

New MBA scholarships for African social entrepreneurs

4 Oct 2011 11:23

[BizCommunity](#)

The UCT Graduate School of Business' (GSB) has created five new full scholarships for its MBA programme, known as the Bertha Scholarships, which begins in 2012 for candidates who are dedicated to working in or starting entrepreneurial ventures that tackle social or environmental problems.



Image: [digitalart / FreeDigitalPhotos.net](#)

This paves the launch of the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the School, which has been set up in partnership with the Bertha Foundation to boost social and green enterprises in South Africa and the African continent, as well as instilling corporate managers with the insights and skills to building better businesses in emerging markets.

The centre will work in tandem with the MBA programme at the GSB to instil in students those business values and skills that are needed to solve some of society's toughest challenges.

"The scholarships have been established to reduce the financial burden for social entrepreneurs undertaking an MBA in order to encourage them to take that all important step towards becoming better business people," says director of the GSB, Professor Walter Baets.

The scholarship covers the full costs of the MBA programme and in some cases may also assist with a modest stipend to partially cover living and travel expenses. The scholarship committee will assess need, based on previous earnings, personal circumstance, geographic location and future earning potential.

African eligibility

To be eligible, candidates must be residents of African countries and must have started or worked in a social entrepreneurial or green

venture, or have at least one year's experience working on social business strategies and developing the base of the pyramid business models within a larger corporate.

"We are looking for people who demonstrate a strong moral character, strong entrepreneurial drive, a track record of action, leadership qualities, traits of social activism and a commitment to the sustainable development of emerging economies," says Baets.

The centre will drive research into social innovation and entrepreneurship and will provide new elective courses and an action learning semester programme on the MBA. Furthermore, the centre will run an outreach programme training local social entrepreneurs.

Seasoned director appointed

The newly appointed director for the centre is Dr Francois Bonnici, the former head of Africa for the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and Global Leadership Fellow of the World Economic Forum. A UCT alumnus and Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he has worked in public, private and civil society sectors. He has supported the development of both social and environmental ventures and novel financing mechanisms to support these new business models, and served as the contributing editor to MIT's special edition on 'Social Innovation in a Post Crisis World'.

"For the Bertha Scholar, the centre will provide a broad foundation to understanding innovative market-based solutions to development goals and challenges, and create unique opportunities to meet successful social and environmental entrepreneurs, leading thinkers in market based solutions, as well as blended value investors, foundations and philanthropists," says Bonnici. "We envision that this scholarship will stimulate a new generation of entrepreneurs and better, bolder businesses in South Africa."