Five NUST students depart to Switzerland

Five NUST students from various Faculties departed on 01 May 2021 to participate in the B360 Education Partnerships, which afforded them the opportunity to undertake industry internships at companies based in Switzerland.

In March 2020, Anthens Liyali from the Faculty of Computing and Informatics; Ernestine Nkotongo from the Faculty of Management Sciences; Paulus Awala from the Faculty of Engineering; and Pena Nelumbu and Nancy Mukubesa from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences, were selected for the B360 Internship Programme. However, they were not able to undertake their internships last year due to the impact of COVID-19.

The NUST Vice-Chancellor, Dr Erold Naomab, encouraged the students to work hard during their time in Switzerland, and to open up opportunities for others.

"Remember that you are ambassadors of NUST, Namibia, and Africa," Dr Naomab advised the students after bidding them a safe journey.

Liyali will spend his internship with a Swiss financial services provider, Bob Finance AG; Nkotongo will be placed with Ferrum AG; and Awala will intern at Buchi AG. Nelumbu will carry out her internship at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), and Mukubesa will be working at Zweifel Pomy Chips.

Thus far, 90 NUST students have benefited from the B360 Education Partnerships established in 2009. The Swiss-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) contributes to skills and knowledge transfer and capacity development.

(Front) left to right: Pena Nelumbu (student); Dr Erling Kavita, Acting Special Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor; Dr Erold Naomab, NUST Vice-Chancellor; and Nancy Mukubesa (student). (Back) left to right: Anthens Liyali (student), Ernestine Nkotongo (student), Paulus Awala (student).

Empowering edupreneurs

The launch of the Edupreneurs project kicked-off on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 via Microsoft Teams through the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII) in collaboration with Glowdom and Eduix (Finland) in partnership with National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST), and the Southern Africa Innovation Support programme.

The project is a digital business ecosystem that powers the EdTech infrastructure and education software development in Southern Africa.

It aims at solving challenges that have risen due to the lack of digital infrastructure and personnel with digital competencies, even more exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The developed information systems must help make life easier for end users. New systems must be seen as useful tools rather than an extra burden to carry," Hon. Anna Nghipondoka, Minister of Basic Education, Arts and Culture emphasised.

In addition, she stressed the EdTech infrastructure's importance during the pandemic, since stress levels and the mental load of individuals have increased. Although there are a few relevant EdTech

solutions across Southern Africa, such initiatives still remain isolated, decreasing the potential of consolidating success to regional levels.

"Innovation is the route to follow to address the social and economic issues of a given country, and we collectively need to develop a culture of innovation and creativity to challenge the 'business-as-usual' mentality. This will enable us to introduce new or improved products or services, and processes and methods," Bernice Ndungaua, Manager of Entrepreneurship and Incubation at NBII said.

Members of the project are in the process of planning to formally launch the digital platform, as well as to host capacity-building workshops for the various stakeholders in the education space locally and regionally.

From left to right: Jackson Nghinamhito, Sebulon David, Joekina Gomes, Aron Udjombala (participant), Efraim Ashivudhi from the Glowdom team, and Hasekiel Johannes Edupreneur project coordinator at NBII.

Rural community grateful for SCIONA Knowledge Fair

A total of 100 participants from conservancies in the Okunene region, participated in the first-ever SCIONA Knowledge Fair last month at the Okapare village near Epupa. The fair attracted community members from across the region and, mostly from the conservancies, that are: Otjinungua, Orupembe, Okanguati and Epupa. Community members learned, shared and gained knowledge about integrating conservation efforts, rural development, tackling climate change and poverty alleviation through the sustainable management of natural resources.

Dave Kangombe of the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) lauded the researchers, students and the leadership from NUST, as well as the European Union (EU), for steering and funding the initiative for the past three years.

"This project opened our eyes and minds on the usefulness of technology in aiding conservation efforts and helping us to effectively manage our ecosystem. We can now monitor our environment and also our game. When we need to apply for hunting licenses, we will know how many wildlife we have in our conservancies", Kangombe elaborated.

Mutjindika Mutambo, the Headman from Omuhonga village, said that the initiative was useful in the sense that it assisted them to track wildlife, and now they know that there are giraffes and mountain zebras in their area

by utilising and viewing camera trap visuals and drone footage.

"This project was important to us since it preserves and digitally stores our culture. I was told that funding will end soon and I appeal to government and the EU to continue supporting the project," he said.

Kataeko Nangunda, one of the female participants from Epupa said that the fair provided her with knowledge and better understanding of the local environment. "I can now record, take pictures of our trees, different types of vegetation and our mountains, and share this data through the Internet. When tourists come to visit our area, I will also be better equipped with knowledge to explain our different vegetation and animals. I can now foresee myself as a tour guide in the future," she said.

Scenes from the SCIONA Knowledge Fair