

US-Africa Higher Education Partnerships: Strategies and Practices for Success



InnovATE Symposium Report
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Summary

Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education (InnovATE) works to support capacity development in agricultural education and training (AET) in order to stimulate innovation within the agricultural sector and entrepreneurship throughout the developing world. The mission of the InnovATE project is to achieve sustainable food security, reduce poverty, promote rural innovation and stimulate employment by building human and institutional capacity. The program focuses on all aspects of agricultural education and training including: youth, gender, and workforce development at the primary, vocational/technical, university and post-graduate levels. The consortium is led by Virginia Tech (VT), with additional partners from Pennsylvania State University (PSU), and Tuskegee University (TU) and the University of Florida (UF).

On March 24-25, 2015, InnovATE hosted a symposium on US-Africa Higher Education Partnerships: Strategies and Practices for Success, at the University of Florida in Gainesville that centered on preparing successful students, faculty and institutions. This meeting focused on four challenges that are crucial to the success of African students in higher education:

1. Relevant programs for jobs of today and the future
2. How to align faculty incentives with achieving student success
3. Addressing challenges in creating new institutions and adoption of new curricula
4. Gender issues in African higher education including recruitment, retention, access, security, career paths for female students, as well as faculty and administration.

On day one, keynote speakers Dr. Clara Cohen from USAID Bureau for Food Security, Dr. Carl Larsen from World Bank, and Marilyn Crane from Higher Education for Development (HED) started the sessions speaking on donor investment in African higher education and the challenges of human and institutional capacity development. On day two, panels including both domestic and international faculty presented on preparing successful students, moderated by Dr. Youssef Diabate, and on preparing successful faculty, moderated by Dr. Grady Roberts, including a presentation from Dr. Emily Van Houweling about strategies and good practices for gender equity. A third panel of international faculty currently studying in the U.S., moderated by Dr. Tom Gill in a talk show style, discussed the challenges of returning home, and strategies for ensuring re-entry success. Dr. Keith M. Moore and Dr. Kurt Richter concluded the last panel discussion which focused on successful institutions highlighting experiences in Senegal and South Sudan.

Dr. Rick Rudd and Dr. Donna Westfall Rudd wrapped up the two-day symposium with a break out exercise to capture AET good practices identified from each panel introducing and utilizing the web-based Community of Practice as a platform to house and develop the ideas generated. Outcomes of the meeting were concepts for good practices papers and recommendations for future collaboration, research, and partnerships.

Proceedings

The symposium began with three keynote speeches from Dr. Clara Cohen, Dr. Carl Larsen, and lastly from Marilyn Crane. Their presentations can be viewed by clicking and following the hyperlinks on the titles below.

Keynote speakers:

- Dr. Clara Cohen, USAID, Office of Agricultural Research & Policy, Bureau for Food Security

[“USAID Support to African Higher Education: How is USAID Engaging?”](#)

In her presentation, Cohen discussed the context and opportunities for African higher education as well as donor funding trends. She also explained the way in which USAID partnerships with higher education institutions are evolving.

- Dr. Carl Larsen, World Bank, Global Practice Agriculture

[“Can African Higher Education Systems reinvent themselves and can the donors?”](#)

Larsen states that institutions must optimize existing societal designs and continue to re-invent, rather than attempt to invent a new structure. He presents ideas that could make the universities more accountable than the donors, and ideas to increase the university’s standard of excellence.

- Marilyn Crane, Higher Education for Development

[“Promoting African higher education leadership development through institutional partnerships: what works?”](#)

Crane begins by defining an optimal higher education partnership, then discusses the success and challenges these partnerships face by explaining key phrases and examples from previous programs.

Following the keynote speakers were four panels; the first, second and last panel sessions were structured as short presentations of no more than 10 minutes per panelist, with time allotted at the end for questions and answers. The third panel was set up in an alternative format as a moderated group discussion or “talk show”. In each session panelists were invited to develop thoughtful discussion of what is new, innovative, and transformative in AET and the given topic. A few panelists used additional resources to accompany their discussion points, click and follow the hyperlinked resource titles to view their materials or presentations.

