

Press Release

Cape Town: With Help from Potsdam, a Third School of Design Thinking opens

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Potsdam/Cape Town. A third innovation school will soon be joining the other two established schools — one at Hasso Plattner Institute, at the University of Potsdam, and the other at Stanford. In the first quarter of 2016, the HPI School of Design Thinking at the University of Cape Town (UTC) will be fully operational. The founding director, Richard Perez (46), brings with him many years of experience from the areas of project design and municipal innovation. The appointment was announced by Prof. Christoph Meinel, director of the Potsdam Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI).

Initial funding for the HPI School of Design Thinking at UCT comes from the Hasso Plattner Förderstiftung foundation. The innovation school is housed in customized premises in the Library Learning Lab on the University of Cape Town campus and at the Graduate School of Business (GSB). The school will be launched with a series of pilot courses for Master and PhD students from all scientific disciplines and for managers from industry and public administration.

"In collaboration with several partners, we are developing a model of Design Thinking education that is particularly suitable for the promotion of innovation on the continent of Africa," Meinel said. Besides students and executives, developmental experts will have the opportunity to enjoy Design Thinking. Experienced Design Thinking specialists from Potsdam will support the establishment and expansion of activities in Cape Town.

The Stanford University in Silicon Valley and the Potsdam institute, active since 1999, have already been closely linked for ten years through the commitment of founder Prof. Hasso Plattner. In the summer of 2005, the HPI benefactor donated 35 million US dollars to Stanford University to establish the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at the School of Engineering. The Potsdam software institute, with its HPI School of Design Thinking (active since the winters semester of 2007/2008), has worked intensively with its sister institute in Stanford since that time. Together, the partners teach and research in the area of user-friendly innovations.

Profile of Hasso Plattner Institute

The Hasso Plattner Institute for Software Systems Engineering GmbH (HPI) (<https://hpi.de>) at the University of Potsdam is Germany's university excellence center for IT-Systems Engineering. HPI is the only university institution in Germany offering the Bachelor's and Master's degree in "IT-Systems Engineering"—a practical and engineering-oriented alternative to conventional computer science studies. Current enrollment is at approximately 480 students. The HPI School of Design Thinking is Europe's first innovation school for university students. It is based on the Stanford model of the d.school and offers 240 places annually for a supplementary course of study. There are a total of twelve HPI professors and over 50 guest professors, lecturers and contracted teachers at the Institute. HPI carries out research noted for its high standard of excellence in its eleven topic areas. Research work is also conducted at the Potsdam HPI Research School for PhD candidates and at its branches in Cape Town, Haifa and Nanjing. HPI teaching and research focuses on the foundation and application of large-scale, highly complex and distributed IT systems. The development and exploration of user-driven innovations for all sectors of life is an additional area of importance. HPI always earns the highest positions in the CHE university ranking. Since September 2012, HPI has provided an interactive Internet learning platform - openhpi.de. Its free open online courses are available to everyone.

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