

## **Background**

The speed and quality of the development of science capacity in Africa depend not only on infrastructure and the technical training of people but is intimately linked to the quality of leadership to lead change. It is widely accepted that the future of scientific development lies in enabling interdisciplinary, interconnected, and often large, international teams. Training structures are, however, often not set up to prepare the next generation of scientists for the complexities that an interconnected, interdisciplinary approach to science entails. There is an internationally emerging paradigm that recognizes that the focus on individual leadership is often inadequate to address complex challenges, which require skills across many sectors and collaborative processes. This was very evident during COVID-19 where collective leadership was critical to navigate through the crises posed by the pandemic. The African Science Leadership Programme(ASLP) will therefore focus on developing collective leadership skills that will help fellows contribute to the “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”.

## **Overview of the Programme**

The ASLP is an initiative of the University of Pretoria in partnership with the Global Young Academy and is funded by Robert Bosch Stiftung. It serves early- to mid-career researchers in basic and applied science, engineering, social sciences, arts, and the humanities. The programme aims to grow mid-career African academics in the areas of collective leadership, team development, engagement, and collaboration, with the intention of enabling them to solve the complex issues that face both Africa and the global community.

## **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 projects/initiatives that are relevant to the academic development on the continent and its impact on society
- Creates a network of academic leaders on the continent, 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 project, peer support, and mentorship. The fellowship will kick off with two intensive online workshops - one a 6-day followed by a shorter 4-day workshop a few weeks later, after which fellows will go out and develop their leadership initiatives over a period of about a year. Fellows are expected to be fully active to fulfill the fellowship requirements. 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
- Development of effective networks
- Stakeholder engagement for change
- Maximising the impact of collaborative efforts
- Advanced dialogue and communication skills
- Effective problem solving and decision-making

Following the first training week, fellows will apply their skills to a project relevant to their context, the AGENDA 2063 and SDGs, and with the aim to contribute to a new paradigm for Africa science. During the fellowship year, participants will continue to engage with the wider ASLP community and have access to peer and professional support. The following year (2022), fellows will report back on their initiatives during a second, 4-day workshop, where they will also be equipped with further skills to continue fruitfully on their leadership journey. Pending restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic by that time, it is envisaged that this second workshop will be held in person in Pretoria, South Africa at the Future Africa Institute.

### **Expected commitment**

The ASLP is seeking candidates who are committed to developing leadership in Africa. The training itself requires the time commitment of attending all the training sessions. Furthermore, fellows will be expected to develop their leadership initiatives and engage with other fellows for peer support.

The programme will offer support towards the costs of data for the virtual workshops for those that require it. In the event of an in-person meeting, fellows will also be required to provide us with their personal travel insurance details as a condition of participation. There will be some costs that are not covered by the programme, such as visas, vaccinations, and local transport expenses, for which fellows may need to seek support from their local institution or fund personally.

### **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, etc.);
- 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 being 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 University of Pretoria, the Global Young Academy, national young academies, and ASLP Management. The ASLP Management team will make the final selection of candidates.

**Key dates:**

<b>31 May 2021</b>	<b>Applications close</b>
<b>30 July 2021</b>	<b>Outcome letters sent to applicants</b>