



Annual ARA-W Newsletter -Highlights from 2017

Reflection on the Year:
Strengths and Areas of Improvement



by **Dr. Yvonne Commodore-Mensah, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer**

"Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained." -Marie Curie

When Kwadwo Sarpong, the co-founder of the African Research Academies for Women (ARA-W), approached me a few months ago to discuss my potential involvement in the organization, the last thing I expected in that conversation was a request to be the new Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director. As he shared his thinking with me, I was very impressed by his vision for the organization and his approach to positioning the organization for a change in leadership. His desire to put the success of the organization above his aspirations was humbling. ARA-W has been well-served by Kwadwo's vision for reducing the gender disparities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in Africa. In stepping down from his role as CEO and an amazing track record of accomplishments, he has created a launching pad for the continued success of this organization. Needless to say, he has stepped down but stepped up whenever the organization has needed his counsel or guidance on critical issues.

Since July of this year, I have had the incredible honor of leading ARA-W. I have observed firsthand the selflessness of our Executive Team. I have witnessed the idea of revamping our website becoming a reality—thanks to our committed team members. I have observed with awe and amazement as each team member has executed their roles with passion.

I come to this role as an African girl, born in a small town in Ghana, who has benefited from the generosity of educators, philanthropists, and research mentors. I am a Nurse Scientist today because a college professor and research mentor inspired me to persevere and have confidence in myself. She planted a seed in me that continues to bear fruit. She taught me how to pose a scientific question and relentlessly pursue an answer to the question.

I believe that every young girl in Africa deserves a fair shot at living up to her fullest potential. Several barriers stand in the way of our quest to bridge the gender gaps in STEM training.

Jessica, one of the fellows in our first cohort, shared: *“All I knew was medical school, and when I didn't get in, I was devastated and hopeless. Most science students like myself lack knowledge about the opportunities we have in science. After this experience, I hope to study forensic science and serve as a volunteer.”*

We want thousands of students like Jessica to experience the limitless possibilities in STEM in the next decade. But we can't do this alone. We believe that the answers to the pressing issues that plague the African continent are buried deep in the bright minds of its youth. Will you join us in this mission to unlock the world of possibilities for these students who are hungry for the opportunity to change the world through STEM? Will you join us in “putting Her at the Root of Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics”?

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Updates from the Executive Board



Programs

by **Adaobi Okocha, Director of Programs (Local); Dr. Emmanuel Ohuabunwa, Director of Programs (International); Jessica Asante (Program Coordinator); Linda Lartey (Assistant Program Coordinator)**

ARA-W celebrated another successful Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) in Ghana, welcoming more scholars this year and an even greater applicant pool than in the years before! SURP 2017 began June 9th and on July 31st, 2017, with final presentations and awards given by and to fellows on August 4th. Our fellows delved right into their research projects, undergoing valuable experiences such as performing DNA extractions, polymerase chain reactions (PCR), antioxidant assays, and researching smart homes and energy production from waste products. Many of our scholars, both within the current and past years of SURP, have gone on to seek continued academic and personal growth opportunities by applying to graduate programs and scholarships. This year, an online program evaluation was distributed to all former ARA-W scholars. The information collected will be used to inform improvements to the program and better tailor it to the needs of future scholars.

Funding and Grants

by *Janessa Aneke, Director of Finance and Fundraising; Sope Oguntuyo, Co-Director of Grants; Jessica Boachie, Co-Director of Grants*



Every year, ARA-W relies on donors and sponsors to provide summer research and mentorship opportunities to female undergraduate students in Ghana. 2017 was no different as we were able to increase our donor base to support 15 students. Furthermore, we won a fellowship from Stanford University through the **Stanford Haas African Service Fellowship**. This fellowship was awarded to one of ARA-W's undergraduate volunteers, Rhodalene Benjamin-Addy, who spent her summer in Ghana working with the local ARA-W team.

The Haas fellowship provides Stanford students with the opportunity to volunteer with an organization in any African country of their choice. Fellows receive a base stipend of \$5,500 to work in an organization that aligns with their interests and goals. The African Service Fellowship was initiated in 2003 as a joint program with the Center for African Studies. The fellowship is made possible by the David Abernethy NGO Internship Fund, the African Service Fellowship Fund, the Tom Lockard and Alix Marduel International Public Service Fellowship for Undergraduates Fund, and the Kasem Lamsam Education Development Fellowship Fund.

Partnerships

by *Michele Acheampong, Director of Partnerships*

ARA-W is proud to partner with leading research institutes across the globe. Thus far, the organization has established formal partnerships with the University of Ghana Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. This year, ARA-W also partnered with the **West African Center for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP)** and the **Women For Africa Foundation (Fundación Mujeres por África)** in Ghana and Spain, respectively. To expand its international reach, ARA-W is currently working on formalizing partnerships with Johns Hopkins University and Abia State University.

