



2025 EDHE AWARDS

A look into the winners and
what drives their successes

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LEADING WITH PURPOSE: CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Letter from the Editor

The second edition of the EDHE Magazine arrives at a moment of both reflection and resolve. Across South Africa's higher education landscape, entrepreneurship is no longer a peripheral activity or a pilot experiment; it is becoming a defining pillar of how universities respond to national challenges, nurture talent, and translate knowledge into impact.

This issue turns our focus to what drives success. We celebrate the winners of the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity and the EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge who took home over R 2 million in prizes at the EDHE Awards. We also highlight those deserving of accolades for advancing entrepreneurship at their university through the EDHE Champion Award and the EDHE Entrepreneurship Learning and Teaching Excellence Award. We look closely at the people, partnerships, and systems that enable entrepreneurial ideas to move from concept to consequence. The stories in these pages reveal a powerful truth: meaningful entrepreneurship is rarely accidental. It is cultivated through intention, collaboration, and sustained support.

At the heart of this edition are the 2025 EDHE Awards and the remarkable individuals behind them. From student innovators engineering solutions grounded in lived realities to studentpreneur researchers transforming scientific inquiry into social value, these stories remind us that entrepreneurship is not about scale alone but about relevance, access, and purpose. The journeys of winners such as Student Innovator of the Year, Mpho Kotlolo, and Studentpreneur of the Year, Zanodumo Godlimpi, demonstrate how excellence emerges when technical skill is paired with empathy and a deep understanding of context.

This edition also reflects EDHE's growing ecosystem. The expansion and consolidation of Economic Activation Offices across all 26 public universities signal a maturing national infrastructure for entrepreneurship development. These offices are not merely administrative units; they are connectors that create campus linkages among students, academics, industry, and communities, enabling innovation to be possible and sustainable.

Our thought leadership feature challenges us to broaden how we define entrepreneurship, particularly through the lens of culture, creativity, and the arts, as we announce the newly launched Community of Practice for Cultural Entrepreneurship. It is a timely reminder that innovation does not belong to a single discipline. When we embrace diverse forms of knowledge and expression, we unlock new pathways for inclusive economic participation.

Equally significant is the launch of the EDHE Mr Price Foundation Waste Innovation Challenge. This initiative captures the spirit of this edition: turning urgency into opportunity and positioning young people at the centre of solutions to pressing environmental and economic challenges. It reflects what is possible when universities, industry, and civil society align around a shared purpose.

I am proud that this second edition moves us beyond introduction and into intention. It tells a story of a programme gaining momentum, of partnerships deepening, and of a generation of studentpreneurs and academic leaders who are not waiting for the future, but actively building it.

May these pages inspire continued collaboration, bold thinking, and action that reaches far beyond our campuses.

Yours in entrepreneurship,

Dr Edwell Gumbo

Director: Entrepreneurship
Universities South Africa

EDHE 2026 TIMELINE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION



THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP

“The need to focus on Cultural Entrepreneurship”

by Prof Peter Baur

Deep down, I feel that there has always been something incredibly nostalgic about doing research into the cultural industries of South Africa. Maybe it's because I was raised by parents, who, by the most traditional of definitions, crafted out their own densities as artists. My father, a gifted photographer, would capture the very essence of a person's soul and freeze that moment onto a timeless black and white portrait, an image that would possibly outlive the subject for decades to come. My mother, with her long academic gown and even longer career as a painter and sculpturer, would transform any canvas into a myriad of social, political or historical embellishments of colour and meaning, and as such evoking feelings of love, anger, passion or fear, depending on who was looking through her abstract kaleidoscope of imagination and intellect. Yet, while this may sound like an evocatively romanticised view of the 'Artist', the deeper realities are by far, mostly muted from the generalised perspectives of how the life of the 'Artist' could be perceived by many.



For those of us who love theatre, dance, or opera, we are contented to enjoy the perspective of the stage from the audience's side, especially the flair of the lights, the glam, the sparkles in the costumes, the beautiful music, the flow of the dancers, and, most importantly, the magic in the atmosphere which the artists create. But on the other side of the curtain, there is often a very different reality been played out. Torn muscles, exhaustion, broken shoes, urgent improvisation, twisted cables, time constraints and ticket sales. As a child of two artists, I lived in the reality of the real experience, I learned from a very early age what it meant to live on the 'other side' of that curtain which separates the expectations of the audiences from the lived reality of the 'Artist'.

Having the gift of 'Art' does not imply that all is good. On the contrary, many artists, across the world find it difficult to carve out a meaningful income from their 'art' alone. Most need to work a second or third job to pay the bills, or to put food on the table, or, stating it simply, just to survive. My father would often work tasks from handyman to picture framer, and my mother would lecture in art, work as a city councillor, or help people with supportive counselling. This does not imply that either were not brilliant or successful, on the contrary, my mother's art paid for my entire schooling, and together both parents gave me the opportunity of developing and experiencing a wonderful career of my own. It's not just me they carried; they carried an entire community through their vision and their dedication to their respective 'arts'.

As an academic, who loves to delve into the economics of the 'Arts', I have come to learn that even amongst the most brilliant and acclaimed artists around the world, there is often an accompanying story of struggle and heartache, only overcome through persistence and courage. Such determination is most often reflected through their innovativeness, vision and the ability to overcome resistance. And these three qualities just mentioned are the very hallmark of what Joseph Schumpeter defined at the turn of the 20th century as 'core' of the 'entrepreneur'.

The skills of being an entrepreneur do not necessarily descend from the primordial 'Ether', to rest upon some chosen individual, nor does it just manifest itself from pure necessity. On the contrary, entrepreneurship is a skill which can be taught in schools or institutions and can be sharpened through skilful learning. Given the high levels of unemployment and the overall breath of the informal sector in South Africa, there should be sufficient evidence to suggest that there is a growing need to develop entrepreneurship skills wherever possible in key sectors of the broader economy.

This then begs the question of which of the sectors would be considered 'key' in any economy. Usually, funding opportunities support the development of entrepreneurship within the 'STEM' disciplines as it is often considered popular convention to cite Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in promoting innovation, critical thinking, and inevitably providing the solutions to solving global challenges and workforce development. However, history has taught us that the 'Arts' are just as critical in accomplishing just that. Let's not forget the great philosophers that shaped the early structures of philosophy, reason and logic from which law, mathematics and science evolved. Need I remind us of the work of Leonardo da Vinci, Maria Sibylla Merian, Antoni Gaudí, Ada Lovelace and Jacquard Looms, for instance. It is history which proves unequivocally that it is the 'Arts' which lead innovation and critical thinking and thus supporting the prerogative of notarising 'Arts' into 'STEAM'.

Conventional wisdom aside, the 'Arts' are more than just a portal into innovative thinking. The arts embrace key cultural values, ancestral conventions and community identity. And it's often in this environment that the cultural entrepreneur is empowered to carve out an identity that is far larger than their own ideology. Through embracing culture, the entrepreneur creates a space, sometimes sacred, which develops horizontal reach and longitudinal depth, spanning markets through both space and time. For just a moment, let's think about the tourist market. The tourist seeks an experience. This experience can take on multiple aesthetic layers, such as taste, texture, temporal, social, cognitive, or quite simply, *sui generis*. 'A lion in Africa is different from an African lion'. To merge this distinction is the domain of the cultural entrepreneur.

