



Mentoring can open doors to new opportunities...

BAMIDELE FARINRE

An award-winning biomedical scientist, **Bamidele Farinre** has shown resilience and determination in her own career and is passionate about inspiring young people to follow in her footsteps. Through her mentoring and mental health advocacy, she is committed to fostering greater diversity and driving positive change within STEM.

Where does your passion for STEM come from?

My passion for STEM is deeply rooted in my childhood experiences, personal challenges and the desire to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. I vividly remember my grandmother taking me to graduation ceremonies and instilling in me the importance of education and the aspiration to achieve greatness. Growing up in a close-knit community, where the first point of contact with healthcare was the community pharmacist, my passion for STEM began to take root. The community pharmacist served several neighbourhoods, becoming a vital lifeline for many. Watching how the pharmacist provided care, guidance and solutions to various health issues made a significant impression on me.

What motivated you to specialise in biomedical science?

Following my less-than-stellar performance in A-levels, I was told I wasn't 'cut out' for STEM. Initially, I was dispirited, but I resolved to demonstrate my capabilities and, through the university clearing process, went on to pursue a higher national diploma (HND) in applied biology. After my HND, I completed a bachelor's in biomedical science.



The transition from applied biology to biomedical science gave me the chance to explore the mechanisms governing human health at a deeper level. Specialising in biomedical science has empowered me to contribute meaningfully to patient welfare, healthcare enhancement and scientific progress.

Why are you so passionate about mentoring?

When I was younger, the absence of a role model or mentor to provide guidance

during setbacks made me feel isolated and overwhelmed. I made a conscious decision to turn adversity into motivation, to overcome challenges and achieve my goals. By mentoring young people, I can provide the support and guidance that I lacked, helping them navigate their paths with confidence. Mentoring is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about inspiring the next generation to believe in themselves and their potential, regardless of the obstacles they may face. It helps people develop resilience and problem-solving skills. Mentoring can open doors to new opportunities by connecting mentees with industry professionals and resources that they might not have access to on their own. Additionally, mentor-mentee relationships foster personal growth by allowing mentees to learn from their mentors' experiences and mistakes.

Why is advocating for mental health also important for you?

Mental health advocacy is a priority for me as it plays a vital role in overall wellness, and I believe in destigmatising mental health issues, raising awareness and ensuring everyone has access to the support they need for their mental well-being. As someone who has faced challenges and setbacks, I understand the importance of having support systems in

place. Promoting mental health awareness helps create a more inclusive and supportive environment where individuals feel valued and empowered to seek help when they need it. By prioritising mental health, we can foster resilience, productivity and a healthier community, both personally and professionally.

What does it mean to excel in biomedical science?

To excel in this field means consistently pushing the boundaries of knowledge and innovation to improve patient care and outcomes. It involves a deep commitment to scientific rigour, continuous learning and the application of cutting-edge techniques to solve complex health issues. Excelling in biomedical science also means mentoring and inspiring the next generation of scientists, advocating for diversity and inclusion, and actively contributing to the scientific community through research, publications and collaborations. For me, it also includes speaking engagements and educating others to broaden the impact of scientific advancements.

What does winning awards mean to you?

Winning the UK Advancing Healthcare Awards 'Biomedical Scientist of the Year' (2022) was a monumental achievement for me, especially as a black female leader

in STEM. This recognition was more than just an acknowledgment of my hard work and dedication; it was a powerful affirmation that diversity and excellence can coexist and thrive in the scientific community. As a black female in a field where we are often under-represented, this award represents breaking through

barriers and challenging stereotypes. It underscores the importance of visibility and representation, showing young black girls and women that they too can excel and lead in STEM. It validates the struggles and triumphs of navigating a career path that hasn't always been welcoming or inclusive. ➔



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What motivates your ambassadorial work?

Through my role as a mentor with the Institute of Biomedical Science and other STEM platforms, I strive to provide guidance, support and encouragement to aspiring biomedical scientists and STEM professionals. I share insights into the opportunities and challenges within the field, offering practical advice on navigating educational and professional pathways. My message to students is one of empowerment and possibility, highlighting the vast potential for impact and contribution in the exciting world of biomedical science.

