Every Human Being Has The Potential For Greatness
We’ve made the notion of “paying it forward” easy for you.

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#NurturingPotential | #EducateAFutureProfessional | #SuccessIsBetterShared

The PPS Foundation is a registered Public Benefit Organisation. Registration No. IT 873/2016(G)
The PPS Foundation continued to fulfill its mandate of contributing to one of the key national priorities of improving access to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related fields. We have embraced the challenges of the higher education public benefit sector and begun navigating the complex donor world characterised by myriad competing socio-economic needs.

As a Public Benefit Organisation, we now have an opportunity to cast our funding net wider, including PPS Members, to make possible the dream of extending our reach and ‘educating a graduate’ throughout the length and breadth of the country.

In 2018 we continued to make substantial progress against our goals as highlighted in this, our first annual report. Armed with deeper insights about the needs of university students and newly-qualified graduates seeking to enter the workplace, we enhanced our programmes and launched initiatives such as the work-readiness programme as well as a food donation programme in partnership with Rise Against Hunger Africa. The latter intervention was aimed particularly at addressing some of the underlying psychosocial needs of students, which we recognise can have a negative impact on their academic performance, if left unattended.

In 2019, we will focus on galvanising more PPS Members and other graduate professionals to contribute to the PPS Foundation. Through the graduate outreach platform, Professionals Connect, opportunities for collaboration and volunteerism exist where graduate professionals can mentor and coach graduates and students, or even provide internship and vacation work opportunities for them.

I am grateful for the countless efforts of the PPS Foundation team, together with all our partners, in pursuing this mammoth task of educating and “Nurturing Potential”. PPS is, after all, the home of the graduate professional, and this is where their futures can be moulded.

I wish to thank my fellow Trustees for their unwavering support and guidance in this journey.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Ms Lindiwe Dlamini for her stewardship during her tenure as the PPS Executive Trustee of the PPS Foundation. She leaves an indelible mark in her exemplification of a leader and passionate champion of the vision of both the PPS Foundation and PPS Educational Trusts.

Dr S N E Seoka
Chairman
It feels surreal that it was only 2 years ago, in 2016, that the PPS Foundation was established and formally launched in 2017. Our primary mandate is to facilitate access to tertiary education, primarily focusing on STEM programmes (science, technology, engineering and maths) for disadvantaged South African youths, and grow the number of graduate professionals.

We are proud that in two years we have comprehensively funded well over 200 university students; provided job opportunities to just over 60 graduates through the graduate internship programme, the majority of whom have been absorbed by PPS; and supported public universities with computer labs, work study programmes and other development initiatives.

To scale our initiatives and extend our reach, the Foundation has also launched a user-friendly and secure online donation platform that is accessible from the PPS website. This facility offers a great platform for financial giving by PPS Members, staff and the public. We recently launched our first donation campaign, supported by an emotive call-to-action driven through social media and other digital platforms.

In this, our debut annual report, we outline some of our achievements and highlight the journeys of some of the graduates and students, and how their lives have been impacted by the work of the Foundation.

The key highlights for 2018 are:

- Operationalising the Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) and its related governance processes
- Launching a secure, online donation platform enabling us to raise funds from external sources. A tax exemption certificate (s18A) is issued to all donors
- Comprehensive funding provided to students across the various universities, pursuing science, technology, engineering and maths-related degrees
- The successful completion of the rigorous 12-month internship by our 25 graduate interns placed across the business

- Partnering with Rise Against Hunger Africa and the public universities to curb the plight of food insecurity among students, by packing well over 60,000 food packs. This was a feat achieved through employee volunteerism, which saw over 100 staff and executives rolling up their sleeves and packing food for distribution to various universities
- Another successful year of partnership with GetReadySkills, with whom we have a shared passion for developing young graduates through mentorship
- Launching a work-readiness programme, LEAP, to equip unemployed graduates with the skills required to navigate the job-search process. At least 35 young people attended the first workshop
- Developing the alumni platform that will enable all former students and interns of the Foundation, as well as PPS Members and other graduate professionals to steer volunteerism efforts that support the growth and development of students and new graduates

Notwithstanding these achievements, we recognise the significant work that still lies ahead. According to the Business in Society Handbook, “...education continues to receive the largest proportion of corporate social investment - 48% in 2017 - but (yet) poor quality and lack of access to education persist. Youth unemployment and poverty are rife.” A revitalised approach to addressing youth unemployment (pp184-200) underscores the need for innovation and strengthened partnerships between the public and private sectors to create employment opportunities for young people.” BIS Handbook (Triaglogue; 2017)

With this bleak picture, we recognise that our work is not yet done. We also recognise that it is vital that we remain true to our brand essence, ‘Nurturing Potential’, thus giving young people opportunities for growth through education, development and mentorship, nurturing their dreams and, ultimately, their potential for greatness.

The work we do at the Foundation is in fact our Thuma Mina. Every day we can impact the lives of young people in a positive way. We call on all who can, to contribute to this noble cause and national imperative to grow one graduate professional at a time.

Indeed, we are grateful to our PPS colleagues for always rising to the occasion. We thank our tireless partners, whose passion for the work we all do propels us to higher levels. We applaud the university stakeholders we have worked with countrywide, whose thankless jobs sometimes go unnoticed – we acknowledge you and pledge our continued support.

Finally, this project would not be where it is without the tremendous support of our founder, PPS Insurance Company. We are privileged to enjoy the leadership and wisdom of our Board of Trustees.

