



ALLIANCE *for* AFRICAN
PARTNERSHIP



REPORT NARRATIVE

2025 AAP ANNUAL CONSORTIUM MEETING

**Lilongwe, Malawi
8-11th June 2025**

Hosted by Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Introduction

The 2025 Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) Annual Consortium Meeting took place from June 8–11 in Lilongwe, Malawi, hosted by the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). Bringing together university leaders, researchers, development practitioners, government officials, and private sector representatives, the meeting aimed to deepen institutional relationships, celebrate collective achievements, and chart a collaborative path forward. The agenda reflected AAP's commitment to co-creation and equity, featuring sessions on strategic plan implementation, university–private sector collaboration, gender equity, doctoral education reform, and science engagement through the Falling Walls initiative. Participants also explored how to expand the network's reach through partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and enhance youth entrepreneurship through engagement with the Tony Elumelu Foundation.

The convening reaffirmed the consortium's shared vision and generated next steps.

The key objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Introduce university leaders to AAP and deepen their understanding of MSU's long-standing engagement in Africa, particularly Malawi;
2. Showcase AAP's achievements in collaborative research and capacity building, and outline plans for the year ahead;
3. Review progress on the AAP 5-Year Strategic Plan and discuss AAP's value proposition across the consortium;
4. Host a Higher Education–Private Sector Forum to explore opportunities for partnership in Malawi;

Over the course of four days, the meeting achieved these objectives: it showcased AAP's measurable progress in capacity building and fundraising, explored sustainable models for institutional and consortium-level growth, launched new initiatives such as the Falling Walls Hub and Lab at LUANAR, and fostered dynamic discussions around doctoral training, gender-based violence prevention, and the future of cross-continental partnerships. The convening reaffirmed the consortium's shared vision and generated actionable next steps to strengthen AAP's impact across Africa and within the global academic community.





Day 1

Cultural Welcome Event

The AAP Consortium 2025 meeting started with a vibrant cultural event. Participants were welcomed in true Malawian style by the incredible Malawi National Dance Troupe, whose captivating performances of music, dance, and storytelling brought the country's rich cultural heritage to life. This unforgettable Welcome Cultural Event reminded us of the power of culture in building bridges, strengthening partnerships, and celebrating our shared identity across the continent.

AAP deeply thanks our hosts, LUANAR, and NBS Bank for generously sponsoring this event and helping us kick off the consortium meeting in such a powerful and unifying way.

AAP Leadership Meeting

The AAP Leadership Meeting, held on June 8, 2025, brought together consortium leaders to address critical developments impacting the Alliance. The agenda focused on responding to major funding disruptions—particularly the withdrawal of USAID funding—and the broader implications of shifting U.S. priorities. Institutions shared strategies to mitigate these challenges, including diversifying funding sources, strengthening local and governmental partnerships, and exploring philanthropic and private sector engagement. Michigan State University reaffirmed its long-term commitment to AAP despite internal budget cuts, emphasizing the need to transition from a single-institution funding model to a more sustainable, consortium-based structure. Discussions also covered proposed restructuring of the Africa office and collaborative approaches to resource mobilization and program delivery.



Key decisions included identifying the need for a mapping exercise to target alternative funding sources, collective planning for the future structure of the Africa office, and the development of a strategic funding model supported by member contributions. Action items include implementing a process for dues payment and non-payment follow-up, revisiting AAP's strategic plan and program portfolio, exploring the establishment of a legal entity for fund management, and expanding membership—particularly in underrepresented regions. Participants emphasized aligning AAP's priorities with African development goals and the importance of innovative, inclusive, and sustainable models to ensure long-term impact.

Gender Program Discussions

This was the second year that focal point representatives, directors of gender centers, faculty and staff involved in gender-related programs within the AAP network met. Soma Chaudhuri, Director of Research, Outreach, and Engagement at MSU's Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen) introduced the center and discussed gender-related events for that week. In addition, Dr. Chaudhuri highlighted key research projects at the GenCen and opened the conversation on how to collaborate on external grants between AAP institutions and MSU.