Developing cultural entrepreneurship creates a myriad of potential throughout the market, from both the supply side as well as from the demand side. While this may sound like the words uttered by a seasoned economist, there could be a hidden truth after all. Economics concerns itself predominantly with the issue of scarcity. And there is clearly a scarcity of entrepreneurship skills tailored to people that live and work within the creative industry. We spend time teaching art to artists, dance to dancers and music to musicians, and then quite suddenly, and rather tragically, we eject those same dynamic and highly creative people into the stormy expanse of the wild market economy, expecting them to survive, without the benefit of a life jacket to keep them afloat, or a pair of soft fluffy socks to keep them warm.

Our 'Artists' are our nation's greatest asset. They transform chaos into order, they critically evaluate our state of being, and they preserve our deepest and most cherished identities. Let's not allow these assets to simply survive in the informal sector or to flounder into unemployment. Let's bring entrepreneurship into their discipline. Let's support their skills with greater focus on tailored entrepreneurship for the creatives. Let us make cultural entrepreneurship a national prerogative.

ARE YOU INTERESTED

In Joining the CoP for Cultural Entrepreneurship?

Terms of Reference for the EDHE CoP for Cultural Entrepreneurship (CoP for CE)

1. Introduction

The Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) program aims to cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship within universities. This document outlines the Terms of Reference (TOR) specifically for the EDHE Community of Practice (CoP) for Cultural Entrepreneurship (CE).

In recognition of the growing economic and social significance of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), EDHE hereby establishes the Cultural Entrepreneurship Community of Practice (CE-CoP). The CE-CoP provides a structured, collaborative platform for higher education stakeholders to engage with cultural entrepreneurship as a field that intersects creativity, intellectual property (IP), authorship, ownership, digitalisation, tourism, and inclusive economic participation.

2. Background

The Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme was established to address graduate unemployment and promote entrepreneurial thinking in universities. The EDHE Communities of Practice (CoPs) foster knowledge sharing, collaboration, and policy influence among university stakeholders, supporting the development of a comprehensive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Through these communities, universities advance entrepreneurship education, research, and practice, driving economic growth and innovation.

South Africa's Cultural and Creative Industries contribute meaningfully to GDP, employment, and cultural tourism, positioning artists and creatives as both cultural producers and economic actors. However, the sector is characterised by structural inequalities, concentrated market returns, limited IP literacy, uneven digital access, and ongoing tensions between individual and communal authorship.

Cultural entrepreneurship in the South African context is deeply embedded in heritage, indigenous knowledge systems, and informal modes of production. Existing intellectual property regimes—largely derived from Western legal traditions—often inadequately recognise collective authorship and traditional cultural expressions.

At the same time, digital platforms and global markets offer new opportunities for visibility and monetisation, while introducing heightened risks of appropriation, misattribution, and exploitation.

Against this backdrop, the CE-CoP adopts a developmental and inclusive approach to cultural entrepreneurship. It reframes intellectual property not only as a legal construct, but as an enabling mechanism for empowerment, sustainability, and equitable participation in cultural and economic value chains.

3. Scope

This CoP is open to university leaders, academics, and support professionals involved in entrepreneurship development. The focus is on universities, and activities related to entrepreneurship development in other sectors are omitted.

The CE-CoP focuses on cultural entrepreneurship within the higher education ecosystem, with particular attention to:

- Cultural and creative disciplines housed within universities; - University-linked creatives, students, academics, and cultural practitioners;
- Institutional mechanisms that support IP development, commercialisation, and protection;
- Linkages between CCIs, tourism, digital platforms; and
- Global markets.

4. Purpose

The purpose of the CE-CoP is to strengthen institutional, academic, and practitioner capacity to support cultural entrepreneurship in an equitable, sustainable, and contextually grounded manner. Key objectives include:

- **IP Literacy and Capacity Building:** Enhancing understanding of intellectual property, authorship, ownership, and licensing among cultural entrepreneurs within universities.

Terms of Reference for the EDHE CoP for Cultural Entrepreneurship (CoP for CE)

- **Recognition of Diverse Authorship Models:** As part of the planned Higher Education National Entrepreneurship Policy, the CoP will support advancing dialogue and policy thinking that recognises both individual and communal authorship, including indigenous knowledge systems and traditional cultural expressions.
- **Digital Platform Equity:** Exploring strategies to improve access to digital infrastructure, platforms, and tools that enable fair attribution, visibility, and monetisation of cultural works.
- **Inclusive Commercialisation Pathways:** Supporting models of cultural entrepreneurship that link creatives to tourism, heritage economies, and global markets while mitigating risks of appropriation and exploitation.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Research:** Facilitating interdisciplinary research, case studies, and scholarship on cultural entrepreneurship and IP in the South African context.
- **Policy Influence:** Contributing evidence-based insights to institutional and national policy discussions related to CCIs, IP, and entrepreneurship.

5. Membership

5.1. Leadership

- Chair and Deputy Chair:
 - Employed by a Higher Education Institution of affiliated organisation
 - Possess relevant expertise in cultural entrepreneurship, CCIs, IP, or related fields.
 - Hold at least a postgraduate qualification or equivalent professional experience.

5.2. Members

Membership is open to individuals and organisations who:

- Are employed by, or formally affiliated with, a Higher Education Institution or relevant partner organisation.
- Are involved in cultural entrepreneurship, creative practice, IP management, technology transfer, tourism, or related support functions.
- Demonstrate a commitment to advancing inclusive and ethical cultural entrepreneurship.
- Actively involved in entrepreneurship-related initiatives at their HEI or affiliated organisations (advantageous).
- Able to commit time to CoP activities.
- Possess a postgraduate qualification (advantageous).
- Experience with entrepreneurship or business management (advantageous).
- Available to attend at least three annual meetings (virtual).

6. Membership Term

- The Chair and Deputy Chair serve a three-year term, renewable subject to performance and CoP endorsement.
- General membership is reviewed annually to ensure relevance, diversity, and opportunities for new participation.

7. Key Focus Areas and Projects

The CE-CoP may initiate, and support projects aligned to its mandate, including but not limited to:

7.1. Cultural Entrepreneurship and IP Capacity Programme

Development of workshops, toolkits, and short courses on IP literacy, authorship models, licensing, and commercialisation for creatives and support staff within universities.

7.2 Research and Knowledge Production

Collaborative research on cultural entrepreneurship, communal authorship, digitalisation, and market access, including policy briefs and academic publications.

7.3 Digital Platforms and Market Access Initiative

Exploration of ethical digital platforms, direct-to-consumer models, and strategies to enhance equitable visibility and monetisation for cultural entrepreneurs.

7.4 Cultural Entrepreneurship Dialogues and Indabas

Convening national or regional dialogues that bring together universities, creatives, policymakers, tourism bodies, and industry stakeholders. This includes contribution in the form of speakers, panels and breakout rooms as part of the EDHE Indaba and Lekgotla.

