

New director brings vision of executive wellness to top business programme

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) has appointed Elspeth Donovan to direct its prestigious Executive Leadership Programme (ELP), it was announced this week.



Elspeth Donovan

Donovan, who previously headed up the MBA programme at the School, is set to create a fresh agenda for the programme - one of the top-tier short courses offered by the School's Executive Education arm.

"To help keep pace with the realities of the workplace, our programmes have to evolve all the time," says Director of Executive Education, Elaine Rumboll. "We are confident that Donovan will bring just what the ELP needs at this point to keep it current and top of mind for leaders and executives in South Africa and beyond our borders."

And what ELP needs, according to Donovan, is a subtle shift towards the concept of executive wellness and a firmer orientation towards future business challenges. This means going beyond paying mere lip service to work/life balance. The new-look ELP has been designed to literally take executives (current and future) on a trip deep into themselves, and to share that experience with others in the classroom, so that they all emerge richer, more balanced and more creative individuals fit to lead in tomorrow's organisations.

"Although some might think this a 'warm and fuzzy' goal, it is in fact achieved through rigorous design and discipline," says Donovan. "Participants will be exposed to a series of top level lectures on topics ranging from the traditional business tool box (the role of people in economic value add, business strategy and systems thinking) to the more systemic (the state of the planet, barriers to business in Africa and what tomorrow's company might look like). This input is balanced with more creative and personal sessions on topics such as leadership, improvisation, sensory intelligence, self mastery and depth psychology."

All sessions examine their topic through the lens of leadership and take into account the unique challenges facing leaders in South Africa. The cumulative effect is designed to get participants to think differently about themselves, their leadership style and their environment.

To aid this process, participants will each receive intensive one-on-one coaching for the two-week duration of the programme. The ELP at the UCT GSB is the only leadership programme in South Africa that makes such a significant investment in coaching. According to Donovan, this is because coaching as a discipline has been shown to significantly improve the uptake of learning - helping to embed what participants experience so that it is not lost when they return to the workplace.

Donovan says that the coaching element also plays a key role in executive wellness which is at the heart of the programme

design. "Getting leaders to understand themselves better - and hence manage themselves better - has knock-on benefits for their organisations, their staff, their families and their friends," she says. "It is this vision of wellness in the widest sense of the word that we are working towards with this programme."

Donovan takes the reins for ELP from outgoing director Bruce MacDonald. Speaking at the UCT GSB last week she paid tribute to MacDonald who has successfully built the programme's reputation - particularly in the SADC region - in recent years.

"Bruce has left me an excellent legacy with which to work," she said. "I hope to enhance what he has created, rather than reinvent what he has already done so well."

The first programme that Donovan will oversee will run from 27 August until 9 September 2006 at the UCT GSB. The list of local and international speakers and lecturers assembled promises to deliver exactly what Donovan claims.

It includes Robert Poynton, founder of On Your Feet, an innovative collaboration between business and the arts that develops team-work skills. Poynton has run workshops globally for clients such as the Said Business School (Oxford University), Orange and JWT amongst others.

He will be joined by Mike Jackson - Professor of Management Systems and Director of the University of Hull Business School (in South Africa to teach on the GSB's Executive MBA); Peter Desmond from Growth International - a business improvement and change management consultancy; Roger Stewart - founder and lead partner of Business Sculptors Management Consultants; Rodger George - strategy consultant in the strategy and operations division of Deloitte Consulting; and Amanda Cromhout - founder of Truth, a leadership and marketing consultancy business based in Cape Town.

For more information please contact Tracey Kimberley on 021 406 1346 or email .

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