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20 February 2020

Tech giant gives R2.7 million boost to UCT students for ICT skills development

University of Cape Town (UCT) students have been awarded R2.7 million in bursaries to help create youth employment and bring more ICT skills to South Africa.

Multinational technology company, Huawei South Africa, has partnered with UCT to fund 15 students as part of the firm's external bursary programme. Bursaries are awarded to students in IT and electrical and mechanical engineering and cover accommodation, tuition and general living expenses. Once students graduate, they are given a chance to work at Huawei South Africa for a year.

Third-year BSc (Eng) Mechanical Engineering student, Yaseera Lockhat, was one of the recipients who applied after the Huawei South Africa bursary was advertised. She took a "leap of faith" and has now been afforded an "amazing" opportunity, she says.

"The bursary contract gives you funding for a year, covering tuition fees as well as other expenses. The condition is that you have to work for them for a minimum of 12 months and is subject to renewal. It's really great to have a bursary that gives you employment after graduation because in the job market at the moment there is very little development in South Africa and a lot of engineering companies are cutting back. So considering that they [Huawei] are giving bursaries is amazing. Having them on my CV and just being able to work for them as well as the learning experience, is invaluable," she says.

Nobi Rululu, funder liaison coordinator at UCT's Financial Aid Department, says that corporate bursary partnerships are crucial as they provide more opportunities - through financial support - for undergraduate and postgraduate students. "Huawei's external bursary support will facilitate financial assistance for students and help widen and diversify Huawei's talent pool. It focuses on attracting and facilitating the development of skills identified as scarce and critical in the IT fraternity. We truly appreciate the commitment from Huawei to capacity building and job creation for UCT students and the youth of South Africa," she says.

Mohammed Bismilla, graduate and bursary programme coordinator at Huawei South Africa, says that companies recruiting in South Africa often require work experience once

students complete their studies. "Huawei believes in investing in the youth because that is where we unlock potential. They are automatically placed into our graduate programme, which is very intense and tough to get into," he says. The selection criteria includes drive, a willingness to succeed, passion for the IT industry and a willingness to contribute back into South Africa. Students are required to maintain a 70% study aggregate. Although the bursary programme funds 47 students across the country, UCT has the bulk of the funding.

Jacqueline Ford, senior recruitment and allocation manager for Huawei South Africa, says the company believes in the transformation of youth especially with the high unemployment rate in the country. "We find it extremely important to give bursaries to deserving students. We also feel that skills transfer is extremely important. The financial contribution is just under R3 million that we are currently providing to UCT. It is, thus far, our biggest contribution. Across the board we have five universities but we found the majority of the talent at UCT," she says.

Management from Huawei recently attended the bursary award ceremony, which was held at UCT Careers Service.



UCT and Huawei officials with one of the bursary recipients

Photo: Lerato Maduna/UCT

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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