We look forward to the active involvement of our Members, colleagues and the public in contributing to this noble work of purpose.

With love,

Vuyo Kobokoane
Executive Head
The PPS Foundation Trust is a registered Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) as envisaged in section 30 (3) of the Income Tax Act. As such, it is governed by and observes the regulatory requirements outlined by SARS.

The PPS Foundation Board of Trustees, led by the chairperson of the PPS Group’s apex body, PPS Holdings Trust, meets quarterly to review operational progress against strategic goals, review fiscal management against set financial governance standards and to review risks and issues. The Foundation’s management team, under the direction of the Executive Head, implements the strategic plans and ensures the effective operational functioning of the organisation.

The PPS Foundation Board of Trustees provides strategic oversight and guidance to the management team of the Foundation. With the support of subcommittees such as the Group Audit and Risk Committee, governance functions such as Group Compliance, Company Secretariat, and Group Finance, among others, the board is assured of the integrity of the Foundation’s operations.

In the past year, as we transitioned into the public benefit organisational (PBO) structure, we aligned all governance practices and processes to regulatory requirements such as SARS and B-BBEE. This includes compliance with section 18A(1)(a) of the Income Tax Act where all donations to the Foundation receive a tax exemption certificate.

Our staff complement remained unchanged at 5 employees.

A full set of audited financial statements may be viewed at the PPS Foundation offices on request to the Chief Financial Controller, Mr T Spies.

tspies@pps.co.za or 0861 777 146

All donations received during 2018 were from the Trust’s founder, PPS Insurance Company Limited.

Distributions to beneficiaries are made in line with the deed of the Foundation Trust, as overseen by the Board of Trustees. The founder allocated an amount to be donated to the trust in 2019, which will enable it to continue with its work of upliftment of the professional community. The trust also aims to receive donations from other stakeholders during 2019, which would supplement its funds for distribution to beneficiaries.

The past year saw the PPS Foundation Trust continue to operate its Graduate Outreach & Mentorship, Bursary Programme, and University Support Programme.

A full set of audited financial statements may be viewed at the PPS Foundation offices on request to the Chief Financial Controller, Mr T Spies.

tspies@pps.co.za or 0861 777 146

DISTRIBUTIONS

64% UNIVERSITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

27% BURSARY PROGRAMME

9% GRADUATE OUTREACH & MENTORSHIP
The dearth of skills in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields in South Africa remains a pressing issue for the financial services sector and the economy at large. This negatively impacts the country’s innovation and productive capabilities in a global marketplace whose competitiveness is ever more driven by investment in an aptitude for knowledge work.

The bursary programme aims to narrow the access gap to tertiary education, specifically in the STEM disciplines for disadvantaged young South Africans.

With the world progressing as rapidly as it is, South Africa and its citizens will be left behind if we cannot close the gap in education between ourselves and the developed world.

The PPS Foundation believes that without supporting our youth, encouraging and nurturing the potential present in disadvantaged communities, South Africa’s ascent from our current economic troubles will be made all the more difficult. That is why the Bursary Programme responds to the real and comprehensive needs of these students by covering the cost of tuition, books, meals and student accommodation.

Beyond the payment of tuition fees, students struggle to access financial resources for books, study equipment, residences and even food.

Additionally, the programme is supported digitally, which reduces administrative intensity. The students are also assisted through an individualised “hand-holding” process that eases the students’ applications and entry into the academic institution.

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The bursary programme aims to narrow the access gap to tertiary education, specifically in the STEM disciplines for disadvantaged young South Africans.
**Bursary Programme Beneficiaries**

**CHARLIZE DORMEHL**

In 2018 Charlize was pursuing her third and final year of human physiology at the University of Pretoria, with additional minors in pharmacology and microbiology. One of her concerns at the beginning of the academic year was that the funding set aside for her tertiary education would not meet the need of paying for it.

The cost of books, food and student housing had become a disproportionate concern for a student whose primary mission should simply be to study hard and pass well. With this obstacle distracting her focus from her studies, Charlize, like many South African students, was worried about her educational future.

“If I’m going on to further my studies, it’s going to be much more expensive and I don’t think we will be able to cover the costs if I don’t apply for a bursary,” she said.

As someone whose sincerest hope is simply to earn an education that she can use to help others, the PPS Foundation’s message of nurturing potential holds a pertinent meaning for Charlize.

“Nurture means you look after something, so you tend to look after what you care for so to the people who show potential – you want to nurture them because they still need to rise up and show what they are capable of. And not many people can do that, but you give them the opportunity, you nurture them and help them to show their potential to the world.”

Charlize has risen to the occasion and, as a result, through her hard work and grit, she was accepted into her third year of medical school at Wits University.

**INNOCENT SITHOLE**

At the age of 21, Innocent has learned all about diligence and dedication through the challenges that the experience of pursuing his BSc in Mathematical Science have presented him with. It’s these challenges that awakened him to the desperate need for a bursary, if he wanted to give himself the best chance of focusing his attention on his studies.

“The problem was that I was able to write my exams, but I couldn’t access my results. If you can’t access your results you can’t apply for any bursaries because every other bursary requires your transcript.”

Over and above that are the more concrete obstacles that a lack of funding has put between him and the completion of his degree. With 3 to 4 hours of travel time, each way between school and home, and classes that sometimes run until the evenings, Innocent has struggled to find time for what should be a student’s primary responsibility: to study.

