

A first for Africa

8 February 2012 By [Alan](#)

Rhodes University, in partnership with Inyathelo – The South African Institute for Advancement – is to offer South Africa and the rest of the continent the first ever university-level course in Advancement – the practice of building, maintaining and improving support, skills and funds for an organisation or institution.

The certificate course at Rhodes Business School in Grahamstown will take place in the second semester of this year, and cover key aspects of Advancement, including governance, skills capacity, fundraising, marketing, donor stewardship, planning, strategy and leadership. The 2012 certificate course will constitute the basis of a new post-graduate diploma in Advancement which Rhodes is developing in conjunction with Inyathelo.

Rhodes University Vice Chancellor, Dr Saleem Badat, says the course is aimed at building and enhancing the capabilities of those involved in developing and sustaining higher education institutions and the non-profit sector. “Universities and civil society need to actively seek more ‘third stream’ funding and support – whether it be through donations, investments, research contracts or other entrepreneurial activities – if they want to survive and thrive in today’s tough economic climate and in a context of declining public subsidies. But building educational and institutional capabilities, and enhancing collaboration between foundations, individual philanthropists and other institutions, requires investment and expertise. This course is aimed at building that capability to mobilise resources and secure our future,” explains Dr Badat.

Director of Rhodes Business School, Professor Owen Skae, says fundraising is becoming highly competitive, with an increasing number of organisations chasing ever shrinking traditional sources of income. “Advancement can be very challenging, particularly during periods when world economies are performing poorly. Nonetheless, there are many opportunities if advancement is approached strategically and in a business-minded manner. Our certificate will equip participants with the skills, knowledge and tools to become effective Advancement practitioners”, says Skae.

The certificate course will be offered in two five-day blocks and is open to professionals in the field of Advancement including academics, administrators, CEO’s and trustees who are involved in fundraising, marketing, donor and project management, and community-building at universities, big institutions and non-profit organisations.

Inyathelo Executive Director Shelagh Gastrow says the course is the foundation step towards offering South Africa’s first ever post-graduate diploma in Advancement. “We are fast outliving our ‘developing nation’ status that helped secure significant support from international donors during and after the struggle for democracy. We can no longer rely on these contributions. We believe this course will help build the necessary professionalism and expertise we need to attract support from donors and help sustain the institutions and organisations that form the backbone of our democracy. Local and international experts in the practice of Advancement will provide both the theory and advise on the practical implementation of the participants’ strategic, development and fundraising plans,” says Gastrow.

The planning and development work to design the full post-graduate diploma course will begin next month. International experts such as Tyrone Freeman, Associate Director of Public Service & the Fundraising School at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, have been approached to provide advice and guidance on the framework, structure and content of the course. The US-based Kresge Foundation, which funds various higher education projects in South Africa, is also providing support. Kresge’s Education Programme Director Bill Moses says South Africa will increasingly need to win support, in open competition, for research and developmental projects from international donors. “Advancement is not just a euphemism for fundraising. It’s about finding common cause with those who have similar values and aspirations and those who want to give their time, talent and financial resources to worthy organisations and institutions. We are confident this course will help institutions in South Africa and other African nations to mobilise and secure the resources they need to prosper in the future,” says Moses.

To find out more about the Rhodes University Certificate Course in Advancement, contact Leticia Greyling at Rhodes University on 046 603 8617 or Nazli Abrahams at Inyathelo on 021 456 6981.