



# The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

## Strengthening the Engagement of RUFORUM Alumni to support Post-Graduate Training in Africa

### Launch of the RUFORUM Alumni Network

#### Concept Note

#### Background

Alumni Networks play a significant role in advancing the goals and objectives of an institution. Specifically Alumni are advocates for and support linkages between the parent institution and the outside world. Alumni can also provide important feedback on the current trends and market demands in the area of focus of the parent institution and advice on the necessary re-orientations and interventions to address emerging challenges so that the parent institution remains relevant to its customers. With this in mind, RUFORUM is keen to find means of engaging with former students that have been supported by RUFORUM. RUFORUM has since its establishment and during the 10 year period of its predecessor, the Forum on Agricultural Resource Husbandry, has supported over 1500 postgraduate students (Masters and PhD). A recent survey by RUFORUM (2014) indicated that most of these students (95%) were living and working within the Continent and majority had been employed within six months of graduation. The Tracer study (RUFORUM, 2014) also confirmed that graduates (RUFORUM Alumni) were working largely at Universities and research institutions but also with the private sector, non-government and policy institutions and others have started their own businesses across Africa. The wide experience of Alumni would bring important benefits to RUFORUM’s work.

The recently approved RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan (2015-2020) highlights the evolving trends on the continent and the opportunities that RUFORUM could exploit to enhance achievement of its mission and vision. The Secretariat envisages a stronger program, backed by strong

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engagement between current students and the former RUFORUM supported students who not only would strengthen mentorship of young scientists but improve the transition from studies to workplace environment for students. Because they understand RUFORUM, they are in good position to be engaged by the Network.

Discussions with selected Alumni also highlighted their own eagerness to participate in RUFORUM programs and how they might be able to support current programs, in light of benefits that they received through the program. With this in mind, discussions were pursued to identify how a platform for former RUFORUM students might be created and structured to continually support RUFORUM current students, the overall RUFORUM program and enhance Post -graduate training in Africa. A formal mechanism/ platform for their participation is proposed in the RUFORUM Alumni Network (RAN).

As initial steps to establishment of the RAN, an online consultation was done among the Alumni where suggestions were made by Alumni on how to initiate the alumni platform. The Alumni recognize the important need to strengthen the linkages between universities with research institutions, industry and farmers who are the ultimate consumers of knowledge. With this background, it was agreed that the Alumni with support from the Secretariat organize a side event at the Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week to explore models of operation and officially launch the RAN.

### Objectives of the side Event

Specifically, the side-event objectives are to;

1. Discuss/ dialogue on how Alumni can engage in RUFORUM agenda and in supporting current postgraduate students;
2. Discuss the naming, objectives, arrangements and structure of a RUFORUM Alumni Network platform for strengthening higher education in Africa;
3. Officially Launch the RUFORUM Alumni Network

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### Approach and Methodology

The event will be organized as a one day event during the RUFORUM Biennial Conference attended by the RUFORUM Alumni. Background presentations will be made by the Alumni on the perspectives on their engagement with input from the Secretariat as necessary. Perspectives from the Alumni on the functionality of the Network will be discussed as well as discussion on key guiding documents and initial activities of RAN. Other members of the Network will participate in the launch of the Network.

### Venue and Participants

The event will be attended by the RUFORUM Alumni

**Venue:** Century City Conference Centre, Cape Town, Meeting Room 11

**Date & Time:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 (1830-2230)

### Side Event Organizers and Contact

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

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## Side Event Programme

### Day One

Time	Activity	Responsible Person
18:00-18:10	Arrival and Registration	RUFORUM
18:10-18:15	Welcome Remarks	Executive Secretary RUFORUM
18:15-18:30	Introductions and meeting objectives	RUFORUM Secretariat
18:30-19:30	Background presentations from Alumni – perspectives on the RAN and its functioning	Selected Alumni
<b>19:30 – 20:00</b>	<b>Working Dinner</b>	
20:00-21:00	Group discussions on the Activities of the RAN	Facilitator
21:00-21:30	Plenary presentations of group discussion reports	Facilitator
21:30-22:00	Discussions and conclusions	Facilitator
22:00-22:05	Photo ceremony	All
22:05	Closure	RUFORUM

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