Figure 1: Attendees at the Gender Program Discussions Meeting

Several GenCen affiliates, including Katie Gregory (Dept. of Psychology, Research Consortium on Gender-Based Violence), Heather McCauley (School of Social Work), Laura Rugless (Office of Civil Rights and Title IV Education and Compliance), and Kelly Schweda (Prevention, Outreach and Education), attended the meetings as a starting point to network and develop ideas and strategies for grant collaboration between MSU and AAP partner institutions. The GenCen affiliates were supported by an MSU International Studies and Programs Strategic Partnership grants in collaborations with School of Social Work, Department of Psychology, RCGV, and office of Title IX and Civil Rights at MSU. Representatives from LUANAR (Prof. Agnes Mwangwela), University of Nigeria Nsuka (Prof. Anthonia Achike), University Yembo Ouologuem of Bamako in Mali (Dr. Aboubacar Coulibaly), Swedish University of Agricultural Science (Prof. Linley Chiwona-Karltun),

Makerere University (Dr. Racheal Ddungu Mugabi and Ms. Clare Cheromoi) participated in the meeting.

The meeting participants identified four key areas of collaboration among AAP consortium universities: (1) academic, report, and grant writing mentorship to train the next generation of scholars; (2) evaluating and improving the inclusivity of gender policies on AAP university campuses; (3) leadership training for women in higher education and science; (4) creating supportive communities for women in higher education to share stories, discuss microaggressions, and build power with others in the community. The group identified two next steps, including: (1) sharing these opportunities with the AAP focal points who can help connect the leaders of gender centers and relevant faculty on their respective campuses; (2) setting up a communication platform on WhatsApp and an email list. The MSU team is developing several grant proposals for the coming academic year based on the conversations at the AAP meetings in 2024 and 2025.





Day 2

Opening Ceremony

The 2025 Annual Consortium Meeting officially opened on June 9, 2025, at LUANAR, with remarks from academic and government leaders emphasizing the power of partnerships in advancing Africa's development agenda. LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, welcomed delegates to LUANAR and thanked AAP for choosing to have this meeting in Malawi. He highlighted LUANAR's innovations in agriculture and technology, positioning the university as a leader in research and industry collaboration. Prof. Kaunda applauded AAP's impact, including in areas such as scholarship opportunities and support for innovation.



Figure 2: Vice Chancellor of LUANAR, Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, giving welcome remarks at the official opening of the AAP Annual Consortium Meeting

Prof. Titus Awokuse, Vice Provost & Dean International Studies and Programs at Michigan State University, reaffirmed AAP's mission to address pressing challenges like food insecurity and climate change through partnerships grounded in equity, innovation, and shared values. He noted MSU's long history of collaboration with African institutions, including LUANAR, and expressed eagerness to deepen these ties. Officially opening the meeting, Dr. Levis Eneya, Secretary for the Ministry of Higher Education, noted that AAP's goals aligned with Malawi's Vision 2063 and the ongoing reforms in higher education in Malawi. Dr. Eneya emphasized that progress depends on collaborative action, noting that "if you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together." He then officially declared the consortium meeting open.



LUANAR Falling Walls Hub and Lab Launch

The launch of Falling Walls Engage Hub and Lab marked a powerful step toward transforming science communication, engagement and innovation in African universities particularly within the AAP consortium. The event brought together leaders from LUANAR, the AAP consortium, and the Falling Walls Foundation to activate these global initiatives locally. Falling Walls Foundation operates globally, hosting more than 70 labs each year in 58 countries. Lab winners compete at the Falling Walls Science Summit in Berlin, supported by the German Academic Exchange Service through training, embassy visits, and research tours. Falling Walls also supports nine Engage Hubs on five continents who work to promote science and community engagement in creative and innovative ways. The Malawi Hub launched in this event raised the Falling Walls Hub number to 10, making it the first among the AAP consortium members. Dr. Amy Jamison, Co-Director of AAP facilitated the morning session which introduced participants to the mission of the Falling Walls Foundation, its historical roots, and its current initiatives focused on fostering innovation and science communication globally. Dr. Jamison emphasized the foundation's focus on cooperation and elevating the global reputation of science, particularly in the Global South.