7.5 Student and Emerging Creative Support

Alignment with EDHE student entrepreneurship initiatives to ensure cultural and creative entrepreneurs are meaningfully included, such as supporting the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity.

8. Approach

The CE-CoP will operate through:

- Knowledge sharing and peer learning;
- Interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Replication and scaling of effective institutional practices;
- Research-informed engagement;
- Strategic partnerships with public, private, and social sector stakeholders;
- Advocacy for inclusive, context-sensitive policy frameworks.

Terms of Reference for the EDHE CoP for Cultural Entrepreneurship (CoP for CE)**9. Governance and Reporting**

- The CE-CoP operates under the auspices of the EDHE Programme.
- Activities and outputs will be reported to EDHE in line with agreed reporting cycles.
- Sub-committees or working groups may be established to advance specific thematic areas.

10. Review and Amendment

These Terms of Reference are living document and may be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with EDHE priorities, sector developments, and stakeholder needs.

11. Conclusion

The EDHE Cultural Entrepreneurship Community of Practice provides a critical platform to reposition cultural entrepreneurship as both a creative and economic endeavour. By centering authorship, ownership, and opportunity, the CoP seeks to ensure that South Africa's cultural producers are not only recognised for their contributions but are empowered as rightful beneficiaries of the value they create.

**SIGN UP FOR THE COP
FOR CE**

[HTTPS://EDHE.CO.ZA/COMMUNITIES-OF-PRACTICE/](https://edhe.co.za/communities-of-practice/)

2025 EDHE ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The EDHE Entrepreneurship Learning and Teaching Excellence Awards aim to showcase new ideas and approaches for teaching and learning entrepreneurship in higher education institutions. The initiative targets academics and support professionals driving entrepreneurship development who have developed a credit-bearing entrepreneurship module, programme, course or entrepreneurial initiative. The purpose is to share best practices in the ecosystem. The winner receives R10 000.



In the first spot was the University of the Free State's Dr Ekaete Benedict (2nd from left, above) for enhancing graduate employability through integrated entrepreneurship education.



Second place went to Professor Lawrence Diko Makia (middle, above), at the University of Venda, for fostering an entrepreneurial mindset through learning dialogues.



Winning third place was Professor Ayansola Olatunji (middle, above), from the University of Zululand, for embedding entrepreneurship education into the institution's curriculum.

The other nominees were The University of Johannesburg's UJ Business Clinic (A Vehicle for Student Entrepreneurship/Diploma: Small Business Management, Dr Lawrence Seseni); University of Mpumalanga (C.R.E.A.T.E Model; Research-Led Agricultural Entrepreneurship, ABM402, Dr Bongie Mcata); Tshwane University of Technology (development of a Work-Integrated Learning framework in an entrepreneurial approach for somatology at a university of technology, Mr Tsabuki Makou) and University of Johannesburg (Work Integrated Learning for Entrepreneurial Strategy Implementation ESI03YC at the iZindaba Zokudla 2025, Professor Naude Malan).

Written by Janine Greenleaf Walker a contract writer for Universities South Africa.



SWEEP Feature

ENGINEERING HER OWN PATH: Ms Amohetsoe Shale

This story highlights a student woman entrepreneur whose work speaks for itself. Amohetsoe Shale's journey reminds us that women in innovation are not defined by titles or programmes, but by the quality, intention and impact of the work they put into the world.



FEW STUDENT INNOVATORS LEAVE A MARK ACROSS MULTIPLE NATIONAL PLATFORMS IN A SINGLE YEAR – BUT MS AMOHETSOE SHALE DID JUST THAT.

When Amohetsoe Shale speaks about her work, she doesn't start with awards. She starts with people; with bodies, movement, terrain, and the quiet frustrations that come with devices that were never designed for the realities of everyday South African life.

It's this grounded way of thinking that has set her apart.

In 2025, the Stellenbosch University biomedical engineering student made EDHE history, winning three awards across two national competitions, including the Student Womanpreneur Award at the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity and recognition at the EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge. But long before she stepped onto a national stage, Amohetsoe was already deeply immersed in problem-solving, not as a performance, but as a practice.

Her innovation, NAVU, is an affordable prosthetic knee designed for real terrain, real movement and real people living with upper leg disability and wearing a prosthetic limb. It is the result of careful engineering, constant iteration and listening, and not just to textbooks or supervisors, but to lived experience.

"I didn't want to design something that only works in perfect conditions," she explains in the interview. "People don't walk on flat floors all day. They walk on gravel, on slopes, on uneven ground."

That insight didn't come from theory alone. Growing up, Amohetsoe witnessed disability up close, not as a distant concept, but as a daily reality shaped by access, environment and infrastructure. Those early observations stayed with her, quietly shaping the kind of engineer she would become.

Academics who work beyond the classroom

At university, her journey was far from solitary. NAVU emerged through collaboration with classmates, mentors, and specialists who challenged her thinking and strengthened the design. She speaks openly about the importance of working with others, acknowledging that innovation is rarely the work of a single mind.

"Engineering teaches you very quickly that you don't have all the answers," she reflects. "You need people who see what you don't."

That willingness to collaborate became one of her greatest strengths during the EDHE competitions. Balancing academic demands, prototype development and competition pressure was no small feat, yet she navigated it with a calm determination that judges and peers alike noticed.



Amohetsoe volunteered for FoMSF (student division of Doctors Without Borders)

A Student Woman in Action

Winning the Student Womanpreneur Award carried particular significance; this was not because she set out to represent women in engineering, but because her presence did so naturally.

"I don't think about being a woman in engineering every day," she says. "I think about doing good work."

And yet, the impact of her visibility is undeniable. In a field still dominated by men, Amohetsoe stands as proof that technical excellence and leadership are not gendered traits. Her confidence is not loud or performative; it is precise, considered and rooted in competence.

The prize money from her wins has allowed her to take NAVU further, to refining the prototype, thinking more intentionally about testing, and exploring how the device could eventually reach the people who need it most. But she remains realistic about the road ahead.

"There's still so much work to do," she admits. "This isn't the finish line."

What sets her apart is not the illusion of certainty, but her commitment to the process, to learning, adjusting and improving. She understands that meaningful innovation takes time, patience and resilience, especially when it intersects with healthcare, ethics and access.

As a student woman entrepreneur, Amohetsoe occupies a powerful, if understated, space. She is not building a brand around herself; she is building a solution. In doing this, she is quietly expanding what success can look like for women in science, engineering and entrepreneurship. Her story is not about exceptionality.

It is about possibility.

And as NAVU continues to evolve beyond the competition stage, one thing is clear: Amohetsoe Shale is not just engineering a prosthetic knee — she is engineering a future where thoughtful design, collaboration and purpose move in step.



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- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- University of Fort Hare
- University of Limpopo
- University of Zululand
- University of Venda
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- Walter Sisulu University
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- Mangosuthu University of Technology
- University of Mpumalanga
- Sol Plaatje University

EDHE ECONOMIC ACTIVATION OFFICES

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY  Standard Bank

EDHE Economic Activation Offices (EAOs) The Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Entrepreneurship Activation Offices (EAOs), established in 2021, serve as central hubs for promoting entrepreneurship within universities. Their role involves catalysing support, facilitating collaboration, and exchanging information throughout the university community. Positioned as connectors, the EAOs aim to align various stakeholders, including university leadership, faculty, students, and local businesses, to nurture the entrepreneurship ecosystem within academic institutions.

