

NUST reimagines university engagement

The NUST community has been urged to continue exercising economising measures in the effort to weather the gloomy economic outlook that the nation is currently facing. This was one of the main focuses at the University's 2017 Academic Opening that was held recently.

Traditionally on this occasion, the NUST Vice-Chancellor, Dr Tjama Tjivikua, welcomes the staff and outlines the Institution's roadmap for the year. Tjivikua said that he is optimistic about the future, though in the same breath, expressed concerns about the economic situation in the country. "One cannot expect the University to excel or be ranked amongst the best if we do not have sufficient resources. We have had to make some severe budgetary adjustments, but to ensure our survival during these challenging times, we just have to make difficult decisions".

Befittingly, the NUST theme for the Academic Year is: 'Reimagining University Engagement'. This requires staff to reassess the University's functions and realign themselves efficiently and effectively to students' and business needs henceforth. These include reimagining

education models, stakeholder relationships and income generation, amongst others.

Andreas Habermacher, Founder of Leading Brains, an international coaching company that offers workshops on neuroleadership, gave a motivational talk at the event. Habermacher unpacked the functions of the brain, specifically to coach the audience on how to control their thinking processes and learn to rewire their minds in a positive manner. "A deeper dive into the brain, its regions and chemical transmitters deepens the knowledge, understanding of human drives, personality and behaviour. This sheds light onto why humans do what they do," he remarked.

The official opening of the Institution is scheduled to take place next week Wednesday, 1 February, at the main campus.



Andreas Habermacher, Founder: Leading Brains (left) pictured with Dr Tjama Tjivikua, Vice-Chancellor.



From left: Martha Namutuwa, Industry Liaison Officer Cooperative Education Unit; Johnson Billawer, Lecturer: FCI; Dr Nobert Jere, Head of Informatics Department: FCI; Dr Anicia Peters, Dean: FCI; Winnith Schrywer, Managing Director: Veya ICT; Suama Hamunyela, Lecturer: FCI and Thomas Jonas, Business and Development Manager: Veya ICT.

Veya ICT comes on board

Through the Faculty of Computing and Informatics (FCI), NUST has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Veya Information Communication Technology (ICT), a newly established local company previously operating as Gijima.

The MoU will see students from the University benefitting from placements within the technology company as part of their Work Integrated Learning (WIL) course. WIL enables students to apply theoretical knowledge gained from their studies in a practical setting, in addition to increasing the students' range of employability skills.

Furthermore, as one of the many initiatives between the FCI and Veya ICT, the company availed a monetary sponsorship to promote the growth of SAP skills in Namibia and other critical qualifications. SAP is the world's leading provider of business software, offering applications and services that qualify companies of all sizes and in various industries to become well-run businesses. Through this partnership, lecturers in the Informatics Department will undergo training with SAP customising and programming skills.

The sponsorship comes amid a renewed sense of urgency amongst industry and the Faculty to address the lack of high-level SAP skills in the country.

The Head of the Informatics Department, Dr Nobert Jere said, "The support from a private sector

organisation like Veya ICT will go a long way in ensuring that the curriculum of the Department is in line with the industry needs."

Winnith Schrywer, the Managing Director of the company, said that the motive behind their involvement is to ensure that sufficient skills are developed and retained in the country, but also of a high quality, such that they are sought after beyond the country's borders. "We wish to contribute and support the aims of higher education in Namibia as part of our social responsibility to ensure a better workforce for the benefit of our society," Schrywer said.

Dr Anicia Peters, the Dean of FCI, expressed her gratitude for the formalisation of this relationship which she said has been in existence for some time. Peters gave assurance that the top performers will be afforded this opportunity.

The parties further agreed to explore the possibilities of availing the company's data to students for action-learning projects and/or research purposes.

FABlab hosts partners in innovation

Staff from Durban University of Technology (DUT), in the Faculty of Arts and Design (FAD) paid a familiarisation visit to the NUST Fabrication Laboratory (FABlab).

The visit opened doors for the possibility of a SADC student exchange programme where Namibian and South African students will collaborate on lean innovative product development projects in cross-cutting disciplines such as Fashion Technology and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The DUT delegation had expressed interest in visiting Namibia after representatives from FABlab gave presentations at the South African Technology Network (SATN) Conference, which took place in South Africa last year. "They were really inspired with the work we do and wanted to see it for themselves," said Kirstin Wiedow, the Director of FABlab. The SATN Conference has been held for the past nine years and it brings together innovators who are set on bridging the technological divide at a grassroots level across the globe.

Wiedow further applauded the like-mindedness of the two institutions. "The increased probability for innovation lies

in the merging of very different skillsets and breaking down barriers between polar opposite industries and fields of study. There is an opportunity to truly boost innovativeness within these student groups and the aim herein is really to build a new arena for student entrepreneurial ventures to flourish," Wiedow said.

The final outcome of the proposed exchange will culminate into cutting-edge tangible student products which will be showcased at a festival known as the DUT-FAD Digifest scheduled to take place this year, as well as the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) next year. Both events are aimed at promoting and showcasing students' artistic work and talent. It will serve as a platform for promotion of artistic work to the general public, especially scholars who are interested in the arts and thus develop a better understanding of the industry.



From left: Kirstin Wiedow, Director: FABlab; Khaya Mchunu, Lecturer, Department of Fashion and Textiles: DUT; Dr Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi, Research Coordinator, Faculty of Arts and Design: DUT and Sunthra Moodley, Head of Department of Fashion and Textiles: DUT.