

# The THENSA-DSI 5 Day Entrepreneurship Training Programme

## Reignites Entrepreneurial Spirit in Pretoria!

Empowering the youth through entrepreneurship training programme is crucial for fostering innovation, economic growth, and social development. The Technological Higher Education Network South Africa (THENSA) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) play a pivotal role in bringing together student entrepreneurs across various South African universities in efforts to upskill them in entrepreneurship.



The THENSA-DSI programme equips young individuals with business economics skills and knowledge required to turn their ideas and businesses into successful ventures, encouraging self-reliance and creativity.

Twenty-nine student entrepreneurs were meticulously selected amongst hundreds of applicants to attend the THENSA-DSI 5 Day Entrepreneurship Training programme from 28 July 2024 – 2 August 2024 at the Protea Hotel in Pretoria Loftus Park. Students arrived on Sunday (28 July 2024) where their induction took place before the week of intensive training ahead.



The training programme hosted students from the University of Venda (UNIVEN), University of Mpumalanga (UM), University of Pretoria (UP), University of Limpopo (UL), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

Entrepreneurship training helps bridge the gap between education and employment, reducing youth unemployment rates and stimulating local economies. The 5-day training programme provided students access to resources, mentorship, and real-world experiences.

The student entrepreneur group comprised of students from diploma to doctoral level, from those who have project ideas to those who have registered functioning companies. Vani Moodley and Associates facilitated the training, providing vital learning and coaching sessions to the student entrepreneurs.

The intensive weeks preparations led up to the Dragons Den where students presented their business or project ideas to a group of panellists which consisted of Brigitte Binneman (Deputy Director: Innovation Instruments) from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), Ashley Peters (Key Account Suites Manager) and Tsholofelo Makope (Branch Manager) from Access Bank, and Dr Siyaze Gantsho (Business Advisor) from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

It was indeed excellent to see the student entrepreneurs use all the skills learnt from the training programme during their pitches and taking the panellists feedback to heart.



Kogie Pretorius with student entrepreneurs

Special awards were presented, and the *Most Innovative and Creative Business Concept Award* went to Nothile Ngema (winner) from University of Limpopo for her AI E-Aggrandizer Company and to Jessica Meier (runner up) from the University of Pretoria for her Coffee Passport project idea. Next award presented was the *Most Financially Viable Business Innovation Award* which went to Thabang Ngwenya from the University of Pretoria for his company Infinite Vumisa Agro. The final award presented was for the *Highest Growth Potential Business Innovation Award* which went to Amukelani Chauke (winner) from the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University for his company Solberb and Marize' Cuyler (runner-up) from the University of Pretoria for her company Valoren Cosmetics. A huge congratulations to all our awardees for such a great achievement!

Panelist Brigiette Binneman from the Department of Science and Innovation mentioned that ***“It’s always great to see young minds with such innovative ideas. Theres a lot of potential in some of the ideas presented and students need to stay on course and push through. Some will still need to refine their ideas, and some are ready for the market. I highly motivate them to stay on the entrepreneurship journey, know who their competitors are and indicate clearly what their niche or market is, in their chosen industry. There are endless opportunities for the youth out there, they should grab them and turn their dreams into reality.”***

Furthermore, panelist Dr Siyaze Gantsho from the Small Enterprise Development Agency said ***“Our focus as SEDA is to assist those who want to start a business. Young people of South Africa are so brilliant and intelligent, the business and project ideas presented today truly indicate that as a country we are in good hands, I as a judge learnt a lot. I would also like to encourage the students to continue to focus on market research as they continue their business journey. They can also call us or come to our offices during weekdays, and we can assist them. Continuous learning and improvement are key and will help the student entrepreneurs remain relevant and sustainable during their business endeavours.”***

Through entrepreneurship, young people can harness their potential, contribute to their communities, and build a brighter future for themselves and others.

We asked one of the winners Amukelani Chauke who is a medical student at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University to share about his experience at the THENSA-DSI entrepreneurship programme, this is what he had to say, ***“No risk, no story... but the risk must be well calculated! I have learned a lot at the 5-day entrepreneurship workshop. What I grabbed the most is that teamwork is key in the business world. I also got to portray myself in the role of leadership and I am glad I got the chance to meet with smart innovative minds as well as the wonderful team from Vani Moodley and Associates. This experience is worth no known financial price because the biggest gain was the opportunity to network and learn from potential partners and newfound friends. Shout out to THENSA!”***

Deonisia Brito, a Diploma in Entrepreneurship student from Tshwane University of Technology had this to share about her experience at the programme, ***“The entrepreneurship training workshop ignited my entrepreneurial spirit, transforming my approach from simply being self-employed to redefining my value proposition to answer a bigger ‘why’ that drives meaningful impact in society”***.

Filled with newfound confidence and multiple entrepreneurship tools in their toolbox, this programme not only cultivates innovative entrepreneurs, but also is a network hub for shared skills and mentorship.

Moreover, this programme nurtures a generation of leaders who can address global challenges, driving sustainable development, and creating positive social change.



*THENSA-DSI student entrepreneur group*