



THE SIXTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION WEEK AND RUFORUM BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, 22 – 26 October 2018

Theme: Aligning African Universities to Accelerate Attainment of Africa’s Agenda 2063

Venue: Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), Nairobi, Kenya

Call for Expression of Interest to Participate

Building a Pool of Professional Public Relations Officers in RUFORUM Member Universities to promote information gathering and visibility of Universities in Africa

Open to: Public Relations/marketing/Communication Officers from the 85 member universities of RUFORUM or communications persons from research institutions in the 35 African countries where RUFORUM operates. See www.ruforum.org for details on countries where RUFORUM operates and the RUFORUM member universities.

Introduction

Universities generate a lot of knowledge through faculty and students’ research which is needed for society and national development. Further, due to the increasing demand, universities are also engaged in research for development and community outreach which are beneficial for national development. Universities also provide a lot of social services to society. However, the visibility of African universities’ contribution to society development, and policy formulation in particular, is not that visible to the general public, especially policy. This is partly because university scientists and researchers have challenges in communicating the information they gather and the knowledge they generate for informing decision making and consequently national development. Yet the knowledge based on independent, quality-assured information such as that from universities empowers people and helps them to develop ideas, engage in discussions, influence policy and make decisions that can improve the quality of life in general. The demand for easy to understand, up-to-date information is growing. This demand comes from policy makers, researchers, students, Media and from civil societies who are increasingly urging for full transparency on information from both public and private Universities. Alongside this development, the rapid evolution in new information technologies provides tools to communicate more effectively.

Because of the increasing need for information and the existing communication gap between what universities do and the demand of the communities/countries they serve, universities continue to be labelled as “Ivory towers” or irrelevant to community or national development. The result has been the isolation of universities as institutions, from national development framework consultation processes,

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decline in funding in some countries, lack of trust from governments and loss of prestige as “knowledge and innovation centres”. Restoring the lost glory requires adaptation of universities to the current needs and aggressively communicating every action to adapt. At international level, African universities are competing to be world class yet African universities continue to lag behind in global ranking. Information used for ranking is based on communicated information such as online publications, stories published, and electronic resources available, among others. While University top management is responsible for making strategic decisions on how the universities should operate, it is the role of Public Relations and Communication Officers to package their universities as successful institutions and worth investing in. Information on graduate quality and employability, the research being done and its outputs and how the community and national economy will benefit among others, is a key role for Communication and Public Relations Officers to articulate and make widely visible.

Some universities have excelled in information packaging and communication and thus are perceived as excellent universities while many others in Africa have not promoted their visibility that well, and are seen as less performing. While the level of activity in the community and nationally is low for emerging universities, twining of such universities with the established ones will provide a platform for lesson sharing and learning from each other to enhance performance and visibility of African universities. Accordingly the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) has organised a lesson sharing and learning event for Public Relations and Communication Officers of the member universities. The event will facilitate information sharing amongst the Officers and a team of resource persons on best practices for promoting visibility and marketing of universities.

Rational and Objectives

The purpose of the event is to build a Community of Practice (CoP) of professional Public Relations and Communication Officers in RUFORUM member Universities. The CoP will facilitate identification of gaps that exist within Universities in the Public Relations and Communications offices regarding information sourcing, sharing and dissemination, review of member university websites, improvement of the traffic flow and visibility, increasing access to research done at universities as well as engaging more with beneficiaries such as alumni.

The overall objective of the event is to increase visibility of what Universities do using the various tools of mass communications. Specifically, the objectives of the event are to;

- Bring together the member University core PRO teams and communications resource persons to discuss the best practices for promoting visibility and marketing of African Universities
- Create a Community of Practice for continuous sharing of best practices
- Provide opportunity for the Public Relations and Communication Officers to profile their universities during the 22-26 October 2018 Sixth Africa Higher Education Week.

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Expected out comes

- A database of RUFORUM member University PROs and Communications Officers created
- A community of Practice (CoP) for furthering discussions and sharing formed
- Enhanced visibility of Member universities in various platforms and to the general public

Eligibility

The training is open to Public Relations, marketing and or Communication Officers from the 85 member universities of the RUFORUM Network and research institutes from the 35 countries where RUFORUM operates. Please check www.ruforum.org for details about the countries where RUFORUM operates in and the member universities.

Costs

The training is organised on a cost-sharing basis. The RUFORUM Secretariat will cover costs related to resource persons, facilitation materials, training venue, morning and evening teas, and lunches. The participants are expected to cover the cost of their travel (air tickets, ground travel at home country and in Kenya), registration fees, workshop package, exhibition booth, accommodation, dinners and any other incidentals for participation in the 6th Higher Education week and RUFORUM Biennial 2018. Below is the summary of costs to be covered by participants.

#	Item	Cost (USD)
1	Conference Registration (Monday-Friday)	\$350 (Includes Airport pick up)
2	Workshop package	\$120
3	Accommodation	\$110 per day
5	Dinner per day	\$30
6	Exhibition booth for members Universities	\$700
7	Exhibition booth for non-members Universities	\$750

Write-shop dates and venue

The training will take place **20- 21 October 2018**; this will be followed up by the Sixth African Higher Education Week Events, 22-26 October 2018 at the Kenyatta International Conventional Centre, Nairobi, Kenya <http://kicc.co.ke/> . Arrival will be on **19th** and departure on **27th October 2018**.

Note: The PROs/Communication Officers would manage exhibition booths of their universities and profile the Sixth African Higher Education week in their university and national media.

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Confirmation

All interested participants should confirmation to participate in the training by registering through this [Link](#) by **15th September 2018 23:59 GMT** (East African Standard Time) to allow for logistical preparations

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