

18 November 2021

Public universities deploy their 28 enterprising best in the 2021 Entrepreneurship Intersarsity finals

When Friday, 19 November comes to an end, budding student entrepreneurs in South Africa's public university system will know who the best in entrepreneurial practice are, in 2021. By sunset that day, winners in the four contested categories of the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity 2021 national finals will have been announced and so will the winner of the 2021 Studentpreneur of the Year Award. This, as the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EHDE) programme completes its third annual EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity in 2021.

The 28 young men and women – representing 18 of the 26 SA public universities – who were selected from among 150 contestants in the regional rounds, will descend on the Premier Hotel on the East Rand in Gauteng this Thursday, to pitch their respective businesses to a panel of five judges. The four categories under consideration are:

Category 1: Innovative Business ideas (eight finalists)

Category 2: Existing Business – Tech (six finalists)

Category 3: Existing Business – Social Impact (seven finalists)

Category 4: Existing Business — General (seven finalists)

Out of the winners of these four categories, the judges will further select the winning business, and the student behind it will be named the 2021 Studentpreneur of the Year. According to Dr Norah Clarke, Director: Entrepreneurship, the institution that produced the 2021 Studentpreneur of the Year will automatically be pronounced the Winning University for 2021. Alongside a prize of R20 000 waiting to be won in each of the four categories, all finalists' eyes are fixed on the ultimate R100 000 that the 2021 Studentpreneur of the Year will walk away with.

Third Annual EDHE Awards

The national finals of the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity 2021 will be followed by the third annual EDHE Awards event, at which occasion the coveted EDHE DVC Award will be bestowed upon the Deputy Vice-Chancellor recognised as the most supportive of their institution's entrepreneurship development initiatives this year, including student entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship through teaching, learning and research; and developing an entrepreneurial university. Such a DVC will be selected from among the six nominations received in 2021. Another Deputy Vice-Chancellor will walk away with the Rising Star EDHE DVC Award for having made the most remarkable progress in entrepreneurship development at their institution in 2021.

Also to be acknowledged for their contributions to entrepreneurship development at all institutions are the chairpersons and deputy chairs of all five national EDHE Communities of Practice – collectively the engine room that co-ordinates and supports the entrepreneurship programme at all universities, each from its distinct focus area (student entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship



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learning and teaching; entrepreneurial universities; entrepreneurship research; and EDHE Studentpreneurs).

The EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity finals, held at the close of each calendar year, represent the culmination of a process that starts with student enterprises competing within their individual institutions in the first quarter of the year. Winners at the institutional level go on to compete in six regions at the regional level by mid-year, from which the finalists are selected to proceed to Gauteng, the zenith of the process.

The EDHE programme, founded in 2016, is a partnership between Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The goals of this programme are to develop **student entrepreneurship** by mobilising students to create successful enterprises that will ultimately lead to wealth and job creation; **entrepreneurship in academia** by supporting academics in instilling an entrepreneurial mindset in their students through offering relevant knowledge, transferring practical skills and promoting the application of business principles across all disciplines; and **developing entrepreneurial universities** by deliberately creating an entrepreneurial culture in an environment that fosters innovation and entrepreneurialism.

On the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity 2021, Professor Ahmed Bawa, CEO of Universities South Africa, says it is most gratifying to see that all 26 public universities have since 2019 produced students bold enough to compete in this annual event. Although **not** all institutions make it to the finals, their students nonetheless get to learn from the experience and go on to refine their craft. “Any failed attempt yields critical learnings, which, when applied diligently, enable our students to acquire the competence it takes to run and sustain successful businesses.”

Dr Clarke says she is proud to acknowledge four institutions making it to the finals for the first time since the inception of the Intervarsity in 2019. These are the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the Mangosuthu University of Technology, the University of the Western Cape and Walter Sisulu University. Highfliers witnessed over the three years include the University of Cape Town, which has produced up to 11 finalists since 2019; Nelson Mandela University generated eight and the Durban University of Technology, seven. The Central University of Technology, the University of Limpopo and the University of the Witwatersrand have each been graced by five finalists. Each of these three institutions has, at least once in the past two years, emerged with winners in some of the competing categories.

The EDHE Programme, mostly funded from the DHET’s University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), is now into its second funding cycle.

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