His hope is that a PPS Foundation bursary will mitigate some of his challenges, allowing him to get back to the job of pursuing the dream he’s harboured for years.

When asked about his choice to study this specific degree, Innocent shares: “Ever since I was a learner at primary school I was a maths guy. Maths was everything to me. Without maths, there is something that is missing in my life. I’m a numbers guy. I like solving problems and one of my career paths is to be an Air Traffic Controller. Maths was the best option for me.”

This young gentleman seems to have figured his life’s equation out by divining hopes to end up in the aviation industry, showing that the sky is definitely the limit for him.

**JOSHUA MOTTO-ROS**

Joshua, a recently qualified doctor, is currently busy with his community service year at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. This is something that the hopeful 27-year-old - who has dreams of taking an even greater role in medical specialisation in the future - had been eagerly working towards when we first engaged him.

His passion for medicine, and the experience of his studies has only grown over the years, especially when he was exposed to working in rural communities, with those he believes - whose needs are greatest.

“You feel like you are actually making a difference and there’s not so much of a hierarchy system that you see in the bigger academic hospitals,” said Joshua of the experience.

His dream to make a difference could have remained just that because of funding issues. Towards the end of 2017, he began eagerly seeking a bursary to fill in for the dwindling retirement funding that his father, a PPS Member, had been using to cover the cost of his education. It was at that point that the PPS Foundation reached out to Joshua the funding he needed for the year.

With a clear understanding of South Africa’s need for good doctors – and doctors in general – the PPS Foundation made sure he achieved his goal after being relieved of the financial concern he had prior to being awarded with the bursary.

When asked about his motivation to apply for funding through the PPS Foundation during a surprise cheque handover in April 2018, Joshua displayed his commitment to his field by expressing how he wanted to devote his focus to his academics and intern responsibilities, so he could serve society wholeheartedly.

Eight months after the initial meeting with Joshua, we caught up with him at his graduation ceremony, and when asked if that he should be referred to as, the joyful Wits Medical School graduate said: “Dr Joshua Motto-Ross”.

**KAJAL PATEL**

When awarded with the bursary in 2018, 23-year-old Kajal Patel was in the fourth year of her MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) qualification at Wits University. The reality was whether she would be able to continue with her studies had been in limbo.

Her father holds an engineering degree that he earned in India. However, due to language barriers, he has been unable to make use of it in South Africa’s professional environment. For this among other reasons, Kajal’s education is a point of great pride and importance to her and her family.

Blessed with an altruistic spirit, Kajal has since high school been determined to help people. She has seen education as her bridge toward making a positive difference in the lives of others.

She tells of a defining experience from her matric year, “I was doing community service at a public hospital close to the Glen and the experience there was amazing. You just get to meet so many people and everyone has different stories. As a doctor, if you can just help them in some way, it makes such a big difference. In our country also, we don’t have a lot of facilities and we don’t have as many doctors as other places so it’s a great choice, I think.”

Unfortunately, while her father maintained a university fund for his daughter, their family was unprepared for the expense of studying medicine.

“Most of the money from the fund went into the first degree so now we’re lagging behind because we’re not sure where to extract funds from.”

Because the PPS Foundation funded Kajal’s tuition, she successfully progressed into her fifth year of study and is one step more closer to making use of her hard-earned skills in the healthcare space.

**RIXONGILE CHAUKE**

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University student Rixongile’s first encounter with the PPS brand was when students in her university department received sponsorship of scrubs from the organisation. It was an experience that she would remember while seeking out bursaries to ease the financial burden that medical school can be on families with limited resources.

“There is a lot of things that you have to do you know like even the stethoscope was R2000! And you cannot just call home and say that you want R6000 for all this because you’re not the only child.”

With the needs of four siblings to consider, Rixongile tried to think of other sources of funding toward completing her education. It was while she waited without much hope for the drought-stricken provincial bursary she had applied for, that she found out about the PPS Foundation Bursary Programme. Not wanting to waste time, she applied immediately.

“I thought, if these people can give us scrubs, then the chances are their generosity is very wide.”

Nurturing Potential – PPS Foundation’s tagline and driving mission – is a concept that means a great deal to Rixongile who feels that more than anything else, it is about helping people to overcome their innate fears and anxieties.

“For me, it’s making us realise our potential and then making us meet that potential to our fullest.”
As mandated by the Foundation Trust, our Bursary Programme’s emphasis is on empowering those from previously disadvantaged demographic groups.

The University Support Programme provides funding for projects that intend to improve the learning and teaching experience in South African universities and universities of technology.

LEAP, which stands for Learned, Engaged, Accelerated Professionals, is a work-readiness programme that aims to provide candidates with the skills, tools and mechanisms vital for their assimilation into the work environment.

An online portal where students, young graduate professionals and entry-level employees can access professional development information such as job opportunities, industry and career-related information and a mentorship programme.

The programme has been established to financially support tertiary students, specifically in the STEM fields, who display meritorious academic achievements and capability.

We mobilise employees and members to take an active part in sustainable social responsibility initiatives.

We collaborate with qualified PPS Financial Planners to help students improve their skills and confidence in managing their finances.
The University Support Programme is a partnership between the PPS Foundation and the various public universities across the country. It is borne out of an appreciation for the struggles faced by some institutions in maintaining and increasing their throughput rates while balancing that with dwindling government funding.

**FROM INFRASTRUCTURAL TO INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS**

Historically, the programme focused on infrastructure projects. This narrowed its emphasis in an educational context typified by the broad scope of the problems that afflict it. Following extensive engagements - through roadshows - with the public universities across the country, the programme was enhanced to serve their needs more accurately.

