

University Education for  
Transformative Leadership in Africa

**Report on the Faculty Support Grant**

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## Introduction

In partnership with The MasterCard Foundation the Talloires Network launched the University Education for Transformative Leadership in Africa (UETLA) Faculty Support Grant in 2016. This unique grant opportunity supports the ongoing learnings of the Youth Economic Participation Initiative, launched in 2012 to catalyze change in the way universities across the globe prepare their students for employment and entrepreneurship after graduation. The purpose of UETLA is to support such efforts by documenting university education for transformative leadership at African institutions, with an emphasis on education strategies for youth leadership and economic participation. It contributes significantly to the Talloires Network's action research agenda and growing community of practice; it also assists the Network in its commitment to "increase acknowledgement and recognition for professors who perform high quality community-engaged teaching and research, and public service."

This report presents the participants, activities, and outcomes of the faculty support grant program. Special attention is given to four main summaries of findings: (1) Gender, Youth, and Transformative Leadership, (2) Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Networking, (3) Pedagogy and Mentorship, and (4) the Power of Sharing and Exchange. The report also briefly discusses the successful ingredients of implementing a program to support university faculty and recommendations for the continuation of university support in Africa.

## Engaged Faculty

An international selection committee chose 10 faculty from a pool of 28 applicants from Africa. The cohort of 10 engaged faculty includes 7 women and 3 men working in 9 universities in 6 countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda).

The group represents some of the most distinctive and innovative programs in university-community engagement. They are:

| Name                           | Department                                               | University                                        | Project and Partner                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elvis Akomoneh                 | Department of Health Sciences                            | Saint Monica University, Cameroon                 | Saint Monica Health Center Franchise Project partnering with the Ministry of Public Health in Cameroon                 |
| Sunitha Chandrasekhar Srinivas | Faculty of Pharmacy                                      | Rhodes University, South Africa                   | Maternal and Child Health partnering with <u>St. Mary's Development and Care Center</u>                                |
| Filliam Efiti                  | School of Media Technology                               | LivingStone International University, Uganda      | Internship partnering with the <u>Bungokho Rural Development Centre</u>                                                |
| Martina Jordaan                | Department of Informatics                                | University of Pretoria, South Africa              | Community-based Project Module partnering with the <u>Stanza Bopape Health and Community Centre</u>                    |
| Phumelele Kunene-Ngubane       | Institute for Rural Development and Community Engagement | Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa | MUT Student Volunteerism Project partnering with the <u>Ikamva Youth Organization</u>                                  |
| Anthony Leone                  | Department of Rhetoric and Composition                   | American University in Cairo, Egypt               | The Quartet of Course and Civic Engagement Conference Project partnering with the <u>African Hope Learning Center</u>  |
| Rwida Matar                    | School of Management                                     | Ahfad University for Women, Sudan                 | Creating Opportunities for Youth Employment partnering with the Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women Studies |

| Name            | Department                                                      | University                            | Project and Partner                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Janice McMillan | Global Citizenship Program                                      | University of Cape Town, South Africa | Deliberate Pedagogy in the Community: Developing Citizen Leaders in Higher Education partnering with the <u>Development Action Group</u> |
| Olive Mugenda   | School of Applied Human Sciences                                | Kenyatta University, Kenya            | Kenyatta University Growing Leaders Programme partnering with <u>Brilliant Technologies</u>                                              |
| Dina Wafa       | Executive Education, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy | American University in Cairo, Egypt   | Future Generations in Economic Development in Egypt and the Arab Region partnering with <u>CARE-Egypt</u>                                |

### Methodology

One of the primary goals of the Talloires Network is to recognize and raise the profiles of innovative community engagement programs. The UETLA Faculty Support Grant recognizes engaged faculty as individuals at their home institutions, while raising the visibility of their activities locally and globally. The public recognition of engaged faculty not only encourages universities to adopt policies that support community engagement, it also spurs innovation and ingenuity in the programs themselves. Elevating the visibility of high-quality engaged research and teaching in Africa is a top priority for the Talloires Network. The selection criteria for the Faculty Support Grant included:

- Demonstrated commitment to, and accomplishment in, university community engagement activities;
- Engaged pedagogy, curriculum, approach to mentorship, and/or stewardship of professional networks;
- Approach to partnership with community;
- Evidence of educational methodologies for transformative leadership;

- Demonstrated impact on student learning and employability; and
- Potential to yield learnings relevant to others.

