



Recruitment of Students underway in New African Initiative in Science and Education

Nairobi, Kenya, April 21, 2009; Recruitment of students has begun in various African Universities under a new initiative known as Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE).

Fifty-one students have been admitted in universities in five networks. Of the recruited students, thirty-five will pursue their doctorate degrees, fifteen will pursue their masters degrees while one will be a post-doctoral fellow.

The RISE initiative is funded by a grant from the Carnegie Cooperation of New York through the Science Initiative Group (SIG) based at the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) Princeton, New Jersey. The Nairobi-based African Academy of Sciences (AAS) co-administers the initiative with SIG while the five university networks are directly involved in its implementation. The major goal of RISE is to strengthen higher education in sub-Saharan Africa by increasing the population of qualified faculty members in Africa's universities. The success of RISE will be measured by the number of doctorate and masters-level scientists and engineers who successfully complete university-based research and training in selected disciplines and remain in the region to teach and mentor post-graduate students and conduct locally relevant research.

Grants worth US\$800,000 each over 2.5 years were awarded to five African networks made up of sub-Saharan universities and research institutes. The grants are being used to cover tuition costs and stipend payments for the recruited students as well as other costs such as stipend fees for visiting lecturers, travel costs between participating institutions and to relevant conferences, communication, books and journals as well as equipment obtained to enhance the training of students.

The RISE networks, most of which were not in existence before the launch of the initiative, focus on selected thematic science and technology areas. Networks are responsible for student recruitment, training and retention in universities under the leadership of designated network coordinators. Each network boasts of established leaders of research who champion and lead the thematic areas below. By having such links formed among African universities, the initiative hopes to strengthen selected areas of science and engineering in sub-Saharan Africa by making available to students and faculty the complementary expertise and resources of all participating institutions.

The RISE networks and their thematic areas as well as number of recruited students are described below:

- The **African Materials Science and Engineering Network (AMSEN)** led by Lesley Cornish of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. AMSEN's focus is on improving education in materials science to make fuller use of Africa's vast mineral deposits. Other participating universities



are University of Botswana, University of Nairobi, University of Namibia and Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. In total nine PhD students and four masters students have been identified and recruited.

- **The Southern African Biochemistry and Informatics for Natural Products (SABINA)** network aims to improve food security, public health and exports by taking advantage of Africa's natural biodiversity through advances in natural products science. Based at the University of Malawi under the direction of John Saka, the network includes University of Namibia, University of Pretoria, Witwatersrand University, African Centre for Gene Technologies, Tea Research Foundation of Central Africa-Malawi University of Dar-es-Salaam and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa. The first round of student intake brought in two PhD students and four masters students.
- The **Western Indian Ocean Regional Initiative in Marine Science and Education (WIO-RISE)** uses research and training to promote sustainable development, utilization and protection of the coastal and marine environment. Led by Alfonse Dubi of the University of Dar-es-Salaam's Institute of Marine Sciences in Zanzibar, Tanzania, WIO-RISE also includes Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique and University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- The **African Natural Products Network (RISE-AFNNET)** seeks to develop Africa's rich biodiversity into a natural products industry of social and economic significance by expanding existing research programs and formalizing educational activities in such natural products fields as engineering, biochemistry, environmental science, pharmacology, economic development and nutrition. RISE-AFNNET is led by John David Kabasa of Makerere University. Partner universities are University of Nairobi, Kenya and Sokoine University, Tanzania. So far, fourteen students have been recruited for doctoral degrees.
- **The Sub-Saharan Africa Water Resources Network (SSAWRN)** addresses the most pressing water issues of the region, including rising use, declining quality, insufficient research and teaching capacity, inadequate observation networks, and the likelihood of increased variability of water supplies associated with future climates. The network assigns first priority to research projects that address practical issues and contribute to problem solving. Led by Professor Denis Hughes of the Institute for Water Research, Rhodes University, the network partner universities are Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, University of Botswana and Makerere University, Uganda. So far, seven masters students, seven PhD students and one post-doctoral fellow have been selected.

This initiative was launched in Nairobi, Kenya on the 6th of October, 2008.