Using these roadshows, we maintain and build the partnerships that inform us of the needs of the students, and institutions, and position us to respond to them.

Today, the PPS Foundation aims its efforts primarily at historically disadvantaged institutions of higher learning; prioritising those programmes that enhance the teaching and learning experience, or are aligned to issues high on the country’s socioeconomic agenda.

We continued to collaborate with the various public universities across the country. Given the large-scale food insecurity experienced by university students, PPS Foundation prioritised contributing to this cause in 2018. Through the company’s employee volunteerism programme, staff packed 21,400 items of foodstuff in June and just over 40,000 in December. These were distributed to the University of Fort Hare, Tshwane University of Technology and the Stellenbosch University’s Campus Giving Day.

**10 800 MEALS DONATED**

University of Fort Hare: Food Programme

University of Pretoria: QS Computer Lab

Stellenbosch University: Food Programme

Nelson Mandela University: QS Computer Lab

University of Limpopo: Work Study Programme

**7 128 MEALS DONATED**

University of Cape Town: First Year Experience Programme

University of North West: Equipment for Disabled Students: Mafikeng Campus

**UNIVERSITY’S TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR MATHS AND SCIENCE**

University of Pretoria: Teacher Development Programme for Maths and Science

**FUNDING TO HELP BUILD A SPECIAL BUILDING SUITABLE FOR DISABLED STUDENTS**

University of Fort Hare: Food Programme

University of North West: Equipment for Disabled Students: Mafikeng Campus

**ADDITIONAL COMPUTER LAB CAPACITY ENABLING A CONDUICIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Stellenbosch University: Work Study Programme

**HELPDESKS ARE PROMOTED AND PROVIDED TO FIRST YEARS TO HELP AND SUPPORT THEM DURING THE ORIENTATION PROCESS**

University of Limpopo: Equipment for Technology Lab

University of Pretoria: Teacher Development Programme for Maths and Science

Stellenbosch University: Equipment for Technology Lab

**18 190 000 MEALS DONATED**

Medical students of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, wearing PPS-sponsored scrubs
Re: Letter of Prof. Gw-C

On behalf of the Student Affairs Division, I wish to acknowledge the generous donation of food parcels made by the PF Foundation. This act of kindness was more profound when Ms. Nkosi Zula from the Foundation contacted us about the donation by handing a presentation to the staff and students who attended the handover function.

The timing for the donation was so spot on that it was just before the start of examinations. These food parcels of students from writing examinations of hungry stomachs and thereby has contributed to academic excellence. As a broader note, the donation indirectly contributed towards retention of our students and ultimately towards throughput.

The donation marked a significant partnership whose impact will be felt by families of the beneficiaries across the length and breadth of our country and continent. It is a mark of kindness like those that not only contribute to graduate throughout but also to breaking the cycle of poverty in many homes. The value of the donation was felt more when our department received feedback from beneficiaries of the donation. They all had positive things to say about your donation and its positive impact on them.

The improvements to this letter show in a cleaner way In pictures and in words what I am trying to say in this letter:

Thank you ever so much!

Yours truly

Dr. Malinga Gw-C
Dean of Students
University of Fort Hare
A word of thanks from Stellenbosch University

On behalf of Stellenbosch University, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to PPS Foundation for its unwavering support in 2018.

The R350,000 in support of the Work Study Programme, made it possible to grow our programme from 40 to 62 participants in 2018. As you know, the project aims to provide students from low-income backgrounds, with financial reimbursements for work completed at University offices located in departments and faculties. This, not only, enables these students to earn their way through university, but also provides them with valuable work experience which adds credence to their CVs, thereby increasing their employability upon graduating from the University. I am delighted to read the very positive feedback on the experience from both the students and staff.

Your valuable contribution not only alleviates the financial pressure on these students but also enables them to enter the world of work with a degree of work experience.

Along the same lines, PPS Foundation also supported our students under the #MoveFood campaign. This student fund initiative highlighted the plight of our students and the very real issue they face around food insecurity. To date over R1 million in donations and goods have been raised.

Since the campaign launch, a number of students, staff, alumni and friends of the University have supported #MoveFood in various ways. We are so grateful to everyone who has decided to #MoveFood and has included your very own Mr. Satcha during his session in our #MoveFood campaign that ran on campus in September.

All students deserve equal opportunities to an educational experience unmarred by socioeconomic factors. As a result of this generosity, these students have been inspired to improve their future prospects which in turn helps to build a more resilient and equitable society.

Stellenbosch University values relationships with those who share in this endeavor to empower our communities.  

Yours sincerely,

Prof Willem de Villiers  
Rector & Vice-Chancellor

07 September 2018

Ms. Vuyo Kokobona  
Executive Head, PPS Foundation  
6 Anley Road  
Parktown  
Johannesburg  
2193

Dear Ms. Kokobona,

We hereby acknowledge with gratitude the kind donation of sanitary towels towards our Cooking Girls initiative.

We thank you for your continuous support and commitment to our programme and for contributing towards our overall objective of ensuring girls in school during their monthly cycle, through this support, I can confirm that most beneficiaries are poor girls from previously marginalized backgrounds and are 70% black.

