

Wits enters major partnership to drive digital transformation in Africa

Wits secures the largest partnership in its history, to drive digital transformation in Africa. The Afretec network has made 20 M available to members

JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA, November 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) has secured the largest partnership in the history of the university, which will drive digital transformation in Africa. It made this announcement as it celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2022.

Wits becomes a member of the African Engineering and Technology Network (Afretec), a pan-African collaboration of technology-focused universities from across the African continent. The network, led by Carnegie Mellon University Africa (CMU-Africa), has over 20 million US dollars available for network members to engage in collaborative activity that drives inclusive digital transformation in Africa through engineering and technology. The network is generously supported by a recently announced investment from the Mastercard Foundation in CMU-Africa.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic at Wits University, Professor Ruksana Osman says, "It is an absolute privilege for Wits to have been selected as a member of this prestigious network, especially as we celebrate 100 years of excellence in 2022. We look forward to working with members of the Afretec Network to expand, educate, and empower the next generation of African technology leaders. We want to co-create opportunities and drive the inclusive digital transformation and growth of Africa, one of Wits' centenary goals."

The 2022 Afretec Conference will take place in Kigali, Rwanda from 6-8 November and will focus on the inclusive digital transformation of Africa. A plan of action will be developed to ensure the realisation of the goals and objectives of the network in advancing digital transformation, knowledge creation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

Professor Nithaya Chetty, Dean of the Faculty of Science at Wits University adds, "Some of the collaborative activities may include the establishment of joint capacity building programme; the exchange and sharing of best practices; the delivery of faculty enrichment and exchange programmes to promote teaching excellence; programmes to better prepare students for postgraduate programs in engineering and technology; the organisation of social leadership activities; and student and staff exchanges to advance research with a focus on job creation. We could also look at developing new certificate and degree programmes, online short courses and

work across sectors and disciplinary and geographic boundaries to bring our best talent and resources to bear to solve 21st century challenges.”

The Afretec Network seeks to:

- Promote and share effective approaches and best practices to engineering, technology, entrepreneurship, education, and knowledge creation activities to influence and shape practice and policy;
- Advance the digital development of Africa by developing skilled educators, engineers, and technologists;
- Encourage and support deep multidisciplinary research collaborations, to enhance research capacity and to develop focused engineering and/or technology research on African matters;
- Identify and create pathways to opportunity for engineering and technology students through entrepreneurial development and opportunities;
- Leverage the collective engineering and technology education, research and entrepreneurial strengths of members of the network and industry partners; and
- Maintain a consistent commitment to social impact, diversity, inclusion, and sustainability as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) and the Africa Agenda (2015-2063).

Driving digital transformation is a priority area for Wits University and forms a key component of its Centenary Campaign. The Centenary Campaign seeks to raise R3 billion to support Wits’ eight priority areas: driving digital transformation; catalysing innovation and entrepreneurship; ensuring better health for all; solving global challenges; advancing society, governance and justice; future-proofing our national treasures; developing the next generation of leaders; and energising broad-based alumni support, and this partnership fits squarely with these priorities.

“We are deeply grateful to CMU-Africa, to the Mastercard Foundation, to members of the Afretec Network, and to Professor Osman for leading, enabling and stewarding this important partnership at Wits, with her colleagues. May it grow from strength to strength and drive digital transformation in Africa,” concludes Professor Zebulon Vilakazi, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Wits University.

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