A 12-month syllabus provided structure for the engaged faculty cohort. Each month, they shared with each other teaching strategies and theories underlying their community engagement work, with an emphasis on outcomes of education for transformative leadership and youth employability and entrepreneurship. This dynamic cohort of 10 engaged scholars quickly expanded through TN's online community of practice where these engaged faculty were able to bring the learning, knowledge, and key practices from each of their programs to a wider audience. The engaged faculty connected with leaders throughout our network by creating individual profiles and posting reflections, stories, comments, questions, videos and photographs. Throughout 2016, the engaged faculty also participated in quarterly video conference calls, and took advantage of other opportunities for exchange such as conferences, co-authorships, webinars, and in-person meetings.

### **Key Findings**

A common theme in The MasterCard Foundation 2015 Strategic Plan, the Talloires Network Leaders Conference 2014 Report, and the YEPI Year 2 Learning Report is the development of students' leadership skills through higher education. These reports indicate that higher education is a vital avenue that enables young people to access the appropriate skills, knowledge and abilities to better their lives. In turn, university graduates may make meaningful contributions to their home communities. The engaged

faculty provide evidence of growth in community engagement at African higher education institutions amidst a time of youth population bulge and rising unemployment rates.<sup>1</sup> The engaged faculty cohort help us to better understand emerging pedagogies and community collaboration that build student's leadership skills, as summarized below.

### Gender, Youth, and Transformative Leadership

The engaged faculty work in challenging environments. Particularly relevant to the African landscape of higher education are discrimination against women and barriers young people face to becoming engaged, educated citizens. The engaged faculty draw on conceptions of critical pedagogy<sup>2</sup> to better orient learners towards skills and perspectives that build civic competencies. They encourage students to have experiences that catalyze transformative leadership. Transformative leadership acknowledges that both personal and social transformations are intricately connected. It centers the experiences of individuals as cornerstones from which to build confidence and understanding that can be shared among others. Transformative leadership emphasizes the transferable nature of its power – it is strengthened by diffusion of responsibilities and leadership roles, rather than weakened or threatened. This kind of cooperatively minded leadership is necessary to allow individuals and communities to become self-reliant and sovereign.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Youth Unemployment is on the Rise Again, 2016 <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/08/global>

<sup>2</sup> Paulo Freire's practice of critical pedagogy requires students and teachers to question existing knowledge to empower themselves for social change.

By emphasizing the roles of Gender, Youth, and Transformative Leadership in the UETLA curriculum and program, faculty and students come together to better challenge personal and societal assumptions, biases, and hierarchies. Focusing on these issues also allows us to transform our perspectives on, and means of assessing achievement academically, professionally, and personally. The UETLA curriculum offers participants the frames to discuss social issues like sexism, racism, and structural poverty without assigning personal blame and helps individuals feel they have a role to play in building the world they want to see.

As Anthony Leone from Egypt explained, “we examine what [Howard Zinn] meant when he wrote that he was ‘worried that students would take their obedient place in society and look to become successful cogs in the wheel - let the wheel spin them around as it wants without taking a look at what they’re doing.’” Applied to gender, the common thread for the group is their work to make students aware of gender inequality and helping students recognize how to find solutions.

In South Africa, the UETLA grant funded a course on transformative leadership called “Leadership through Community Interaction,” which taught students the outcomes of positive moral and ethical behavior when working with challenging social situations (Kunene-Ngubane). Another South African program subscribes to a horizontal method of student learning that creates space for immersion learning, inclusion assessment, students as collaborators and reciprocal community partnerships (McMillian).

Transformative leadership in higher education is about changing individual lives, enhancing student learning, and improving standards of living for communities, according to engaged faculty in Uganda (Filliam).

### **Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Networking**

A major point of emphasis for the UETLA program is nurturing skills and opportunities for students to get hands-on experience in professional and real-world settings. Engaged faculty in their work with community members, public offices, non-profit groups, businesses, and others create opportunities for student participation in community building. By supporting engaged faculty, UETLA elevates and connects efforts to build economic security and personal and social wellbeing. Engaged faculty use critical pedagogies to link real world opportunities to provide for one's self and one's community; they develop academic experiences that allow students to better integrate and innovate in any professional field. The incorporation of entrepreneurship into course curricula opens up possibilities for students who never considered it an option.

