

# Network Update

## 2021 Meeting of the Membership



The 2021 Meeting of the Membership was held on October 23, 2021 with the theme CAREER PATHWAYS, primarily focused on experiences, challenges, and opportunities in industry. This was an All-Virtual event with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Anastasia Mutethya Nyalita, CEO, Kenya Healthcare



Federation and Invited Speaker Dr. Pauline (Paula) Welikhe, Research Scientist, Phospholutions, Inc. Dr. Nyalita, shared her experiences from the C-Suite, noting the importance of building connections, especially connections with industry, and the important role networks played. Dr. Welikhe shared her perspectives on pursuing a career in industry versus a career in academia in terms of what determines the research direction, project timelines, and additional skills needed in industry. The meeting included two breakout sessions with discussions on career management and development, and deciding on graduate school. Key take-aways from the breakout sessions: (A) the need to regularly reflect on ones' career path and find the sweet spot where profession, mission, passion, and vocation meet; and, (B) key considerations for choosing a mentor, importance of considering the expectations of graduate school, and work-life balance. The full [Meeting Report](#) and other meeting materials are available [here](https://mtawainc.org/events/) (https://mtawainc.org/events/).

## 2021 Outstanding Graduate Students



**Abigail Ekeigwe** (at left) is a Ph.D. student in the Biotechnology Innovation and Regulatory Sciences program at Purdue University. She serves the public as a medical products regulatory officer with the FDA of Nigeria (NAFDAC).



**Cecilia Wangari Wambui** is an international scholar for Masters in Sustainable Development (Ecology Track) at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, and Biotechnology at Kenyatta University, Kenya. **Congratulations Abigail and Wangari!**

## In Brief

Dear Members and Friends,

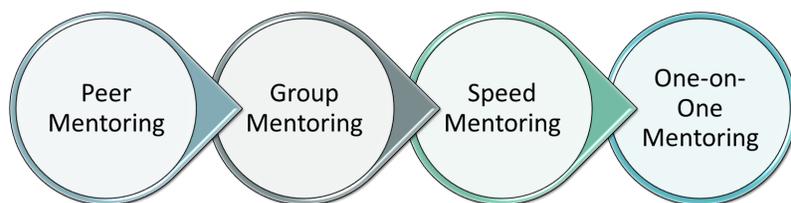


I hope this newsletter finds you well and in good health. The COVID-19 pandemic has lingered on, bringing about a lot of change and uncertainty. Despite the situation, we continue to look forward. We remain committed to our mission and vision to empower African women to succeed in graduate and professional programs and improve their representation in key leadership positions across multiple sectors. MTAWA is now five years old (September 2021). I am excited to note that in those five years we have: had 10 mentees graduate with PhD or MS degrees; held four successful workshops in Kenya, U.S., and South Africa; awarded four Outstanding Graduate Student awards; and, established four mentoring models. I trust that we all find inspiration from these accomplishments. We still, it would seem, have a long road ahead of us and there really is no going back to "the way things were" before the pandemic, but we can focus on what is working now and keep looking ahead.

My very best wishes for 2022!

Margaret Gitau  
President

## Mentoring Models



In 2021, we rolled out new mentoring initiatives led by our Mentoring Coordinator (Dr. Paula Welikhe) and her team of volunteer peer mentors (Abigail Ekeigwe, Amina Naliaka, and Redempter Mutinda). We also established a dedicated email address—[mentoring@mtawainc.org](mailto:mentoring@mtawainc.org)—to handle communications specific to mentoring. Everyone’s (both mentors and mentees) contribution to this initiative is valuable. Please be on the look out for and respond to communications from Paula in the coming months. Feel free to provide your inputs, suggestions, comments, etc. by emailing [mentoring@mtawainc.org](mailto:mentoring@mtawainc.org) or our general email [mtawainc@gmail.com](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com).

