

UCT makes history - and a difference - in Philippi

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The 'Sivul'indlu' and official launch of UCT GSB Solution Space - Philippi, a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in Philippi Village, celebrates a new approach that seeks to go beyond the traditional reach of a university.

On 24 July 2017, the University of Cape Town (UCT), for the first time in its 179-year history, established an official and permanent educational space in a Cape Town community with the opening of the GSB Solution Space in Philippi Village.



Backed by the university's Graduate School of Business (GSB) and the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the GSB Solution Space at Philippi Village has, over the past year, started to establish a presence in the community with the long-term purpose of getting community members of Philippi and surrounding Nyanga, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha, as well as private stakeholders, donors, corporate parties and business school students, involved in a process that goes beyond the traditional space of a university.

"Our presence in the Philippi Village development is one way in which the GSB is deepening its roots and relevance as an African business school," says GSB Director Associate Professor Mills Soko. "The GSB is widely regarded as the leading business school in Africa, but its location at the V&A Waterfront is far from representative of the reality that the vast majority of South Africans face every day."

The GSB Solution Space in Philippi Village has a campus set-up with workspaces, lecture space, lounge areas and meeting rooms creating a vibrant hub where creative thinking around entrepreneurship and technology is encouraged. To date, over 100 workshops and educational programmes have been held there, which have been attended by about 3,000 people. All students who study an academic programme at the GSB are also encouraged to take at least one course at the Philippi Village satellite site and the hub also works closely with the Raymond Ackerman Academy for Entrepreneurial Development, another entrepreneurship development unit at the GSB that works with youth who have not had the opportunity to pursue tertiary education.

Associate Professor Soko says the GSB teaches students the importance of learning how to become comfortable with uncertainty and paradox in a complex and fast-changing world – and to trust that solutions will emerge. "Here at Philippi Village, we get to practise what we preach. The reality is that we live in a thoroughly divided country and city from a geographic perspective, and that creates a divide in understanding, in connections, and in networks and our presence in Philippi is seeking to bridge that. Being here helps our students to develop empathy and resilience and to open their eyes to wider perspectives – all of which are vital attributes for the modern leader, especially one operating in an emerging market.

"In addition, by working directly with entrepreneurs in the community we are able to be more inclusive and more actively involved in developing business innovations that change lives for the better."

Sarah-Anne Arnold, Solution Space Manager, explains that the GSB Solution Space acts as a business incubator and hosts local social enterprise businesses such as the Blue Door Early Childhood Development venture that is about to open its first preschool for about 40 children in the Philippi area.

"It is such an energetic workspace," says Blue Door co-founder Megan Blair. "There are a few ventures based here and we all work together. There is such cross-pollination of ideas and then there is the sense of camaraderie and pride in what

we are doing in the community; it feels awesome.”

Other ventures based in the GSB Solution Space Philippi Village include Lakheni, a bulk-buying initiative for low-income households, and Discover Ikasi, which promotes township tourism.

“The GSB Solution Space has been operational for one year and the launch is aimed also at celebrating the businesses and initiatives that have been started here, promoting them and creating awareness about the possibilities for collaboration, innovation and entrepreneurship that exist in the space,” says Arnold.

She adds that it is easy to be impatient in wanting to see change happening right way. “But we have a long-term vision for the Solution Space - Philippi and the impact we would like the hub to have, and for this reason it was important to ensure a good foundation was in place first. Now we are really in a position to be a catalyst in enabling an ecosystem for inclusive development across sectors.”

Philippi Village, as a development, was initiated more than five years ago with the vision of creating economic opportunity through the active inclusion of those who are excluded from the mainstream of development, and the Bertha Centre at the GSB has been involved in these conversations from the outset. The 6,000m² mixed-use space now boasts a retail section as well as a modern public library. Small businesses like Kings Fish & Chips, Betty’s Hair Salon, Simphiwe Shoes, and AV Schoolwear have shops here. Organisations with offices at Philippi Village include the Business Activator, Harambee, Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation and Leap Schools.

The UCT GSB is one of the foundation tenants of the Philippi Village development and its facilities have been made possible with the support and involvement of key sponsors including the MTN Group, the UCT Vice-Chancellor’s Strategic Fund and the Flanders Government Funding for building a social economy as well as the Bertha Foundation.

About the GSB

The GSB has over the past 50 years charted its own distinctly African path. Year after year, our school is recognised by its global peers at the Eduniversal World Convention and in the QS Global 200 survey as the top business school in Africa. The GSB is one of only three business schools in Africa to have the prestigious triple-crown accreditation (AACSB, AMBA & EQUIS). It is also a member of and accredited by AABS, a unique African accreditation, which promotes excellence in management education in Africa through collaboration, capacity building and quality improvement. The full-time MBA was ranked in the Financial Times Global Top 100 MBAs for 12 consecutive years and was the only African business school to feature in this ranking. Teaching, learning and research at the school is directed towards building a more economically prosperous, more equitable, and more integrated continent.

About the Bertha Centre

The Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship is a specialised Centre at the University of Cape Town’s Graduate School of Business (GSB). Established in 2011 in partnership with the Bertha Foundation, a family foundation that works with inspiring leaders who are catalysts for social and economic change and human rights, it has become a leading academic centre in Africa. Its mission is to pursue social impact towards social justice in Africa, through teaching, knowledge-building, convening and catalytic projects with a systems lens on social innovation. In 2017, the Bertha Centre was benchmarked by the Bridgespan Group as one of five university-based centres globally in terms of social impact.

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