



MSU Academy for Global Engagement GKI-Designed Pitchfest & Network Bootcamp

After Action Report

*Building skills in promoting research and forming networks
for early career Michigan State University faculty*



GLOBAL
KNOWLEDGE
INITIATIVE



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

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Background

Inaugurating a Global Fellows Program

In 2010, Michigan State University (MSU) President Lou Anna K. Simon laid out a bold vision for the university's future. Staying true to the university's roots as a land-grant institution, President Simon envisioned MSU as a "world grant" university: one committed to supporting sustainable prosperity across the globe by "empowering people from ordinary backgrounds to do extraordinary things." A chief piece of this vision was the cultivation of global scholarship among a new generation of MSU faculty.

MSU inaugurated the Academy for Global Engagement Fellowship Program to carry this vision forward by creating a growing cohort of early career faculty who participate in global activities, and who view scholarship through a global lens. Each year, 8-10 faculty members have the opportunity to join the Fellowship Program based on their work, the support of College Chairs and supervisors, and their interest in meaningful international research. Nine fellows hailing from MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Engineering make up the first cohort of Academy for Global Engagement Fellows. Fellows' research interests range from sensors that monitor the degradation of infrastructure, to participatory research among Nigerian farmers, to developing neuroprosthetic devices that integrate into brain networks. Fellows aspire to create global impact by expanding their work to scale. During a yearlong fellowship, Fellows experience a combination of mentoring, training, and exposure to national and international stakeholders. MSU designed these experiences to build Fellows' capacity to launch large-scale, high-impact international research programs. The "Pitchfest and Network Bootcamp", designed by non-profit the [Global Knowledge Initiative](#) (GKI) and described in this document, represents an integral component of this innovative program.

Needed: Skills for Building Partnerships

Creating partnerships with those who have influence and needed resources represents an essential part of building successful international projects. With this in mind, GKI developed a training program that balances interactive modules and practical experience. Leveraging a unique opportunity for Fellows to network with scientific and international development professionals in Washington, DC, Fellows had the opportunity to learn and then immediately put into practice skills on "pitching" potential partners. Fellows developed skills as presenters, using a combination of expert advice, one-on-one guidance, and collaborative tools. They also explored how global networks could bring resources and expertise to bear on research challenges. Ultimately, GKI and MSU aspire to help researchers gain the skills and experience needed to become the next generation of elite global scholars, while impacting the lives of thousands, if not millions, around the world.



ONE-ON-ONE EXPERT GUIDANCE
GKI Chief Operating Officer Sara Farley helps a Global Fellow expand his map of Key Influencers by inviting him to consider other potential contacts

Washington experience: Building networks and pitching partners

Program Design

The Global Fellows' Washington, DC, experience provided a chance to advocate for their research and projects by speaking directly with influential stakeholders and potential funders. During this trip, participants met with potential partners at a number of influential organizations across the nation's capital from US Agency for International Development to the National Science Foundation. GKI's training was built to achieve two main objectives geared toward assuring Fellows made the best of this experience. First, GKI believed participants should leave with an increased ability to pitch their research/projects to a variety of different audiences (funders, collaborators, etc.). Second, Fellows should consider their new contacts, as well as existing partners, as members of growing problem solving networks. By learning about network dynamics and methods for managing communication, Fellows could devise a system to make the most of their new potential partners. To create an experience tailored to the needs of the Global Fellows, GKI conducted a thorough review of leading expert opinion and best practice in pitching partners, making "the ask," network management, and other skills, leveraging [GKI's own experiences around the world](#) to develop the experience described below.

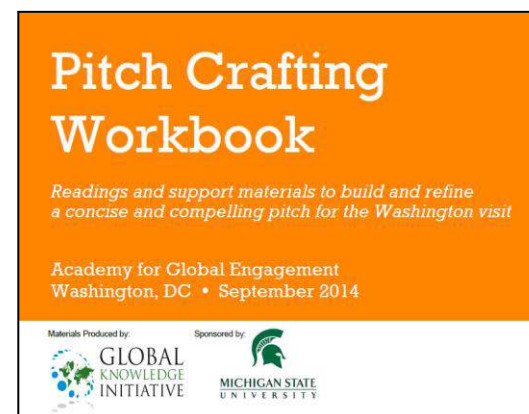
Pitchcraft and Network Bootcamp Experience

The Pitchcraft and Network Bootcamp Experience consists of four key components. Participants took part in these activities between September 8 and September 17, 2014.

- **Guided Preparation and Pitch Crafting Workbook:** Prior to their arrival to the training in Washington, Fellows received a Pitch Crafting Workbook (see image at right). This workbook comprised several articles on various aspects of a pitch, along with study questions and activities. As participants read through these materials, they also iteratively created a first draft of their pitch.

GKI also had significant coaching time with Fellows before the Washington, DC, trip. In May 2014, GKI Chief Operating Officer Sara Farley had an initial meeting with Fellows to better understand their challenges and offer initial feedback. On September 8, GKI experts held a virtual meet-up with Fellows to orient them to Pitch Crafting and provide time for Fellows to ask questions and obtain clarifications about readings, expectations, and activities.

- **Pitchcraft 101:** On September 15, 2014, GKI met with the Fellows for an intensive half-day workshop devoted to refining their pitches, hosted at MSU's Washington offices. Fellows delivered the pitch drafts that they had created using their Pitch Crafting Workbook, receiving live feedback from GKI experts. They then built [Challenge Maps](#), used to dissect and clarify the challenges their research addresses, the solutions they planned to deliver, and the intended impacts of those solutions. An iterative design tool, the challenge maps help individuals and groups clearly communicate these elements in a variety of setting, including during upcoming meetings. Afterwards, Fellows participated in an activity called "Practicing your Ask," where Sara Farley and Gretchen Neisler, Director of MSU's Center for Global Connections in Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, teamed up to accept or reject the Global Fellows' "asks, helping to dispel the fear associated with asking.