Their role includes catalysing support, facilitating collaboration, and effectively exchanging information throughout the university community. Positioned as connectors, the EAOs aim to align a diverse range of stakeholders, including university leadership, faculty, support staff, students, local businesses, and industries, to nurture the entrepreneurship ecosystem within academic institutions (Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education, 2023).

3718 TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS REACHED THROUGH EAO.	3875 TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS REACHED THROUGH EAO.
2023 COHORT 1 Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Sol Plaatje University, Durban University of Technology, Walter Sisulu University, University of Johannesburg, Tshwane University of Technology, University of Venda, University of Limpopo, Nelson Mandela University, University of Cape Town.	2024 COHORT 2 Central University of Technology, University of Pretoria, University of Mpumalanga, University of South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Fort Hare, University of Kwazulu-Natal, University of the Western Cape, University of Zululand, North-West University, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Stellenbosch University, Mangosuthu University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, Rhodes University.

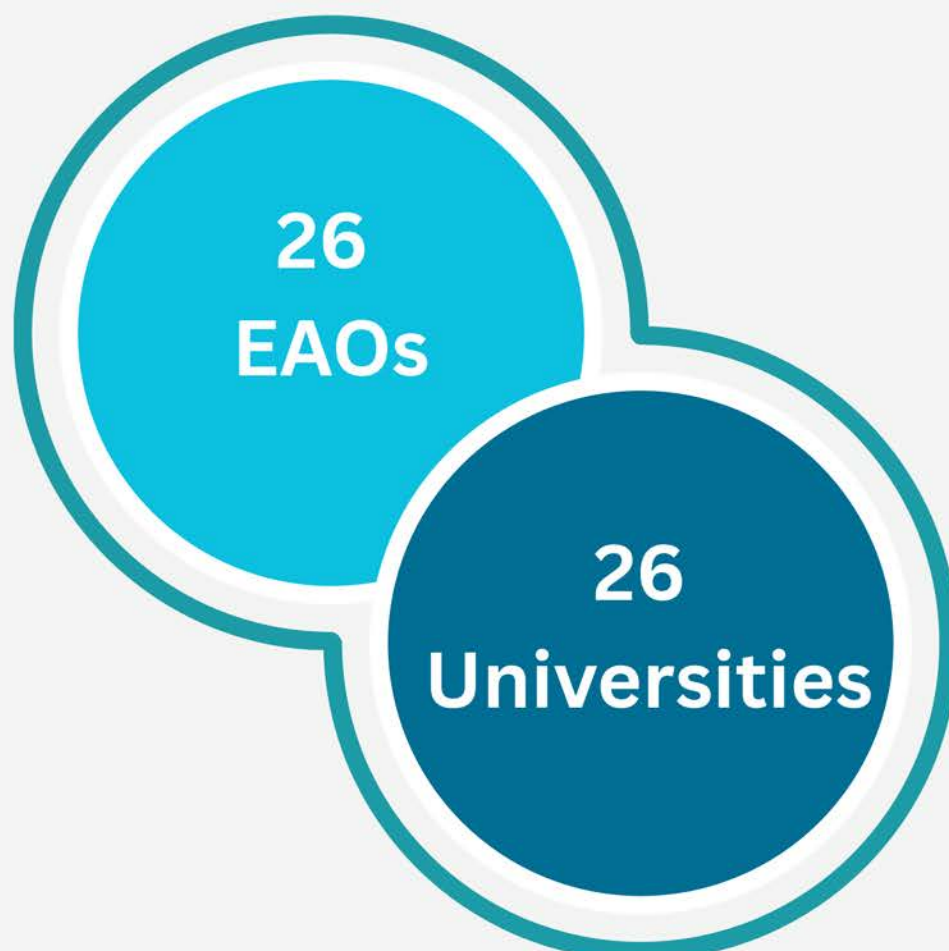
The EAO Initiative in 2024 had a significant impact on student entrepreneurship across South Africa's universities, transforming the way students engage with business and innovation. The initiative empowered thousands of students with the skills and confidence to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape through targeted training, real-world exposure, and dynamic competitions. Workshops on digital marketing, financial literacy, business model development, and commercialisation strategies became the foundation for many students' entrepreneurial journeys. These sessions provided practical knowledge, ensuring that young innovators had the tools they needed to bring their ideas to life. The initiative's reach extended far beyond the classroom, offering a blend of in-person and online training that allowed for flexible participation. At the University of Venda, the Entrepreneurial Mindset Workshop drew an impressive 368 students, a testament to the growing interest in entrepreneurship among young South Africans. Beyond skill development, the initiative provided students with invaluable industry exposure.

Events like the Student Entrepreneurs Market Day and the Technology Start-Up Panel at the University of Cape Town connected students directly with business leaders, giving them a glimpse into the realities of the entrepreneurial world. These experiences were more than just networking opportunities; they were moments of inspiration where students saw firsthand what was possible with the right mindset and determination.

Collaboration also played a central role in the initiative's success. At institutions like the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and the University of Mpumalanga, students came together for hackathons and exhibitions, where teamwork and creative problem-solving took centre stage. These collaborative projects encouraged students to refine their ideas, challenge conventional thinking, and develop solutions with real-world impact.

For many, the initiative became a launchpad for their entrepreneurial dreams. The Inhlanyelo Hub Pitch Competition allowed students to test their ideas, present their business concepts, and receive valuable feedback from industry experts. These competitions were more than just events; they were catalysts for change, helping students transition from ideation to execution, with some taking their first steps toward building sustainable businesses.

Through its multi-faceted approach, the 2024 EAO Initiatives equipped students with critical entrepreneurial skills and fostered a culture of innovation, collaboration, and resilience. By bridging the gap between academia and industry, it continues to shape a new generation of student entrepreneurs, ready to drive economic growth and create meaningful change in their communities.



EDHE MR PRICE FOUNDATION WASTE INNOVATION CHALLENGE LAUNCHES WITH A *R1.3-million sponsorship*



Janine Greenleaf Walker is a contract writer for Universities South Africa.

A platform where sustainability meets entrepreneurship, where research meets impact and where young South Africans are empowered to build tomorrow's green industries

South Africa generates more than 125 metric tons (Mt) of solid waste annually, most of which ends up in landfill sites^[1]. Waste innovation ideas are therefore critical for environmental protection, conserving valuable resources, driving economic growth and safeguarding human health.

At the 2025 National Awards event of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) programme in Gauteng, on 26 November, the audience heard that the Mr Price Foundation would be sponsoring the EDHE Mr Price Foundation Waste Innovation Challenge, to be implemented in 2026, with a R1.3 million sponsorship.

This comes as former Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George, emphasised in a report in September this year, that South Africa's waste and renewable energy reforms are turning environmental policy into a source of jobs and investment.

"What many people call waste should be seen as wealth. By managing waste and energy wisely, we can create thousands of jobs, attract billions in investment and build a resilient economy. Waste (is) the raw material of a new economy. Every recycling enterprise is a step towards inclusive prosperity," he said.