Panel 1: Preparing Successful Students

Moderator: Dr. Youssef Diabate, Tuskegee University, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Sciences

Panelists:

- Dr. Gretchen Neisler, Director for the Center for Global Connections in Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (CGC), Michigan State University

- Dr. Serine Ndiaye, Cheikh Anta Diop University de Dakar Senegal, Tuskegee University
- Dr. Renata Serra, Lecturer at the Center for African Studies, University of Florida
- Dr. Karen Duca, Associate Professor, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, USAID
 - [“Preparing Successful Students”](#)

The panel discussion focused around the following questions and challenges:

- Challenges:
 - Creating critical thinkers
 - Innovators
 - Entrepreneurs
- What is the innovation(s) being practiced?
- What does a student centered curriculum look like?
- How have institutions changed their curriculum to become student focused?

Panel 2: Preparing Successful Faculty

Moderator: Dr. Grady Roberts, Professor at the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, University of Florida

Panelists:

- Dr. Leonardo Villalón, Director at the Center for African Studies, University of Florida
- Dr. Brijesh Thapa, Professor at the Department of Tourism, Recreation, and Sports Management, University of Florida
 - [“Preparing Successful Faculty in South Africa”](#)
- Dr. Emily Van Houweling, Associate Director of Women and Gender in International Development, Virginia Tech
 - [“Challenges and opportunities for female faculty members \(in agriculture programs\) in Africa”](#)
- Dr. Walter Bowen, Interim Director at the Center for Tropical Agriculture, University of Florida
- Dr. Francis Zotor, Head of Department, Family and Community Health, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ghana
 - [“Innovations for Sustainability”](#)

The second panel discussion focused around the following questions and challenges:

- Challenges:
 - Heavy teaching loads
 - Relevance of curriculum
 - Outdated materials
 - Old teaching models
 - Limited access to and use of technology
 - Few faculty development opportunities

- Discrimination against women and junior faculty
- Ossified institutional structures
- Disincentives to performance
- Training for the needs of the institutions (not training individuals per se)
- What can be changed, what can be ignored?
- Where are the advocates?

Panel 3: African faculty in the US – re-entry success

This session was held in a format of a radio talk show. The moderator, Dr. Tom Gill, asked a question for each member to respond to, if he or she chose to, and then Dr. Gill moved onto the next question. The panelists were informed of the focus and questions, but they did not prepare presentations. The panel was in effect a sort of group interview and also involved audience participation. The intent was to identify transformative possibilities for these faculty and their institutions when they return home.

Moderator: Tom Gill, Assistant Director of International Programs, College of Agricultural Science, Penn State University

Panelists:

- Matrona Kabyemela, Women University- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Ramadhani Majubwa, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania
- Martin Sebit, University of Juba, Virginia Tech
- Nana Baah Pepra-Ameyaw – Michigan State University, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
- Abou Traore, University of Kankan-Penn State University

The talk show discussion focused around the following questions and challenges:

As a graduate student in the US and a faculty member at an African university...

- What are you learning that you can use at your home institutions?
- What are you learning that you cannot use and why not?
- How can US partners help you become better faculty?
- Why would you not go back?

Panel 4: Developing successful institutions

Moderator: Marilyn Crane, Senior Program Specialist at Higher Education for Development

Panelists:

- Dr. Mamadou Cisse, Professor, Linguistics and Language Sciences, Universite Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar
- Dr. Kurt Richter, Associate Director, Technical Assistance and Special Initiatives, Virginia Tech
- Dr. Keith Moore, Interim Director, Office of International Research, Education, Development, Virginia Tech

- [Education and Research for Agriculture, USAID/ERA project in Senegal](#)

The panel focused around the following questions and challenges:

- Challenges:
 - Funding
 - Political support
 - Leadership and management
 - Infrastructure
 - Faculty recruitment
 - Quality and relevance
 - Accreditation
 - Power dynamics within and between institutions.
- How to use labor market data to inform institutional policies?
- Is money the answer? If not, what are good strategies?
- What has worked to make needed changes?

