

NEWS RELEASE

UP hosts City of Tshwane's 2024 Higher Education Innovation Challenge launch



Mr Phindile Tshabangu, Centre Manager at TuksNovatio, at the launch of the 2024 Higher Education Innovation Challenge

The Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria (UP) recently hosted the launch of the City of Tshwane's 2024 Higher Education Innovation Challenge. The initiative encourages students at higher education institutions to partner with the city to come up with innovative solutions to help improve its governance. Deputy Mayor of Tshwane Dr Nasiphi Moya was in attendance along with various other stakeholders.

The challenge, which was introduced in November 2019, is about collaboration between industry and higher education institutions in a bid to share knowledge and transfer skills in the community. Through it, the city hopes to build a vibrant, competitive entrepreneurial community in Tshwane, and create a pipeline of student entrepreneurs and innovators who can conceive and implement innovative solutions that can solve service delivery challenges.

The city is seeking to employ new technology and systems to enhance efficiency in accessing various municipality services and facilities; protect public assets with improved safety and security monitoring systems; and provide digital platforms to introduce new revenue opportunities.

“The city appreciates that education and innovation are key drivers of economic growth, entrepreneurship and problem-solving, especially in this digital world,” Dr Moya said.

“We are launching a programme on innovation, and its main focus is on water, energy, waste and finance,” explained Professor Wynand Steyn, Dean of UP’s Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology, in his welcome remarks. “In the end, our real job is to teach the generation of tomorrow by making sure that young people who come into institutions where we teach, train and educate them understand their roles in the community and how to solve problems in these communities.”

“I asked myself, what are we doing to advance innovation?” said speaker Dr Hamilton Mphidi, Head of Innovation and Technology Transfer at the Tshwane University of Technology. “This was a catalyst, a turning and breaking point to collaborate. We’ve been talking about collaboration; that is where the journey began.

During the launch, Phindile Tshabangu of UP’s business incubator TuksNovation, held a round table to discuss the importance of inter-institutional collaborations in driving the new economic paradigm for South Africa’s development. Curriculum transformation was highlighted. Many attendees felt that higher education institutions encourage graduates to find employment in places where entrepreneurship is overlooked; this can drive innovation and economic growth. They all agreed that South Africa needs to promote entrepreneurship to achieve innovation goals.

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za