EDHE, a programme that aims to develop the entrepreneurial capacity of university students, academics and university leaders, is a collaboration between Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). It encourages students to become more economically active by offering training programmes and initiatives to foster entrepreneurial skills, and running competitions such as the annual EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity and the EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge.



[1] Research and Markets, 2024. South Africa Solid Waste Management Report 2024: Rising Waste & Landfill Limits Create Growth Opportunities for Private Firms in Composting... Available in: South Africa Solid Waste Management Report 2024: Rising

The pursuit of new ideas, solutions and products

Mr Octavius Phukubye (above), Executive Director of the Mr Price Foundation, said this new partnership aimed to encourage innovators to search for new ideas, new solutions and new products.

The 2026 Challenge would recruit 400 students and alumni to develop innovations that convert plastic waste into viable business solutions. Participants would receive training in design thinking, product development, green technology and waste management, equipping them with the skills needed to refine their ideas and build prototypes that address real environmental challenges.

From this group, the most promising innovators would be selected to participate in an intensive national bootcamp, where they would further strengthen their concepts and prepare them for market entry. Ultimately, the top five innovators would receive cash prizes and investment-readiness support to transform their solutions into scalable green enterprises.

Said Mr Phukubye: "We are delighted with this new partnership because it talks to secular entrepreneurship. Our society and supply chain generate a lot of waste that could be recycled or repurposed. Our initial investment into this programme is R1.3 million, but we will look to increase it over time," he explained.

"Not all the ideas and all the concepts are going to be commercialised, and not all concepts will become upscalable businesses – and that's okay. We want to listen and to celebrate learnings; that's the culture and the spirit we want to drive. We want to empower young people through three key areas, namely skills development, entrepreneurship and education.



That sentiment was echoed by Dr Edwell Gumbo (left), Director: Entrepreneurship, USAf.

"This new national initiative marks an exciting moment in our collective journey to position young South Africans at the centre of innovation, sustainability and enterprise development.

This partnership is a powerful reminder that when we combine the strengths of universities, industry, government and civil society, we unlock solutions that none of us could achieve alone. In the spirit of the quadruple helix, collaboration is not just valuable; it is essential.

South Africa is facing two intersecting crises, among others: youth unemployment and environmental degradation.

"THIS NEW NATIONAL INITIATIVE MARKS AN EXCITING MOMENT IN OUR COLLECTIVE JOURNEY TO POSITION YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS AT THE CENTRE OF INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT"

"Individually, these challenges can appear overwhelming. But when we bring together the research capacity of universities, the entrepreneurial energy of young people and the resources and expertise of committed partners like the Mr Price Foundation, these challenges become powerful opportunities for innovation, enterprise creation and environmental resilience," he said.

"This collaboration strengthens EDHE's mission and gives young innovators a platform to transform research into real products and services that will shape the circular economy of the future. Across our campuses are brilliant young minds working on research, design, engineering and technological innovations that often remain trapped within academic spaces. The Waste Innovation Challenge creates a national pipeline to take ideas and bring them into the market."

Mr Phukubye referenced the success that the EDHE Awards had already achieved. This was evidenced by Emmanuel Kiyonga, the 2024 EDHE Studentpreneur of the Year Award winner, among others, for developing a promising drug for breast cancer and osteoporosis. He said Kiyonga and his fellow student entrepreneurs and innovators reminded him of the book *The Boy That Harnessed the Wind*, a true account of William Kamkwamba, a 14-year-old Malawian boy who built a windmill from scrap metal and bicycle parts to bring electricity to his village during a severe famine.

"Since 2005, the Mr Price Foundation has been unlocking access to quality education and skills development to empower youth to reach their full potential. Everything we do, we do to break the cycle of poverty and inequality," he explained.

The Mr Price Foundation programmes align with a number of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a plan to protect our planet and to preserve and create opportunities for all people to live in dignity and prosperity. It has also announced an ambitious plan to get 500,000 youth economically resilient by 2035. The target, revealed in its FY2025 Integrated Impact Report, comes as the country faces a youth unemployment crisis, with 7.7 million young people not in employment, education or training.

"We've also looked at how we can work with young people at the earliest level and create multiple pathways so that those who don't find jobs, those who are looking for opportunities and those who are innovative can be provided with the right amount of support," he concluded.





Waste Innovation

Challenge

by mr price foundation

in partnership with



Mr Price Foundation x EDHE WASTE INNOVATION CHALLENGE



WIN UP TO R 2 4 5 0 0 0 IN CASH PRIZES AND MORE

Turning Plastic Waste into Green Innovation

Plastic waste is one of South Africa's most visible challenges, but for a new generation of student innovators, it is also an opportunity.

In 2026, the **EDHE Mr Price Foundation Waste Innovation Challenge** invites university students and recent graduates to rethink plastic waste not as a problem to be buried or ignored, but as a resource that can fuel new ideas, businesses and sustainable solutions.

Powered by Universities South Africa's Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) programme and the Mr Price Foundation, this national challenge calls on young innovators to design practical, scalable business ideas that transform plastic waste into products, services or technologies with real environmental and economic value.

This is more than a competition, the challenge is designed as a guided innovation journey to supporting participants from early ideas through to pitching refined concepts on a national stage.

How the Challenge Will Run

The Waste Innovation Challenge opens with Expressions of Interest from 1 December 2025 to 27 February 2026, giving students and alumni across the country the opportunity to submit early-stage ideas.

To help prospective entrants understand what the challenge is about and how to participate, an online information session will take place on 27 January 2026. This session is the first step for anyone interested in entering and will unpack the focus areas, expectations and support on offer.

Following the Expression of Interest phase, all entrants will be invited to take part in a series of online workshops between March and April 2026. These sessions are designed to strengthen ideas, introduce green innovation principles, and help participants think critically about feasibility, scale and impact.

Formal proposal submissions will take place in May 2026, after which entries will be reviewed and shortlisted. From here, the competition narrows to a Top 50, then a Top 20, who will be announced publicly in June 2026.

The Top 20 teams or individuals will be invited to an intensive two-day bootcamp in October 2026, where they will receive hands-on mentorship, refine their concepts, and prepare for pitching. The journey culminates in a final showcase and pitching event in November 2026, followed by the announcement of winners at the EDHE National Finals and Awards.



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Participants will compete for a total prize pool of R245,000, awarded across multiple categories:

R100,000 for first place
R75,000 for second place
R40,000 for third place
R20,000 for fourth place
R10,000 for fifth place

Beyond prize money, entrants gain access to expert guidance, practical learning, national exposure and the opportunity to position their ideas for future partnerships or investment.

WHO SHOULD ENTER

The challenge is open to registered students and alumni (aged 18–35) from all 26 public universities in South Africa.

Applicants may enter individually or in teams of up to four people, and no registered business is required.

What matters most is a strong idea that uses plastic waste as a core input, shows environmental benefit, and has the potential to work in the real world.

Why This Challenge Matters

South Africa produces millions of tonnes of waste each year, with plastic forming a significant portion — yet only a small percentage is reused or repurposed. By engaging young innovators at universities, the Waste Innovation Challenge sits at the intersection of youth entrepreneurship, sustainability and economic opportunity, encouraging solutions that respond directly to local realities.