Networking events and learning experiences directly connected to employability in various sectors, if framed and executed properly, help to build personal competencies and stimulate engagement and community-minded planning in individuals. This in turn boosts confidence and provides the chance for transformational leadership to flourish. Nurturing this virtuous cycle and changing the culture of individuals and institutions is the first step in nurturing a network of like-minded institutions that can reform higher education institutions around the globe to move beyond the ivory tower.

The goal is “ensuring that the research, teaching and learning process in institutions of higher learning are aligned with the demands in the communities and businesses where graduates will serve,” according to Kunene-Ngubane. Many North African students in the Arab region, and students from countries that were part of the Arab Spring in 2011-2012, are receiving intensive training by way of full scholarship to learn skills for community dialogue (Wafa). Even in difficult political environments involving closed campuses and protesting, students can learn how to access information and create a participatory approach to policy reform. These real-life experiences and “community classrooms” contribute to employable skills and entrepreneurial mindsets. For students in Cameroon, tuition debt after graduation limits future employment opportunities due to need to settle for the first, underpaid job after graduation. A potential solution is to produce graduates who are successful entrepreneurs capable of running businesses, where “the university funds the most promising projects, creating an atmosphere of creativity and hard work, an act that reassures students that no matter their background, becoming a ‘complete graduate’ guarantees your dreams.” (Akomoneh)

### Pedagogy and Mentorship

There is growing support for higher education in Africa from large entities such as the World Bank, the Pan African University, and the African Union. But the need for higher education far exceeds what can be provided for a growing youth population.

Furthermore, traditional learning methods are not the crucial necessity. The UETLA

faculty expand the traditional methods of research and teaching by engaging students in pressing social problems in their chosen profession. Advances toward successful higher education programs under their direction include critical and constructivist pedagogies that teach civic and personal responsibility, immersion learning beyond the university, networking with invested employers, peer mentoring, and institutional reform. According to a former Vice-Chancellor Mugenda, “part of what is learned in the university is not only cognition but socialization of values, practices, and attitudes; it transforms the student into a successful person.” In a broader sense, innovative pedagogies help to engender systems change in higher education, and mentorship is a practice that influences pedagogy. Mentorship builds networks of change makers and can be useful in two distinct ways. First, by building long-lasting professional networks between students and faculty as well as community leaders. Second, mentoring offers sustainability for programs and institutions with strong alumni involvement. “Teaching is about empowering learners to take responsibility for their learning because in a few short years they will be professionals and decision makers in health care systems, which will have local, regional and global influences. Teaching should cultivate curiosity and passion in learners because the future of the profession is only as good as the professionals who join the work force,” according to Chandrasekhar Srinivas. Similarly, for Babiker Hassan Matar, mentoring is a way “to sustain professional networks relationships between students and community and between students and university, through research, assignments, and civic engagement activities.”

## The Power of Sharing and Exchange

Reflections from the engaged faculty point to the invaluable transfer of knowledge between students and community members. In addition, evidence shows peer-to-peer learning that takes place when students are grouped together in community-based networks for learning and action. For most engaged faculty, community-based research and assessments make it possible to prioritize teaching and learning around community needs and the well-being of local citizens, which also happen to be the students and their families (Babiker Hassan Matar). Engaging community members in sharing and exchange enables learning across cultures, language, and class, which can unlock problem-solving potential in ways never considered by students.

Engaged faculty are the axis to such sharing and exchange. Some serve on various community and university boards, bridging similar conversations with new ideas and finding support from extraordinary sources. As Jordaan in South Africa explains, “I am a member of the advisory boards of various NGOs where I network with other stakeholders in the community. Before the academic year begins, I visit as many new and existing campus-community partners in the areas as possible.” This outreach allowed this faculty member to engage the help of a local radio station, “which resulted in a new network of individuals who could donate computer hardware for the students to use in their projects.” According to Chandrasekhar Srinivas, “networking works in interesting ways, allowing us to share ideas and methods thereby building a space where community engagement can flourish and expand its embrace to include more members.” The

engaged faculty in Africa were chosen based on their unique perspectives from the southern hemisphere, where the focus on human capital influences the practical and applied priorities of life (Watson et al, 2011). The large-scale sharing materialized through global networking efforts where exchanging ideas across campuses grew to exchanges across borders and hemispheres.

