

UCT GSB course set to boost board strength at SA's State-Owned Enterprises

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Board expertise will play crucial role in stabilising SA's State-owned Enterprises, says business school expert.

The University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) has taken the novel step of launching the country's first business programme dedicated to giving board members of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) the support they need to build stronger and more effective organisations.

"Knowledgeable and capable board leaders are crucial for the successful leadership of State-Owned Enterprises," says Associate Professor Mills Soko at the UCT GSB. Soko has designed the Board Performance and Corporate Governance at State-owned Enterprises programme, which will run for the first time in October this year.

The course will be taught by a high-profile faculty made up of very experienced international and South African (as well as private and public sector) board experts.

He says the course is aimed at existing and new board members at SOEs in South Africa, and it seeks to help them become more effective in their roles.

"This course has been designed to fill a gap in the market and is the first to target the public sector and the challenges it currently faces," he says.

According to Soko, while SOE boards in South Africa have received much condemnation recently, there are a few SOE success stories.

"We will share best practice from within South Africa and from abroad in order to create strong performing boards for all our SOEs," he says.

The five-day course will unpack several case studies from South African and global SOE boards, while touching on key competencies required of board members such as financial management, corporate strategy and risk management.

"State-owned enterprises in South Africa are complex institutions with a legacy of political, financial and corporate governance issues, but this does not mean that board members cannot overcome these obstacles," Soko says.

He says course participants will learn a range of skills and tools, which include how to manage a board in crisis and how to engage with strategies for influencing the political process and policy formation. The course also focuses on improving corporate governance of SOEs and helping to clarify how these fit into the government's National Development Plan.

The course is part of the UCT GSB's Executive Education offering, which offers solutions for Africa by Africans. The business school's director professor Walter Baets says: "What we do at the UCT GSB is to help businesses create a better future for all Africans, through education and business education in particular. This course will help board members at SOEs, which is a crucial sector in the national economy."

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