Waste Innovation

Challenge

by  **mr price foundation**

in partnership with



Your First Step: January Information Session

For students and alumni curious about entering, the online information session on 27 January 2026 is the ideal starting point. It offers a chance to learn more about the challenge focus, competition stages, and what judges will be looking for — before committing to an entry.

Sign up for the information session and take the first step toward turning plastic waste into opportunity.

www.edhe.co.za

DOWNLOAD



IMPACT ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION **REPORT 2024**

Gisters in innovation;

Female inventors take top spots in million-rand EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge

Janine Greenleaf Walker is a contract writer for Universities South Africa.
December 1st, 2025

Female inventors and entrepreneurs were the big winners at the first EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge, the largest student entrepreneurship initiative ever launched across South Africa's 26 public universities with prize money totalling more than R1 million.

They took the five top spots and seven positions in the Top 10.

Ms Mpho Kotlolo (right) from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) was named the EDHE Absa Top Student Innovator of the Year and received R500 000 for developing age-appropriate ARVs for children living with HIV/AIDS.

In second spot, and winner of R250 000, was Ms Nondumiso Nkosi (right) from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University – who is the founder of HepaSure Diagnostics, a pioneering analytical assay for Hepatitis B, addressing a critical need in regions in South Africa where the disease is endemic.

The University of Limpopo's Ms Qetello Baloyi (right) was in third position and took home R150 000 for inventing smart panty liners which detect infections.

Other award-winning projects included a process to reduce CO2 emissions during the manufacture of cement; reasonably priced, high performing prosthetic knees; a bioprocess that produces a powerful natural compound that transforms waste into opportunity and size adjustable school shoes. Beyond the substantial cash prizes, winners also gain access to comprehensive business development support, including ongoing mentorship, potential market access through Absa's procurement networks, and connections to industry partners.

The EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge is targeted at current students and recent alumni of public universities to develop and commercialise innovative solutions to societal challenges while fostering entrepreneurship. It's key purpose is to develop innovative solutions, that address major issues in South Africa, such as healthtech, greentech and fintech.

Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) is a programme of Universities South Africa (USAf) and integrates entrepreneurship into higher education curricula and helps unlock and develop young talent to drive economic growth in the country while creating employment opportunities.

Dr Edwell Gumbo, Director: Entrepreneurship, USAf, said that EDHE's mission was to ensure that knowledge does not end in publications only but finds expression in new ventures and new industries that boost the economy and create employment.

"We want to ensure that entrepreneurship becomes an integral part of the educational experience across all the faculties. Universities must be, and are increasingly, low-risk sandboxes for innovation. Within our universities lies unharnessed intellectual capital, cutting-edge research, state-of-the-art laboratories and multidisciplinary enterprises. These assets make universities uniquely positioned to incubate early-stage ideas without the pressures and risks associated with the open market," he said.

"In the Global North, there is the concept that new startups were founded in the garage – think of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos; often in their parents' garage. But we know that realistically, and with the current economy, South African students come from households where the garage does not exist and doesn't have the necessary resources. Our universities have to be the garages that enable our innovators to thrive. Students can test their prototypes; researchers can convert intellectual property into commercial possibilities and interdisciplinary teams can collaborate on solutions that shape society. Universities are not only silos of knowledge generation but they are also the birth places of enterprises that can transform our economy."

Dr Edwell Gumbo paid tribute to the 20 EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge finalists, competing for the Top 10 spots, who were chosen from 644 successful entries. "It is not a cliché to say that you are all winners. There are 1.1 million students at South African public universities and you are in the Top 20 which is a remarkable achievement. Your stories and successes have already inspired us and this is just the beginning of your journey."



Mr Clement Motale (right), Managing Executive: GMCA Strategic Transformation and Partnerships at Absa, said that the banking group was delighted to promote entrepreneurship at universities across the country through this sponsorship. The partnership with EDHE also creates an opportunity for Absa to expand its SME client base, enhance brand visibility and establish long-term relationships with South Africa's future business leaders and innovators.

"This year's Challenge theme - Entrepreneurship for Sustainability - speaks to the broader situation we find ourselves in right now; there is climate and economic uncertainty, rising inequality, digital transformation and global health challenges. Innovation can provide solutions for some of these.

"At Absa, we believe that entrepreneurship is one of the most powerful forces for sustainable development and that without entrepreneurship, South Africa will never grow and achieve its full potential."

He praised the winners and finalists for their extraordinary innovations.

"Your courage and resilience is impressive. Remember, the purpose of life is a life of purpose. Entrepreneurs should not be in it for the money - they should do it to solve critical societal challenges."

The judges for the 2025 EDHE ABSA Innovation Awards were Mrs Pabalelo Banks (Analytics X), Mr Billy Bokako (SEDA), Dr Phuti Chelopo-Mgobozi (The Innovation Hub), Mr Marshall Grant (Garden Route Innovation Hub), Ms Tshembani Khupane (Technology Innovation Agency) and Ms Khanya Matshikwe (Absa Group)



MEET THE TOP 10 FINALISTS



10 - Siphumelele Mzolo



9 - Ayabulela Binase



8 - Tebogo Phasha



7 - Darryl Nyamayaro



6 - André Valkenburg



5 - Charne Verster



4 - Qetello Baloyi



3 - Amohetsoe Shale



2 - Nondumiso Nkosi



1 - Mpho Kotlolo



SWEEP Research Report 2024

Barriers faced by student women in higher education institutions of South Africa to participate in entrepreneurship and business, and challenges experience during participation



SWEEP

**STUDENT WOMEN ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME**

Download SWEEP 2024 Report



Where Science Meets Innovation

From Academic Requirement to National Responsibility

Mpho is a doctoral researcher at Tshwane University of Technology, and the innovation that brought her to the national stage focuses on the development of child-appropriate antiretroviral medication. It is a solution aimed at one of the most overlooked challenges in paediatric healthcare: medicines that children can actually tolerate, swallow and stick to consistently.

At the beginning, she approached the work like many postgraduate researchers do — with the goal of completing her qualification. But as the project evolved, and as she worked more closely with her team, the implications became impossible to ignore.

"We realised this wasn't just a project for a degree," she says. "This could actually change lives."

That realisation came with a shift in mindset. The work demanded more care, more accountability and deeper collaboration. Mpho speaks often about the people behind the scenes, supervisors, coordinators and research partners who supported the project long before it was recognised nationally. The journey, she insists, was never a solo one.

The science itself was unforgiving. The antiretroviral drugs at the centre of her research are notoriously bitter. Early formulations were so unpleasant that even she struggled to tolerate them. Masking that bitterness without compromising the effectiveness of the medication required patience, technical precision and countless iterations. Through focused experimentation and collaboration, her team identified taste-masking agents that significantly improved palatability, a small change that has enormous implications for adherence, especially among children.

Mpho's pursuit of better solutions eventually took her beyond South Africa. In 2023, she travelled to the University of Eastern Finland, where she immersed herself in advanced drug design, manufacturing processes and quality testing. The experience pushed her technically, but it also reshaped her personally.