I look forward to strengthening our partnership.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Mbabu  
Chief Executive Officer
The Graduate Internship Development Programme (GIDP) epitomises the intersection at which PPS’s ethos of mutuality meets the spirit of PPS Foundation’s tagline, Nurturing Potential. Such is the benefit that both parties – that is, PPS and the graduates themselves – gained through their involvement in the programme.

The GIDP is aimed at talented and ambitious newly qualified graduates looking for meaningful work opportunities in the financial services sector. The programme provides them with valuable learning, development and work experiences. As such it is targeted in its approach, thus enabling a good fit between intern and the business unit host. During the rigorous 12-month programme, our interns are immersed in a dynamic learning process from personal branding, financial wellbeing, to the hard skills of products and services of the organisation.

The 2018 cohort were placed in areas such as Short-Term Insurance, to Financial Planning and Operations, depending on the participant’s chosen field of study.

PROVIDING AN IMPACTFUL MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

The graduate interns were paired with mentors from across PPS. Under the guidance of a mentor, they learned to navigate the workplace safely and confidently over time.

Far from a one-sided relationship, these mentorships have also opened the eyes of the mentors to the challenges faced by new employees struggling to find their feet and make their mark on the world.
True to the ambitious spirit of the graduates we select for our Graduate Internship Development Programme, the primary thing Nokulunga Goba was looking for when she began her internship at the PPS Project Management office was growth. And that is exactly what she found, in spades.

“I never thought that I’d be actually placed in a project management office space and I’m getting so much growth in there. And that is not just growth in terms of the business but in terms of self.”

Having been taken under the wing of one of her colleagues, Nokulunga received leadership training, sat in on executive-level meetings, and has been expected to contribute more than she ever anticipated an intern would be responsible for. It’s been a rewarding experience for the young graduate, giving her a newfound sense of self-worth, and the opportunity to add value to a high-level professional environment has given her the confidence to recognise herself as the competent professional she is becoming.

“I’m always asked by my manager for input on how to, for example, make things better. So, I feel very valuable in my department and I wouldn’t trade it for another company. I like where I am.”

Working as a graduate intern in the PPS Claims department, Kabelo Mphethi was caught by surprise by the depth of knowledge an intern is required to possess and become comfortable with, in order to meaningfully contribute to the task at hand.

“Before we actually started with the real work, when they were still training us, I thought it was going to be an easy thing. I thought we were just going to process claims, (and) it was not going to require a lot of knowledge.”

What she discovered was that every claim is different, and an understanding of the profession of the client and the circumstances surrounding any given claim is required in order to produce output equal to the standards and expectations of the PPS culture.

Not one to be discouraged, she threw herself into her work and took the experience as an opportunity for her own professional development.

“I like the fact that at PPS, graduate interns have a different meaning. At PPS, graduate interns don’t just make tea and copies for their bosses. [We] are actually given a platform to show off [our] skills and potential.”
Working as an Advice Analyst as a part of the Graduate Internship Development Programme, Mlungisi Bundwini has taken to heart the development of his own professionalism. Surrounding him with experienced but amicable and accessible colleagues, the supportive environment at PPS has served as the ideal platform for the development and exploration of the different facets that comprise professionalism.

“I’ve learned a lot of things like the importance of being a professional, especially with how I behave with my colleagues and also the importance of effective communication and team effectiveness.”

Feeling an affinity for the PPS values, culture and the ethos of mutuality, Mlungisi was almost overwhelmed by his good fortune at being successfully placed within the business. Now, though, he has a few words of advice for those who would follow in his footsteps and apply for a position through PPS Foundation’s Graduate Internship Development Programme.

“Anybody who wants to apply for the programme must be prepared to work and they must be prepared to learn and to not give up.”

When he first began his internship at PPS’s Business Processes division, anxiety was Thabo Nkadimeng’s companion. It was a new environment and while his expectations for himself are nothing short of excellence, he could not be sure if he would meet his own standards in this exciting yet unfamiliar environment.

It wasn’t long before he conquered those fears. With PPS Foundation supporting his journey, he soon found himself living up to the expectations he habitually set for himself.

“I love the working, this type of working environment where the culture is just so conducive.”

Having found his professional feet, Thabo immersed himself in the PPS culture, finding it to be a welcoming and rewarding environment that offers the appreciation of his peers and an abiding sense of accomplishment for a job well done.

“I love the working, this type of working environment where the culture is just so conducive. It’s very friendly and it allows you to be yourself, to be an individual and to work as an individual and also as a team player.”
Through the Graduate Internship Development Programme, Thami Nxumalo was positioned as a professional service agent in PPS Mutual. The placement has given him the opportunity to not only learn more about the professional working environment, but also to learn more about himself and what it means to be a professional.

“What the programme has done for me is that it gave me a different outlook on how professionals are. It’s actually a lifestyle. Before coming to work, I thought it was just an act. Coming here it’s just kind of incorporated into who I am.”

The programme is not all sunshine and smiles. It presents interns with challenges, some of which they may never have expected to encounter. For Thami, those challenges have been growth opportunities. This was especially true when interns were all brought together for the programme’s regular feedback sessions. That’s why, when asked what the highlight of his experience was, his answer comes easily.

“First and foremost, my peers within the programme. All of us were outspoken about our challenges, which made me deal with mine better. Depending on what someone was going through, it actually made me deal with mine. That was the highlight: having good graduates.”

Katlego Lebese is a young woman who is distinctly aware of the fact that there is more to being a professional than simply attaining the qualifications and finding gainful employment. That might be the dictionary definition but, placed in the Actuarial space, she quickly realised that there is a lot more to professionalism than can be learned while seated in a lecture hall.

