

Woolworths offers lecturers from TVET colleges and University of Technology an 'insider view'

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Higher Education to benefit from Woolworths high impact skills development initiative

Woolworths, South Africa's leading retailer, is running the second instalment of its "Inside Retail" programme with five Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The programme, launched in 2013, seeks to provide lecturers with on-the-ground, practical experience of the retail environment to complement their academic knowledge.

"In the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDSIII) the Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande called on the private sector to assist government in its quest to promote the growth of the public TVET colleges in order to advance skills development in South Africa," says Sibongile Antoni, Woolworths National Learning and Development Manager.

"Woolworths is proud to offer the lecturers a chance to better understand the complexities of retail so that together, we can be part of the skills development transformation that we want to see in our country."

The programme targets educators in higher education and offers a week-long, embedded course where the lecturers gain some background on the retail value chain and then head straight out to the distribution centre, suppliers and to the shop floor to put theory into practice.

The lecturers are not only responsible for providing students with the knowledge and skills that they will need to succeed in the course being studied, but also have the challenging task of ensuring that they supply industry and the country with skilled individuals to meet the skills shortage in SA.

"By offering the lecturers who teach retail related subjects' industry exposure; we're helping to ensure that our institutions of learning have the capacity to deliver the skills that are required in the sector."

Woolworths - a leader in this kind of approach to training, skills development and learning - is using the programme to create a learning value chain that builds a talent pipeline from secondary education to employment and beyond - inclusive of lecturers and teachers.

To this end, Woolworths has invested a significant amount of money, growing its financial contribution to learning and skills development year-on-year, through the Woolworths Academy. This contribution has increased by more than 400% since 2009/10, which is an indication of the company's commitment to skills development programmes and ensuring the sustainability of the retail sector.

"Within the context of the South African transformation agenda, Woolworths also uses skills development to unlock transformation of the industry in line with our commitment to ensuring that our business is representative of the entire country."

The retailer also said it made business sense to pursue this type of training. "Aside from Woolworths developing a talent pipeline aimed at ensuring the future sustainability and professionalism in the sector, we are using training as a tool for future economic empowerment for trainees and enabling them to become empowered, economic citizens in the future, thereby contributing to South Africa's growth."

Participating TVET colleges include the College of Cape Town, False Bay College, Northlink College, Boland College, and South Cape College plus the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

The Inside Retail lecturer development programme ran for a week between March 23 and 27 in Cape Town and at participating Woolworths' stores.

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