

VUT students win in Intervarsity Entrepreneurship Competition 2021

By Qhawekazi Memani, issued by Vaal University of Technology

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The Intervarsity Entrepreneurship Competition took place on Saturday, 10 July 2021. There were a variety of categories in which students from 26 public universities participated. Four students from the Vaal University of Technology won awards.



Top left: Tshepo Dlamini; bottom left: Mpho Qhubu; top right: Lehlohonolo Colline Moreki; and bottom right: Nkosinathi Ndala

The Entrepreneurship Intervarsity Competition guidelines stipulates how students are identified and recognised by showcasing their businesses. The competition provides an opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs to pitch their innovative business ideas.

The four VUT award-winners are aiming for the National Competition scheduled to take place in August 2021.

In the category for innovative ideas, VUT has Tshepo Dlamini in first place and Nkosinathi Ndala second place.

“As we grow and get exposure to different elements of life, we develop the drive to innovate and dream. We all have dreams, we will live them of course,” says Dlamini.

Dlamini, a third-year public relations management student, recalls that as he registered his business idea in the

entrepreneurship development in higher education (EDHE), in the category of new business idea, he already had this magnificent idea within him. Although he did not reveal its name before entering the competition.

The idea is driven by what he studied in communication sciences and integrated marketing communication. He saw a gap in the communication spectrum and concluded that advanced transport communication is the best way to fill the gap. He believes that the idea stands out because of the innovative ability it contained in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

After winning the internal round, Dlamini gives credit to all the participants and Ma'am Onica Matsheke. "Without their coaching and best pitches, it would have been difficult for me to simplify this humongous idea I had in my small mind," he said with excitement in his eyes. His next objective is to attract investors that will help him to grow his business.

As someone who primarily enjoys giving advice, Dlamini's words to Innovators and business owners: "Nothing is impossible until it is done, invest in time as procrastination is the thief of time."

Nkosinathi Ndala, a second-year information technology student, came second in the category of new business idea.

Ndala's business stems from problems that he noticed in his neighbourhood where he grew up. Teachers were being attacked and learners were failing in large numbers. Some of those who matriculated were walking in the streets aimlessly. Ndala identified this gap and came up with a solution to address these societal problems.

Ndala is the owner of a business named Ezamaguduva, which means 'competition'. It started as a competition that helped learners to improve their grades as well as enhancing teaching skills of educators.

Ndala's goal is to see our country being developed economically through education and business. He is grateful for the opportunity presented to him through this competition. He is of the view that if the world's issues seem too big to tackle, the best approach will be to take it one step at a time.

"My objective for the future is to improve my business idea and create more opportunities for communities. One thing I've gained from this competition is the importance of believing in yourself and a persistent attitude," said Ndala.

Winning under the existing business category, we have Mpho Qhubu in first place and Lehlohonolo Moreki in second place.

Qhubu is an m-tech in chemistry student, currently waiting to graduate in September.

She is the founder and owner of Qhubu Supplies. "I manufacture liquid hand sanitisers, home fragrance diffusers, car fresheners and cleaning detergents. It has always been my dream to start a manufacturing company and practically apply what I learned in chemistry. The initial plan was to register my business in 2017 when I lost my job. Back then, I was still studying for my BTech. I had hope that I would probably get another job and focus on that. However, the following year, I decided to enrol for my master's degree with no hope of employment. I guess I kept my focus on completing my studies up until 2020 when the global pandemic hit. I remember when we went on lockdown, we did not have sanitisers, so I decided to make a 5L liquid sanitiser for my family and friends and they loved it so much. They loved how good it smelled, how smooth it was on their hands. Then in January 2021 I decided to register my business and start selling my own hand sanitisers and that is how it all started. Driven by good scent and profit made from the sanitisers, that's how I introduced the home fragrance diffusers and car fresheners," she notes.



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Qhubu would like to grow her business so that she can create employment opportunities for her fellow friends who are also

graduates: “There’s nothing as exhausting and depressing as studying with no hope of building a career path or getting employment so that you could provide for your family. It is as though your degree is useless. So, I am working extra hard so that I can give hope to other graduates and families and create a brand for the people. I hope to see this little business of mine grow into a huge manufacturing factory,” she said.

This win has motivated Qhubu to never give up. When she entered the competition, she had given up: “I had no hope at all. It felt like all that I have put in to start the business was for nothing. I could not see the pathway. But talking to other entrepreneurs, receiving training and motivation from Mrs Matsheke and others really revived some hope within me. It shows that I am on the right track,” she says.

She concluded by saying: “Never ever give up. Slow process is still a progress. The little that you are doing will eventually show and the progress will build up. One day it will all make sense... Keep on keeping on, believe in your dreams, they matter.”

Second winner Lehlohonolo Colline Moreki is a third-year human resources student and a founder of Moreshy Clothing. Moreki is also a fashion design graduate at VUT. “During my studies, I have learned that as a designer, I am the brand and I should have my own niche, while producing what my clients require,” he says.

The brand name Moreshy comes from his surname Moreki. The brand started in 2018 at Sebokeng when he came across a few individuals who are disabled, oversized body types and pregnant women struggling to get the right fit. Seeing them smile after designing for them gave me joy and the brand was more focused on them, while also producing ready to wear and haute couture for men and women, brought hope for my brand.

“My goal is to design good quality and comfortable clothing for people with disabilities, create employment for graduates from various fields, e.g. photography, graphic design, public relations, HR, fashion, engineering and more, as well as to create a platform for all entrepreneurs to get their work out there through organised trade shows, social markets and fashion shows. Most importantly is to have a positive impact in the fashion industry globally,” Moreki said.

Moreki feels blessed and is grateful for this opportunity. “I feel like there is more to this vision as it is going to help my clients and the society. This competition has taught me a lot in terms of business planning and management and conducting proper business research. The main step from now on is having a proper studio, increasing sales, catering for specific needs of my clients, creating employment and uplifting other entrepreneurs by creating a trading platform for them.”

Moreki advises fellow entrepreneurs: “Don’t place all your eggs in one basket, diversify. Explore other valuable sister products or services you can offer to attract and retain clientele. Not only will this increase your revenue, but it will also continue to generate additional revenue during seasonal dips. Another advantage in offering more than one specialty is that you can cross-market, giving consumers more value for their purchase while increasing your bottom line.”

Thrilled by the work done by the students, Ms Onica Matsheke who is a lecturer in logistics and supply chain management and EDHE coordinator at VUT, wishes the students the best of luck and hope to see more students participating in such competitions because it does not only give them valuable life/business training but exposes them to investors as well.

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