“You can have the qualifications - anyone can get the qualification but the soft skills, the emotional intelligence is something that, I believe now, is scarce. The graduate programme highlighted that and made sure that we get that critical skill that is needed to progress in our careers.”

That wasn’t the only pleasant surprise that the PPS working environment had in store for her. Katlego counts the freedom and responsibility that she and the other interns were given as a major selling point of the PPS Foundation Graduate Internship Development Programme. The confidence in one’s own competence, that can only come from successfully meeting your responsibilities, is an irreplaceable benefit of the experience.

“I believe that PPS graduates get more opportunities compared to other graduates elsewhere. Here you are given a platform to really learn and fly.”
No matter the qualifications a graduate might have to his or her name, the job-hunting process can be daunting to someone new to the job market. Employer requirements can be vague, and an interviewee is commonly assumed to be aware of norms and expectations.

It can be an unsettling experience for the young graduate, unaccustomed to the world of work and the complexities that comprise it. It can also be incredibly difficult for these graduates to do themselves justice in interviews that leave them feeling off-balance and unsure of themselves.

ASSISTING UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES

Aimed at unemployed graduates, the LEAP Work-Readiness Programme (Learned, Engaged, Accelerated Professionals) offers inexperienced job-seekers the interview-awareness of a veteran, transferring the soft skills necessary to excel when seated across from a potential employer.

Consisting of workshops that build the foundational competencies of Learned, Engaged, Accelerated Professionals, the LEAP Programme integrates into the wider PPS Foundation skills-development network ensuring a level of continuity across programmes as methodologies evolve.

What makes the LEAP Programme unique is its amalgamation of both personal and professional development in the coursework offered. While knowing how best to present oneself in an interview is invaluable information, participants are taken a step further than simply being coached. They are encouraged to develop a sense of self-awareness that will serve them well in sincerely understanding what strengths and weaknesses they bring to the professional’s table.

COLLABORATION WITH GETREADY

Closely aligned to the innovative skills development offered by our partnership with GetReadySkills, the LEAP Programme is focused on a practical and results-oriented approach to developing work-readiness. This requires multi-day workshops that cover diverse theoretical ground such as personal branding, CV-writing techniques, interview preparation, communication and presentation skills, as well as the development of one’s emotional intelligence and self-awareness. Multiple facets of financial wellness, such as budgeting, saving and debt management, are also covered, arming graduates with the knowledge to help protect and manage their finances.

“This innovative programme empowers inexperienced job-seekers with the soft skills necessary to excel when seated across from a potential employer.”
While reviewing the successes of the LEAP programme to date, we caught up with participant, Anjali Govan.

Anjali has found the innovative LEAP Work-Readiness Programme, its connection to GetReadySkills, and the opportunities that both have opened up for her, to have been powerfully enabling. It has worked to develop both her professional competencies and her understanding of the nuances of the professional environment that academia often fails to capture. Among these are the nitty-gritty necessities that are often overlooked until they’re staring the unprepared job-seeker in the face.

“As part of my involvement in the LEAP programme I have learned a number of things such as CV-writing, interview tips, networking and emotional intelligence.”

Networking can be especially difficult for the young graduate first entering the professional world. As they say, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” While this might paint a cynical and not entirely accurate picture, it still carries an undeniable kernel of truth. Having a network of contacts, both in your field and on its periphery, can be invaluable in carving out an adaptable and resilient career path.

“As attendance of the LEAP Programme has allowed me to network with individuals at PPS and this has allowed me to come out of my comfort zone and be able to apply for more opportunities that I never would have before.”

More than just networking, the LEAP Programme empowers unemployed graduates with knowledge of how to distinguish themselves from the growing crowd of job-seekers flooding the market, and how to avoid some of the potential pitfalls of social media and other professional dangers of living in an ever-connected world.

The innovative LEAP Work-Readiness Programme dovetails neatly with other PPS Foundation initiatives and partnerships that prepare graduates for the workplace and job markets of the future, bridging the gap between academia and the expectations of the corporate world.

While this sort of readiness preparation is important for anyone entering the working world, it is doubly so for the underprivileged or impoverished graduate, already struggling to overcome their circumstances. The job hunt can be a disillusioning and heart-breaking endeavour, especially when the graduate on the hunt receives little to no feedback about what they are doing wrong and how to improve their chances of success.

“With initiatives like the LEAP Programme, PPS Foundation is playing its part in improving not just the lives of the individuals directly affected, but the nation as a whole. It is our hope that the graduates who benefit from participation in the LEAP Programme will go on to spread what they have learned to their peers and contemporaries. After all, Success is Better, Shared.”
The Professionals Connect online portal is the platform through which PPS Foundation attracts graduates seeking employment, career and industry-specific information, linking them to professionals established in their fields. In this way, we have enabled a mentorship programme that will help the graduate navigate his or her entry into the working world.

FOR THE MENTEES
For the burgeoning professional facing the daunting challenge presented by a difficult job market, the opportunities offered by having access to an experienced mentor are myriad – ranging from the development of professional contacts to the understanding of industry nuances that simply cannot be covered by a standardised curriculum.

Given South Africa’s socioeconomic context, and the incredibly diverse backgrounds from which tomorrow’s professionals hail, there are no one-size-fits-all umbrella solutions to confronting the challenges they face as they transition from academia to the professional world.