The German Ambassador to Malawi, Her Excellency Ute König, and Director at the Falling Walls Foundation, Andreas Kosmider, provided historical context for the initiative. They reflected on the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989—a powerful symbol of overcoming division and oppression. The Falling Walls Foundation was launched in 2009 to commemorate this event and promote breakthroughs in science and society. In her opening remarks, the Ambassador reiterated Germany's commitment to supporting partnerships that amplify African science and innovation on the global stage. In his keynote address, Andreas Kosmider, Executive Director of Falling Walls, highlighted the importance of breaking barriers between science and society, calling for more inclusive, engaged, and collaborative approaches to research. Christina Hooge and Saskia Schnorrenberger further presented on the Falling Walls Engage and Lab platforms,



Figure 3: After the ribbon cutting for the launch of the Falling Walls Engage and Falling Walls Lab Lilongwe, Malawi

emphasizing community-based science engagement and global innovation competitions designed to solve pressing challenges through interdisciplinary approaches.

A panel discussion on integrating science communication in African research institutions followed, moderated by AAP advisory board member, Dr. Linley Chiwona-Karltun. Her opening remarks called for decolonizing language in science and highlighted the need to reach broader, non-academic audiences. The panel featured leaders from institutions across Africa including the University of Botswana (Prof. David Norris), Africa Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutions (Dr. Antony Chapoto), LUANAR (Dr. Japhet Mchakulu), and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Prof. Oguejiofo Ujam). The conversation centered around how African institutions can shift policies and governance models to embed science communication within their missions and better connect research to communities, especially farmers and other end users.

Panelists stressed that partnerships between universities, government, industry, and communities are essential for meaningful dissemination of knowledge. They highlighted the importance of diversifying communication channels and combining peer-reviewed publishing with radio, television, field work, and social media, while also ensuring that research outputs are translated into accessible formats. Successful models, such as Botswana's regular science segments on national TV and LUANAR's collaboration between researchers and media professionals, were cited as examples of effective public engagement.



Figure 4: Panel discussion that explored strengthening of science communication and engagement within African institutions of higher learning.

The discussion also touched on challenges such as limited incentives for researchers to engage in public communication and the disconnect between research and policy impact. Recommendations included investing in science communication training, co-creating content with media professionals, incentivizing researcher outreach, and creating platforms for ongoing dialogue between scientists, journalists, and policymakers. There was a shared call for science to be demand-driven and user-centered, with messaging tailored for impact and understanding.

Overall, the session emphasized that integrating science communication and engagement into institutional structures is vital to ensuring that research leads to action and development. Through initiatives like Falling Walls and collaborative platforms across

Africa, the goal is to create a more connected, informed, and innovative scientific ecosystem. The launch officially positioned Malawi as a leader in a growing network of African institutions leveraging science for social impact. This Malawian launch paved the way for the launch of a Falling Walls Lab Gaborone. As Kosmider aptly concluded, “Let’s make some walls fall.”

Lunch Hour Presentation: Astria Learning

Following the panel discussion, Mr. Jeff Bordes, CEO of Astria Learning, delivered a brief lunch-hour presentation introducing the company and its innovative e-learning solutions. Astria Learning is a leading global provider of AI-powered educational platforms, designed to deliver personalized learning experiences for students across diverse academic settings.

Mr. Bordes highlighted how the platform leverages machine learning to tailor content, assessments, and feedback to each learner’s unique strengths, challenges, and learning styles. Key features include real-time feedback, adaptive learning paths, and dynamic support tools that enhance both teaching and learning outcomes. The presentation demonstrated Astria’s potential to transform higher education through technology-driven, student-centered learning models.

AAP-Falling Walls Workshop

The afternoon session brought together a mix of presentations and interactive discussions, highlighting both global perspectives and local strategies for advancing science engagement. Moderated by Abraham Mamela and Dr. Daniel Chiumia, the session featured insights from Falling Walls Hubs and Labs in Kenya, Mexico, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, showcasing how science communication and community engagement are being tailored to local contexts. Participants discussed local challenges, identified institutional capacity gaps, and proposed steps to better integrate Falling Walls into ongoing research and innovation programs.



