

Scholarship programme to foster a more just, inclusive and sustainable Africa

Issued by [UCT Graduate School of Business](#)

23 Oct 2020

The Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship aims to support a cohort of new leaders across the African continent with its scholarship programme, commencing in 2021.

Applications for the Bertha Scholarship, offered by the Bertha Centre at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) since its inception in 2011, are still open and will close on 31 October. The Bertha Scholarship is offered to innovators, entrepreneurs, out-of-the-box thinkers, system-entrepreneurs, change-makers, social activists and cross-disciplinary candidates from any field provided they are actively involved in the exploration of social, environmental and/or economic justice using innovative approaches.

In doing so, the centre aims to diversify the student body at the UCT GSB, by enabling scholars who might not have been able to study at the institution and investing in their journey to increase their social impact as their career evolves.

The Bertha Scholarship covers full or partial costs of the MBA (both full-time and the modular programme) and MPhil in Inclusive Innovation programmes at the UCT GSB. Bertha Scholars are selected on the basis of their track record of social justice, innovation and entrepreneurialism in their work experience, eligibility for the programme of their choice at the UCT GSB, character and capacity that the scholarship will catalyse their trajectory and careers.

“We seek to provide scholarships to individuals who aren’t focused solely on advancing their career, but on using the degree as a catalyst for the impact of their own work,” says Fergus Turner, programme manager and advisor at the Bertha Centre. “We support students financially so they’re able to take time off work to study, and we bring them access to these networks, and build what really is a blossoming community of entrepreneurs across the continent. The goal is to support research that is focused on social innovation that is for socio-economic justice.”

Turner says the Bertha Centre strives to ensure the incoming cohort represents a diversity of experience, language, race and gender. “We want an alumni network that is representative of a diverse set of viewpoints, perspectives and experiences in broader society.”

Recognising the interest in building a scholar community and network of alumni across the continent as a progression of the Scholarship Programme, the Bertha Centre has invested in community events that seek to address scholars’ needs. “Being a scholar is about joining a collective, as much as it is about propelling your own professional and personal trajectory,” adds Turner. Bertha Scholars will join a community of over 60 Scholars and Alumni who make up a mutually supportive and resourceful network of change-makers. This community continues to grow and evolve, becoming an empowering launch pad for anyone wishing to engage in systemic change and social innovation allied with like-minded innovators from across Africa.

“Covid-19 has exacerbated the devastating consequences of an unequal society,” says Solange Rosa, Director of the Bertha Centre. “Across the world, people are responding to these stark inequalities in startling new ways. In the past few months, we’ve seen a flowering of social innovation at all levels of society from government and big business, to the community and individual as people reach out to help. Many of these innovations have the potential to change South Africa’s social landscape, not as temporary measures, but as long-term solutions. Now more than ever we need new leaders in business, public sector and academic institutions alike – that can pave the way for innovative institutional transformation across all levels of society – toward a more just, inclusive and sustainable African continent.”

About the Bertha Centre:

The Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship is a specialised unit at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (GSB). Established in 2011 in partnership with the Bertha Foundation, a family foundation that works with inspiring leaders who are catalysts for social and economic change and human rights, the Centre has become a leading academic centre in Africa.

Its mission: to pursue social impact towards social justice in Africa, through teaching, knowledge-building, convening and catalytic projects with a systems lens on social innovation.

For more information please visit their [website](#).

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