

A chance 2 advance

Learning without limits is what Unisa's campaign for learning aims to bring about through its Chance 2 Advance (C2A) programme. Showcasing a wide selection of customised and relevant learning initiatives that encouraged and inspired informal learning, C2A was launched on 27 January and ran until 13 February at various locations in Pretoria, mainly on the Sunnyside Campus.

With no barriers to access, this programme drew both those with learning and those who craved learning. Students ranged from school leavers and the unemployed to professors, community leaders, NGO directors, business people and the general public, with important networks being formed. Above all, the programme drew in people who had never been part of a learning environment before.

The presenters were highly skilled and widely experienced subject matter experts and practitioners. Most courses were facilitated by experts from Unisa, while others were led by carefully selected specialist trainers.

Inspired was at hand to learn more and gauge the impact of the programme on those attending.

Prism break: What colour is your brain? attracted a number of students who were keen to find out more about the research behind this intriguing theory, which posits that by knowing the colour spectrum of one's brain, people work smarter, live better, love more and laugh often.

Second-year Public Relations Unisa student, Mbali Lekker, whose brain is yellow, said the title of the workshop caught her attention and she was eager to discover the colour of her brain. "I didn't know our brains have a colour. This workshop was informative; I learnt a lot, and it helped me understand myself better, which will enable me to understand other people better."

Blue-brained Akhona Dakela, who is studying Transport Economics, said such a workshop helps people to understand their strengths and weaknesses and work from there. He said government leaders would benefit from this course as it would help them understand each other better and allow for more development in South Africa.

Thrilled at the means people used to be part of this programme of learning, Project Manager Dr Genevieve James believes their goal was met. "One of our deepest hopes for the programme was that we encourage a culture of learning and that we break down the walls between marginalised communities and learning initiatives. By breaking down these walls we can create greater access and destroy the myth that learning and education are for the elite."



These young enthusiasts had to be there and made it possible by gathering their friends in Diepsloot, hiring a taxi and getting to a C2A course.



As bright as sunshine, yellow-brained Mbali Lekker shares her thoughts on the C2A course.



His brain is blue: Akhona Dakela believes the Prism Break workshop can change the course of South African development.

DCCAD creating counselling careers

Students of Psychology and Industrial Psychology are keen for work opportunities related to their field of study. Unfortunately, opportunities of direct experience are far and few, leaving students disillusioned. However, Unisa believes in creating platforms to put theory into practice through the Directorate for Counselling, Career and Academic Development (DCCAD).

DCCAD has introduced various career development opportunities that reach out to students at different levels of study. These include peer helpers, assistant student counsellors (ASC) and internships in career counselling.

The peer help volunteer programme is an innovative one that strives to place career, academic and personal guidance within the reach of each and every Unisa student. It also gives senior Unisa students the opportunity to give back to the community at large in terms of educational and developmental opportunities they too have received.

The ASCs are contract workers who provide an initial screening service. Thereafter they may provide basic career, academic or personal guidance. The career counselling interns are part of a full-time, remunerated programme in collaboration with Unisa's Departments of Psychology and Industrial Psychology.

Inspired spent some time with students from the various counselling nodes within the DCCAD who were really

excited to share their work and training experiences with the rest of the Unisa student community.

Emmanuel Ravhudzulo, an intern since January, believes this programme has helped him be aware of his own strengths. "I'm able to bridge the gaps in terms of skills development, academia and practice."

Also part of DCCAD since the start of the year is Risuna Maluleke, who is a peer helper. Discovering her weaknesses and strengths through the range of tasks has been most valuable for her. "I have learnt different kinds of skills which are transferable and every day is a new learning experience for me as learning is progress. Also, I have recently learnt to love feedback, for it is useful to improve one's performance."

Mihloti Mashabela has been with the team a bit longer, since February 2009, in fact, so she really has been exposed to many facets of counselling as well as challenges faced by students. This includes

open distance learning (ODL). "I spend a lot of time speaking to students who don't understand ODL and I take a personal initiative to explain the process, having experienced the same myself."

Senior Student Counsellor (Training and Development), Tshifhiwa Kodisang oversees the growth and development of these students and is pleased by what the programmes allow aspiring counsellors and psychologists to achieve. "DCCAD is playing a vital role in preparing psychology students to register as professional counsellors with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), so that they can then practise independently or look for employment. Also the process of training is quite fulfilling, as it forms part of grooming graduates to be professionals".

Internships are advertised as contract positions by the university at various times during the year so students who are interested in applying are encouraged to check regularly on the Unisa website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/vacancies>. For more information, see the DCCAD webpage via the Unisa website.



Emmanuel Ravhudzulo, Risuna Maluleke, and Mihloti Mashabela shared their experiences with *Inspired*, hoping to make the rest of the student community aware of opportunities provided by DCCAD.



The entire group of interns, peer helpers and ASCs who are not only gaining but adding value through DCCAD's role in affording them opportunities of putting theory into practice.