

Taking SA wine to the next level

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UCT programme to focus on the business aspect of wine to build a competitive industry in SA

The University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) is re-launching its pioneering Wine Business Management Programme, the only course of its kind focusing on the business aspect of wine in South Africa.

The postgraduate diploma in management practice fills a critical gap in the wine education industry, which has largely been focused on the technical aspects of wine making. According to Jonathan Steyn, convener of the programme, it is designed to equip wine industry leaders with the business acumen and skills necessary to make their organisations more competitive and innovative in a tough global environment.

"Although the SA wine industry is one of the most established in the world, wine business leaders are struggling to cope with some of the challenges confronting the industry," says Steyn.

Michael Fridjohn, wine industry expert and a visiting professor at the UCT GSB agrees. "In the post-1994 period the South African wine industry has seen its exports increase more than 20-fold in as many years. Now, more than ever, its senior managers need the business skills to build on our competitive advantage, to lift average price points and to make the most of the undoubted value inherent in Cape wine," he says.

Steyn says that key challenges include the fact that the industry is still adjusting to its readmission to African and global markets. "This period of re-legitimising SA wine products has been characterised by high levels of growth off a low base, adaptation to new techniques and quality innovations, and the emergence of new markets and competitors. At the same time the potential threat of climate change, global changes in wine consumer sensibilities and an imperative to build an inclusive industry that contributes to social upliftment while reducing the impact of commercial wine growing on the environment makes this a tough market to be in," he says.

The GSB programme begins with a focus on personal development to cultivate delegates' value systems and leadership skills. Delegates also gain practical business acumen and management techniques, while being immersed in the practical and sensorial aspects of winemaking.

"The greatest need in the industry is to cultivate skilled, values-based leaders with a holistic vision and the practical savoir-faire to cope with the demand of operating a wine business in fast changing emerging and global markets," says Steyn.

According to Steyn, too often leaders emerge from the production side of the wine industry, not possessing the necessary business acumen to be effective, or the industry recruits leaders from outside of the wine industry who have the business acumen but not the knowledge of the industry.

"Up to now, graduates seeking entry into the industry or start up wine business or those wanting to move into a leadership role have been at a loss as to where to develop their skills. The GSB postgraduate diploma is, at last, offering the industry a clear skills development trajectory," he says.

Walter Baets, Director of the GSB and Allan Gray Chair in Values-Based Leadership says: "This programme is a stepping stone for SA wine and will ensure it can grow its own timber and foster an industry that is inclusive and sustainable as well as world-class and competitive."

The programme draws on a mix of top academics and business practitioners to deliver the material. It comprises four

modules over 12 months. Each module is an eight-day contact period and involves an integrated case study, where delegates can demonstrate their learning. Modules include: wine business management, business acumen and techniques to be an efficient and effective manager, values-based leadership, and business model innovation.

For more information on the Postgraduate Diploma in Management Practice specialising in Wine Business Management please contact Ann Wium on ann.wium@gsb.uct.ac.za or on 021 406 1214. Applications close on 5 May.
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