## New for 2022

**Member Directory Updates:** We are continually working to improve our operations to meet our mission and achieve our vision. To enhance engagement among members, we are currently updating our member directory. Please respond to the email sent on Monday, December 27, 2021 to provide us with your updated information. Many thanks to those who have already responded. We will host the directory on our WordPress site and provide member only access so members can find and contact each other directly. We will not sell, rent, or lease directory information to third parties. Many thanks to Abigail Ekeigwe and Mercy Okezue for taking on this project.

**LinkedIn:** Our [LinkedIn](#) page is now actively managed. We welcome everyone to engage, follow, like, comment, etc. Many thanks to Amina Naliaka for managing the Page.

**Slack Account:** We are in the process of establishing an account on Slack with several channels to enhance member engagement. Once established, we will need additional volunteers to manage the different channels. Be on the look out for communications on this in the coming months. Many thanks to Paula Welikhe and Amina Naliaka for handling this.

**MTAWA in Europe:** We are looking to hold our signature workshops in Europe this coming June or July. This will be tied together with our Meeting of the Membership. Stay tuned for additional information. Initial Planning Committee: Margaret Gitau, Clare Muhoro, Tabitha Mwangi, Wangari Wambui.

**Mentors Café:** Calling all mentors. The need for separate gatherings of mentors similar to ones we have with mentees has come up at least a couple of times in past meetings. We will soon be holding our inaugural gathering of mentors (Mentors Café). More information to follow shortly.

## Members on the Move

### Recognitions/New Appointments

Abigail Ekeigwe: 2021 MTAWA Outstanding Graduate Student Award. (May)

Wangari Wambui: 2021 MTAWA Outstanding Graduate Student Award. (May)

Pauline (Paula) Welikhe: Research Scientist, Phospholutions, Inc (July)  
Senorpe Hiablie: Research Scientist, Shell (October)

Pauline (Paula) Welikhe: Emerging Scholar Award 2021, International Fertilizer Association (November)

### Special Thanks

Anastasia Nyalita

Clare Muhoro

John McDermott

### Our 2021 Volunteers

Abigail Ekeigwe

Amina Naliaka

Christine Adhiambo

Clare Muhoro

Margaret Gitau

Margaret Okomo-Adhiambo

Pauline Welikhe

Redempter Mutinda

Senorpe Hiablie

Wairimu Nzoka

*Many thanks for your support!*

## Welcome New Members

Andile Sindiso Dube, KU Leuven, Belgium  
Eunice Njomo, KU Leuven, Belgium  
Gladys Mwaka Holeh, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Kenya  
Gloria A Aidoo-Frimpong, University of Buffalo, USA  
Hannah Njiriku, Kenya Medical Research Institute, Kenya  
Kujang Laki, Ohio University, USA  
Linda Akoth Otieno, University of Nairobi, Kenya  
Marcella Owuor Lang'o, Maseno University, Kenya  
Nancin Dadem, Ohio University, USA  
Phumzile Sibisi, University of Johannesburg, South Africa  
Rita Nairuti, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Kenya  
Tewbesta Alemayehu, Purdue University, USA  
Thikhedzo Nephawe, WRC Graduate Programme, South Africa

## About MTAWA

The Mentoring neTwork for African Women in Academia (MTAWA) 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.

### For more information:

Visit: <https://mtawainc.org/>

Contact Us: [mtawainc@gmail.com](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com)



## Get Involved

**We'd love to hear from you.** We are now accepting opinion pieces (articles) related to our mission and vision for publication on our website and in our newsletters. Submit articles up to 500 words to [mtawainc@gmail.com](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com).

**Send us your news.** Accomplishments, awards, graduations, promotions, etc.

**Review student award applications and provide feedback.** Indicate interest by emailing [mtawainc@gmail.com](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com). Reviews are conducted in April.

**Name a student award** e.g. in honor of a parent, special someone, or even after yourself. Other forms of naming are welcome.

**Volunteer to mentor through different MTAWA mentoring models** Look out for email requests from (or email) [mentoring@mtawainc.org](mailto:mentoring@mtawainc.org).

**Assist with strategic functions** including communications, fundraising, member engagement, and mentoring.

For more information, email us at [mtawainc@gmail.com](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com).

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*Best Wishes for 2022!*

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