Conferences

by *Dr. Efe Chantal Ghanney, Director of Strategic Initiatives*

Last year, Dr. Efe Chantal Ghanney, a current Urology resident at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Medical Center, represented ARA-W at the 2016 Clinton Global Initiative University held in San Francisco. She was accompanied by fellow executive team members Michele Acheampong (Director of Partnerships) and Adaobi Okocha (Director of Programs). At the conference, Dr. Ghanney had the unique opportunity to [share the work of ARA-W](#) on stage with former President Bill Clinton.



Pictured: A. Dr. Efe Chantal Ghanney with President Bill Clinton. **B.** Olatide Omojaro (middle) with fellow CGIU attendees.

This year, Olatide Omojaro (Director of Data Analysis), Janessa Aneke (Director of Finance & Fundraising), and Kasopefoluwa Oguntuyo (Co-Director of Grants) represented the organization at the 2017 Clinton Global Initiative. Furthermore, our co-founders, Kwadwo Sarpong and Shadrack Frimpong, were both honored by **President Bill Clinton with the Honor Roll Alumni Awards**.

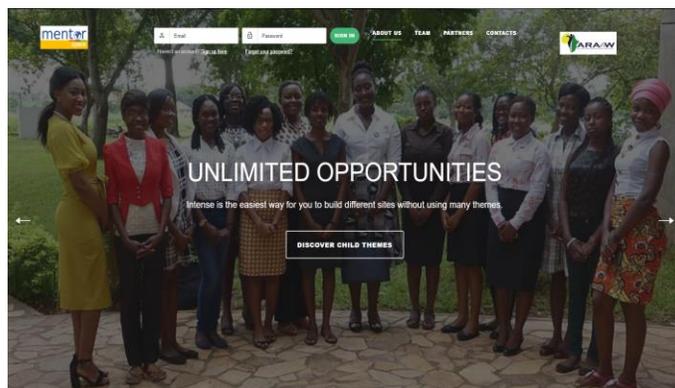
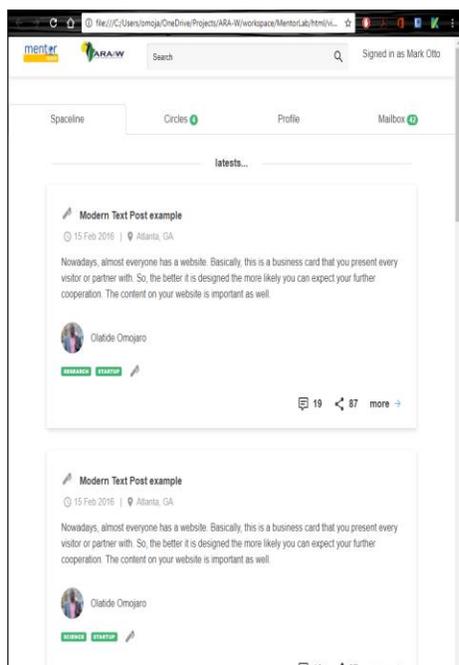


Pictured: ARA-W Co-founders, Kwadwo Sarpong and Shadrack Frimpong, with Chelsea Clinton.

Technology

by **Olatide Omojaro, Director of Data Analysis**

In 2017, the technology team has continued developing *MentorSpace*, a professional mentorship-pairing network. *MentorSpace* will serve as a platform to create mentee-mentor relationships for SURP alumni. In May, an online survey was sent to all SURP



2014 - 2016 alumni to collect information on their current progress and/or updates on efforts towards their academic and professional careers. Approximately 60% of alumni responded to the survey. With these responses, an effective back-end design for *MentorSpace* is well on the way towards completion. On the front-end, mock-up designs have been implemented (see accompanying images). In the meantime, the SURP scholars have been manually paired with mentors within the organization.

The team also promoted ARA-W's presence on the web with a revamp of its website. The new look of the ARA-W website utilizes modern web rendering technology to highlight the vision of the organization, its board members, volunteers, partners, and most importantly - its students. The new website also features a new live-chat function that allows visitors to the site to instantly communicate with one of ARA-W's representatives. This feature supplements existing methods of in-mail communication between site visitors and ARA-W team members. A new slogan was also rolled out with the ARA-W website revamp: "Putting Her at the Root of Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics". Check out ARA-W's new website here: www.africanwomenresearchers.org.

Board Member Updates

by **Melrose Huang, Administrative Secretary**

In September, two new members joined ARA-W's Board of Directors:



Dean Patricia Davidson is one of the most influential deans of nursing in the U.S. A global leader in cardiac health for women and vulnerable populations, she has an established program of research in supporting individuals living with chronic conditions and developing innovative models of transitional care. A primary objective of her work has been to improve the cardiovascular health of underserved populations through the development of innovative, acceptable, and sustainable initiatives internationally. Since 2003, she has secured over \$10 million in competitive research grants from national and international funding bodies and co-authored 320-plus peer-reviewed journal articles, 20 book chapters, and more than 100 peer-reviewed abstracts. She has mentored more than 35 doctoral and postdoctoral researchers and is an editor of several high impact journals.