A Win That Carried Weight

When Mpho Kotlolo's name was announced as the R500 000 winner of the 2025 EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge, the moment landed with both celebration and weight. For her, the applause was not just recognition — it was a turning point. "I was excited," she recalls. "But I was also scared. Because suddenly this wasn't about my personal goals anymore. It was about impact, about my country, and about Africa."

Mpho is a doctoral researcher at Tshwane University of Technology, and the innovation that earned her national recognition addresses one of South Africa's most persistent healthcare challenges: age-appropriate antiretroviral medication for children.

"I didn't go there saying I already knew everything," she explains. "I went there to learn."

Finland taught her discipline, balance and the importance of rest — lessons she brought back home alongside new scientific skills. But her vision remained firmly rooted in South Africa. Everything she learned abroad, she knew, had to serve the context she came from.

The work became even more personal during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Mpho lost her young niece at a time when approved medicines and vaccines for children were still limited. The loss left a permanent imprint on her journey. "Every time I think of her," she says quietly, "I tell myself: this must happen. Our children should not face what she faced."





That conviction carried her into the EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge; a space that initially felt unfamiliar. Coming from the lab, she questioned whether she belonged in an entrepreneurial environment.

"At the bootcamp, I remember thinking, 'What is a business model canvas?'" she says. "I wasn't sure I was an entrepreneur."

With mentorship and support, uncertainty gave way to understanding. She began to see how science, sustainability and scalability could exist together. By the end of the process, she was no longer just a researcher with a solution; she was someone capable of translating knowledge into real-world impact.

Today, Mpho is working with Kiara Health, a pharmaceutical company supporting the next phase of development. The R500 000 prize has become what she calls a "master key" which is unlocking refinement, testing and steps toward market readiness.

But even now, she remains cautious, aware that progress in healthcare innovation is measured carefully and responsibly.

After the awards ceremony, she returned home to Hammanskraal overwhelmed. In her parents' yard, she cried. Her family prayed together, and her mother reminded her that her name means gift. Her father spoke about the entrepreneurial instincts he had noticed in her long before she recognised them herself.

That grounding; faith, family and community, remains central to how she moves forward.

Looking ahead, Mpho dreams of Pharma Kids, a future venture dedicated to developing palatable medication not only for children, but also for the elderly and for people who struggle to swallow conventional tablets. But she is clear: success, for her, is not about accolades or recognition.

"My journey has been a challenge," she reflects. "There were moments when I didn't believe in myself. But other people believed in me."

Now, that belief is no longer borrowed.

In the space between research and responsibility, Mpho Kotlolo is building something rare; a future where innovation remembers the most vulnerable, and where science is not just discovery, but a promise kept.

My journey has been a challenge, there were moments when I didn't believe in myself. But other people believed in me."





Champions for Entrepreneurship: Your university, your impact



Written by Janine Greenleaf Walker a contract writer for Universities South Africa.

Nelson Mandela University's Africa Hub took the EDHE Champion Award, in recognition of the institution's exceptional support for entrepreneurship development, and Stellenbosch University's LaunchLab was named the runner-up. The EDHE Champion Award was a new category launched for the 2025 cycle to recognise teams and institutions rather than individual leaders. The winner receives R10 000 for their institution and a trophy.

The Mandela University Africa Hub (MUAH) was founded in 2024 to drive entrepreneurship and social innovation across the continent. Dr Thobekani Lose (above), a senior researcher, is its director. Over the past two years, MUAH raised close to R10 million, 65% of which went to the development of small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs).

MUAH actively promotes entrepreneurial development. It has developed a policy that allows students to operate businesses on campus while employing other students. Business ventures on the Gqeberha and George campuses include tutoring services, website development, food vendors, fashion stores and more. To operate a business on campus, students must sign a lease agreement with the university and pay a rental fee.

This is not MUAH's first accolade this year: Dr Lose was the winner of the prestigious Hult Prize SA 2024/2025 University Entrepreneurship Co-ordinators' Award at the South African National Showcase.

Dr Lose said the university was honoured for the work that the Africa Hub is doing.

"Entrepreneurship and incubation are the spark of higher education life. They transform universities from institutions that produce employment-seeking graduates into hubs that cultivate innovators and job creators. Championed by our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sibongile Muthwa, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: People and Operations, Luthando Jack, we are committed to being an entrepreneurial university."

He said his university would be launching the Chancellor's Entrepreneurship Fund in 2026. This is a legacy initiative inspired by Chancellor Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi's enduring commitment to nurturing innovation and empowering the next generation of African changemakers.



The Stellenbosch University (SU) LaunchLab, which began operations in 2013, empowers the institution's entrepreneurial community to grow impactful, sustainable and profitable businesses. It also curates access to market and funding opportunities. Since 2015, the LaunchLab has incubated more than 400 businesses and raised over R980 million in capital. It boasts a R1.5 billion turnover derived from its portfolio of services and former incubatees.

Other nominees in the EDHE Champion Award category were the University of Mpumalanga's Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (UMPCFERI); the Tshwane University of Technology's ICT Student Teams; the University of Cape Town's MedTech EMECR team; the University of Limpopo's Technology Transfer Office, and the Vaal University of Technology's ENACTUS team.



WINNERS HIGHLIGHTS

The EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity is a platform designed to identify, recognise, and showcase the top student entrepreneurs at South African public universities. The primary objective is to encourage entrepreneurship, a valuable skill for students to develop, and inspire universities to support student businesses. The competition is an excellent opportunity for students to learn from the perspectives of entrepreneurs and investors, gain valuable guidance, and obtain a great learning experience.

The competition is designed with four distinct categories, providing opportunities for diverse groups of innovative students to participate and benefit. The competition invites studentpreneurs to submit their entries in one of the following categories:

- Category 1: Existing Business - Tech - Designed for businesses that primarily create and develop innovative technology.
- Category 2: Existing Business - Social Impact - Focuses on businesses that leverage research, innovation, and technology to address social, environmental, or community challenges while generating profit.
- Category 3: Existing Business - General - Invites businesses with a proven track record of success, established products or services, and align with one or more of the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Category 4: Research-Based Business renamed Commercialisation of Academic Research in 2025. - Targets Master's or PhD entrepreneurs who transform scientific and technology-driven experimental academic research into viable commercial ventures. Research should have been accepted by an authorised South African academic or research institution.



Submissions since 2019:

- 26 Universities
- 1,155 (2019)
- 1,545 (2020)
- 1,468 (2021)
- 1,682 (2022)
- 1,266 (2023)
- 599 Existing Businesses (2024)



Mentorship

Annual business coaching & mentorship programme sponsored by the SAB Foundation.



Global Exposure

2022 & 2023 winners visited Switzerland to explore global partnerships.



Awards

- Category winners: R20,000 each
- 2x Social Impact runners-up: R10,000 each
- Overall winner: +R100,000



Opportunities

Finalists connect to funding pipelines like SAB Foundation, Hult Prize, EO Awards & more.



Total Impact

Over 7 years: R1,127,500 awarded to 51 high-potential entrepreneurs.



