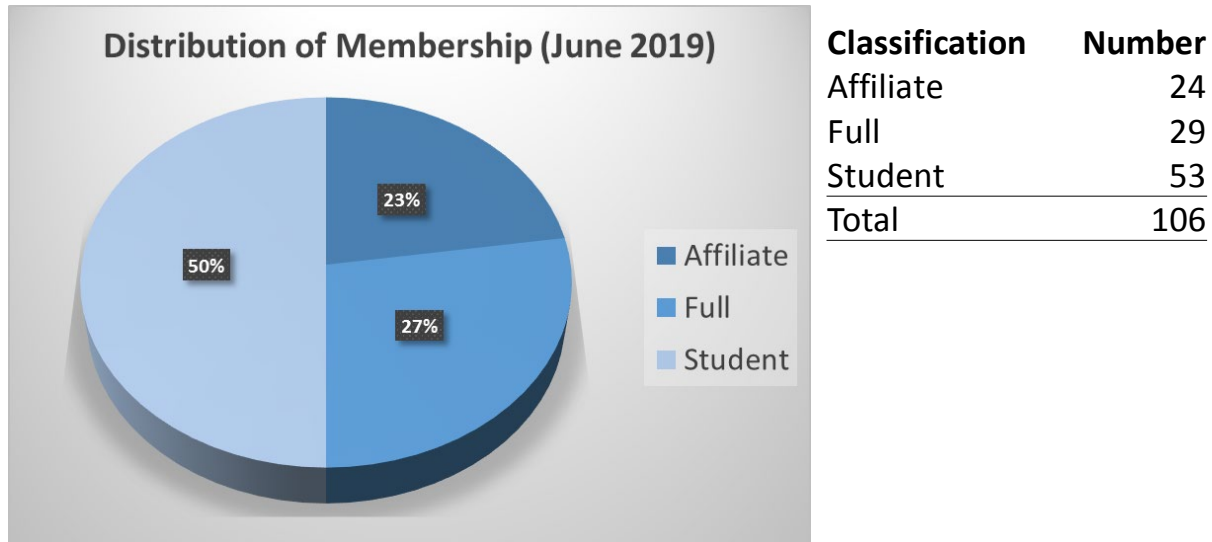
Dr. Quansah, Director of Outreach Global at Auburn University, shared her professional journey and provided insights into the challenges and opportunities for African women in Academia. The keynote noted that half of all PhDs are being awarded to women but only 20-33% of women PhDs were in tenured faculty position (and only 5% in engineering). Additional challenges for African women included immigration issues and cultural adjustments. Dr. Quansah noted the need for African women to first and foremost embrace their identity adding that passion, taking on challenges, and collaborating were additional keys to leaving a legacy. Dr. Quansah also led a discussion on Claiming Authority in the Workplace including: identifying leadership strengths, styles; gaining recognition as a leader; building support; self-advocacy vs self-promotion; and, leading graciously. Dr. Quansah's presentation is available at: <https://mtawainc.org/news-2/>

Workshop on Negotiation (Prof. Clare Muhoro):

