

Young Investor Programme offers UWC students practical training

The launch of the recent Young Investor Programme (YIP) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) offers enterprising young finance students the opportunity to learn by doing and putting their theoretical investment knowledge to good, practical use.



The Young Investors Programme 2017 student committee (from L-R): Sinalo Mhluli (Secretary), Benetton Petersen (Chairperson), Yankela Mlletye (Student Liaison), Kgomotso Makena (Treasurer), Musa Sotashe (Marketing & PR) and Lelethu Bodlani (Project Manager).

Photo credit: Nicklaus Kruger

“The finance industry is a competitive one and the YIP is a useful means of obtaining a practical understanding of the investments industry, and an opportunity for students to see where they fit in,” says Professor Ricardo Peters, director of UWC’s School of Business and Finance (SBF).

“The challenge has never been a matter of not knowing how to crunch the numbers to pass a test or exam, but rather to build on the softer skills so that our students can have the right level of self-confidence so as to prepare well for interviews and know how to conduct themselves in the workplace.”

The YIP aims to help students build those skills and bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge obtained at university and the practical aspect required by the investment industry.

Finding sponsors

When a group of UWC B.Com Honours Finance students realised they lacked the kind of practical knowledge they would need out there in the finance and investment industry, they approached the SBF with a solution in July last year.

Since then, the SBF has set out to secure sponsorship to tackle this challenge. SBF senior lecturer Dr Warren Brown approached Coronation and it agreed to sponsor R62,500 towards the Young Investor Programme initiative, thus changing the course of several students' lives.

So far, six YIP groups, consisting of five members each, have been formed, all in their second or third year of finance and investment studies. For the rest of the year they will be participating in a number of workshops, interacting with industry professionals, and performing practical investment exercises, picking companies to invest in, reviewing financial headlines and conducting company analyses and virtual trading, recommending whether to buy, sell or hold to academia and sponsor assessing groups. Many participants have already been taken up in the workplace - a source of pride for the students and the SBF alike.

"We want to create activities that are aimed at enhancing the practical, personal and professional skills of the members within the programme," Prof Peters notes. "We'd like to see students equipped, able to make informed financial decisions and understand the intricacies of the industry - and secure their futures."

Students doing it themselves

Keagan Martin (24) from Ennerdale, Johannesburg, was one of the students who initiated the programme. A UWC B.Com Finance honours 2016 graduate and a member of the Golden Key International Honours society, he currently works as a financial reporting accountant at State Street SA.

"In our honours year, we noticed a key trend after going for interviews. We discovered that our level of 'real-world' or 'industry knowledge' was not quite as advanced as we wanted and we came up with the idea of the programme to help. Being part of this initiative helped me develop a sense of responsibility and understanding. I think the greatest tool students will take away from the Young Investors programme is confidence."

The current YIP committee has dedicated themselves to growing the initiative and sharing its benefits with other dedicated students.

"As a student, having fantastic results alone is not enough," says Brackenfell-based finance honours student Kgomotso Makena (23), who was a YIP member in 2016 and has been elected YIP Treasurer for 2017. "If your ambition is to be a trader or an analyst, it is essential to be doing things right now that will show that you have an interest in what a trader or an analyst actually does. Moreover, as a member of the YIP, you will receive the guidance needed to become a successful professional within the investments industry. "

Final-year finance student - and YIP 2017 Secretary - Sinalo Mhlauli (22) from Gugulethu, is proud of her participation in the initiative. "The programme has opened my mind so much in terms of the finance industry. Our initial meet-ups have already helped shape my view of how the industry operates. Where else would I get the opportunity to engage with professionals in the finance industry? I'm convinced UWC students who take part will be coming out stronger than ever."

YIP Student Liaison Yamkela Mdletye (21), from the Free State, is a final year B.Com general student, majoring in investment and finance and information systems. "I am grateful to be part of this project. I look forward to developing soft skills through workshops and expanding my passion for investment and finance, along with the other benefits of being in YIP. To me, the programme means commitment and dedication, with the hope of making history by making YIP even

better."

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