

COUNCIL ON TEACHING
Follow Up Report for
Teaching in Higher Education Conference Award

Name: **Beatrice Mkenda**

Department/Unit: **French and Italian**

Conference Attended: 27th Annual Conference of **African Languages Teachers Association (ALTA)**

Date of Conference: **Thursday, April 11th -Saturday, April 13th, 2024**

Award Amount: **1000.00**

Briefly summarize how your attendance at the conference enhanced your professional development and allowed you to gain a better understanding of teaching in your discipline or trends in higher education in general.

Attending the African Languages Teachers Association (ALTA) conference provided me with invaluable opportunities to enhance my professional development and gain a better understanding of teaching in my discipline. The conference featured workshops and presentations by leading scholars in the field, which allowed me to learn about the latest trends and best practices in African language teaching. I also had the opportunity to network with other educators, exchange ideas, and collaborate on future projects. Overall, the conference was instrumental in expanding my knowledge and improving my teaching practices in African languages.

Attending the African Languages Teachers Conference significantly enhanced professional development by providing a platform for networking with peers, exchanging pedagogical strategies, and gaining insights into the latest trends in language education. Through workshops, presentations, and discussions, attendees acquired innovative teaching methodologies tailored to African languages, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and linguistic diversity. I attended a pedagogy research and publishing panel that was particularly very beneficial to me. This panel facilitated discussions on broader trends in higher education, such as inclusivity, technology integration, and interdisciplinary approaches, literary works, and arts, which enriched pedagogical practices across disciplines. Not only I connected with renowned scholars in African studies such as Beth Samuelson, Martha Nyikos, and Alwiya Omar, but also, I got accepted to participate in the African language pedagogy and research workshop at the University of Indiana this Summer. Therefore, this conference was very fruitful to my teaching and learning experiences. Overall, the conference proved instrumental in fostering collaboration, expanding knowledge, and refining teaching techniques in teaching African languages as a foreign language in higher education.

How have you been able to share what you learned about teaching with the campus?

At the conference, I attended a leadership roundtable discussing the future of African language programs in U.S. higher education. This panel brought together coordinators and influential leaders from various institutions to address common challenges, including student enrollment, funding, restructuring, and integration with other disciplines.

I shared insights from this discussion with my colleagues in the Swahili program and the Department of French and Italian at the University of Iowa. Our Swahili and other language programs are currently experiencing challenges with restructuring and enrollment. While we used to enroll up to sixty intermediate-level students, this spring, we only have fourteen. Despite these changes, our Swahili program remains one of the strongest in the U.S.

I also discussed with my students the opportunities available to them as Swahili learners. The job market increasingly values multilingual and multicultural experiences. I encourage graduating students to highlight their experiences of interacting with people from different cultures and studying a foreign language on their resumes.

