FUTURE AFRICA
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH AFRICAN RESEARCH EXCELLENCE
With some of the oldest, most diverse and most vibrant cultures originating and interacting in Africa, there is unlimited potential for unique cultural and societal innovation and development.

The work I do with Future Africa is really exciting to me. We’re working on a range of big complex problems that cut across disciplines and expertise. We have a rapidly growing population of young minds, many of whom are brilliant and need nurturing.

I know now what I want to do, and who I want to do it with.

We are doing things much bigger than ourselves here. We can dream big and achieve big.

Future Africa epitomises what is called the medici effect; by capitalising on the intersections between disciplines, there is a massive opportunity to build science in South Africa and Africa, and into the world.

There are many complex challenges that face Africa and the global community. These include diverse issues such as climate change, food security, poverty, human rights, health and well-being, biodiversity loss, and much more. We know that traditional linear and singular approaches to science are no longer appropriate, and that searching for solutions will require that the scientific community operate in fundamentally new ways. It also requires transformation-minded researchers and science leaders to drive equitable and sustainable development.

In a nutshell, Future Africa:

- takes a future-oriented perspective on skills development for a new generation of science leaders in Africa
- actively builds networks between leaders of science across Africa and the rest of the world
- develops interdisciplinary and multinational research teams who, together with societal structures, can engage in impactful research to find solutions to complex problems
- places equity and sustainability central in its research and engagement related to African challenges.

Our work at Future Africa is anchored by our commitment to the African continent, the belief that knowledge generation will be the foundation of development, and the recognition that this cannot be done in isolation. To have substantive impact on the pressing issues facing society, Future Africa’s value proposition is to strengthen networks, and to mobilise human capital and talent to generate integrated knowledge that matters for Africa.

‘Here the best young minds in Africa are working with the best, without compromise.’

– Howard Alper, March 2019.
RESEARCH THAT MATTERS
a sense of people and place

Future Africa offers exceptional opportunities to address rising societal challenges, and to implement new modes of learning and research that engage a diversity of scholars and stakeholders.

The launch of the Future Africa was held on 29 March 2019. This event was preceded by years of detailed concept planning, infrastructure development and, since 2015, the implementation of science leadership programmes.

In less than a year after the official opening, the Future Africa campus has become a vibrant collaborative space where Africa’s young and leading scientists, together with civil society and international scholars, leverage the benefits of inter- and transdisciplinary research to address Africa’s most pressing problems.

The ethos of Future Africa has influenced all elements in its development, from the design, to the sourcing of materials and the people who were trained as part of the construction process. The gardens celebrate the evolutionary history of African plants and orphan crops, and are now integrated in research and used in the food that is prepared; the buildings reflect the need for different spaces of engagement, dialogue and contemplation — a conference centre designed to foster group work and interaction, a research commons with offices and meeting rooms, and accommodation for visiting scholars and residents.

The end result is a contemporary African setting that focuses attention on people and a commitment to sustainability; a place that will be as challenging and transforming to every visitor and resident as the ideas we hope to stimulate.

Future Africa’s focus is on connecting people, developing research capacity, and making an impact through networks that trigger a powerful and creative process of engagement that is impact focused.

This truly pan-African platform supports innovative research projects from conceptualization to execution — from IdeasLabs to forums, dialogue and seminar series, the focus is on selected challenges that require transdisciplinary solutions.

**connecting people and ideas**

**IdeasLabs**
identify capacity, interests, passion, needs and opportunities

**developing research capacity**

**Frontier Research Teams**
Target doctoral and postdoctoral fellows, local and visiting scholars, industry, government and civil society groups

**making an impact**

**Innovation**
Produce new generations of scholars, innovative policy, transformative knowledge and societal change
AFRICA'S YOUNG SCIENTISTS
leading the way

The speed and quality of the development of science capacity in Africa depends not only on infrastructure and the technical training of people, but is intimately linked to the quality of leadership to lead change.