To close the symposium, Dr. Rick Rudd, Dr. Donna Westfall-Rudd and Dr. Tiffany Drape facilitated a session wherein four groups, addressing the four major topics of the symposium, were formed to discuss best practices that either emerged from the panels or with which the groups had experience. Lists were generated and amplified with discussions.

Wrap Up: Session Notes

Best Practices for Developing Successful Faculty:

African universities rarely have faculty development centers or programs to help faculty improve their teaching and research skills. Professors usually have heavy teaching loads yet are expected to publish their research in order to be promoted or receive raises. The top best practice, more of a wish than a documented practice, was to balance the development of teaching skills and research skills. Panelists had noted that there were few rewards for being a good teacher, team teaching was not encouraged, flipped classrooms or on-line teaching were not common practices, and teaching performance was not linked to student learning. Participants also noted that there is a challenge around publishing research results. There is a strong belief that only Northern or Western journals are not accessible and in any case, few have time to write or don't see the benefits of publishing. A best practice suggestion was to develop local initiatives for faculty to publish issue briefs and bulletins.

Another best practice that was offered, again more likely a best practice wish, was for faculty to be aware of gender balance in curriculum and teaching practice. This would likely be true as well for administrators, to recognize the gender barriers that female students and faculty face daily.

Specifically related to curriculum and teaching, as noted above, best practices that were desired are:

- Quality assurance measures for faculty performance related to student learning
- Strategies for peer collaboration on teaching and curricula topics
- Faculty incentives for good teaching (including TA support)
- Systems for on-going (continuous) faculty development
- Networking and support systems for faculty (including gender based networks)

Finally, albeit briefly, best practices and examples of long-term career progression within universities were mentioned. What would be good strategies to keep faculty in place, to keep them from seeking outside employment, and to help them decide and develop along a career track as a research, teacher or administrator.

Best Practices for African Faculty in U.S: Ensuring Re-entry Success

Both the "talk show" and the closing session highlighted the isolation that returning faculty face, going into an institution that has not changed while they were gone. Because teamwork is such an integral part of graduate student academics in the U.S., the African faculty's top best practice was to find a way to continue to do teamwork when they went back home. Find colleagues who are doing good things and work with them. Mentor and mentee relationships were also best practices – finding a good mentor and being a good mentor. The last best practice as building partnerships – within and across institutions in their own country and globally.

Best Practices for Developing Successful Institutions

Several panelists had noted that the secondary education system needs to be improved, that vocational schools need to be revisited/improved, and that not as many students need a university degree. The top best practice noted was the need to establish associate degree programs for the types of jobs that are available. This links to the second best practice – develop private sector agreements so that graduates can be employed. There was discussion around how this does or does not work in specific

contexts but that when it does work, it is a win-win for all. A very few institutions are focusing on entrepreneurship or on building their programs to address community needs.

Best Practices for Developing Successful Students:

The two practices that were at the top of this list were Peer Mentoring and Active Learning Methods. In African higher education institutions, too often the distance between the professor and the student is too great for students to bridge. There are rarely teaching assistants. Thus, programs for peer mentoring where more knowledgeable students help struggling students has worked. Active learning, whether through a lot of in class assignments and projects, group projects, hands-on assignments, practical skills building or journal clubs, engage students because their learning experiences are multi-faceted. Learners learn in different ways; not every student learns well via lectures.

Other best practices suggested and shared by the panelists include:

- Selecting curriculum for student success
- Challenge mapping
- Stakeholder buy in for workforce development
- Benchmarks for students to gain workforce skills
- Managing expectations of: student, employers, society
- Thinking globally, acting locally
- Experiential learning
- Pre-test to gauge student knowledge
- Counselor face-to-face time for career exploration
- Journal club for critical thinking
- Student retreats

Appendix A: Symposium Agenda

**US-Africa Higher Education Partnerships:
Strategies and Practices for Success
March 24-25, 2015
University of Florida Smathers Library East Room 100**

