



Women's University
in Africa



Addressing Gender Disparity and Fostering
Equity in University Education



HADIP | Historic African Diaspora Placement Program

Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Southern African Universities Seal Strategic Alliance to Transform Regional Higher Education

In a milestone effort to unite the African continent with its global Diaspora, a high-level regional dialogue held on March 26 2026, has laid the groundwork for a transformative partnership between U.S. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Southern African higher education institutions.

The forum, titled “*Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Engagement with Africa: Building Sustainable Collaboration with Southern African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)*,” was jointly convened by the Historic African Diaspora Placement Program (HADIP), the Association of African Universities Southern Africa (AAU-SARO), the Women’s University in Africa (WUA), and Clark Atlanta University (CAU). The virtual summit brought together more than 100 Vice Chancellors and Rectors from universities in Southern Africa, government representatives, and Higher Education Regulatory Authorities to move beyond informal ties toward a structured, long-term cooperative framework.

The proceedings opened with a compelling strategic vision focused on inclusivity and development. In her welcome remarks, Professor Sunungurai Dominica Chingarande, Vice-Chancellor of the Women’s University in Africa and Head of the AAU-SARO Secretariat, highlighted that the partnership is anchored in a mutual commitment to eliminating gender disparities and promoting equity across the academic landscape.

The forum was officially opened by Honourable Simelisizwe Sibanda, Zimbabwe’s Deputy Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, whose keynote address described higher education as the primary engine for regional innovation. From the American perspective, Dr. George T. French Jr., President of Clark Atlanta University, affirmed the readiness of HBCUs to enter into deep-rooted joint research and capacity-building initiatives with African partners.

Ms. Angele Makombo Ntumba, SADC Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration, underscored the strategic importance of this collaboration in achieving the goals of the SADC Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030. She emphasized that strengthening higher education through international partnerships is vital for human capital development and regional industrialization. By aligning with the African Union’s Agenda 2063, Ms. Ntumba noted that this partnership would play a critical role in fostering a knowledge-based economy for the Southern African region.

Professor Stephen Simukanga, Executive Director of the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) and acting AAU-SARO Chairperson, outlined a strategic roadmap for enhancing collaboration between Southern African higher education institutions and HBCUs. Professor Simukanga underscored the importance of the proposed partnerships prioritising key areas such as STEM research, digital transformation, and curriculum reform designed to meet evolving labour market needs. By formalizing these ties through joint degree programs and research initiatives, both regions aim to strengthen institutional capacity and improve graduate employability on a global scale.

A central theme of the dialogue was the transition from isolated, one-on-one agreements in favour of a robust, consortium-based model. Dr. Barassou Diawara, Senior Knowledge Management Expert at the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), presented a new coordinated framework intended to facilitate scalable and sustainable collaboration across the two regions.

The forum builds upon the foundational work of HADIP, a program facilitated by the ACBF and the African Union. HADIP’s mission focuses on placing African American professionals in African countries for occupational and cultural immersion, and strengthening the bond between Africa and the Diaspora. As the dialogue drew to a close, Professor Reginald Nnazor, Executive Director of HADIP, joined delegates in committing to a formal roadmap for the future prioritising institutional strengthening, the promotion of innovation, and the harmonisation of quality assurance standards across Southern African universities.

The Women’s University in Africa through leadership of the AAU-SARO Secretariat is pleased to be associated with this initiative and believes that this landmark convergence marks a new era of partnerships ensuring that the historical bonds between the Diaspora and the African continent yield practical, high-impact results for the next generation of scholars and leaders.