



The AFRICAN CONNECTIONS Research and Education Fund, Inc. (ACREF)  
<https://www.africanconnections.com>

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Contact: [marketing@africanconnections.com](mailto:marketing@africanconnections.com)

## ACREF introduces its newly elected Officers and 2023 – 2025 Board of Directors

The AFRICAN CONNECTIONS Research and Education Fund, Inc. (ACREF) is pleased to announce the appointment of its 2023 - 2025 Board of Directors and the election of corporate officers.

The following individuals (listed alphabetically) have been welcomed to the board for a two (2) year term:

- Dr. Emily Achieng' Akuno
- Melvin H. Cox
- Anna Gray
- Dr. Denis K. Muthoni
- Dr. Stephen S. Robinson, M.D., MPH
- Kelvin 'Sterling' Scott

### Emily Achieng' Akuno



Dr. Emily Achieng' Akuno is Vice Chancellor (Chief Administrative Officer) of the [Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology](#) (JOOUST) - a public university named for independence leader and Kenya's first Vice-President Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (1911 – 1994).

JOOUST's main campus is in the town of Bondo – in Siaya County – approximately 62 kilometres (39 mi) west of Kisumu - Kenya's third largest city.

Dr. Akuno studied at [Kenyatta University](#) (Kenya); [Northwestern State University of Louisiana](#) (USA) and [Kingston University](#) (UK).

She is Past President and Treasurer of the [International Music Council](#), the Paris-based UNESCO-affiliated NGO umbrella organization of worldwide music organizations and bodies.

She is a member of the [International Society for Music Education](#) (ISME), where she has served as Commissioner and Chair of Music in School and Teacher Education Commission (MISTEC), member of the Board of Directors, Interim Secretary General and President.

She is a long-time participant at [Pan African Society for Music Arts Education](#) (PASMAE) and ISME conferences and has pioneered research projects covering multiple countries of Africa. Through the ISME presidency, she served as chair of World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE), the UNESCO-affiliated alliance that brings together four main international arts education organizations. She is the founding Chair of the Music Education Research Group – Kenya (MERG-Kenya), a network of Kenyan higher music education practitioner-researchers who are keen on 'looking at ours to build ours' towards the growth of a robust music scholarship and practice in Kenya, and the region.

A Professor of Music, Emily has taught music performance and education at high school and university levels in Kenya (Kenyatta University, Maseno University and the Technical University of Kenya) and South Africa (the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban). She has been privileged to work with talented students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, interrogating matters around curriculum, pedagogy and contexts of music teaching and learning. She has also served as external examiner for written papers and Masters and doctoral theses and dissertations for a number of universities in Africa.

Emily's publications cover the concept, contexts, content and procedures of music and music education, with a recent interest in what music does and can achieve in society. She is editor and author of books and articles on music and teacher education in cultural contexts, including

the continent-covering title *Music Education in Africa: Concept, Process. and Practice* (Routledge, 2019).

## **Melvin H. Cox, President**



Melvin H. Cox, Lecturer, Merrill College, [University of California, Santa Cruz](#) (UCSC) and President, The AFRICAN CONNECTIONS Research and Educational Fund, Inc.

Since the Fall of 2014, Mr. Cox has been the principal instructor in the Focus on Africa program at UCSC's [Merrill College](#). During this time, he has overseen student travel to Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, The United Kingdom and Zambia.

From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Spring of 2020, Melvin has taught courses remotely - successfully incorporating digital technologies such as [Canvas](#), [Zoom](#), [Yuja](#) and [Kahoot!](#). The adoption of these 'cutting edge' instructional tools has facilitated the active participation of students and faculty from the Co-operative University of Kenya in Focus on Africa courses.

A UC Santa Cruz alum (Merrill College, Class of 1973), Mr. Cox has also taught in the Paralegal Studies program at the [University of San Francisco](#) and spent more than a decade as a Technical Support Engineer for a leading Silicon Valley technology firm ([Sybase](#)). He holds a certificate in UNIX System Management and Administration from the [University of California, Santa Cruz Extension](#). In December, 2000 he was awarded a Diplome D'Honneur by [l'Université Simon Kimbangu](#) in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Melvin is a member of the Board of Directors at the [Tryon Fine Arts Center](#) - a regional performing arts incubator in Western North Carolina. Since 2022, he has chaired the organization's Program Committee.

