

ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

MARY LYON AWARD 2022

PRESENTED TO



Abena Opekua Foli '10

ABENA OPOKUA FOLI, CLASS OF 2010, the Alumnae Association is pleased to honor you with the Mary Lyon Award. This award is presented to an alum who graduated no more than fifteen years ago and who has demonstrated sustained achievements in their life and career consistent with the humane values that Mary Lyon exemplified and inspired in others.

Abena, your dedication to your West African roots and your innovation in helping to expand America's culinary knowledge of West African spices has made you a trailblazer in the food industry.

Your passion for food began at home with your family in Ghana, where you learned how to cook and blend savory spices. After graduating from Mount Holyoke with a degree in biochemistry, your love for food and for science led you to pursue a master's degree in food science at the University of Minnesota. You began your career as a regulatory specialist at Borden Dairy Co., Saputo, and Merck, now working at Orbillion Bio, where you serve as head of regulatory affairs. In 2016 you launched the Texas-based company POKS Spices, leveraging your food science expertise, West African heritage and familial influence to introduce West African spice profiles to the United States. Since its launch, POKS Spices has not only grown year after year but has earned national recognition as an innovative business. The company has received the Merchant Maverick Opportunity Grant for Black Female Entrepreneurs, the 2017 FedEx Small Business Grant and multiple culinary awards. In 2019 you were recognized by the Institute of Food Technologists Emerging Leaders Network as a future leader in food science. In addition, you started a consulting firm to help small businesses that sell retail food products understand and comply with U.S. food labeling regulations so they can expand their markets.

In recognition of your exceptional early career achievements and in anticipation of your future contributions in food science and culinary entrepreneurship, the Alumnae Association is honored to present you with the Mary Lyon Award.

Ellen Hyde Pace

ELLEN HYDE PACE '81
PRESIDENT
ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

Nancy B. Perez

NANCY BELLOWS PEREZ '76
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE