



Announces the Fourth International Conference on Responsible Leadership

Leadership Challenges That Matter

March 2017, The Gordon Institute of Business Science, South Africa

Presented in partnership with

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria



The Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership and the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) at the University of Pretoria in South Africa will host the Fourth International Conference on Responsible Leadership on March 15-17, 2017 at the GIBS campus in Johannesburg. Two international partners will co-host the conference – the Leadership Collaboratory at the Copenhagen Business School and the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative.

We invite proposals for papers, panels, and workshops on a wide range of topics related to responsible leadership, especially those addressing the conference theme, “Leadership Challenges That Matter”. By means of this theme, we call on scholars of leadership, business, organisation, environmental studies, and the humanities to grapple head-on with complex and pressing challenges confronting business and society in a problem-driven, solution-oriented, and collaborative manner.

Far too often, leadership research starts from a particular disciplinary approach or definition of leadership and then proceeds to test existing concepts or theories against research data in a manner that rarely transgresses the boundaries erected by previous scholarship. While this model may help scholars in their quest for “validity”, it is ill-suited to keep up with the fast pace of contemporary change or to address complex global challenges and at times, wicked problems that cry out for new kinds of leadership, collaboration, and problem-solving. We therefore encourage conference proposals that incorporate elements of action research, grounded theory, ethnographic enquiry and dialogue to address these complex challenges in ways that expand the the boundaries of traditional leadership theory and research.

We call on contributors to address “challenges that matter” in order to stress that leadership carries with it the responsibility to engage with issues of moral, ethical, economic, environmental, and social significance that affect diverse groups of stakeholders and interests in global, regional, and local contexts. By hosting a conference on this theme at GIBS, one of Africa’s premier business schools, we intend to emphasise that the business community shares these ethical and social responsibilities, and that business practitioners and scholars bring a wealth of practical skills and valuable insights to the task of addressing major leadership challenges.

To better explain our emphasis on “challenges that matter,” we can point to three examples of the kinds of issues conference participants may choose to address:

- **Refugee and migration crisis**

The current global refugee and migration crisis provides one glaring example of the kinds of major societal challenges to which leadership scholars and practitioners should be turning their attention. Violent conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere have forcibly displaced more than 50 million people worldwide, while a rising tide of global economic and climate-related migration has added to these numbers and complicated policy responses to the problem. The increase in refugees and migrants fleeing to Europe has placed severe strains on national governments and humanitarian organisations, resulting in politically-charged tensions and conflicts, and leading some to voice concern for the future of European collaboration altogether. The United Nations has called on companies and their stakeholders worldwide “to take action to diminish the suffering of people forced to flee conflict and to support solutions for the resulting widespread societal disruption,” on the grounds that “the urgency of the global refugee crisis is a challenge that requires support from all actors in society – including business.” We encourage conference participants to take up this call by means of proposals that address the leadership dynamics of the refugee and migration crisis, the leadership challenges faced by organisations engaging with these issues, and the political and social leadership needed to find lasting solutions to such problems. We encourage conference proposals that focus in these directions.

- **Crisis in SA higher education**

The refugee and migration crisis brings into sharp focus the complex politics of diversity and inclusion among multiple groups of stakeholders with conflicting interests, different cultural loyalties, and disparate levels of wealth and privilege. South Africa is no stranger to such complexities, especially as ongoing post-Apartheid struggles bear testament to this.

One such complex challenge playing itself out is the current crisis in SA Higher Education. The challenges relate to, amongst others: fee structures; affordability challenges by the large majority of students, disabling them from enrolling at universities; as well as language barriers. These challenges matter to a great deal in so far as ensuring a stable Higher Education sector in SA is concerned. It speaks to a systemic (wicked) problem that demands leadership that can find new solutions to these intractable problems, and generate new perspectives on leadership theory and practice in the process. We also encourage conference proposals that focus in these directions.

- **Crisis for humanity and the planet.**

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essentially a list of 17 major leadership challenges that matter. In the words of the UN, the SDGs seek to “stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet” on a range of issues related to people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. The breathtaking ambition and sweep of the SDGs are directly related to the number, the magnitude and the complexity of the challenges they seek to confront. We encourage proposals for individual presentations and for workshops or other innovative conference formats that address the leadership dynamics of the UN’s Agenda for Sustainable Development. These could address the SDGs process as a whole or take up individual challenges within the 17 Goals or the 169 related targets.

We invite proposals that address the above and other leadership challenges that matter. These proposals should explore the relevance and meaning of responsible leadership in the context of these kinds of challenges, in ways that add to our understanding of responsible leadership. Since we are calling for new approaches to responsible leadership, we also invite creative proposals for different types of conference formats that will foreground dialogue, interaction, and constructive engagement with leadership challenges.

Contact Information

Please click on the link below for up-to-date information about the academic conference:

<http://www.up.ac.za/crl>

Contact us on the email address below for more information about the academic conference:

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