

Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

PROGRAM CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

For some students, the college experience includes studying abroad. But instead of museums and art galleries, a few CU-Boulder students are entering some of the most impoverished areas of South Africa to help local entrepreneurs improve their livelihoods.

The Leeds School strives to create a global mindset for its graduates through its Global Initiatives, a variety of trips to different parts of the world to introduce students to aspects of the global economy. One of these international business experiences is the Entrepreneurship and Empowerment in South Africa program, or EESA.

This six-week program is open to any CU-Boulder student who wants to learn valuable entrepreneurship skills while

making a significant positive difference in the world by helping disadvantaged businesses in Africa, says **Erick Mueller (MBA '99)**, a Leeds entrepreneurship instructor who is now director of the EESA program.

American students hailing from CU-Boulder, Oklahoma State, and Texas A&M form consulting teams with college students from South Africa; together they learn a comprehensive consulting model and apply it to help local entrepreneurs and businesses in the townships of Cape Town.

These college-student consulting teams must evaluate the business and determine the highest-impact deliverables. The teams must then implement these deliverables, and the entrepreneur must use them before the students leave.

The stakes are high.

"The students want something different, and they want to make a difference," says **Frank Moyes, a retired Leeds instructor** who founded the origins of the EESA program with a fellow entrepreneurship professor in 2000. Leeds students have participated since 2010. "If you're sitting across from an entrepreneur whose entire reason for existence is this business, and you're trying to help them, that's a huge responsibility."

The students stay on the campus of the University of Western Cape outside of Cape Town, South Africa, and travel chaperoned into the townships to ensure safety. The program takes place over June and July, and includes comprehensive cultural training. Leeds students see firsthand how poverty affects opportunity, the cultural differences working with

Townships are often underdeveloped urban living areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of Apartheid, were reserved for nonwhites.



African students as well as the African entrepreneurs, and how focusing on simple, key parts of a business can make a big difference.

"These are typically hand-to-mouth businesses that can greatly benefit from our consulting teams' work," explains Mueller—anything from a bakery of local fare to a printing company to a local deejay training company. "Students must adapt to a very different culture in order to earn the trust of the entrepreneur to truly affect change. This is a big challenge. If they don't accomplish this, they fail."

Kevin Voigtschild ('12 operations management) says he wanted to study abroad and was intrigued by the consulting aspect of the EESA program. His assignment during his EESA trip in 2011 involved identifying and prioritizing the key needs of two businesses—a magazine and a commercial cleaning company. Over the course of six weeks he created a corporate marketing and billing system for the magazine, allowing it to rebrand and relaunch; improved operations for that magazine

so that it printed on time and twice as often; developed a pricing system for the cleaning service; and worked with the entrepreneur to implement it into the bidding process.

"This experience taught me how to adapt to change and new experiences, and it gave me a different perspective on business," says Voigtschild, who now works for a consulting firm. "I was able to develop an understanding of how culture shapes business, and I learned a lot about my internal strengths and weaknesses."

He says employers have been impressed with the real-world application of this program.

Says Mueller, "This maturity, confidence, and empowerment helps our graduates stand out from all other applicants in the job hunt."

For **Brittany Hallett ('13 marketing)**, the EESA program counted as internship credit for her entrepreneurship certificate at Leeds. She helped two clients, a hair salon and a recycling business, with deliverables like bookkeeping and sales during her

trip last summer.

"The pressure to do something so they are able to be successful once you leave is powerful," she says. "I'm not a professional, I'm not a professor. But the entrepreneurs are looking to you for advice. These are hardworking people who want to be successful, and you get to help spur economic development in an area that needs it. I now have two 80-page consulting reports that can show a future employer how I helped develop solutions for a customer. It was really empowering."

Mueller hopes to increase student participation from CU-Boulder through scholarship opportunities and other aid for interested students who need financial support. He'd also like to see the program host African students on the CU-Boulder campus one day, and to continue to support the African entrepreneurs through ongoing mentorship and advice.

To learn more, visit leeds.colorado.edu/global.



Left to Right page 6-7: Busiswe, one of the EESA clients, and her aunt run a bakery. **Alyssa Carroll ('13 management)**, center, and her team present one of their deliverables for their client. Frank Moyes and Erick Mueller, hold a batik from Khayelitsha, one of the townships. EESA students enjoy an outing to Stellenbosch, a famous South African region. University of Western Cape student union. A student team presents a case study.