Overall, my involvement with these initiatives is driven by a commitment to fostering a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM. By serving as a role model and mentor, I hope to inspire and empower the next generation to pursue their passions, break barriers and make meaningful contributions to the STEM community and beyond.

How do you look after your own well-being?

My energy and motivation come from my passion for making a positive impact. Knowing that my efforts contribute to meaningful change and empower others fuels my drive to continuously strive

for excellence. To ensure I maintain my well-being amidst the demands of work, I prioritise self-care and mindfulness practices. I make time for activities that rejuvenate me, such as exercise, spending time with loved ones, and pursuing hobbies and interests outside of work. Setting boundaries and practising time management helps me maintain a healthy work-life balance.

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

The highlights of my career so far have been numerous and deeply rewarding. They include delivering keynote speeches, participating in panel discussions, and presenting at conferences nationally and

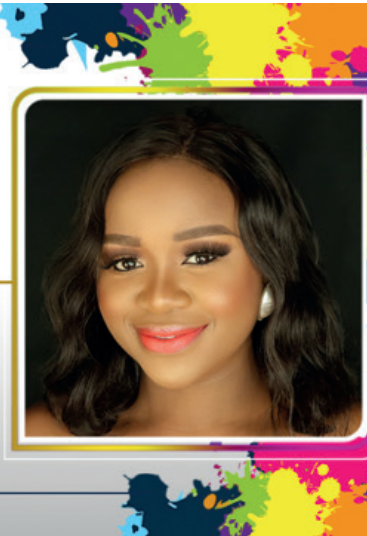


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for best practices in healthcare and STEM education. My goal is to contribute to global solutions that improve lives and foster inclusive growth. Ultimately, my aim is to build a legacy of change that extends beyond my career. I want to be remembered as someone who not only excelled in their field but also made significant contributions to creating a more inclusive, diverse and equitable world.

Connect with Bamidele

Bamidele Farinre
Chartered Biomedical Scientist,
Consultant (freelance BMS), UK

Professional Affiliations: Institute
of Biomedical Science (IBMS),
Health & Care Professions
Council (HCPC), Academy for
Healthcare Science (AHCS)

[in linkedin.com/company
instituteof-biomedical-science](https://www.linkedin.com/company/instituteof-biomedical-science)

[in linkedin.com/in/bamidele
farinre-352b1191/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bamidele-farinre-352b1191/)

[X @bamiprecious](https://twitter.com/bamiprecious)

internationally, where I have shared insights and expertise on various topics related to STEM, diversity and leadership. I have also contributed articles to industry publications and engaged in media appearances to raise awareness about important issues in biomedical science and to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These acknowledgments and achievements have motivated me to continue advocating for gender and racial diversity, driving positive change and inspiring others to do the same.

What are your aims for the future?

I aim to establish more comprehensive mentorship programmes, particularly for under-represented groups in STEM. This includes expanding my reach to mentor students, early-career professionals and aspiring leaders, providing them with the guidance and support I wished I had during my own journey. I also aspire to take on more leadership roles where I can influence policy, drive change and advocate

Bamidele's top tips for students

- 1. Stay resilient and persevere.**
Understand that setbacks and challenges are a part of the journey and that persistence is key.
- 2. Seek mentors** who can provide guidance and insight and help you navigate your career path.
- 3. Identify role models** who inspire you, and learn from their journeys.
- 4. Build a strong educational foundation;** take your studies seriously and strive for excellence.
- 5. Gain practical experience through** internships, research projects and voluntary work.
- 6. Build and collaborate with a network** of peers who share your interests and goals.

Bamidele's advice for teachers

- 1. Foster inclusivity** by ensuring that your classroom is a welcoming and inclusive space for all students, regardless of their background, gender or ability. Emphasise the value of diverse perspectives in STEM.
- 2. Encourage students** to ask questions, explore new ideas and engage in hands-on, inquiry-based learning.
- 3. Connect STEM concepts** to real-world applications to make learning relevant and exciting.
- 4. Use technology** and digital tools to enhance learning and make STEM subjects more interactive and engaging.
- 5. Highlight diverse role models** in STEM fields, including women and individuals from under-represented groups.
- 6. Facilitate mentorship** by connecting students with mentors who can provide guidance, support and inspiration.
- 7. Provide career insights** by inviting guest speakers from various STEM professions to talk about their careers and experiences.