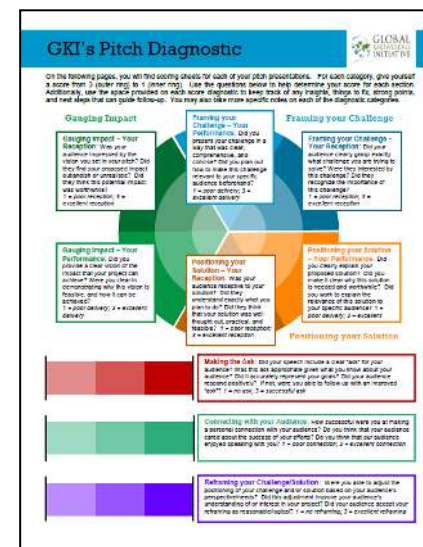


At the end of the Workshop, GKI oriented participants to a Pitch Diagnostic that GKI designed to help researchers track their performance during meetings. The score diagnostic also provides space for participants to make note of their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for follow up. See Pitch Diagnostic cover page at right.

- Pitch Reboot and Network Formation:** On September 17, after a series of meetings with officials across the capital area, Fellows returned for a final workshop. Each fellow participated in one of three Skill Deepening Tracks—Making the Ask, Connecting with your Audience, or Reframing your Challenge/Solution—designed to help them build skills in an area where they felt they could use additional practice, as revealed through self-assessment using their pitch diagnostics.

Next, participants learned about the basics of network formation and management. Fellows built Key Influencers Diagrams, which visualize the most important contacts for the success of an initiative in terms of individuals and institutions in a position to provide resources (technological, institutional, or knowledge-based). Finally, Fellows began to construct a network management plan from a template designed by GKI, which enables thinking about ways to continue engaging and communicating with contacts.

- Follow up:** Following the Workshop, MSU staff will work with Fellows to help them pursue their connections and strengthen a network that augments the impact of their projects. GKI staff have also continued communicating with Fellows, answering questions in a number of areas. MSU and GKI will continue to support the goals of the 2013-2014 Global Engagement Fellows as they work to make a difference around the world through cutting-edge research.



EMPOWERING CONFIDENCE

GKI experts and Gretchen Neisler of MSU, work with Fellows to get specific about their “ask.” Here, Neisler rewards a well-thought out ask with a piece of candy.



BREAKING DOWN COMPLEX PROJECTS

Using a Challenge Map, Fellows learned to visualize and better understand the challenges that their work addresses; the solution that they hope to create; and the intended impact of that solution.

Impact of Global Engagement

Training Outcomes

Feedback provided from participants reinforced the value of this experience. In a survey issued to them, several Fellows listed the design tool Challenge Mapping as their favorite activity, stating that it encouraged them to “think systematically and holistically” about their projects. Other favorite components included the Pitch Crafting Workbook and the “Practicing your Ask” activity, where participants felt it was “useful to obtain live feedback.”

The impacts from the Pitchfest & Network Bootcamp will extend far beyond the end of the training. Going forward, Fellows will be able to build their international research portfolios using the knowledge and skills learned during the program. Ultimately, the Pitchfest & Network Bootcamp, as critical components of the Academy for Global Engagement, will provide Fellows with the basis for creating strong networks that allow them to effectively engage a world thirsty for research impacts in agriculture and engineering.

Vision for the Future

As Fellows continue to move forward from the Pitchfest & Network Bootcamp, they will use the connections, resources, and information obtained during their experience in Washington to advance their own projects and conduct research on a global scale. However, while these nine Fellows will likely achieve impressive accomplishments, the vision that MSU and GKI share goes beyond a single event, or even a single year. We are committed to building sustainable mechanisms to deepen the capacity of young researchers and early career faculty to scale their ideas and innovations internationally. As senior international researchers at US universities begin to retire, a growing community of international development and academic stakeholders recognizes the need for new models to encourage faculty to conduct international research and participate in global problem solving. One way to achieve this goal is by scaling programs such as the Academy for Global Engagement.

Our vision is to build this capacity not just at MSU, but in universities across the developed and developing world. In this vision, MSU’s Academy for Global Engagement represents the first step toward building a scalable model for teaching and cultivating global engagement skills. Building this cohort of internationally-minded researchers and faculty will boost the US’s academic engagement worldwide, build faculty skills, and enable the expansion of research networks connecting scholars to resources, knowledge, stakeholders, and ideas around the world. Given the success of this initial experience, as well as the potential to serve a growing demand for such capacity across universities in the US and globally, MSU and GKI are poised to dramatically increase global engagement for researchers worldwide.

“Challenge Mapping ... encouraged me to think systematically and holistically. I see broad applicability in many contexts.

-Meredith Gore, Global Fellow, MSU

“I am very confident that the Fellows are now equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to aid them in the development of their international research portfolios thanks in large part to your (GKI’s) direct involvement with the MSU Academy for Global Engagement program.”

-Sean Lawrie, Special Projects Coordinator, MSU

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BUILDING STRATEGIC NETWORKS

A Global Engagement Fellow works to build a Key Influencers diagram. This tool allows Fellows to visualize the contacts that are most important to the success of their project, enabling strategic engagement of potential partners.