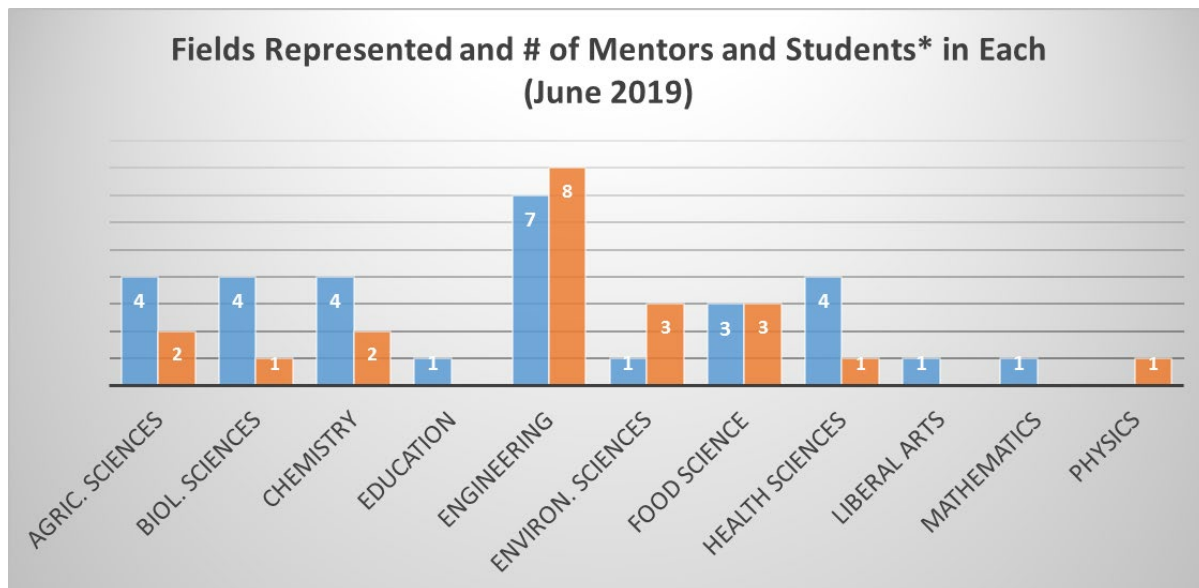
The main goal of the workshop was to help participants develop negotiation skills. Additionally, information exchange helped participants to understand barriers and opportunities each one might encounter in networking with scholars, professionals, and peers. Participants learnt to: identify negotiables; develop alternatives to an agreement; handle difficult people and conversations; listen to and appreciate different viewpoints; and, develop long and short-term negotiating goals

Business Meeting (Prof. Margaret Gitau and Prof. Clare Muhoro)

1. MTAWA Network Update (Continued from morning session)



MTAWA also includes a group known as “MTAWA Support”. These are partners or individuals who support MTAWA but do not necessarily want to be members.



*Numbers only include members who have submitted information on their field of work or study. Blue (Mentors), Orange (Students). Members who identify with multiple fields are only counted in their primary field.

- A lack of mentors in Physics was noted.

- It was suggested that some of the fields be combined (e.g. Biological Sciences and Health Sciences to Biomedical Sciences) for the purpose of mentoring.
- Some fields had more people due to recruiting efforts by Board members. Prof. Gitau urged everyone to recruit within their respective fields. There was a particular need for more mentors as students typically self-identify and contact MTAWA for membership.

2. Budget Wish List

Prof. Gitau shared a budget wish list of approximately \$11,000/year for five years, including: 1) mentee support (largest expense, 82.5%. Includes support for graduate school applicants, mentee travel, and outstanding student awards for mentees); 2) strategic committee functions (11%); and, recurring expenses (6.5%). The need for sponsors (corporate, other non-profits) was noted. MTAWA also has an active GoFundMe campaign for mentee support.

3. Strategic Objectives (covered in detail in morning session)

1. Expand MTAWA's reach across Africa (mentors, mentees, partners)
2. Deepen relationships among members and partners (sustainability)
3. Raise funds for the Network (sustainability, continued success)
4. Offer financial support to students and early career mentees (increase opportunities, chances of success)
5. Develop and/or support regional groups (access to networks)
6. Provide a variety of mentoring opportunities (mentoring models).

4. Introducing Incoming Chair of the Board (Prof. Clare Muhoro. Towson University and MTAWA)

Prof. Gitau introduced Prof. Muhoro as the incoming Chair of the Board. Prof. Muhoro led the Business meeting from this point forward.

Prof. Muhoro outlined her agenda (Partnerships) for the coming year. She discussed the need to meet partners who could potential help with funding.

It was noted that one of MTAWA's strengths was that it was African-led.

The Science Forum (hosted by AWARD) coming up in South Africa would be a good start. It was noted that MTAWA was not currently on AWARD's mailing list (AWARD had a representative on MTAWA's mailing list). Prof. Muhoro would follow up with AWARD.

5. Strategies for General Meetings

Members brainstormed on ways to increase meeting attendance.

