

## PROFESSOR CAROLINE THORUWA

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### **Please tell us a little about yourself.**

My background is in Chemistry, I did a Bachelor of Education in Chemistry and Maths, and then a Masters in Chemistry. My Phd investigated the use of plant compounds to treat malaria.

### **Could you tell us about your career journey and how you got to your current position?**

In 1998 I was appointed Chair of the Department of Chemistry at Kenyatta University, and later Director of all campuses, continuing my research throughout. I was Director of the African Centre for Transformational Leadership with UN Women with a special focus on women and youth leaders. In 1999 I was accepted on to a programme at Iowa State University organised by IWISE (International Women in Science and Engineering). This programme was an eye-opener for me to the challenges that women were facing in science and engineering. It was run by two dynamic women who really impacted our lives. They supported us...we organised a conference in 1999 'African Women in Science and Engineering – Why are there so few?' We brought in women from 21 African countries, and AWSE (African Women in Science and Engineering) was launched. It aimed to support women but also make governments and policy makers aware.

### **Can you describe a particular challenge or set-back that you have faced in your career, and how did you overcome it?**

The IWISE programme showed me that women needed to take up leadership positions. When I was appointed Chair of the Chemistry Department I wasn't sure if I wanted to take it up because I didn't have prior leadership or management experience. However, having just completed the programme at Iowa State University where they had encouraged us and said that women should take up leadership positions, I accepted.

### **Do you have an inspirational advice for people who may face similar challenges?**

Speak up – being quiet is the least efficient way to succeed. In order to succeed you need to reach out for support, work with others, have several mentors and be a mentor yourself. Speak to others who have succeeded before.

### **Why are the networking opportunities offered by INWES so valuable?**

Networking with INWES has been so valuable...women interacting together, sharing their experiences, showing how to overcome challenges, learning from around the world has been valuable for many of us.

This case study was developed in the frame of the Enhancing Research Culture [project](#)  
"Towards a Warwick STEM R&D People and Culture Hub: Empowering people's voices"