### **Ingredients of a Successful Faculty Support Program**

The UETLA revealed several ways to support engaged faculty members. First, we found the grant amount to be sufficient to raise the profile and awareness of each faculty member and their work.<sup>3</sup> As a sector that is usually overlooked by funding opportunities, financial awards help to recognize and promote community engagement activities and those who lead them. University leaders take notice of increased funding for engaged work. In many cases, students use the funds to work directly with community organizations that also benefit from the income.

Second, we discovered the critical role individual faculty members play in promoting student-community engagement; a collaboration that leads to creative and innovative problem-solving. Faculty members are the catalysts that ensure interactions between students and community members are interdependent and well organized.

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<sup>3</sup> The grant awarded \$10,000 USD to 10 engaged faculty

Third, the UETLA program allowed time and space for reflection on practice. Hartley and Harkavy argue, “Critical and guided reflection focused on civic learning involves exploring how groups of individuals, organizations, or policies attempt to accomplish a set of common goals” (2011:71). Given the opportunity to reflect on their pedagogies and practices, engaged faculty understand self-interests, the interests of others, and the negotiation of interests to become stronger and more effective leaders. Reflection is a way of organizing the thinking process, describing and examining the experience and articulating the learning that arises from that examination (Ash and Clayton, 2009). UETLA documented over 100 reflective writings and several meaningful exchanges useful to generations of engaged scholars to come.

Fourth, and important for the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, is the online platform that enables and encourages collaboration and co-creation among participants. The members of the group were able to work beyond their isolated campuses or home countries and broaden their interaction to different but similar contexts and challenges. Using technology for networking and exchange is an essential ingredient.

### **Recommendations**

The UETLA Faculty Support Grant has recognized engaged faculty in Africa locally and globally for their commitment to university community engagement. Their public recognition has encouraged their home institutions and Talloires Network member universities to explore practices that support and prioritize community engagement. This

program demonstrates the benefits of supporting faculty pioneers who are making significant contributions to educating the next generation of transformative leaders in Africa.

Key themes from faculty reflections shed light on emerging pedagogies that build student's leadership skills. Disruptive pedagogies and experiential learning challenges student's social assumptions and personal values on important societal issues like sexism, racism, classism, and structural poverty. Values are transformed to a wider perspective that takes into account community members and social responsibility. Faculty play a vital role in connecting students to their communities as well as private industry. Engaged faculty create and maintain important networks for employment and actively prepare students to better integrate in professional fields. They are incorporating entrepreneurship into curricula that opens possibilities for students who never considered the option. And equipping students with key personal skills to develop networks in their communities already shows evidence of lasting positive change. Critical pedagogies and ongoing mentorship sharpen student's leadership skills by building networks of effective communication between students and their universities, as well as, building strong alumni networks.

Although we see unprecedented growth in university community engagement from these examples, there is still much to be done and more support is needed. We identified several ideas to enhance learning and exchange in similar programs. First, we would

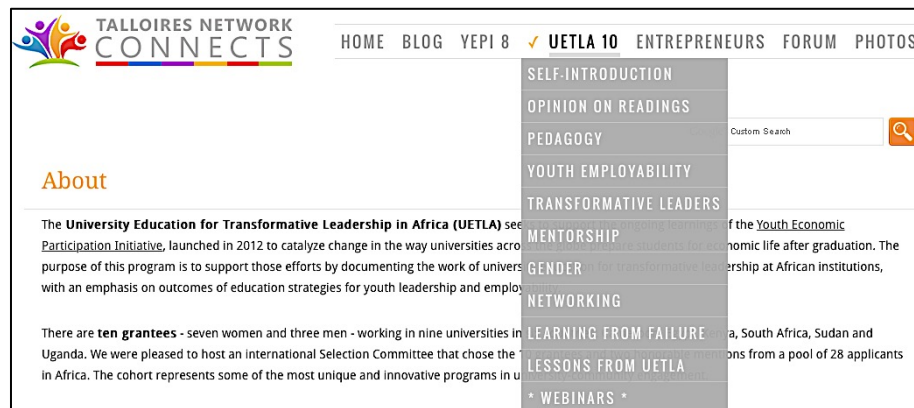
create a cohort with members from all levels of the university. This would enable discovery of university systems from a diversity of perspectives and experiences. Among the recipients, it would be useful to focus on the challenges of implementing programs and challenges to organizational change. As a global network, the Talloires Network wants to build regional capacity with national networks by integrating engaged faculty. This would support and allow for the additional in-person interaction and meetings desired by many participants. The Talloires Network, a network of networks, is already in good position to begin immediately with the 11 existing regional and national networks that represent hundreds of engaged faculty. Second, we would continue supporting the dialogue and networking among engaged faculty and student leaders through an expanded community of practice. Activities would include virtual meeting platforms and new technologies for networking across languages and time zones. Third, we would pursue an edited volume on university community engagement in Africa from the over 100 reflections from the UETLA engaged faculty. This would be a first publication of its kind and would be used as a handbook for generations of community engaged learners.

