

Reflections from Josué Awonon

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With the support of the CIERP Travel Fund for Experiential Learning, I presented my co-authored paper at the 2023 CSAE conference on March 18-21, 2023, in Oxford, UK. This conference is unique as it prioritizes research works on Africa.

The CIERP Travel Fund for Experiential Learning helped me hit an important milestone during my Ph.D. since that was my first conference presentation.

My session was in the *Health & Education 6* agenda and I was the first to present. I was allocated 20 minutes for my presentation followed by a 5-minute feedback from a discussant and a Q&A session with the audience. This was a successful challenge for me since I had to synthesize the context of the study, the data used, and the multiple results from this joint work in a clear manner to fit in the allocated time and answer all questions that followed. The main suggestions that I have received were to provide additional evidence for the mechanisms that validate and explain the results.

In addition to my presentation, I was tasked with discussing another paper and this turned out to be an interesting task. I had to read a paper written by established researchers and provide feedback to them within 5 minutes following their presentation.

Moreover, the CSAE conference was an occasion to interact with researchers from all over the world. Before the conference, I had limited exposure to Africa-based economists. These few days in Oxford allowed me to interact with them and learn from their work and experience in their respective countries. I also had the opportunity to interact with some of the researchers from the World Bank and the IMF who are conducting research works on Africa. On the second day of the conference, I was invited to a separate session with them to brainstorm research ideas on trade in Africa. These discussions set the grounds for further research collaboration and guidance to reach my professional goals.

Overall, the CSAE conference was a great experience for me. I am very grateful to CIERP for their support that allowed me to present the paper at the CSAE conference.