Figure 5: Participants at the AAP-Falling Walls Workshop

Kenya’s Hub is advancing policy-relevant, interdisciplinary research, with a strong emphasis on empowering African women through mentorship and funding, while also

engaging communities on issues like nutrition and disability inclusion. Mexico's Hub, run in partnership with the National University of Mexico, has reached over 650 students and collaborated with over 130 scientists and journalists, focusing on climate change, youth outreach, and underserved populations across both North and Central America as well as the Caribbean.

Zimbabwe's Lab manager, Dr Emmie Chiyindiko who is a former Falling Walls pitch winner, shared how Falling Walls opened professional doors for her, with five national winners from Zimbabwe already featured at the Berlin Summit. Ghana's Lab emphasized its growing community of practice and deepening engagement with the global science community. Meanwhile, Malawi's newly launched LUANAR Lab announced its first lab pitch competition, scheduled for August 15, 2025, aiming to contribute to Africa's growing role in global science dialogue.

Tony Elumelu Foundation Session

The Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) Information Session, hosted by the Center of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (TACE) at LUANAR, brought together aspiring young Malawian entrepreneurs, TEF alumni, and partners from AAP. The event introduced participants to the work of TEF, outline available opportunities, and explore future collaboration between AAP and TEF in promoting youth empowerment across the continent.



Figure 6: Tony Elumelu Foundation Session with Malawi entrepreneurs

Delivering the keynote presentation, Dr. Hakeem Onasanya, Director of Operations at TEF, underscored the Foundation's core mission of driving economic transformation in Africa through entrepreneurship. He outlined TEF's seven-pillar empowerment model, which includes business training, mentorship, seed funding, and access to a robust alumni network. Since 2015, TEF has disbursed over \$100 million in non-refundable seed capital to more than 21,000 entrepreneurs, whose businesses have generated a collective \$4.2 billion in revenue.

To qualify for TEF support, applicants must be under 35, run a registered business less than five years old, and demonstrate a clear need for support. The foundation also conducts annual monitoring to track progress and impact.



Figure 7: Tony Elumelu Foundation Director of Operations Hekeem Onasanya with AAP staff and Malawi entrepreneurs

The session featured compelling testimonials from TEF alumni. Temwa, founder of a fashion house, shared how the funding helped her expand her team from four to eight permanent employees. Alfred Kankuzi, a software engineer, spoke of the skills and visibility gained through TEF, which opened doors to additional funding and partnerships.

However, participants raised concerns about high transaction fees on TEF grants in Malawian banks and the impersonal communication systems which provided limited access to TEF staff in cases where grantees need to reach out. In response, TACE and AAP leadership committed to following up with TEF to address these challenges and explore a structured plan for continued collaboration.

This session reaffirmed the shared commitment of TEF, AAP, and LUANAR to equip Africa's youth with tools to succeed as entrepreneurs and to create opportunities that catalyze sustainable, inclusive development.

Field Trip to LUANAR Farm

Led by Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, Vice Chancellor of LUANAR, participants toured the Bunda Fish Farm, a model aquaculture facility showcasing sustainable fish farming innovations. Guided by Farm Manager Mr. Siphon, the group explored key infrastructure, including 64 earthen ponds, trial tank systems, indoor fingerling production, and an on-site feed unit powered by solar energy and supported by advanced water management systems. The farm conducts cutting-edge research on hormone-induced sex reversal, light manipulation, and hormone biodegradation in tilapia, all designed to enhance productivity while ensuring environmental safety. A standout innovation was the use of black soldier fly larvae as a sustainable protein source for fish feed. These advancements, developed in collaboration with local farmers, reflect LUANAR's commitment to eco-friendly and scalable aquaculture solutions.



