New tech institution opens for coders

Arlene Mulder, Camille Agon, Justinus Adriaanse and Yossi Hasson founded WeThinkCode_, a newly established tech institution, as 70,000 jobs in South Africa remain vacant due to a skills shortage of coders.

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It is an innovative tech institution dedicated to transforming technology education in order to bridge the gap between undeveloped talent and the IT skills shortage in South Africa. In partnership with Ecole 42 in France, WeThinkCode_ will train world-class software engineers in a peer-to-peer problem solving learning environment over a period of two years.

Ten hours a day, six days a week, students learn to think and write code, by solving increasingly difficult programming challenges via the school's intranet. Promoting the virtues of creative thinking, problem solving and collaboration, the institution aims to produce developers that are self-motivated, well rounded in all aspects of software engineering and willing to work hard.

The founders officially launched the campus late last week and announced the 120 coders who will be the first to complete their two-year course.

"We aim to equip students with the skills to become world class digital problem solvers. We are pleased to reveal the most

talented coders who partook in an intense selection process and have succeeded to become the first to experience our two-year peer-to-peer digital training," says Agon.

The institution received over 30,000 applications for the selection process, which opened in October 2015. Only 2% of the entrants passed both online qualifying assessments. From this, 300 candidates were selected to participate in one of three, four-week long boot-camp sessions.

Mulder adds, "This event would not have been possible if it were not for the support of our 26 corporate sponsors and three founding sponsors (FNB, BBD and Derivco, a leading developer of software for the online gaming industry) that have not only raised R13 million to support our vision but also care about making digital skills transfer a reality.

"Computer programmers are going to be designing the future Africa. We aim to grow the institution annually, offering an opportunity for women and men from all backgrounds to apply for this program. In order to ensure that we create a future world that works for all of us we would like to encourage more corporates to join as sponsors," concludes Mulder.

WeThinkCode_ aims to democratise education by removing barriers to access and providing opportunity to all young South Africans. The program is tuition-free and open to all talented and resilient candidates aged 17 to 35, regardless of previous education, socio-economic background or financial means.

It is a non-profit social enterprise and collaborates with South African corporates to ensure a sustainable business model. Corporate sponsors benefit from being able to identify and access exceptional human capital and IT expertise. For more information on sponsorship, email Arlene Mulder at Arlene@wethinkcode.co.za. for more information, go to www.wethinkcode.co.za.