

New research director to drive top-class research at GSB

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The new research director at Africa's top business school, the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, believes that the school can do even more to promote research that can change the world.

"Academics should strive to do research that deals with real challenges and opportunities in society," says Dr Stephanie Giamporcaro, 36, senior lecturer and the new research director at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB).

"Meaningful research is very important at the GSB. The school, which is one of just 60 around the world to have triple-crown accreditation, participates and collaborates at an international level," says Dr Giamporcaro. This necessitates a strong research mission that is in line with the business school's vision, which is to become a leading business school in emerging economies through a values-based and sustainable business approach.

"Excellence in research and teaching are the fundamental pillars of the UCT GSB," says the school's director, Professor Walter Baets. "We aim to both raise the profile of emerging market business schools as centres of excellence and thought leadership, and provide students, both local and from all over the world, with the knowledge and skills to take on the challenges of this, the emerging market decade."

He says appointing Dr Giamporcaro to the position of research director is a key part of this process. "Dr Giamporcaro has proven herself as a researcher of distinction and has been very active in various research projects at the school."

Dr Giamporcaro came to the business school in October 2011 as a senior lecturer in finance. She has been very involved in research initiatives, like the PhD programme and research design and methodology workshop.

Promoting PhD students and developing them into world-class researchers with a passion for research, is one of her objectives. "PhD students should graduate from the GSB not only with an internationally recognised PhD qualification, demonstrating thought leadership in their area of specialisation, but also a broader understanding of and love for research," she says, adding that they must not only be able to make original contributions to theory, but also be able to address practical, social or organisational challenges.

"We also want to motivate and encourage more faculty members to explore their fields of interest within their study areas and consider research projects, whether they are books, journal submissions or other kinds of articles."

Research at the UCT GSB has gone from strength to strength in recent years and in 2013 faculty published a record 45 publications of which 40 were accredited publications and 27 were journal papers. Publishing academic research is important, says Dr Giamporcaro as it stimulates more research and improves the standing of the school.

This month, Dr Giamporcaro in collaboration with the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship published the Africa Investment for Impact barometer, a vital publication for the business world offering a snapshot of the investment for impact market.

Her particular field of interest is responsible investment - which relates to all three clusters of research at the school - social innovation and sustainability, values-based leadership and emerging market finance, investment and trade. One element of her research looks at the extent to which individuals in South Africa control or play a part in the way their pensions and savings contributions are used and invested by the companies they work for.

She is fascinated by how disconnected many people are from the money they invest in savings and retirement funds. "We buy organic food, we try to live healthy lives but we don't apply those same principles to our investment money," she says. This money could have either a positive or negative influence on the world we live in. The potential for responsible investment to change the social and business landscape in South Africa is vast, she believes.

She says other faculty members at the UCT GSB are working on similarly interesting research projects. "We try to use our expertise as researchers to mainstream certain ideas and develop them into usable frameworks for business and people in organisations. We want to be engaged with business in bringing about change for more responsible and ethical business choices."

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