

* Research Africa



Dr Eme Owoaje – University of Ibadan

Two Nigerian universities subscribing to the Research Professional platform have increased their funding and improved their publication records, writes Jackie Opara.

Eme Owoaje, research manager at the University of Ibadan and Yayha Oyewole Imam from the University of Ilorin share how subscribing to the platform has helped their institutions garner more grants and increase the number of their publications.

University of Ibadan

The University of Ibadan has enjoyed an increase in funding since it joined the *Research Professional* platform in 2008, Owoaje says. Staff at Nigeria's oldest university have successfully applied for grants using the platform.

"Subscribing to the *Research Professional* platform has contributed immensely to this success. The platform makes it easy for researchers to directly search for funding of interest within a short space of time," Owoaje says.

The platform sifts institutional grants, travel awards, postgraduate scholarships, and scientific fellowships from various disciplines and only provides those, which are open for African researchers.

Owoaje says this saves the university's 1500 academics time, as *Research Professional* allows them to only search for funding reserved for Nigerian researchers.

Awareness campaign

Ibadan has accessed more grants because Owoaje and her colleagues at the research office have proactively encouraged academics from the university's 13 faculties, four research institutes, eight specialised centres and over 100 departments to use the platform.

The institution sends email alerts, uses social media and holds workshops to teach its academics how to use it to find funding.

"The success is reflected in our user statistics. The regular incorporation in all our workshops has increased the number of users and those who have won funding to attend conferences in the past year," the research manager says.

The help is not only limited to finding grants. Heavy teaching loads often mean that researchers don't always have time to apply for the grants they find on *Research Professional*. But Owoaje and her team train the academics in grant proposal writing. They also help them to prepare their proposals to improve their chances of winning.

She says: "Some of them struggle to find time to apply for the grants they find on the platform so [they] request for support ranging from budgeting to submission and sometimes idea building."

The support her research office gave to their academic staff saw the university triple the number of users on the RP platform last year, she adds.

Publication success

Those who have won travel grants also found potential partners for their research projects at the events they attended.

Academics at Ibadan have not only been successful in winning grants. Their publication record has improved since the university subscribed to *Research Professional*, Owoaje says.

The university produced 7,950 peer-reviewed publications from 2010 to 2013, according to Thomson Reuters.

Ilorin

The University of Ibadan is not only the Nigerian university whose fortunes changed after subscribing to *Research Professional*.

Some of the academic staff at the University of Ilorin's 13 faculties have successfully applied for grants, which has helped raise their academic profiles, says Imam, the research manager. The institution subscribed to the platform in 2012.

Imam herself won a travel grant to the African Peer Review Mechanism Colloquium held in Ethiopia in 2013.

Other academics who have won funding include Abdul Lateef Ibrahim Onireti from the Department of Arabic, who received an African Humanities Program postdoctoral fellowship awarded by the American Council of Learned Societies. Barr Maryam Mustapha from the Faculty of Law also won a grant from ACLS to complete his thesis.

Gbemisola Animasawun, a social scientist, won a research grant from the US Social Science Research Council.

"The research office campaigns rigorously to make sure staff register on the RP platform. Staff or researchers are encouraged to register on the platform using their official email addresses so that they can access

opportunities posted and we circulate research calls to faculties through the deans,” she says.

Imam says the institution, which was established in 1975, hopes that raising its academics’ profiles will ultimately attract international partners and more funding.

She has no doubt that this will happen as the institution continues to reap more benefits from using the *Research Professional* platform.

“We have not been able to establish international partnerships but have no doubt that it will happen soon as there are several positive engagements going on that will result in significant research collaboration,” Imam says.

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