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PIPS placements with ssDNAfrica

The Science Students’ Development Network in Africa (ssDNAfrica) facilitates peer-assisted soft skills training and networking opportunities for undergraduate science students at Pwani University (PU) in Kenya, with the ultimate aim of creating an international network of science students who are empowered and equipped to fulfil the potential of their degree. Since 2017 we have facilitated three rounds of workshops at PU, each culminating in a students’ symposium. These workshops and events have been organised and facilitated by BBSRC PIPS students, who have been paired with supervisors at PU and travelled to Kenya for a 3-month placement. This offers PIPS students valuable experience in leadership, coordinating events, teaching at a university level and taking initiative in unfamiliar situations, while also improving the skills and experience of undergraduate students at PU.

Opportunities

1. Good Research Practice (GRP) workshops

The ssDNAfrica GRP workshops and students’ symposium have run successfully at PU for three years. The workshops follow a peer-led team learning style and cover topics including giving a presentation, sourcing and referencing information, reading journal articles, and scientific writing. Following the series of workshops, participating students are invited to submit abstracts on their own research ideas, which are evaluated by an independent panel comprised of the ssDNAfrica team. The students with the best abstracts are chosen to present talks or posters at a Students’ Symposium, which is organised by the PIPS student. The role of the PIPS student includes preparing workshop materials, designing the schedule, moderating the workshops and organising the symposium. We are looking for 1-2 PIPS students to continue the GRP workshops in September 2022.

1. Workshops on career skills, leadership skills, outreach activities and/or gender issues

ssDNAfrica has facilitated various workshops on skills and topics useful for scientists and academics inside and outside academia. All these workshops have received excellent feedback from the students and there is the opportunity for you to run them again with the support of some already existing material, while adding to them your own personal touch by refining and expanding the program. Some examples of these workshops are:

* Career development skills – CV writing, cover letters writing, interview skills, job application skills.
* Gender-related issues in academia – facilitating discussion and elaboration around gender related issues at PU.
* Leadership programme – helping students to improve their leadership skills
* Science outreach workshops – helping students to design projects of science outreach in the local community.
1. Designing and organising a new programme of workshops on enterprise and entrepreneurship

Students and staff at PU have expressed interest in a series of workshops that will guide the students into how to develop and exploit their own projects as entrepreneurs. Interested PIPS student would have the chance to design and develop the workshop with the help of previous materials. Ideally the students will work in multidisciplinary groups to develop a business idea and to follow the classes that will help them navigate the key point of developing and handling the idea. At the end of the workshop, we would aim to run a completion, very much like iTeam, where the best designed and more promising idea/project would be rewarded with a small monetary prize that may actually help the project to take off.

1. Developing and running a farmer’s outreach project

We would like to strengthen the knowledge exchange of PU with the local farming community. This would help farmers to know the innovations in the field and would allow PU students to focus and design their projects around the needs of the local communities. The idea of this project is to create an interdisciplinary group of students that would interact with the farmers, identify their main needs and then focus on one particular issue. Each group of students could be focusing on one issue and trying to either describe it/dissect it or propose solutions. At the end of the project, there could be an event or an PU open day where the students present their findingS and their reflections on the issue. This has been a long-standing idea than has been first explored by a PIPS student in 2019 and we know that there is a base group of students at PU that has contact with the famers. The work of the PIPS student would be to explore the potential of this pre-existing network, strengthen it, design the project and get the students to run it. As an outcome, we hope that the open day/display of the students elaboration on the farmers issues and the constant contact between student-group farmers will become a stable and self-run initiative at PU.

1. Designing and organising a new programme of workshops, outreach or other activities

A PIPS placement with ssDNAfrica includes the opportunity to take initiative and explore your own interests and ideas by designing and delivering a new training programme for PU students.

Application

To apply to do a PIPS placement with ssDNAfrica, please express your interest at info.ssdnafrica.gmail.com by sending a CV and a cover letter.