## **Anna Gray**

Anna Gray is a graduate of The University of California, Santa Cruz and holds a degree in Global Economics – with a focus on Africa. She personally experienced the importance of

cultural and educational exchange when she spent time as a visiting student at the University of Ghana. Because of this invaluable experience, Anna is passionate about creating opportunities for other students to visit, study in, and appreciate the continent.

Anna currently serves as a [Peace Corps](#) volunteer in Ghana, where she works with community partners to improve health practices through education and outreach.

### **Denis K. Muthoni, Vice President**



Dr. Denis Kamau Muthoni is a senior lecturer of Supply Chain Management at the [Co-operative University of Kenya](#) (CUK).

He holds a PhD in Supply Chain Management from the [Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology](#) (JKUAT), a Master of Science in Procurement and Logistics from JKUAT and a Bachelor of Education; Arts in Economics and Business Studies (second class honours, upper division) from [Kenyatta University](#).

Additionally, he has a professional qualification as a certified public accountant. He has over 13 years experience in tertiary education as a tutor, lecturer, researcher, conference presenter, consultant and post graduate research supervisor. He is a beneficiary of the [Orange Knowledge Program Fellowship](#) in 2017 for the Market Access for Food Security program held by the [Wageningen University and Research](#) in the Netherlands.

Denis currently serves as the Director of the Board of Postgraduate Studies at the Co-operative University of Kenya. Previously, he served for four years as the Director of the Directorate of Alumni, Career Services and International Students.

### **Stephen S. Robinson, Treasurer**



Dr. Stephen S. Robinson received his MD from the School of Medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle and his MPH from the School of Hygiene and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. He completed his residency in internal medicine at [Harlem Hospital Center](#) and later worked within the Sophie Davis

School at the City College of New York to establish the [CUNY Medical School](#). During his tenure with the City University, he also served as the interim director of the Physician Assistant Program at Harlem Hospital Center.

During the five years he lived in Tanzania, he actively participated in the creation of an exchange program between the [National Institute for Medical Research](#) in Tanzania and the [Public Health Sciences Institute](#) at Morehouse College. He also worked with Columbia University's [Mailman School of Public Health](#) evaluating health facilities for their readiness to provide HIV/AIDS care and treatment, under the auspices of [The United States President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief](#) (PEPFAR).

Returning stateside, to Oakland, California, Dr. Robinson has been evaluating patients for their use of medical cannabis over the past 13 years, both in-person and online. He has participated on panels at numerous cannabis-related conferences and delivered presentations on cannabis' medicinal benefits and dosing strategies to both professional and lay audiences. He has been a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for [CW Analytical Laboratories](#), an independent cannabis testing facility. He has been a board member of the [Society for Cannabis Clinicians](#) and currently serves as its [president](#). Under his leadership, the organization has established new chapters in Australia, South America, and the U.K. with membership also on the African continent. He oversaw the complete revamping of the organization's [Medical Cannabis Clinical Training Curriculum](#), and an update for [New York State's Provider Education course](#). Dr. Robinson also contributed to the update of the Medical Board of California's "[Guidelines for the Recommendation of Cannabis for Medical Purposes](#)."

Dr. Robinson continues to evaluate and follow medicinal cannabis patients in California and New York through the online service, [Synergy Doctors](#).

### **Kelvin 'Sterling' Scott, Secretary**



Sterling Scott is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz and holds a degree in Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology. He currently works in Environmental Health, but is also passionate about the arts, particularly photography and film. His photographs are included in two self-published books [Reflections of Us](#) (2019) and [I Can't Breathe](#) (2020).

During his time at UCSC, he was a member of the pioneering class for Merrill College's [Focus On Africa Global Seminar](#).

Sterling understands the importance of global community and intersectionality and seeks to further promote the Focus On Africa program - so that others may gain from its impact.

### **The AFRICAN CONNECTIONS Research and Education Fund, Inc.**

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, ACREF was created in direct response to the numerous distortions, half-truths and omissions seen almost daily in the popular media regarding Africa, her people and the African Diaspora.

The organization's principal mission is to illuminate, to educate and to provide a balanced viewpoint that celebrates genuine achievement and service to humanity.

The AFRICAN CONNECTIONS Research and Education Fund (ACREF) seeks to train and nurture a new generation of internationally focused "virtual griots" - multimedia historians, journalists, writers, technicians and photographers.

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