

'Imagine a new Africa' at the UCT Upstarts idea auction

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UCT Upstarts is igniting a 'Student Start-up Nation' by helping student-led startups launch their socially impactful ideas.

The Idea Auction is the grand finale to the UCT Upstarts programme, and the culmination of a 20 week 'pop-up' social innovation curriculum. It took place on Wednesday, 30 September 2015, at the Labia Theatre and was hosted by Cape Talk's Breakfast Show host, Kieno Kammies.

UCT Upstarts is the Vice-Chancellor's Social Innovation Challenge. It is a joint-initiative between the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, a specialised centre at the UCT Graduate School of Business, Super Stage and the Office of the Vice Chancellor.

"When this idea was brought to me - I thought this is exactly the right thing for UCT," says UCT Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price. "We are a research university, but research is also about figuring out how to do things differently and better - and that's the innovation - taking ideas and seeing how they can change the world."

Upstarts launched in February this year as the new 'epicentre of innovation' with customised pop-up hubs on Upper Campus to help shift mindsets and create a culture of social innovation that solves real-world problems from campus. A bespoke coaching network of inspirational social entrepreneurs, industry leaders, business and personal development gurus, and innovation activists shared personal stories, presented counter culture business methodologies, gave practical and experimental workshops and offered private coaching sessions to talented young upstarts.

Dr François Bonnici, Director of the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship believes that "Upstarts speaks directly to the Centre's desire to inspire and challenge individuals, organisations and systems to question what is, reimagine what can be, and to get behind and deliver those solutions that have the potential to transform the world we live in."

The Idea Auction kicked-off with a mini-expo for the audience to interact with the Upstarts' teams, followed by the main event where the teams formally pitched their "Imagine A New Africa" ideas. Solutions ranged from rethinking food wastage to revolutionising South Africa's traditional Stokvel system, a low-cost community-based security system for townships, and entrepreneurial courses for schoolkids, money-saving apps, a mobile and outdoor art gallery, educational DIY furniture, better living conditions for shack-dwellers and more (Go to: <http://uctupstarts.uct.ac.za/upstarts-expo.php> and Thundafunda.com/UCTUPstarts). After each team pitch, the audience was prompted to get involved to help make these start-up ideas happen via a live crowd-funding and bidding experience! The energy was electric as the crowd bid to support the ideas. Over R110,000 was raised on the floor, with approximately R250,000 - R500,000 value in-kind (coaching sessions, resources, office space, transport, equipment, expertise, network contacts, etc.) The evening reached a climax when affiliated partners and sponsors like The Bertha Foundation, Mr Price, the SAB Foundation, RedBull Amaphiko, Cape Talk to name a few announced a variety of Upstarts' Awards. These included a trip to Israel (the 'Start-up Nation'), to meet some of the most innovative companies in the world, as well as a Cape Talk Campaign to the value of R125 000, exposure in Entrepreneur Magazine and Fast Company (local and International), R35,000 Start-up capital from Lifeco UnLtd, a customised website from VIGO, and more, for the most innovative, socially impactful and market-ready ideas. One lucky student, Rama Afullo, was named Upstarts' Ambassador 2015, and will get the opportunity to drive the latest VW UP for six months, thanks to Barons VW,

Gina Levy who imagined Upstarts and ran the programme says, "Our currency is opportunity: We insist youth isn't wasted on the young, because we want to create a new generation of upstarts - university students who learn to merge purpose, profit and passion to create a ripple effect of change in Africa and beyond. Tonight has exceeded all my expectations - as of tomorrow all these students are literally in business!"

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