ACEIE and JCP (VIP) community-based project

The African Centre of Excellence for Information Ethics (ACEIE), hosted by the Department of Information Science, is working with the JCP (VIP) community-based projects with various communities that form part of the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) to present Digital Wellness Toolkit workshops. This initiative is led by Ms Naailah Parbhoo-Ebrahim, the convenor of the ACEIE Steering Committee, and Ms Laetitia Cassells, who is the co-ordinator for JCP projects for the Department of Information Science.

Digital wellness refers to the notion of "being well in a digital society". This is a very important consideration especially nowadays due to the prevalence of ICTs. Since ICTs permeate all sectors of society, a more user-friendly term was developed – Digital Wellness. Digital Wellness is characterised by the ability of the user to discern between the dangers and opportunities found in cyberspace, act responsibly, and align their online behaviour with their offline values. It is wrong to assume that being digitally well is only applicable to adults who have extensive access to mobile devices and computers. Rather, this is of even more importance to children and young adults who are growing up using these devices either at home or at school/universities or both. Seeing this need, nine booklets were developed by the ACEIE.

Students taking the JCP (VIP) project are trained by Mrs Parbhoo-Ebrahim on how to conduct effective digital wellness toolkit workshops. Once they are trained, the students will be conducting workshops with individuals from the Pre-University Academy (Mamelodi Campus) and homeless shelters that are identified by COSUP. Due to the sensitive nature of the COSUP programme the workshop will be done over a 3-day period. Each workshop session will last 2 hours to ensure that the participants feel comfortable with the student trainers. On the 4th June Ms Parbhoo-Ebrahim conducted a workshop at the Kalafong Regional Training centre with the peer mentors from the COSUP program so they may become the foot soldiers of the Digital Wellness Toolkit and train others within the community about Digital Wellness.

Community service in the Department of Information Science is completed through the JCP module hosted by the Faculty for Engineering, the Built Environment and IT (EBIT). The module aims to develop personal, social and cultural values; as well as multidisciplinary and life skills, such as communication, interpersonal and leadership skills. The JCP module can serve to further the educational objectives for the various degrees in the Department of Information Science, integrating learning and real-world engagement and facilitating problem-based learning. Specific outcomes of the JCP module align with the Department of Information Science and University of Pretoria to:

- Assist students in developing a self-reflection practice to provide a foundation for continual self-awareness and self-directedness.
- Develop a deep and broad understanding of the social issues and work effectively in a multidisciplinary environment.
- Understand how to communicate and listen effectively within a team and with the community at large.
- Apply the practice of effective communication through writing and presentations.

The University of Pretoria recognises the role of the 'public good' played by tertiary institutions and promotes the concepts of civic and social responsibility through curriculum engagement and research. The outcomes of both the Department of Information Science and the JCP module are also supported by the University of Pretoria Strategic Plan 2025 to:

- Develop an inquiry-led curriculum in building the foundation for knowledge, high-level skills and the pipeline of postgraduate students and researchers.
- Embed a question-based approach in undergraduate teaching and using assessment as a tool for learning.
- Provide multiple learning opportunities in a resource-rich environment in support of teaching and learning, and considering the most effective "blended" learning model to adopt.

Students graduating from the Department of Information Science are expected to integrate the skills acquired through their degrees with the development of inter- and intra-personal skills such as those developed through the JCP module in order to be effective information intermediaries. The effective implementation of the Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) methodology in the JCP module with the outcomes of specific courses through project selection and management can help further the commitment of the Department and Faculty to the key targets of the University of Pretoria Strategic Plan 2025. Specifically, the strategic plan aims to increase the number of active partnerships with industry and government, seeking optimal impact partnerships with local communities, including municipalities and industry. The Department of Information Science can facilitate this with a specific focus on the information and development needs of South Africa as an emerging economy as highlighted by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Written by Ms Naailah Parbhoo-Ebrahim and Ms Laetitia Cassells