

# UCT and industry commit to widening access to the business of wine

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

6 Mar 2018

What comes to mind when you picture a bottle of wine? A rarefied world of expensive restaurants? The beautiful Cape winelands? The wine value chain spans so much more than that - farmers, producers, distributors, scientists, bar tenders, restaurant and hotel managers, even the person who designed the label on the bottle all play their part in this complex and multi-disciplinary industry - which also happens to be one of the fastest growing sectors in the country.

According to a [study](#), commissioned by the SA Wine Industry Information & Systems (SAWIS) and published in January 2015, the industry contributed an estimated R36.1 billion gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 and its contribution to GDP has been growing at a rate of about 10% per year since 2003.

To capitalise on the growth potential of this industry, it is vital to develop better business skills for those who work in it, argues Jonathan Steyn, a business and marketing strategist who convenes the Business of Wine short course at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB). The course is the only one of its kind in the country to focus on the business aspect of wine looking across the wine business value chain.

“Traditionally, business skills have been sidelined in favour of more technical skills such as wine-making and viticulture. The establishment of the Business of Wine at the GSB was a proactive response to close this gap and it has made a significant difference in the industry in the past three years,” he said.

The course is contributing to the development of the industry in another way too – Steyn believes – notably by driving inclusivity by providing bursary opportunities to previously disadvantaged South Africans. “Transformation, growth and profitability go hand in hand,” he says.

It is a vision shared by key industry players including Graham Beck and the VinPro Foundation, a non-profit company established in 2013 to develop, support and improve the sustainability of the wine industry and related stakeholders by promoting and backing people excellence. These two industry stalwarts have been working with the GSB to widen access to the GSB programme and this year are making a record 15 bursaries available. Potential students have to qualify for the programme to be eligible for the bursary. The bursary application deadline is 31 March.

“Our aim is to attract diverse people into the industry, at all levels, across the value chain and to bring about change, particularly within decision-making structures,” says Unathi Mantshongo, Vinpro Foundation CEO.

“The industry is not only about the farm, not only about selling wine,” says Chris du Toit, CEO of Graham Beck Enterprises. “We need to develop our skills and our staff – as this GSB course does. We need to put our abilities and our energy into our people.”

Previous bursary recipients have benefitted not only from the teaching input from industry experts, but also from the mix of delegates who come from all parts of the value chain.

Valmary van Breda, a senior research technician at the Agricultural Research Council, a 2017 VinPro Foundation bursary recipient, says that the course broadened her knowledge, perspective and skill by introducing her to the broader scope of the industry. As most of her work takes place in a laboratory she had not been exposed to this before. “The business, tourism and financial aspects of the course were all very informative,” she says.

Ndabezinhle Ndube, a 2016 VinPro Foundation bursary recipient and restaurant manager at The Vineyard Hotel, says he

found the course intense and challenging. A highlight was meeting industry experts and interacting with other delegates from all aspects of the business. “We were given real projects that allowed us to test our experience and knowledge and we got to meet everyone from wine makers and sommeliers to restaurant managers like myself. The course enabled me to meet good people, people who share my values and that I can rely on going forward.”

Steyn believes that the mix of delegates is an important part of the course. “From a peer-to-peer-learning point of view it’s very important that you have selected people from diverse backgrounds and from all points of the value chain. Delegates learn a lot from each other. The conversations that develop from people with very different perspectives in their daily work really help to generate critical insight.”

The Business of Wine short course includes an open day focusing on innovation, international trade, regulation and logistics – particularly in relation to emerging markets – that is open to industry practitioners and offers a valuable networking opportunity to delegates.

*For more information on the course or to apply for a bursary please contact [Randhir.Ramharack@gsb.uct.ac.za](mailto:Randhir.Ramharack@gsb.uct.ac.za) or visit the website <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/wine>.*

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