## Engaged Faculty Syllabus

### 1. 100 short writings on 10 topics over 10 months in 2016 (5,000-8,000 words/author).

Topics include: pedagogy, youth employability, transformative leadership, mentorship, gender, networking, learning from failure, lessons learned.

### 2. Vibrant online community of practice: members post, read and comment on all other posts, creating a lively forum and exciting discussions.



TN Connects: online community of practice

### 3. Quarterly video conference calls

- February: Introductions and Q&A about the program
- May: Scholar's updates on their funded projects and call for student nominations for the Talloires Network Leaders Conference (TNLC) 2017
- August: Scholar's ongoing updates and call for a session proposal on leadership and livelihoods for TNLC 2017
- November: Debriefing and planning for TNLC 2017

### 4. In-person meetings

January: Anthony Leone (American University in Cairo) shared his experience and stories of teaching community engagement among Sudanese refugees in Cairo, Egypt.

May: Sunitha Srinivas (Rhodes University) delivered a presentation on "Health Empowerment: By and with the Community" <http://tnconnects.net/program-blogs/public-health-scholar-and-uetla-grantee-sunitha-srinivas-visits-t>



Sunitha Srinivas' presentation at TN office in Boston

**5. Public webinars** hosted by grantees, their students, and community partners about their projects and emerging topics around university-community engagement. Recorded webinars are available on YouTube.

a) "Gender and Leadership in Health Promotion" by Sunitha Srinivas, Rhodes University  
Link: <http://tnconnects.net/forum/webinar-video-gender-and-leadership-in-health-promotion?context=category-UETLA>

b) "Sustainability of Community-Engaged Projects" by Martina Jordaan, University of Pretoria  
Link: <http://tnconnects.net/program-blogs/webinar-video-sustainability-of-community-engaged-projects>



Martina Jordaan (bottom right), her student and community partners as webinar presenters

c) "Internship Program and Community Engagement" by Filliam Efiti, LivingStone International University

Link: <http://tnconnects.net/program-blogs/webinar-video-internship-program-and-community-engagement?context=tag-webinar>



Efiti Filliam (right) and his two undergraduate students as webinar presenters

d) “Youth Employability and Community-engaged Healthcare Projects” co-hosted by Elvis Akomoneh, Saint Monica University and Sunitha Srinivas, Rhodes University. Link: <http://tnconnects.net/program-blogs/webinar-video-youth-employability-and-community-engaged-healthcar>.



Five presenters from Cameroon, Germany and South Africa

## Feedback from Engaged Faculty

*“Wonderful development. I just say keep it up. Our youth are the future of our nations. Please continue your support. A lot is being achieved out of your funding.”*



*“Thank you” in different languages from Rhodes University*

*“We have the flexibility to use it based on the contexts. The trust aspect is important. The trust is that we will do what we need to contribute. Thank you for that.”*



*Health Center Franchise Project at Saint Monica University*



*Discussion with the community by LivingStone International University*

*“The grant helped us meet together, think together, and plan different ways for community partners to work together. It means that you can plan ahead knowing there’s some money, can save up some, and build up a relationship over time. Our work can be flexible and change in the way it needs to change. We can really be creative in the way we build our partnerships. I want to share my appreciation.”*



*Community-based Project Module at University of Pretoria*

*“We appreciate the program very much and hope to continue this linkage further.”*

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