Tuesday, March 24

| Time | Topic |
|-----------|---|
| 2:00-4:00 | <p>Opening – US & African Higher Education Partnerships <i>An overview of AET in Africa, where challenges continue to exist, where transformation is possible, and what we, as US and African higher education institutions can do.</i></p> <p><u>Welcoming Remarks:</u> Dr. Leonardo Villalón, Dean, UF International Center Dr. Allen Wysocki, Associate Dean, UF College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dr. Abraham Goldman, Director, UF Center for African Studies Dr. Sandra Russo, UF International Center</p> <p><u>Keynote speakers:</u> Dr. Clara Cohen, USAID, Office of Agricultural Research & Policy, Bureau for Food Security “USAID Support to African Higher Education”</p> <p>Dr. Carl Larsen, World Bank, Global Practice Agriculture “Can African Higher Education Systems reinvent themselves and can the donors?”</p> <p>Marilyn Crane, Higher Education for Development “Promoting African higher education leadership development through institutional partnerships: what works?”</p> |
| 4:00-5:00 | Tour of Science Library Collaboration Commons (at Marston Science Library) |
| 6:00 | Dinner with InnovATE Partners and Symposium Presenters |

Wednesday, March 25

| Time | Topic |
|-------------|--|
| 8:30-10:00 | Preparing Successful Students Moderator: Dr. Youssef Diabate, Tuskegee University Panelists: Dr. Gretchen Neisler, Michigan State University Dr. Serigne Ndiaye, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal Dr. Renata Serra, UF Center for African Studies Dr. Karen Duca, USAID-Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana, USAID |
| 10:00-10:30 | Break |
| 10:30-12:00 | Preparing Successful Faculty Moderator: Dr. Grady Roberts, UF College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Panelists: Dr. Leonardo Villalón, UF Center for African Studies Dr. Brijesh Thapa, UF Center for African Studies Dr. Emily Von Houweling, Virginia Tech Dr. Walter Bowen, UF Global, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dr. Francis Zotor, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ghana |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:15 | African faculty in the US – re-entry success Moderator: Dr. Tom Gill, Penn State University College of Agricultural Sciences Panelists: Martin Sebit, University of Juba-Virginia Tech Matrona Kabyemela, University of Dar es Salaam-University of Florida Ramadhani Majubwa, Sokoine University of Agriculture-University of Florida Nana Baah Pepra-Ameyaw, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology-Michigan State University Abou Traore, University of Kankan-Penn State University |
| 2:15-3:30 | Developing successful institutions Moderator: Marilyn Crane, Higher Education for Development Panelists: Dr. Ntam Baharanyi, Tuskegee University Dr. Mamadou Cisse, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal Dr. Kurt Richter, Virginia Tech Dr. Keith Moore, Virginia Tech |
| 3:30-4:00 | Break |
| 4:00-5:00 | Wrap Up - Strategies and Good Practices Moderator: Dr. Rick Rudd, Virginia Tech |

Appendix B: Keynote Speaker Biographies

Clara Cohen, Senior Science Policy Advisor with USAIDS Bureau for Food Security



Cohen serves as senior science policy adviser with USAID's Bureau for Food Security, Office of Agricultural Research and Policy. She leads Office activities focusing on human and institutional capacity development and has contributed to the design and launch of several new programs emphasizing research and education system strengthening. Previously, she worked as a Research Scholar for the Health and Global Change Unit at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), in Vienna, Austria and at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, where she designed and implemented the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded African Science Academy Development Initiative, a 10-year effort to strengthen the capability of African science academies to inform national health policy. She also directed studies on agricultural research, including a Congressionally mandated review of the four research agencies under USDA's Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area (ERS, ARS, CSREES, and NASS). She served as an AAAS Diplomacy Fellow in USAID's Center for Economic Growth and Agricultural Development, Office of Agriculture and Food Security, from 1998–2000. She has conducted research on leguminous cover crops at the Rodale Institute Research Center and served as a Peace Corps aquaculture volunteer in Guatemala. She holds a BA in biology from Swarthmore College and a PhD in plant physiology, with minors in molecular biology and soil science, from Cornell University.