FEATURING ZANODUMO GODLIMPI

HOW A YOUNG RESEARCHER IS CHANGING LIVES, *One Step at a Time*

When Zanodumo Godlimpi stepped onto the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersvarsity stage in December 2025, he carried more than an idea. He carried the stories, struggles and hopes of thousands of people living with limb loss across South Africa, especially those in rural communities. By the time he walked off that stage at the National Finals and EDHE Awards, sponsored by the SAB Foundation, he had been crowned the EDHE Studentpreneur of the Year 2025.

But if you ask him how that moment felt, he will tell you that he is still trying to process what has happened.

"At first it felt unreal," he laughs. "The competition was tough. The level of innovation from the other students was exceptional. I would have never imagined that I would emerge as Studentpreneur of the Year."

A Rural Heart, A Global Problem

Born in eBizana and raised in small rural towns between the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, Zanodumo's worldview is rooted in the lived experiences of rural communities. He speaks about them without romanticising or pitying, just with pure clarity and opportunity.

"These are the places that I know. These are the people whom I understand," he says.

"Naturally, when I think about solving problems, I think about them first."

And that is how his groundbreaking innovation, the Pneumatic Prosthetic Foot, was born.

Where Innovation Meets Humanity

As part of his Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics training at Walter Sisulu University, Zanodumo spent years working directly with patients. One recurring complaint kept surfacing during his clinical interviews: people who wear below-the-knee and/or above-the-knee prosthetic legs noted that walking down a hill feels unstable, and in the same sentiment, walking uphill feels like the prosthetic leg pushes back, which gives resistance – this makes both forms of casual walking a difficult experience.

In other words, prosthetic feet are not designed for African terrain. Dust. Uneven roads. Mud. Slopes. None of the high-end prosthetic feet on the global market could withstand these realities, and the few that could were so expensive that neither rural South African patients nor the public health system could afford them.

"That's when I asked myself, why don't we have prosthetic limbs that adapt to our environment?" he says.

"We focus so much on the science that we forget the impact. That moment reminded me what this is all about."

FEATURING ZANODUMO GODLIMPI

Using money from his book allowance, Zanodumo bought a basic pneumatic cylinder and started experimenting in the biomechanics lab. That tiny purchase turned into a proof-of-concept, and eventually into a fully functional prototype after his team received R485,000 in seed funding from TIA.

The result?

A prosthetic foot that simulates natural ankle movement using pneumatics, adapts to uneven terrain, and keeps costs low and maintenance simple.

It is, quite literally, engineered for the African environment.

The Moment of Truth

When asked when he realised the idea had real potential, his response doesn't talk about data, funding, or accolades. He talks about his patients.

One particular patient of his had struggled for years to walk up the hill leading to his home. After fitting the pneumatic foot during a pilot test, something remarkable happened: he walked uphill smoothly, naturally – which was something he had not been able to do in years.

The man looked at Zanodumo and simply said, "Ndiyahamba. I am (really) walking."

"That moment stuck with me," he recalls, voice softening. "We focus so much on the science that we forget the impact. That moment reminded me of what the real potential is for people in marginalised communities."

From Researcher to Entrepreneur

Zanodumo admits he never saw himself as a businessperson.

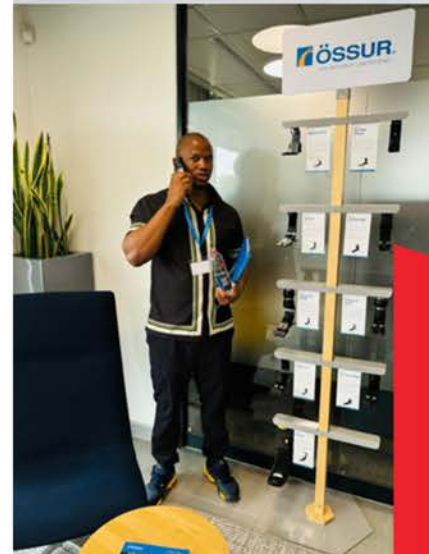
"I still struggle to call myself an entrepreneur," he says. "I see myself as a researcher... a problem-solver." The EDHE journey changed him. Through the EDHE Entrepreneurship Interschool journey, he learned to pitch, translate technical brilliance into a business narrative, and understand how to price, scale, and structure a start-up.

Most importantly, he learned that in entrepreneurship, confidence can be just as powerful as capability.

"The toughest part for me was explaining the business side. I was deeply engaged in research and impact, rather than focusing on revenue models. But this programme and journey taught me how to bridge that gap."

He credits the judges' feedback, the pitching masterclasses, and the broader EDHE community for shaping the version of himself that walked onto the national stage.

"There is a confidence that one gains from pitching in front of hundreds of people. You can't buy this anywhere."



"I see myself as a problem-solver. I'm here to serve underserved communities with real, meaningful solutions."

FEATURING ZANODUMO GODLIMPI

**A Legacy Bigger Than Business**

For Zanodumo, at the heart of everything he builds is a simple, unwavering belief: Mobility is a human right.

"If it were up to me," he shares, "everyone would walk comfortably, whether they have money or not. Mobility allows you to experience the world. When you can't move freely, you only experience the small space in front of you."

He has seen this limitations first-hand. Week after week, patient after patient, he has listened to stories of people whose lives shrink because they can't walk the way they want to or used to. People navigating rural hills, unpredictable ground, dust roads, and rough terrain, without tools designed for their reality.

And with every breakthrough, every setback, every late night in the lab, he carries the weight of the people who are waiting. After his work began trending online, amputees from across his region started messaging him, each carrying their own hopes that his prototype might one day change their lives.

"That pressure keeps me going," he admits. "When people believe a solution is coming, you can't just leave them hanging. I need to have an answer, even on the days I can't see the finish line."

It's the kind of pressure most studentpreneurs face. But this is also the kind of purpose that separates a business idea from a calling.

For Zanodumo, success is measured in: the stories of seeing a man conquering a hill he once avoided, in a child one day recognising their prosthetic as something fun, familiar, even heroic, and in communities that no longer feel forgotten by innovation.

This is the legacy he's building, one that stretches far beyond laboratories, competitions or awards.

And that is why he stands as the **EDHE Studentpreneur of the Year 2025**. Not because he engineered a device.

But because he engineered hope, and offered it to the people who need it most.



"I never imagined winning. The level of innovation in the competition was incredible."

EDHE2025

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OCTOBER - DECEMBER TIMELINE

EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba & EDHE Lekgotla

6-9 October

EDHE Learning & Teaching Excellence Awards 2025: Round 4, Showcasing & presentations of the top 5 Case Studies to Judges at the EDHE Lekgotla

8-9 October

EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity Finals

24 November

EDHE Absa Innovation Challenge Finals

24 November

Annual EDHE Awards (University Entrepreneurship Champion Award 2025, L&T Excellence Awards 2025 winners, Entrepreneurship Intervarsity 2025 Winners)

26 November

#Entrepreneurship4Sustainability

Disclaimer

The dates provided in the EDHE timeline can be subject to change. Adjustments may occur due to unforeseen circumstances, operational requirements, or other factors beyond our control. We recommend checking for updates regularly or contacting the team for the latest information.

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