In many cases, our professionals are the first-generation graduates who lack a voice of experience to turn to in times of uncertainty. They know no one who has already successfully completed the journey they are about to embark upon, and are prone to predictable pitfalls that only a world-wise veteran would be able to point out to them. And that is where the mentors come in.

More than just career counsellors, Professionals Connect mentors provide their mentees with empathetic shoulders as well as professional advice. Sometimes, the best you can do for someone, is to give them someone to talk to who has insight into the dilemmas they are facing. For a graduate on the cusp of starting his or her career, without family or friends who understand South Africa’s professional landscape, simply having a sounding board can be the most important aspect of being a part of a mentorship.

With few exceptions, the mentees that have been a part of the Professionals Connect Mentorship Programme have reported a deep satisfaction with both the professional guidance and personal insights their mentors have afforded them.

FOR THE MENTORS
Professionals Connect provides PPS Members with the chance to pay their success forward and make a positive impact on their field’s next generation of shining stars. Almost across the board, mentors have found the experience of taking a young graduate under their wings, to be a rewarding and eye-opening one.

With South Africa suffering a skills shortage, the difficulties faced by graduates transitioning from classrooms and lecture halls to boardrooms, hospitals and laboratories is only serving to put more pressure on already strained industries, not to mention the country’s economy.

It is an ongoing concern for the nation, as well as the professionals who envision a positive future for South Africa and its people.

By enabling these mentor partnerships, Professionals Connect puts mentors in a position to improve and influence the future of their mentees and, by extension, the future of their profession and the country.

Beyond this, the programme allows mentors to see a different side of their profession and the challenges faced by those first entering it.

From food vulnerability to work scarcity and a simple lack of professional contacts, young, first-generation graduates in South Africa face difficulties completely foreign to the experiences of established professionals.

Bridging this gap in understanding is just one of the rewards offered by the mentorship programme.

The PPS Foundation encourages all PPS Members and other professionals to consider involving themselves in the mentorship programme, paying forward on the success they have enjoyed and giving back to the professional community by investing their time and knowledge in the country’s future professionals.
Professionals Connect puts PPS Members into mentorship positions, assisting recent graduates as they navigate the transition from the life of a student to that of a working professional. To find out more, we spoke to two PPS Members, Herman Kocks and Mike Lledo, who have embarked upon the rewarding journey of mentorship.

Q: What is your name and what do you do?  
HK: Hi. My name is Herman Kocks and I’m Head of Legal at a financial services company.
ML: I’m Mike Lledo. I’m a chartered accountant and a member of PPS.

Q: How long have you been a PPS Member?  
ML: I’ve been a member for 15 years now but probably would have been a member earlier if I had got the right financial advice when I started my career.
HK: I joined PPS in 1986.

Q: As a PPS member, what inspired you to partner with the PPS Foundation in nurturing the potential of young professionals?  
HK: I decided to join the mentorship programme because I started thinking about my own role in society and being a professional person, bringing up my own two children and taking them through school and university. I started looking back at how privileged I have been – going to good schools and a good university and having family support. I realised many people are not that privileged. Professional and academically skilled people can learn for themselves. But how to approach life, how to approach business, how to approach difficult situations; essentially, that you learn on the knee of your grandparents or your own parents and that’s the role I’m trying to play. I have to start thinking about what legacy I leave behind, apart from a professional and hopefully a financial one.
ML: Where you’ve got corporate careers, the programmes they have there are often less structured, there is less motivation to do those programmes, and we will have a whole lot of members, like my mentee, who will not enjoy the benefit of that. And if the foundation of any profession is in the growing and nurturing of young talent, why wouldn’t we be doing that? Why shouldn’t I, as a PPS Member, be making a difference to the future of our society, our professions and even the country?

Q: What value have you taken from your role as a mentor on Professionals Connect?  
HK: The value I have taken for myself is to learn more about the mentee, to understand, to care, to really get involved. And I had to learn a lot about caring and understanding where this person comes from because I can’t compare my own circumstances to that. So, I’ve learned a lot about assumptions I’ve made in life and I’ve seen growth and that was tremendous. That’s very satisfying. It’s much better than drawing up a contract! Much Better!
ML: The issues we grappled with – whether it was at a personal level, at a career level, her future or her studies – were far bigger than I thought they would possibly be. And for me, as we worked through this, and she committed to it, the success and the pleasure of watching her grow and succeed through her own efforts was just absolutely wonderful.

Q: Do you think that a mentorship role is one that other South African professionals should consider? Why?  
HK: I do think that mentorship is something that South Africa should roll out on a much larger scale. It’s one thing for government to say there is free education for everybody, but it doesn’t add value if you don’t have support and you don’t know what to do with it. And if you get stuck, in terms of your progress, you need somebody you can trust to talk to. I found it valuable being part of a bigger programme. It creates a safe space for the mente and the mentor and I think that’s very important. I think it’s also important for PPS and the like to be able to put something back into community on a broader scale.
ML: I think there are a number of levels which operate there. One of them is acting as a sounding board. So, you’re not a friend, you’re not a family member, you’re not a work colleague or manager. You don’t have a political agenda, you don’t have your own personal biases. You’re somebody who’s independent and objective, and can actually just listen. Second thing for me is experience. I’ve made many, many mistakes in my life. Some stupid. Some unexpected. And I always looked for a mentor in my career because I always felt that if I took a lot less pain learning from somebody else’s mistakes instead of mine, I’d be a lot more comfortable, be able to move a lot quicker and get the right results. The third level for me is that as we get older and further in our career, our networks actually grow. For somebody who’s young and starting off, apart from family networks, where would they have a network to access? I think the last thing is simply that everybody needs a little bit of guidance in their lives.