Figure 8: Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, Vice Chancellor of LUANAR led participants to tour the Bunda Fish Farm



Day 3

AAP Consortium Business Meeting Event

The AAP consortium business meeting's main goal was to review AAP's annual report and assess progress in implementing its current strategic plan. The meeting brought together institutional representatives, researchers, university leaders, and development partners from across the consortium. Dr. Amy Jamison opened the session with a presentation of key accomplishments and strategic updates, followed by further updates from Dr. Jose Jackson and Professor Richard Mkandawire. The agenda focused on celebrating progress, identifying persistent challenges, and refining AAP's value proposition in a dynamic global context.

Participants reviewed major achievements, including the mobilization of a total of over \$69 million in funding to support collaborative programs and projects, the training of more than 12,000 individuals, and the support of at least 126 scholarly publications. Discussions highlighted accomplishments under AAP's six strategic goals. Under the "Building Bridges" goal, initiatives such as the Mandela Washington Fellowship, professional exchange programs, and alumni-led community training efforts were credited with strengthening leadership and cross-institutional engagement. Participants encouraged AAP to be more intentional in expanding its partner network across the continent.

Progress under "Transforming Institutions" was marked by efforts to promote equity and innovation in higher education. Highlights included seed grants to institutional transformation teams, two capacity-building workshops, and the launch of the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Faculty Fellows Program. AAP's commitment to translating research into practical impact was also commended, with



initiatives such as research-to-use platforms and student travel fellowships helping bridge the gap between academic inquiry and real-world problem-solving.

In advancing sustainability, AAP has supported 29 funding proposals over the past year, with 11 securing nearly \$1.74 million. The formation of a resource mobilization team was noted as a key step

toward long-term viability, especially through new strategies targeting African philanthropic foundations. Governance was widely seen as a strength of the consortium, with participants appreciating AAP's inclusive and equitable leadership model. Plans to improve knowledge exchange through a mobile app designed to share funding calls (AAP Bridge), policy documents, and publications were also positively received.

Despite these gains, participants acknowledged a number of challenges. Funding cuts across member institutions, inequities in partnerships, and uneven engagement were identified as risks to AAP's sustainability. Some concerns were raised about the dominance of bilateral, donor-driven collaborations, particularly those centered around Michigan State University, which have limited opportunities for South-South partnerships. Strengthening governance coordination, increasing visibility, and ensuring balanced participation emerged as priorities for improvement.

A discussion, led by LUANAR Vice Chancellor Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, examined AAP's comparative advantage in the context of global geopolitical shifts. Attendees underscored the value of AAP's university network model, which focuses on strengthening institutional capacity, building human capital, and enabling African universities to drive national development. However, they also called for more intentional multilateral collaborations, diversification of funding, and the development of marketable university-based products to enhance sustainability and reduce donor dependency.

The meeting concluded with agreement on key next steps. These include reviewing AAP membership benefits to ensure greater relevance, documenting leadership lessons to inform strategy refinement, and convening targeted discussions to address gaps in collaboration. Action items also include expanding inter-university exchange programs, promoting international research partnerships, increasing engagement with the private sector, and enhancing AAP's communication and visibility. A timeline and lead assignments will be established to guide the implementation of these recommendations in the coming months.



Figure 9: Q&A session at the AAP Consortium Business Meeting



University and Private Sector Engagement Forum

The University–Private Sector Engagement Forum was held under the theme "Strengthening University–Private Sector Partnerships for Innovation and Economic Growth in Africa." Moderated by Dr. Hakeem Onasanya, Director of Operations at the Tony Elumelu Foundation, the forum featured an influential panel including Dr. Ronald Mangani (CEO, Press Corporation Plc), Mr. Vizenge Kumwenda (Group Managing Director, NICO Holdings Ltd), Mr. Kondwani Msimuko (Interim Managing Director, Illovo Sugar Malawi), and Ms. Wezi Mzumara (Founder, Kwanzaa Chocolates). The panel shared experiences on how Malawi's private sector is engaging universities in meaningful ways. Core themes included the importance of long-term, strategic partnerships anchored in shared goals and formal agreements. Discussions highlighted collaborations in areas such as digital transformation, research commercialization, graduate training, and co-investments in innovation. Panelists stressed the need for curricula that reflect real-world challenges and called for universities to play a bigger role in entrepreneurship and job creation.