Marilyn Crane, Senior Program Specialist at American Council on Education



Marilyn Crane is Senior Program Specialist at Higher Education for Development. In this capacity, Crane is responsible for managing higher education partnership programs in North Africa, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Haiti, and Armenia. Crane joined HED (formerly the Association Liaison Office) in 2002 as a program associate, where she began by managing HED's partnerships in sub-Saharan and eastern Africa. She has also worked at the Aspen Institute's International Peace, Security, & Prosperity Program and the International Women's Forum, where she was associate director of programs. Crane has more than 12 years of experience in the field of international development. Crane earned her bachelor's degree with honors in international studies, with a correlate in French, from Vassar College and studied overseas at L'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.

Carl Larsen, Senior Agricultural Education Specialist at the World Bank



Larsen has 20 years of work experience with facilitating change of individual, the institutions that governs them, and the organizations they work in. He has acquired work experience from three continents and a dozen countries, mainly in Africa and South East Asia. Larsen operates professionally and goal oriented from farmers' fields, to ministry meetings. His main force is known to be strong analytical skills coupled with system thinking that makes him able to see solutions where others see constraints.

Appendix C: List of Participants

| # | Last Name | First Name | Organizational Affiliation |
|----|---------------|----------------|---|
| 1 | Agbogun | Ashi | Tuskegee University |
| 2 | Amadou Ndiaye | Serigne | University of Dakar, Senegal |
| 3 | Ba | Oumar | University of Florida |
| 4 | Bowen | Walter | University of Florida |
| 5 | Chase | Carlene | University of Florida |
| 6 | Childers | Jessica | University of Florida |
| 7 | Cisse | Mamadou | University of Florida/ University of Dakar, Senegal |
| 8 | Cohen | Clara | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| 9 | Crane | Marilyn | Higher Education for Development |
| 10 | Cricenti | Johanna | Virginia Tech |
| 11 | Drape | Tiffany | Virginia Tech |
| 12 | Duca | Karen | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| 13 | Edgell | Amanda | University of Florida |
| 14 | Galloway | Glenn | University of Florida |
| 15 | Gill | Tom | Penn State University |
| 16 | Houweling | Emily van | Virginia Tech |
| 17 | Jones | Kristal | Penn State University |
| 18 | Kabyemela | Matrona | University of Florida/ University of Dakar, Senegal |
| 19 | Karki | Lila | Tuskegee University |
| 20 | Kernaghan | Nikki | University of Florida |
| 21 | Kima | Peter | University of Florida |
| 22 | Laizer | Japhet | Tuskegee University |
| 23 | Lambeth | Jeremy | University of Florida |
| 24 | Larsen | Carl | World Bank |
| 25 | Lindberg | Winifred | University of Florida |
| 26 | Ludgate | Nargiza | University of Florida |
| 27 | Majubwa | Ramadhani | University of Florida |
| 28 | Moore | Keith | Virginia Tech |
| 29 | Mori | Joakin | Tuskegee University |
| 30 | Neisler | Gretchen | Michigan State University |
| 31 | Obonyo | Ester | University of Florida |
| 32 | Okumu | Michael | University of Florida |
| 33 | Pepra-Ameyaw | Nana Baah | Michigan State University |
| 34 | Qu | Shuyang | University of Florida |
| 35 | Rajotte | Ed | Penn State University |
| 36 | Reboussin | Daniel | University of Florida |
| 37 | Richter | Kurt | Virginia Tech |
| 38 | Roberts | Grady | University of Florida |
| 39 | Rodriguez | Mary | University of Florida |
| 40 | Romero | Claudia | University of Florida |
| 41 | Rudd | Donna Westfall | Virginia Tech |
| 42 | Rudd | Rick | Virginia Tech |
| 43 | Russo | Sandra | University of Florida |
| 44 | Scheider | Laina | Virginia Tech |
| 45 | Sebit | Martin | Virginia Tech |
| 46 | Thapa | Brij | University of Florida |
| 47 | Traore | Abou | Penn State University |
| 48 | Villalon | Leonardo | University of Florida |
| 49 | Vilsack | Christie | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| 50 | Williams | Rebecca | University of Florida |
| 51 | Zotor | Francis | University of Health and Allied Sciences |