At Future Africa the foundation was laid by the African Science Leadership Programme (ASLP), developed in partnership with the Global Young Academy and KnowInnovation, and support from the Robert Bosch Stiftung. Targeting early and mid-career African academics, the theme is science leadership and the intentional focus to enable ASLP fellows to develop the skills and research networks to become future leaders who can address, with transdisciplinary research teams, the complex challenges faced by Africa and the global community.

ASLP has created a lasting network of pan-African researchers and science leaders. Each year since the inaugural programme in 2015, a new group of exceptional researchers is selected from across the African continent, the majority of whom are women, representing a broad spectrum of research fields and disciplines.

The programme has had a profound impact on participants. But it has achieved much more. In the process, it has become a powerful catalyst for strengthening research networks and the development of science leadership programmes on the continent, and even internationally.

Africa is endowed with unbelievable richness in history, people, cultures, biodiversity and environments. With this diversity comes complexity and opportunity. Africa is also a continent where research capacity needs to increase exponentially in order to generate the ideas and innovation for a better African future and world.

A necessary starting point is the development of early and mid-career researchers and science leaders. The basic premise is that the quality of the leadership in the system that is needed to lead change is closely linked to the development of science capacity in Africa. It is estimated that by 2050 the world population will reach 9.8 billion, and that about 40% of the world’s young people (<25 years) will live in Africa. It stands to reason that among these great numbers will be the next generation researchers and science leaders, and that opportunities must be created for this talent to emerge.

The second point relates the role of science and the expectation, in Africa and globally, that science must benefit society.

Future Africa combines leadership for change, and the transformative power of inter- and transdisciplinary science that starts with addressing tangible, real world problems.

The science leadership model we have developed at Future Africa gives growing impetus to our work, and illustrates the very real possibilities of strengthening networks and research capacity for values-driven science in Africa.

‘Africa remains the greatest untapped pool of scientific genius.’
Thierry Zomahoun, March 2019.

AFRICA
an untapped pool of science excellence

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An e-platform that connects African scholars and their institutions has been developed by ASLP fellows as a visualised network of researchers and research expertise on the continent. ConnectUs.Africa makes it possible to find like-minded scholars through this growing network. An added advantage is that researchers who join the network have access to information about opportunities in science development and become visible to other researchers, and to funders.
We know that globally research networks and collaboration have resulted in a shifting science landscape, and that Africa's science capacity needs to expand at least 10 to 100 fold, depending on the context, to be competitive on a world stage and in the co-production of knowledge. But we believe that Africa is also fertile ground for building new paradigms of research and research implementation, and addressing problems that are by their very nature deeply transdisciplinary.

We need to act on multiple fronts:

1. Continue to build a strong African network of research leaders and science leadership programmes
2. Build African centres of excellence in high priority research areas
3. Link with university-specific research capacity programmes
4. Focus on interdisciplinary, multinational and transcontinental research teams
5. Link with African and Global Young Academies.

The synergy in partnerships offers immense possibilities for African science. To illustrate, the Next Einstein Forum is a platform that connects science, society and policy in Africa and globally, and its driving force, Africa’s young people. The Global Young Academy develops, connects, and mobilises young scientists around the world to lead international, interdisciplinary, and inter-generation dialogue.

At the core of Future Africa is this web of connectedness.

In a world where ideas and technologies evolve rapidly and the challenges we face are multifaceted, transnational and global, Africa needs original thinkers with international perspectives, yet with a scholarly vision and voice that is rooted in Africa.
The Future Africa platform was developed to serve as an incubator of research initiatives focused on societal issues, a hub for African and global research networks to align behind these priorities and initiatives, and a point of connection with sectors of society involved in or affected by our research.

We have valued partnerships with young academies of science, universities, research funding agencies, actors and experts outside academia, and civil society groups.

We invite new partnerships with groups and individual scholars who have a ~

Partner with us to transform the world through African research excellence!
It always seems impossible until it is done

~ Nelson Mandela