

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



**WELCOME REMARKS AT THE ARUA REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR EARLY CAREER
RESEARCHERS**

ADDRESS BY:

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VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

**LECIAD AUDITORIUM
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

- *Distinguished Secretary-General of ARUA, Professor John Gyapong;*
- *Esteemed representatives of our funding partners (Mastercard Foundation/Carnegie);*
- *Directors of ARUA Centres of Excellence and Clusters of Research Excellence;*
- *Our eminent facilitators and mentors;*
- *Early Career Research Fellows;*
- *Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen;*

It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you all to the University of Ghana, for this inaugural regional workshop for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) under the ARUA–Mastercard Foundation and ARUA–Carnegie fellowship programmes. As Vice-Chancellor of this university and Vice-Chair of the ARUA Board, I am especially delighted to see this vision of a vibrant pipeline of African researchers taking shape in this room today.

We are gathered over the next three days around a clear purpose: ***to nurture the next generation of African scholars who will undertake high-quality research that speaks directly to our continent's development challenges and opportunities.*** This

workshop is therefore not just another item on the calendar of ARUA; it is an investment in Africa's future intellectual leadership and in the research ecosystems of our universities.

Allow me first to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, our partners who have made this possible. The Mastercard Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York have each demonstrated a strong and sustained commitment to strengthening African higher education and research capacity. Through their generous support, 39 Early Career Researchers are currently undertaking six-month fellowships, hosted at ARUA Centres of Excellence across 23 member universities. These ECRs have now convened here in Accra for this regional workshop. We are grateful for this confidence in ARUA and in African universities as engines of knowledge, innovation, and inclusive development.

Colleagues and fellows, the theme for this workshop, ***“Mentorship and Capacity Strengthening for High-Impact Research and Career Growth”***, is timely and strategic. Africa's development agenda, as articulated in the AU's Agenda 2063,

calls for a continent that is prosperous, peaceful, and driven by its own citizens, relying on strong institutions and cutting-edge science, technology, and innovation. ARUA, through its network of Centers of Excellence and Clusters of Research Excellence, is positioning African universities to be at the centre of this transformation by generating research that informs policy and practice.

Over the coming days, you will engage with a rich programme designed to strengthen key competencies that every emerging scholar requires. A particular highlight of this workshop is the moderated panel discussion on “***Scaling the Heights in Academia and Research – Lessons for Early Career Researchers***”. You will be learning from highly accomplished scholars, mostly women, whose journeys embody resilience, excellence, and impact. I encourage you to listen attentively, ask probing questions, and draw on their experiences as you reflect on your own roadmaps for career progression and leadership in your fields.

Let me also commend ARUA and our partners for the intentional focus on gender in this initiative. Around 70% of the fellows in this cohort are women, which is both encouraging and necessary, given the historic under-representation of women in research and academic leadership in Africa. Building a critical mass of female scholars who can lead research, shape policy, and mentor the next generation is essential to creating more inclusive and equitable knowledge systems on our continent.

To our fellows, drawn from diverse disciplines and from universities across Africa, I want to speak to you directly. You represent a new generation of African researchers who are committed not only to advancing knowledge but also to addressing complex challenges on the African continent. Through your attachments to the ARUA Centres of Excellence, you are already contributing to agenda-setting research that matters for our societies.

During this workshop, I encourage you to do three things.

- ***First, be intentional about learning.*** Engage fully in the sessions on proposal writing, funding strategies, research

translation, and career planning; these are practical skills that will shape your trajectory over the next decade and beyond. Ask questions, volunteer examples from your own work, and see every exercise, whether it is group work on concept notes, or pitching your research ideas, as a rehearsal for opportunities that will come.

- **Second, build relationships.** The colleagues you meet here, fellow Early Career Researchers, directors of the Centres of Excellence, mentors, facilitators, and ARUA Secretariat staff, are part of a growing community of practice across the continent. Take time to connect, share ideas, and explore potential collaborations, because some of the most transformative projects emerge from networks formed in spaces like this.
- **Third, think beyond yourself.** The fellowships you hold and the investments being made in you are not only for your personal advancement, but also for the benefit of your home institutions, your students, and your communities. As you grow, commit to mentoring others, contributing to institutional capacity, and ensuring that your research addresses the lived realities of African people.

To our facilitators and the many distinguished resource persons supporting this workshop, let me express our sincere appreciation. Your willingness to share your time, expertise and experience is central to the success of this programme, and it illustrates the spirit of solidarity and collective responsibility that we seek to foster within ARUA.

I also wish to acknowledge the ARUA Secretariat, who have worked tirelessly to prepare this event, from the design of the programme to the logistics and coordination. Hosting this regional workshop is very much aligned with our university's own commitment to advancing high-impact research and to serving as a hub for scholarly collaboration across the continent.

On this note, on behalf of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and the University of Ghana, I warmly welcome you once again, and I declare this Regional Workshop for Early Career Researchers officially open.

Thank you.

Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo
Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana &
Vice-Chair of the ARUA Board
January 28, 2026