

# UCT GSB launches state-of-the-art academic conference centre

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*Modern academic conference centre opening on the GSB campus in the Waterfront precinct will expand UCT's ability to host sizeable international delegations in line with global best practice.*



*Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng*

The UCT Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) launched its state-of-the-art academic conference centre on the GSB campus in the Waterfront precinct this week. The centre will enhance the school's ability to convene thought leadership conferences and host sizeable international delegations.

With an increasing need for large events focused on research and academic themes, the limited scale of existing facilities hampered the UCT GSB's ability to host modern conferences on the more than 100-year-old heritage site. The academic conference centre is specifically planned to conform to the requirements of a technologically advanced era in academic and research circles.

Addressing guests at the launch event, UCT GSB interim director, Associate Professor Kosheek Sewchurran said, "This is a fantastic new venue that is going to be an asset not just to the business school and the university, but to the City of Cape Town more broadly. In this space, we want to significantly raise the level of academic engagement on issues pertinent to the business success of South Africa and the African continent."

Guest speaker UCT Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng added, "This space, with its facilities for different sizes of groups, reminds us that the GSB's growth has always been across borders - not so much geographic borders as mental boundaries. In a world that is advancing so rapidly in technology, we need to set aside time and space to examine how we can steer that world to address the frightening growth of populism, inequality and poverty.

"I want to take this opportunity to ask that UCT use this space specifically to address how South Africans can benefit from the approach of the fourth industrial revolution, how we can reduce the equality gap and address the need for jobs and new business and technology sectors to harness the energy of our talented and energetic youth.

“With this new facility, the GSB Academic Conference Centre, we are providing a meeting place for thought leadership on these and other issues. This is a place where leaders and future leaders, across South Africa and the world, can come together in a comfortable and welcoming environment, to discuss ways to create the world we want to live in and the world we want our children to live in. This is a place where I expect to see change created.”



*Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng*

The venue has been designed on three levels; the basement houses an auditorium with a seating capacity of 250 people, making it suitable for larger seminars and big groups. On the ground and first floors there are several multi-purpose flat venues which can operate either as independent spaces accommodating around 70 people, or the entire area can be opened out to cater for bigger functions, which can host up to 300 people. There are also a number of smaller breakaway rooms for delegates for smaller gatherings. The entire facility has a capacity of 750 to 900 people at any one time.

The auditorium is named after the late Kate Jowell, the 6th director of the UCT GSB (from 1993 to 1998) and the first, and so far only, woman to have held this role. She has been described as “a brilliant thinker” whose high-profile career included being one of the first editors of women’s magazine Fair Lady and a pioneering labour specialist, who initiated significant advances in labour law and industrial relations in South Africa at the height of industrial unrest in the 1980s. She was also a highly regarded business academic. The donation made by the family will also provide for three bursaries in her name – and one in her husband Neil’s name – in perpetuity.

The conference centre will be available for hire by outside parties - its location in the Waterfront precinct offering obvious attractions. The centre will be operated by Marriott hotels.

Financing for the R130m centre was organised via the Development Bank of Africa and other stakeholders.

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