Career development and Leadership initiative for Early Career African Scientists - W-ASLP/ASI Workshop

Call for applicants 2019

Background

It is becoming increasingly evident that the training of many young scientists features little focus on soft skill development, personal branding and leadership development within their respective fields. It is imperative to prepare the next generation of scientists for the complexities that inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches to science entail. There is an internationally emerging paradigm that recognizes that the focus on individual leadership is often inadequate to address complex challenges; and that instead, a collaborative leadership approach is more appropriate. This, however, requires skills across many sectors and collaborative processes. The West Africa Science Leadership Programme / African Science Initiative (W-ASLP/ASI) workshop will therefore focus on developing soft skills and collective leadership strategies that will help fellows contribute to personal branding and identifying individual leadership initiatives. We will also have a general discussion of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how leadership initiatives can be aligned to addressing the SDGs for the good of Africa.

Workshop Overview

The W-ASLP/ASI workshop is a joint initiative of the Africa Science Leadership Programme (ASLP) and the African Science Initiative (ASI) and is aimed at developing excellent early to mid-career African academics in the areas of thought leadership, team management and research development, with the intention of enabling them to solve the complex issues facing both Africa and the global community.

The ASLP is part of the Future Africa initiative led by the University of Pretoria in partnership with the Global Young Academy and has been running for the last five years in South Africa. In a bid to expand the ASLP to the different regions of Africa, the ASLP has partnered with the Africa Science Initiative to run the first ever West African Science Leadership workshop for early career researchers in the region. The African Science Initiative is, itself, an African-led project seeking to facilitate and promote networking between young African scientists from all around the world. The platform aims to enhance the visibility of African contributions to science and catalyse the establishment of productive collaborations between African scientists to develop science and technology in Africa.

The maiden edition of W-ASLP/ASI is intended to spread the initiative across Africa to reach the many talented individuals within the West African sub-region who will tremendously benefit from this programme.

The programme aims to create a lasting network of science leaders on the African continent, spanning not only across countries, but also across disciplinary boundaries.

The leadership programme:

- Identifies early- to mid-career academics who have demonstrated leadership potential and an interest in developing key leadership skills
➢ Supports them to apply the acquired skills to initiatives that are relevant to the academic development on the continent and its impact on society
➢ Creates a network of academic leaders within the West African region spanning not only across countries, but also across disciplinary boundaries
➢ Advances a curriculum for academic leadership development, which can be utilised in institutions in Africa and beyond.

Programme Structure

The programme will use a highly interactive approach to training, application of skills to a leadership initiative, peer support, and mentorship. Fellows will attend a 3 day, intensive on-site programme at the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP), Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology in Accra at the University of Ghana Legon, Ghana from 21-23 July, 2019 (departing on 24). The process will involve an approach that cycles between theory, application and reflection. Participants will be challenged to work collaboratively to design initiatives that advance a new paradigm for African science.

The training will cover:
• Core elements of collective leadership
• Creative and systems thinking; Effective problem solving and decision making
• Maximising the efficiency and impact of collaborative efforts
• Advanced dialogue and communication skills
• Soft skills development with a focus on CV preparation
• Social media influencing
• Networking
• Mentorship and self-branding.
• Barrier to re-entry to Sub Saharan African Science
• Panel Discussion (Q&A with former and current diasporan scientists)

Expected commitment

The W-ASLP/ASI is inviting applicants who are committed to developing leadership in Africa. The training itself requires the time commitment of the 3 multi-day training sessions. Furthermore, fellows will be expected to develop a leadership initiative and engage with other fellows for peer support.

The costs incurred during the workshop (training, relevant travel, meals and accommodation) will be covered by the programme. There will be some costs, which are not covered by the programme, such as visas, vaccinations or local transport expenses, for which you may need to seek support from your local institution or fund personally. You will also be required to provide us with your personal travel insurance details as a condition of participation.

Selection criteria and application process

To be selected, applicants need to display a compelling vision of their future involvement in the development of research projects, programmes, human capacity, specific policies or societal structures. The selection process will consider individual
qualities but also focus on ensuring a diversity of culture, subject background (Natural and Social Sciences, Humanities) and gender among the fellows. Where possible the programme will also attempt to create small ‘cores’ of leadership; multiple strong applicants from the same centre or country will thus be considered. The following criteria are used as a guide for the nomination and selection of fellows:

- A PhD degree or equivalent qualification;
- A faculty or a continuing research position at a research institution;
- Active in research and teaching at an African institution of higher education or research;
- A sustained record of outstanding scientific outputs;
- Interest in translating and communicating the results of their work for impact in society;
- Demonstrated leadership ability in research and beyond;
- Interest in the role of research in addressing complex issues affecting society;
- Interest in collaborations across disciplines and sectors (e.g. industry, government)
- Commitment to participate in all the activities of the fellowship; and
- Intent to share what is learned in the programme with their broader networks.

All applicants have to provide two support letters by academic referees (details are provided in the application form). One of the two referees has to commit to be involved in future communications and mentorship in case of selection of the applicant into the programme. This referee will be informed about the progress of the fellow and should be willing to support the fellow if he or she requires it.

All applications will be reviewed and shortlisted by representatives of the ASLP Management Team and the Local Organizing Committee at WACCBIP to make the final selection of candidates.

**Key dates:**

18 April – 15 May - Call open
June 1 - Successful applicants informed of decision
20 July - Arrival of participants
21 July - Start of Workshop