1. Atlanta has been the venue of choice due to its accessibility from anywhere in the world. However, there was concern particularly for student and early career mentees about having justification to present to their supervisors since the meeting was not in their specific discipline.
2. A suggestion was made to convene alongside an on-going, broad interest meeting such as the AAAS meeting. This was broad enough that many might find a place in it but we would still need to make a case for the value (because it is broad). A suggestion was made to poll the members to see if there would be an interest.
3. Another suggestion was to determine where a large portion of our members go and plan around that.

6. Way Forward

Cultural training: the need for this had come up severally during discussions. There was discussion about how to do this. Suggestions included: 1) developing materials that were relevant to African women; 2) group E-mentoring sessions; 3) poll students and early career mentees to determine their needs in this respect.

Prof. Gitau would share links to mentoring guides that are accessible online.

General meetings: Poll members to see if there would be an interest in attending AAAS meetings.

Meeting Recap and Closing Remarks (Dr. Okomo-Adhiambo and Prof. Gitau)

Recap: Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo recapped the activities and content of the meeting. Key recommendations coming out of discussions included:

- General need for mentorship among early career mentees. Mentoring relationship needs to be mutually beneficial. Mentees needed to recognize that mentoring relationships can be both formal and informal.
- Need for cultural training for (especially) new graduate students or postdocs coming into the US or other western countries.
- Need for a social network for mentors (mentees already had an active network through WhatsApp). Members decided on LinkedIn.
- Need to learn how to lead as an African woman and to claim authority in the workplace.
- Workshop was very crucial. A lot was learnt about what can be negotiated, BATNA and ZOPA, negotiating styles, etc.

Closing: Prof. Margaret Gitau, thanked all participants for their interest and participation. She recognized the wealth of ideas and information shared and exchanged during the meeting and that these had been well-summarized by Dr. Okomo-Adhiambo.

-----*Day 2*-----

Group Mentoring Activity (Prof. Margaret Gitau)

Prof. Gitau led a group mentoring activity. Participants shared their perspectives and discussed different issues including:

- Need to make it clear that MTAWA had a broader reach beyond the East African region. Also more efforts were needed to reach potential members beyond EA.
- Need to promote members and member activities. This can be done through the website and the quarterly newsletter. Participants were encouraged to submit their news and announcements. A suggestion was made to engage a public relations person within MTAWA. Dr. Okomo-Adhiambo would follow up on this.
- Need better reach across disciplines. Participants were encouraged to recruit within their professions as this would be an effective way to reach the different disciplines.
- Need for cultural training including resources, online materials, expert in cultural studies who can speak to the group.
- Early career mentee needs including how to break out from the post-doc cocoon, job preparations, options for graduating students, and finding a supportive environment.

Tour of Atlanta (Dr. Maryann Chege)

Dr. Chege hosted interested participants in a tour of Atlanta.

-----*End of Report*-----

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Elizabeth Ivy Essamuah-Quansah

Director Outreach Global
Auburn University (AU)



Dr. Elizabeth I. Essamuah-Quansah is the Director of Auburn University (AU) Outreach Global. She is the wife of the lovely Dr. Joseph Quansah and mother of two genius children; Joseph Jr. and Lauren. Elizabeth was born in Ghana where she received her Bachelor's degree and began her career. Upon moving to USA, she earned MBA from Indiana University and Ph.D. in Administration of Higher Education at AU. As the Director of AU Outreach Global some of her major accomplishments have included: establishing the Outreach Global Unit, organizing and implementing a Free Health clinic in Ghana and establishing capacity building programs with universities, community leaders, government officials and NGO's across the globe. Dr. Quansah occasionally teaches Global Fluency classes and is an instructor for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. She and her husband are Founders of the Joseph & Elizabeth Quansah Foundation and a member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Special Thanks

Event Committee

Prof. Margaret W. Gitau

Prof. Clare N. Muhoro

Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo

Dr. Senorpe Asem-Hiablie

Dr. Christine Adhiambo

Ms. Pauline Welikhe

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Keynote Speaker

Dr. Elizabeth Ivy Essamuah-Quansah

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Donations

Dr. Senorpe Asem-Hiablie

Dr. Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo