

Professor Geoff Bick takes the reins as acting director of the GSB

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Newly appointed acting director of the UCT Graduate School of Business, Professor Geoff Bick says that he will maintain the upward momentum of the school and place accountability and measurability front and centre during his tenure.

The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) has announced the appointment of respected scholar and multi award-winning teacher Professor Geoff Bick as interim director of the school, following the departure of Professor Walter Baets on 10 June 2016.

Bick is no stranger to leadership. He spent many years in the private sector in managerial positions in organisations prior to pursuing an academic career. Before joining the ranks at the GSB in 2012, he held the Coca-Cola Chair of Marketing at Wits Business School, where he was also Director of Academic Programmes for some years. Having joined the GSB as Professor of Marketing, he stepped up in 2014 to take on the role of Academic Director.

Bick is clear on his role: he means to steer the ship, not reinvent the wheel. His intention, during his interim directorship, is to maintain stability at what is a highly respected African institution and inspire continued confidence among a blossoming generation of business leaders.

“Having worked closely with Professor Walter Baets for a number of years, my plan is to maintain the upward momentum of the GSB,” he says. “I intend to continue to implement a number of the programme and development initiatives that we have started, so that there is a smooth transition to his successor.”

In recent years, the upward trajectory of the GSB has been steady and certain. Several game-changing projects implemented in the past five years have placed the GSB firmly on the map as one of just three “triple crowned” business schools in Africa. These include the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which was established in 2011, and the MTN Solution Space, born in 2015, which each support the GSB’s stand on innovation and inclusive business. The Allan Gray Centre for Values-based Leadership established in 2011, too, demonstrates the GSB’s commitment to ethical business and leadership. All of the above, says Bick, fall in line with an ethos he will continue to support.

That said, the core functions of the school will remain central. For Bick, scholarship is and always has been at the heart of the matter – perhaps evident through his championing of the newly established case study centre at the school jointly funded by the Harvard Business School (HBS) Alumni Club of South Africa. The centre will be dedicated to assisting academics to write case studies and develop relevant teaching materials that are focused on African realities.

As a renowned marketing specialist, Bick has achieved recognition as both a researcher and teacher, receiving a number of teaching awards throughout his career. NRF-rated as an ‘Established Researcher’, he has a list of some 30 publications and 20 conference papers to his name, as well as an award at the 2013 Africa Leadership Awards conference. His in-the-field work experience began in engineering, working in the mining industry, after which he became a marketing consultant and practitioner for a number of organisations, including Xerox – all experience that contributed to his teaching capabilities.

As a specialist in strategic marketing at executive level, Bick is well placed to continue to grow the GSB’s profile steadily and reputably. He previously told IT News Africa that accountability was a major and misunderstood factor in marketing – and his primary area of research focus is measuring the effectiveness of such campaigns. Bick’s work has always been results-driven, and his approach to academia is no different. Accountability and measurability are key challenges in any

business – including the business of a university, he says.

As Professor Bick settles into the driver's seat, a recruitment process to find the school's next director is getting under way. The process will be run from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and is expected to take several months to conclude.

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