Charity Nyelele wins fellowship to study the human-nature interface

The Earth System Science postdoc works to ensure her science informs policy makers.

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Nyelele stands atop Hoover Dam in Nevada, which creates the reservoir Lake Mead by blocking the flow of the Colorado River.

Picture Credit:
Mwembezi A. Nyelele

Charity Nyelele cares about the ecosystem science she does in the UCI Department of Earth System Science — but that's not where her work stops. The postdoctoral researcher, who works in the lab of newly-minted Sloan Research Fellow Professor Egoh Benis, also cares about how her science goes on to work towards the benefit of society. That's why she applied for, and recently won, a fellowship from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) — an intergovernmental organization that aims to bridge the divide between scientific findings and the world of policy. IPBES performs regular assessments on the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services and publishes its findings as reports for decision makers. Originally from Zimbabwe, Nyelele did her Ph.D. research as a Fullbright Fellow at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry working to understand how urban forests — and their management — provide important ecosystem services and benefits linked to human health and well-being in places like New York City. "I have always been fascinated by the work of IPBES and its commitment to inform and support the development of policies and sustainable actions related to biodiversity conservation, long-term human well-being and development," said Nyelele, who in the Egoh lab works towards quantifying the economic value of different ecosystem services provided by natural places in California. "As a fellow of the new thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health, I get to work on a chapter for the nexus assessment report and contribute to key contemporary science and policy debates for more sustainable solutions for nature and human well-being."

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