A highlight of the forum was the signing of an agreement between LUANAR and NBS Bank, launching a graduate loan facility to support youth-led businesses emerging from LUANAR's incubation programs. Backed by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the \$300,000 fund (90% AGRA, 10% NBS) will provide startup capital to graduates who complete structured agribusiness training. This initiative, championed by Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, LUANAR's Vice Chancellor, and Dr. Felix Maulidi, Coordinator of the LUANAR Africa Centre of Excellence, is a concrete example of how academia and industry can collaborate to tackle youth unemployment and promote inclusive growth. As a consortium, the AAP needs to use these lessons as it seeks to harness the transformative power of university–private sector partnerships in building a more innovative and economically resilient Africa.



Figure 10: Wezi Mzumara, Founder of Kwanzaa Cocoa during the University/Private Sector Engagement Forum



Day 4

Gender-based Violence Panels/Policy Workshop

This full-day event covered topics related to leadership and the prevention and investigation of gender-based violence (GBV). The panels were led by Laura Rugless (Vice President for Civil Rights and Title IX Education at MSU) and Kelly Schweda (Executive Director of Prevention, Outreach, and Education Department at MSU). Each panel had a primary focus and included experts in each topic area, who were selected based on their expertise and the materials that they submitted to the team organizing the event. Topic areas for the three panels included policy and leadership, investigation and support, and prevention education. Audience members were active participants during each panel, gaining ideas and building collaborations. In addition to faculty and staff from AAP universities, approximately 30 students from LUANAR attended the event. The students participated enthusiastically during each panel and engaged with members of the panels after each session. Both audience members and students appeared to benefit and gain insight from experts in the field from a range of institutions and community services. The conversations facilitated by these panels contributed to a larger, long-term discussion around the development of a universal toolkit that can be used globally to set standards on how institutions prevent, investigate, and support policies around GBV.



Figure 11: LUANAR students ask questions and provide feedback at the Gender-Based Violence Panels/Policy Workshop

LUANAR African Fertilizer and Soil Health Meeting

The Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health session, convened by LUANAR and the MwAPATA Institute, focused on advancing the implementation of the 10-year Fertilizer and Soil Health (FSH) Action Plan (2024–2034) developed in response to the 2024 AU Fertilizer Summit in Nairobi. Professor Levison Chiwaula opened the meeting by underscoring the importance of collaborating with AAP to move the action plan forward. Dr. Christone Nyondo presented Malawi's domestication of the action plan, detailing its alignment with recent policy developments such as the 2022 Fertilizer Act and the 2024 Land Resources Management Policy. Despite geopolitical disruptions delaying implementation, the MwAPATA Institute continues to coordinate national efforts under the AU's oversight, promoting research, regional collaboration, and evidence-based policy design to improve soil health and fertilizer use. Key goals include improving agronomic practices, integrating organic and inorganic fertilizers through 4R principles, and establishing a multi-stakeholder platform for coordination and accountability.

A subsequent panel discussion examined challenges and solutions in agricultural interventions. Progress has been made in composting, quality control, and training, though gaps remain in standardization, nutrient deficiency knowledge, and soil pH management. Persistent issues include monoculture dominance, outdated practices, and weak adoption of integrated systems. Panelists called for targeted capacity building for farmers, promotion of crop-livestock systems, localized knowledge-sharing platforms, and stronger investment in soil health research. Overall, the session reinforced the need for collaborative, locally driven approaches to sustainable agricultural transformation in Malawi and across the continent.



Figure 12: Dr. Anthony Chapoto making a comment during the LUANAR African Fertilizer and Soil Health Meeting



Discussion Forum—100,000 PhDs in 10 Years

Moderated by Dr Dorothy Ngila, the AAP advisory board deputy chair, the workshop on “100,000 PhDs in 10 Years: Opportunities for Transforming Doctoral Education at African Universities” sparked a timely and provocative discussion on the future of doctoral training in Africa. The session gathered AAP consortium members’ scholars, other institutional leaders from Malawi, Botswana, South Africa, USA, Uganda, Kenya and research policy thinkers to explore what it would take to not only meet the ambitious numerical target but also to ensure relevance, quality, and sustainability in doctoral education across the continent.

