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## **Africa takes the lead in blockchain education through UCT–UZH partnership**



The Deep Dive into Blockchain Summer School brought world-class blockchain education from the University of Zurich to Cape Town over the mid-year winter break. Photo: Supplied

In a groundbreaking partnership, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of Zurich (UZH) joined forces to bring the renowned Deep Dive into Blockchain (DDiB) Summer School to African soil for the first time. Held from 30 June to 18 July, the DDiB Summer School took a highly interactive approach.

Hosted in UCT's [School of Economics](#) in the [Faculty of Commerce](#) classrooms, the programme welcomed 40 students from across the continent for on-campus sessions at Africa's leading university.

This distinctive educational experience was designed to provide students who could not travel to Switzerland with the opportunity to benefit from the institution's high-quality education and acquire skills that could enhance their career advancement.

Professor Eftychia Nikolaidou, head of UCT's School of Economics and interim South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Blockchain Technology, said that recognising the demand for blockchain education and the need for global accessibility through establishing an off-site campus at UCT allows the creation of impactful, sustainable links that advance cutting-edge research and foster global academic exchanges.

She added: "With this setup, students from Africa and geographically close regions, like the Middle East and South America, can obtain a top education that was previously only available in Switzerland. By lowering the barriers to entry for these students and expanding the capacity to accommodate participants, we are helping to create a more inclusive and diverse pool of blockchain expertise."

The DDiB Summer School in Cape Town is part of a broader academic partnership between UCT and UZH, anchored in the UCT-UZH Dual SARChI.

Professor Nikolaidou described the partnership as a strategic step toward advancing academic excellence while championing diversity and inclusion in this emerging field. "Partnering with the UZH Blockchain Center allows the creation of impactful, sustainable links that advance cutting-edge research and foster global academic exchanges. This approach optimises the project's impact by investing in talent development, education and collaborative initiatives that benefit both universities in the long run," she said.

The SARChI programme, supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), aims to encourage cross-continental research, enhance institutional connections and promote innovation in important, future-oriented fields, such as blockchain.

Jacqueline Friedenthal, the science and technology counsellor at the Embassy of Switzerland in Pretoria, said: "The Fourth Industrial Revolution is driving innovation in Africa at an exponential rate. There is so much opportunity here, and that is part of the reason why we chose to work with South Africa across the blockchain ecosystem, from research and innovation to education.

"The partnership started in 2007, with blockchain being an area we identified for collaboration in 2019, and it has gone from strength to strength since its inception. What I believe is particularly important about this relationship is that it can be used as a blueprint for other countries to collaborate with South Africa to drive progress in research, innovation and education on the African continent."

The course emphasised a transdisciplinary approach to blockchain by connecting its applications in economics, technology and law. By integrating these fields, students gained a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of blockchain. This approach equipped them to critically evaluate its design, implementation and broader societal impact.

"The programme was fantastic. It was a great learning experience that I wouldn't have had anywhere else, and I was able to build relationships that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to build anywhere else," said Precious Nhamo, an economics graduate from Stellenbosch University.

"I would definitely recommend the programme to anyone in any field who's curious about blockchain. It doesn't matter what industry you come from because there's always a possibility for an intersection between blockchain and your field," she added.

"Blockchain isn't just the future; it's the now in the tech space, so we as young people need to be knowledgeable about it."

Event organiser Karen Eksteen shared: "Blockchain is not only for coders, but for innovators and problem-solvers across all fields. It has a cross-disciplinary impact and offers emerging career opportunities. From digital identity solutions to sustainable supply chains, organisations need professionals who understand blockchain's implications in governance, risk management and strategy."

*Story by Nicole Forrest, UCT News*

**ENDS**

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