She is Counsel General of the International Council on Women's Health Issues and is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International's Institute for Global Healthcare Leadership Advisory Board. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, the American Heart Association, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, and the Australian College of Nursing. Before joining Johns Hopkins, she was director of the Centre for Cardiovascular and Chronic Care at the University of Technology, Sydney (Australia) and professor of Cardiovascular Nursing Research at St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. Dean Davidson will be serving an **Honorary Patron** for the African Research Academies for Women.



Dr. Akudo Anyanwu is an award-winning global health expert, public health innovator and social entrepreneur with over 15 years of experience in the field of international development. She is an Associate Dean at Johns Hopkins University and the Founder of Friends Africa, a pan-African organization that fights AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria by mobilizing African businesses, governments and NGOs. She has also served on the boards of Roll Back Malaria, the Global Health Council and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. Dr. Anyanwu's pioneering work on the Gift from Africa Campaign has been recognized by the Rockefeller Foundation as a top 100 next century innovation. She has also been recognized as Tufts University's Distinguished Service Award (21015), a Harvard School of Public Health Innovator of the Year (2013), an Ogunte Social Leader of the Year (2013) and Stevie Innovator and Social Entrepreneur of the Year (2012). Dr. Anyanwu holds a degree in Medicine from Tufts University, an MSc in Public Health from Harvard University and a BSc in Molecular Biology from Lehigh University.

ARA-W STEM Story (Alumni Spotlight)

By *Jessica Asante, Program Coordinator, Ghana*



ARAW 2015 fellow, Delight Naana Datsmor (pictured above), recently received the highly competitive **Erasmus Mundus Scholarship** from the European Union. With this funding and scholarship, Delight will pursue a triple Master's degree in food innovation and product design with a focus on healthy food design. She will be studying in France, Ireland, and Italy from 2017 to 2019.

In 2015, Delight performed a microbial assessment of food (Waakye) sold by vendors near The Ghana Hostels at University of Ghana under the mentorship of one of ARA-W's mentors, Professor Dorothy Yeboah Manu of Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research. Receiving her award at the French Embassy in Ghana, Delight intimated, "France is known for excellence in education, so I am very happy and also eager to get to know the culture and of course the city of Paris." ARA-W congratulates Delight on her impressive achievement.

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SURP 2017 Fellows

By Jessica Asante, Program Coordinator

This year, ARA-W implemented Phase 2 of our program which involves providing our SURP Fellows with the opportunity to continue engaging in research instead of the traditional national service which all University graduates are required to participate in. Eight fellows are currently engaged in Phase 2, and are working on a variety of projects ranging from scientific research to research for top companies such as Unilever.



Pictured: ARA-W Class of 2017 together with alumni, volunteers, and mentors.

Phase 2 Fellows



Pictured from the left: Tabitha Zotorvie, Amma Asantewaa Agyei Boakye, Sophia Okyere, Stephanie Opoku, and Sally Ayim.

KUMASI FELLOWS (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology)



Pictured from the left: Hamid Ku Nwa, Naa Okailey Ayitey, Amina Ibrahim, and Olivia Ayim.

ACCRA FELLOWS (Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research)



Pictured from the left: Emmanuella Adams, Hikmatu Alhassan, Louisa Cobbah, and Elikem Kissar.

ACCRA FELLOWS (West African Center for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens)



Pictured from the left: Clarinda Attah and Isabelle Ampofo.

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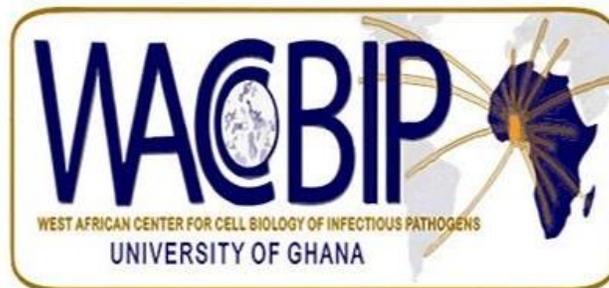
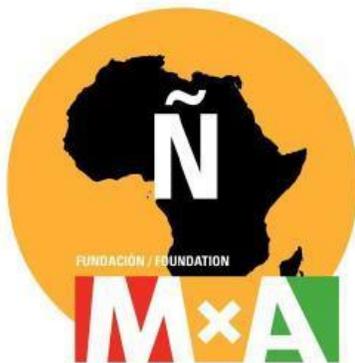
Mr. Sangu Delle



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