The speakers—Prof. Titus Awokuse (MSU), Prof. Alex Kahi (Egerton University), Mr. Isaac Chingota (National Commission for Science and Technology-Malawi), and Prof. Belko Ouologuem (UYOB)—emphasized that achieving this goal requires a multifaceted approach, including increased investment from governments and universities, stronger administrative frameworks, and meaningful collaborations with the private sector to fund research. The importance of revising PhD curricula to foster problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and leadership was widely agreed upon. It was noted that producing high-quality PhDs is a costly endeavor, so efforts must be strategic and impactful. A recurring theme was the need to address the existing systems and practices within academia that limit transformation and inclusion.

Participants also stressed the urgency of decolonizing doctoral education, both in content and structure, by fostering intra-African collaboration and integrating local contexts into research priorities. Questions were raised about how to retain trained PhDs, especially given the allure of better opportunities abroad, and how to engage funders in supporting early-career researchers through small grants. The session concluded with a call to reimagine the PhD not just as an academic qualification, but as a powerful tool for social transformation, innovation, and leadership in Africa’s future.



Building Bridges: Advancing Collaboration Among MSU, HBCUs, and Africa

A panel discussion was convened to explore how partnerships among Michigan State University (MSU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the U.S., and African universities can be deepened to support shared goals in research, innovation, and inclusive development. The session was moderated by Dr. Jose Jackson-Malete, Co-Director of AAP, and brought together distinguished leaders from both sides of the Atlantic.

The panel featured Dr. Lanisa S. Kitchiner, Associate Vice President for Global and Diaspora Engagement at Howard University; Professor Dimeji Togunde, Vice Provost for Global Education at Spelman College; Professor Kwesi Brookins, Vice Provost for University Outreach and Engagement at MSU; and Dr. Nthabi Taole Mjimba, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. Each panelist shared perspectives on strengthening international collaborations through equity-driven approaches, strategic alignment, and long-term sustainability.

Dr. Kitchiner emphasized the importance of building partnerships rooted in mutual trust and shared narratives, noting that collaboration should not be transactional but relational—anchored in a common purpose and history. Professor Togunde echoed this sentiment, stressing the need for equity and accountability in partnerships and urging reforms within institutions to align missions, promote shared leadership, and ensure co-designed research and teaching strategies. Professor Brookins highlighted MSU's experience in developing sustainable structures, such as faculty exchanges, joint research platforms, and shared data governance models, which help ensure partnerships achieve long-term impact. Representing the African continent, Dr. Taole Mjimba called for African universities to play a central role in defining the terms of collaboration. She emphasized the importance of aligning partnerships with local development priorities and leveraging tools like Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) to expand opportunities for cross-border learning and research exchange.



Figure 13: L to R: Monyai Chavers (Tuskegee University), Lanisa Kitchiner (Howard University) Godlove Fonjweng (Prairie View A&M University); 'Dimeji Togunde (Spelman College)

Several themes and recommendations emerged from the discussion. First, building equitable partnerships was identified as essential. Panelists stressed that true equity requires recognizing each institution's unique strengths—whether in research, cultural capital, or community engagement—and creating spaces where emerging scholars and underrepresented voices can lead. Second, aligning missions and resources was highlighted as a way to strengthen institutional buy-in. Institutions should use joint visioning sessions, co-funded initiatives, and measurable outcomes to ensure partnerships are strategic and mutually beneficial.

The third theme centered on creating innovative structures. Participants recommended the adoption of COIL models, the development of shared research platforms, faculty exchanges, and joint fundraising initiatives. Investments in digital infrastructure, cross-institutional data sharing, and shared governance frameworks were also seen as critical to sustaining these collaborations. Fourth, the panel underscored the importance of advancing outreach and inclusion through storytelling and visibility. Efforts should be made to showcase the value of collaborations between Africa and the African diaspora in areas such as entrepreneurship, knowledge exchange, and student mobility.

