



Editor's note

Community and coding, competition and collaboration – the third quarter saw the Economics Department involved in this and more. In this newsletter, you can read about the department's engagement with alumni communities overseas, as well as the WeCode24 Hackfest 2018 – a social impact initiative in our department aimed at learners and parents in local communities. Read about the collaboration between one of our PhD students and astronomers that led to a publication in a top-ranked international journal; a first-time collaboration on banking law between economists and law experts; as well as ongoing collaboration between competition lawyers and economists on competition in South Africa. Our department supports these interdisciplinary collaborations and engagements with our communities both near and far. Enjoy the newsletter!

- Olivia Ezeobi

Wecode24 Hackfest 2018: An event to inspire and delight



WeCode24, a Social Impact Initiative in the Department of Economics, hosted a HackFest at Bernadino Heights High School in Kraaifontein on Saturday, 21 July 2018.

“Technology offers so many opportunities for our children to realise their potential and make a positive impact in society and the economy. The WeCode24 HackFest offers

an exciting window into these opportunities for learners and the broader community,” said Prof Rachel Jafta, Founder and Director of the WeCode24 project.

The event was aimed at learners participating in the WeCode24 programme, their parents and the greater community. Like the WeCode24 programme itself, the HackFest is a playful celebration of empowerment through technology, inviting everyone into the marvellous world of programming. It is also about curiosity, access, deep understanding, community, and showing how incredible the world is. The idea is for learners to interact with empowered individuals who can invite them into their worlds, inspiring them, and changing trajectories for the good. Moving beyond just exhibiting something interesting that was programmed, it is about making it accessible, and opening everyone's eyes to the possibilities.

The HackFest was a hands-on expo festival with exhibitions of Gaming, Electronics, Robotics, Live coding (coding of music as a performance), Animation, and even serious Science Exhibitions. Participants at the Hackfest enjoyed an introduction to live coding by artist Aragorn23, Edro Robotics who teach coding through robotics, Virtual Reality and indie games to play, electronics projects by members of the Arduino Cape Town group, Prof Ben Loos from Stellenbosch University's physiology department, WeCode24 demonstrations, animation displays and many more.

Kids and adults alike were enchanted by the wide range of experiences that the Hackfest offered, to the extent that they engaged the exhibitors long beyond the agreed closing time for the event.

Background information: WeCode24 WeCode24 is currently running as a pilot project for learners at a number of under-served secondary schools in the Western Cape. It is about having a ridiculous amount of fun while learning extraordinary things that have tremendous real-world value. It is centred around learning to program computers, so as to express and to create: whether art, music, games, mobile apps, websites, artificial intelligence, simulations, electronic devices like robots, and whatever else the learners can imagine. It's about passion and wonder and curiosity being the drivers of learning. And it's about empowering learners to make an impact on the world with the things they are passionate about.

For more information visit <https://wecode24.com/> or contact Anthea van Stade at anthea@wecode24.com

PhD Student Tawanda Chingozha, co-authors paper published in top international journal.



Tawanda Chingozha is a PhD student in the department of Economics at Stellenbosch University and a fellow of the Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD). He recently co-authored an article published in *Nature*, a much-cited multidisciplinary international journal with an impact factor of 41.6.

Tawanda works with the OAD of The International Astronomical Union (IAU) to translate aspects of astronomy into development outcomes.

As a fellow of the OAD, Tawanda has provided critical development-related reviews to the annual OAD proposals submitted from various countries. In addition to co-authoring the article “The potential of astronomy for socioeconomic development in Africa” published in *Nature* in July 2018, Tawanda also made an oral presentation at the IAU General Assembly in Vienna, Austria during August 2018. His presentation focussed on how astronomy related skills could be applied in the development discourse.

Astronomy relies on innovative instruments and technology to study the cosmos - this technology provides scientific advantages that are applicable in industry. Furthermore, a labour force with more astronomers may generally have more problem solving capability given the incredibly complex challenges that practitioners in the field solve about outer space. Countries can also enjoy more economic benefits from astro-tourism - within the South African context the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) is an important tourist attraction.

While both economists and astronomers work with lights images, the former are interested in images of the earth while the latter focus on night sky images. Tawanda is one of a group of economists who have increasingly focused their attention on remotely sensed data. In his PhD research, he uses night-lights data (NLD) as a proxy for welfare. Tawanda applies machine-learning techniques on Landsat imagery to track changes in agricultural activity before and after Zimbabwe’s land reform program. The final part of Tawanda’s PhD thesis explores the possibility of using citizen science to measure size and growth patterns of the informal sector using Very High Resolution (VHR) images. In consultation with the OAD colleagues, Tawanda also completed a pilot study on identifying business and housing informality in Harare, Zimbabwe using the Zooniverse.org citizen platform – a platform created by astronomers and physicists at Oxford University.

Public lectures presented at Stellenbosch alumni events in New York and Boston



At the end of July, Prof Johan Fourie presented two public lectures at Stellenbosch alumni events in New York and Boston. Fourie's lecture on 'The Data Revolution in African economic history' was enthusiastically received at both events, and contributed to an excellent discussion about past and present South African challenges.

There were also many opportunities for guests to meet with other members of the department, including Prof Dieter von Fintel, postdoc Edward Kerby, and present and former PhD students Calumet Links, Jeanne Cilliers and Christie Swanepoel. In building up to the department's centenary in 2020, this was an excellent opportunity to build closer partnerships with alumni in the US, and for alumni to reminisce about their memories of student life.

CCLÉ participates in public hearings on the Competition Amendment Bill



Prof Willem Boshoff (SU Economics) and Prof Philip Sutherland (SU Mercantile Law), as co-directors of the Centre for Competition Law and Economics (CCLÉ), participated in the public hearings on the Competition Amendment Bill, by making presentations to the Portfolio Committee on Economic Development at Parliament at the end of August.

They discussed, among other things, the importance of distinguishing concentration in markets from competition and the importance of clarifying legal procedures related to market inquiries. Full details can be obtained from the CCLÉ website at

<http://ccle.sun.ac.za/engagement/>.

Prof Willem Boshoff also spoke on the Classic Business show of Classic FM on the Competition Amendment Bill during August.

Economists and law experts collaborate at Annual Banking Law Update conference.



On 27 September 2018 Dr Hylton Hollander and Dr Dawie van Lill presented a paper entitled A critical review of the SARB's financial stability policies in a global context at the Annual Banking Law Update (ABLU) conference in Johannesburg. The ABLU conference has formed part of the South African and international conference calendar since 1978.

This was the first year that economists participated in this conference – a collaboration initiated by Prof Andrie Schoombee and Prof Charl Hugo. The Centre for Banking Law of the University of Johannesburg hosted this year's ABLU conference.

Hylton and Dawie hope to make SU participation at ABLU a regular feature going forward.



Useful links

Bureau for Economic Research
Research on Socio-Economic Policy
Laboratory for the Economics of Africa's Past
Center for Competition Law and Economics
Working papers