

Foreword

Vice-Chancellor Mamokgethi Phakeng

The understanding of the role of the university has shifted significantly, impacted by public demands for access, social justice and transformation in the higher education sphere. Learning is recognised as more than a commodity to be traded for job security. Learning incorporates the knowledge that is created, accessed and passed on; the processes that are modelled; the skills, attitudes and values that make up the person and the communities they are part of. Learning takes place within a context and is supported and enabled by that context.

There is a growing recognition of the role and responsibility of the university to equip young people with the skills and knowledge to enter the economic environment with the agency and initiative to impact society and the environment – a mandate that goes beyond stepping into ready-made jobs. Fostering entrepreneurship at university simultaneously

activates the students' agency as changemakers within the wider community of South Africa and provides a viable model for job creation that does not depend on state provision.

At a critical point in their lives – when they are looking for direction and opportunity – some of the brightest young intellects spend a number of years



at university. It is during this period that networks are established that extend beyond established geographical, cultural or socio-economic constituencies, to connect people and communities and to enable the exploration of identity. For many, it's the first time they grapple with what it means to be a South African or Afrikan within a wider global context. As public institutions, universities are accountable to the public to align their funds and human resources with ideals consistent with public values, aspirations and policy.

Entrepreneurship is evident across communities in South Africa, from seasonal fruit sellers at traffic lights, the fashion industry, the building industry and the motor trade: it is endemic to the way communities interact and build value outside, alongside or within established business. And it is part of how we are wired as humans: to look for personal and public benefit – to trade that benefit for added-value for ourselves, for our community, or for the benefit of wider communities. As South Africans we need to ask what it is about entrepreneurship within a university that is unique and why it is important?

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is a leading research-based institution of higher education in South Africa with an overt policy of transformation and social proximity to cutting-edge research. This permeates the student environment and influences the process of applying what students learn within a local context and their ability to develop entrepreneurial ideas that extend their research. Connecting these ideas with value propositions and markets requires innovative thinking, social awareness, connectedness and the ability to practically manage a myriad of factors relating to the production of a product, service delivery, marketing and execution, financial management, cash flow and legal requirements.

These requirements can be aligned with the focus of the UCT Vision 2030 document and its emphasis on a “new, integrated and collaborative” UCT driven by the purpose to: “Unleash human potential to create a fair and just society”. This vision highlights the need to affirm the university's Afrikan identity, reclaim

Afrikan agency, and commit to the future of the continent, as a global Afrikan university. All these values align with the concept of entrepreneurship in significant ways.

Transformation and social engagement are regarded as the cross-cutting elements of the UCT ethos. As such, UCT will continue to attract students with exceptional potential from South Africa, the African continent and beyond. In line with its purpose, UCT will offer a transformative and socially engaged undergraduate and postgraduate education, combining holistic, innovative, future-oriented education.

Strategically, at the University of Cape Town, entrepreneurship is a third focus, alongside teaching/learning and research, which provides the opportunity to develop transformative and socially responsive approaches, packaging cutting-edge learning into user-focused solutions. As part of the Vision 2030, UCT's goal is to produce global citizens who are actively responsible for the world they have inherited, and who will leave a better world for future generations. Entrepreneurship is a cross-cutting transdisciplinary area where skill, knowledge and attitudes can be applied and integrated to the benefit of communities and end-users. Entrepreneurship encapsulates “new ways of thinking, being and doing” and thus requires innovative curricula at the cutting edge of disciplines and professions.

In this book, entrepreneurship is celebrated as a constructive response to student learning within the university – a response requiring a particular mindset and agency to create something new rather than simply to acquire or circulate that which is already in existence. Entrepreneurship understands learning as a dynamic process, building value beyond what is known.

Entrepreneurship flourishes where communities are focused on building value within the context of our country and continent. More than just being dreamed, entrepreneurship has been practised, researched and critiqued by individuals and entities over decades within UCT.



Introduction

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This book was born out of the conviction that the future of this country and of Afrika rests upon an abundance of human initiative, energy, and drive to improve our communities and institutions. It recognises that this energy and initiative needs to be nurtured, supported and celebrated. Entrepreneurship within UCT encapsulates this commitment to being change-makers in a society.

Entrepreneurship has been actively nurtured and dreamed over many years in a wide variety of initiatives at UCT. This includes undergraduate course-based content across a range of faculties on upper and middle campus; post-graduate degrees focusing on nurturing and developing entrepreneurs; the world-class UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB); the exciting new Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking Afrika, currently rising above middle campus; and, finally, the Solution Space, UCT's satellite campus based in Philippi. This book provides a snapshot of the university's entrepreneurship ecosystem, making space for a variety of voices from different contexts across the institution and celebrating the successes and vision of individuals and initiatives over time.

Far from being an individualistic pursuit, entrepreneurship at UCT is integrally connected to communities: both the university communities supporting the development of the entrepreneurship initiative, and the internal and external communities that benefit from the products and services produced because of it. Entrepreneurship in this context places the development of students' ideas and attitudes centre-stage as part of the education project, providing support so that ideas can be packaged, trialled and iterated. This support will necessarily look different at the distinct points of the educational journey and requires multiple opportunities to engage with if it is to become an integrated pillar of learning within the university.

This project of collecting entrepreneurial stories was inspired by UCT's involvement with the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) initiative, a programme founded by the Department of Higher Education and Training to facilitate and embed entrepreneurship in the curricula and culture of universities, and by my involvement in the Vice-Chancellor's Entrepreneurship Committee at UCT. For the past three years, as an academic teaching professional communication, my role has been to support a cross-section of UCT students preparing their pitches for the National EDHE Competition. I have been inspired by the energy and agency demonstrated by the UCT studentpreneurs, by academics and role players within the university, as well as the collaboration and vision of the EDHE organising team.

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The EDHE initiative links South African universities that support entrepreneurship, aiming to build a nation-wide ecosystem fostering entrepreneurship at university level. Under the leadership roles of Nadia Waggie and Dr Norah Clark, who have been responsible for founding and implementing the EDHE programme, this vision of a nation-wide student-driven entrepreneurial initiative across universities was communicated clearly and without partisanship. The vibrancy of the support team activated around the EDHE initiative provided a level of accessible and

relevant expertise to students from institutions across South Africa, modelling what can be done on a national scale. The collaborative approach of this team overrode established institutional silos and created a new identity of entrepreneurship as a national asset, unifying and extending the mandate of the university in several significant ways.

With UCT having dominated the section prize winner line-up in both the first and third year of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education Competition, winning the award for Entrepreneurial University of the Year on both occasions, it seemed an opportune time to bring together the stories and contributions of the wide spectrum of people involved in entrepreneurship at UCT and of the initiatives that support them.

This book has been a delight to bring into being – sharing the insights and experiences of academics practising and extending their scholarship, nurturing students wrestling with innovative business ideas, sharing the stories of studentpreneurs, and seeing how all these role-players influence and give back to society. Entrepreneurship, when aligned with visionary policy and explicit social goals, channels this energy in constructive and generative initiatives that add value to the public sphere and that invite and model a can-do approach to solutions.

What we do ripples beyond what we see. My involvement in the entrepreneurship community has shown me that ripples build up to tides that can move mountains and shape nations. What is developed and modelled in entrepreneurship at UCT has the potential to impact what happens at other universities and more widely.

By providing a snapshot of the personal and institutional characteristics enabling entrepreneurship to flourish at a particular institution, I hope this book will inspire other universities to trace their own unique story and practice of entrepreneurship, supporting and nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets, thus contributing to a broader national understanding of what it is to be an entrepreneur in South Africa.