Finally, the discussion emphasized the need for fostering student mobility. Panelists recommended clear technical pathways and scholarship mechanisms that allow African students to study at HBCUs and provide opportunities for Black students in the U.S. to conduct research and engage with universities in Africa. These pipelines are essential to building stronger educational bridges and preparing future leaders with global perspectives.

The session concluded with a shared commitment to building a global academic community grounded in equity, innovation, and mutual respect. Panelists agreed that deeper collaboration between MSU, HBCUs, and African universities has the potential not only to address urgent societal challenges but also to redefine the future of international partnerships. By centering the voices, histories, and aspirations of Africa and the African diaspora, these partnerships can create transformative impact across continents.



Closing Dinner Celebrating Professor Richard Mkandawire

AAP hosted a closing dinner with special recognition of Professor Richard Mkandawire's dedicated service as Director of the AAP Africa Office. The event gathered colleagues, partners, and mentees from across Africa and beyond to reflect on his leadership and many contributions to the organization and to African development throughout the course of his career. As a development expert with deep experience in agricultural policy and higher education, Professor Mkandawire played a central role in expanding AAP's presence across the continent and strengthening its network of institutional partners.

During his tenure, he helped position AAP as a platform for collaborative research, policy engagement, and capacity building, with a focus on addressing African priorities through equitable partnerships. He championed the inclusion of African voices in global development conversations and worked to bridge the gap between academia, policy, and practice. Attendees at the farewell dinner spoke of his mentorship, commitment to young scholars, and efforts to support sustainable development and food security in Africa. His leadership has shaped the direction of AAP, and his impact will continue to be felt in the years ahead.



Figure 14: AAP team bids farewell to AAP Africa Director- Prof Richard Mkandawire

Conclusion

These efforts signal AAP's evolution into a platform for transformative partnerships.

The 2025 AAP Consortium Meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to shared leadership, sustainability, and deepened collaboration across institutions. Several key action items emerged from the week's discussions. These include: (1) implementing a mapping exercise to identify alternative funding streams and reduce reliance on single donors; (2) reviewing and tailoring AAP member benefits to ensure institutional relevance; (3) expanding faculty and student exchange programs; (4) enhancing South–South collaboration; (5) establishing a unified communication

strategy to articulate AAP's value proposition; and (6) formalizing partnerships with the private sector to support entrepreneurship and innovation. A timeline for these actions will be rolled out in the 2025-2026 AAP work plan, with the AAP management team and designated working groups leading implementation.

Additional next steps include developing collaborative grant proposals—especially in gender-related research and capacity building—based on new connections formed during GenCen-led sessions, and setting up communication platforms to sustain those relationships. LUANAR's August 2025 Falling Walls Lab will serve as a milestone for science engagement within the consortium, while follow-up discussions with the Tony Elumelu Foundation will help build a structured plan for youth entrepreneurship collaboration. Finally, MSU and partner institutions will advance joint efforts to transform doctoral education and expand pipelines for student mobility between African universities and HBCUs. These efforts, collectively, signal the AAP network's continued evolution into a platform for transformative, Africa-centered partnerships.



APPENDIX

Name	Title	Institution
David Norris	Vice Chancellor	University of Botswana
Edward Dintwa	Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Technology; AAP Focal Point	University of Botswana
Alexander Kahi	Director, Centre of Excellence for Livestock Innovation and Business; AAP Focal Point	Egerton University
Agnes Mwangwela	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Emmanuel Kaunda	Vice Chancellor	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Belko Ouologuem	Rector	University Yembo Ouologuem of Bamako
Aboubacar Sidiki Coulibaly	Head of External relations and Cooperation; Professor; AAP Focal Point	University Yembo Ouologuem of Bamako
Oguejifo T. Ujam	Acting Vice Chancellor	University of Nigeria Nsukka
Romanus Ezeokonkwo	Deputy Vice Chancellor-Administration	University of Nigeria Nsukka
Anthonia Achike	Professor; Director, Gender and Development Policy Centre; AAP Focal Point	University of Nigeria Nsukka
Barnabas Nawangwe	Vice Chancellor	Makerere University
Augustina Alexander	Director of Internationalization, Covocation, & Advancement; AAP Focal Point	University of Dar es Salaam
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