Q: What would you say to implore other established professionals, especially PPS Members to support programmes of this nature?  
HK: I would implore all professionals, especially PPS Members, to become involved in programmes of this nature because it will give them the opportunity, as it did for me, to understand South Africa much better, to understand the needs of people to make a success of their own careers. In that way we contribute much more than just paying taxes or paying levies or dishing out money. To make the commitment to deal with somebody on a personal level, and to be there for that person, that’s very rewarding even for the mentor.
ML: I think PPS is the preeminent professional society in South Africa. If we want to see the society grow into the future, if we want to see our economy grow and our environment grow, we need to take this young talent and build them. For me it’s a case of needing to give something back to future members and paying it forward. So, if we are committed to the society, if we are committed to young professionals, let’s go and make a difference.

Q: PPS Foundation’s tag line is “Nurturing Potential” while PPS believes that “Success is Better, Shared”. What does this mean to you?  
HK: Don’t withdraw from society, don’t withdraw from the challenges out there; get involved! Make your own small contribution. That’s very rewarding and hopefully adds to the bigger picture and adds value to this wonderful country of ours.
ML: What nurturing potential means to me is helping somebody take their inherent talent, the skills that they are learning, the experience they are gaining, and putting that together to become the best possible person they can be.

“I do think that mentorship is something that South Africa should roll out on a much larger scale.”  
- Herman Kocks

“Everybody needs a little bit of guidance in their lives.”  
- Mike Lledo
As a Mentee in the Professionals Connect Programme, Nompumelelo Khanyile has been connected with established professional and PPS employee, Motshabi Nomvethe, who has taken on the role of mentor. We spoke to Nompumelelo about her experience to find out what value she has taken from it.

Q: What is your name and what do you do?
A: I am Nompumelelo Khanyile. I am a committee officer for the City of Johannesburg.

Q: What field/profession did you study for?
A: I have an honours in Politics and International Relations.

Q: What prompted you to sign up for the mentorship programme offered on Professionals Connect?
A: When the programme was introduced, I had just graduated and I did not have a job. As time went on, I knew that I was just not coping because beyond the frustration that I had of not finding a job, I also didn't have someone to talk to, to vent to, to even ask for advice. So, PPS Foundation's mentorship programme came at the right time for me.

Q: What do you think was the most valuable aspect of having a mentor?
A: The most valuable aspect of having a mentor, for me personally, was to just have somebody to talk to. Because with Motshabi, I was able to talk to her about any aspect of my life; not only career advice or career dilemmas, but even on a personal level.

Q: Motshabi is a PPS employee and she is very passionate about mentorship. Please tell us more about your relationship with her as your mentor?
A: I don’t know how to describe it. I think, for her, this is more than just a programme that she has to comply with. It is something that comes to her naturally. She has sort of grown with me from where I was, to where I am. So, she is now like a family member to me.

Q: Do you think that mentorship through Professionals Connect is one that other South African graduates could benefit from? Why?
A: I think the youth in general can benefit from a mentorship programme like the one that is offered by Professionals Connect...
Pulling the levers from behind the curtain of almost every PPS Foundation initiative, event, workshop or programme are PPS employees and members, freely giving of their time in hopes of touching a life and – maybe, just maybe – making this country a little bit better for everyone, every day. This is the selflessness of intent that defines the PPS Foundation in the eyes of its partners and beneficiaries.

PERSONIFYING THE PASSION OF PPS FOUNDATION

The volunteerism projects that are carried out by PPS employees and members truly epitomise the passion and spirit behind PPS Foundation’s mission. It is often through the Employee and Member Volunteerism banner that we identify the communities we will assist and the initiatives that we will put our efforts behind. And, it is through the hard work of our volunteers that we roll out our programmes and are able to execute on our mandate.

Encouraging Employee and Member Volunteerism ensures that the essence of nurturing potential is embedded into the very DNA of PPS Foundation and that the ethos of mutuality and the communal spirit it represents is truly appreciated and understood throughout the PPS Group.

While our Bursary Programme offers the most direct source of assistance to our beneficiaries, it is through volunteerism initiatives that we truly come to grips with the unfortunate realities that we attempt to alleviate. Investing money is one thing, but at the PPS Foundation, we take pride in investing ourselves in the youth of South Africa.

We understand that each of us is blessed to occupy the professional and relatively privileged positions that we find ourselves in, and it is a blessing we want to share with those who find themselves in less fortunate circumstances. Nowhere does this understanding and desire better manifest itself in PPS Foundation, than through our employee volunteerism initiatives.

VOLUNTEER INITIATIVES

In 2018, PPS employees were behind the ideation and execution of the partnered initiatives that PPS Foundation undertook with Rise Against Hunger Africa and Imbumba Foundation. These comprised a part of 2018’s University Support Programme.

Both initiatives were repeated from the previous year and, respectively, distributed meal packs and sanitary towels to communities in need around the country. Driven under the Employee & Member Volunteerism banner, these initiatives were close to the hearts of PPS staff and so it was a motivated workforce of volunteers that saw the initiatives through to their successful ends.

In addition, PPS Foundation also undertook a number of blood drives. Unfortunately, less than 1% of South Africans donate blood, which is desperately needed, especially in rural communities where access to medical care is exceedingly limited.

RISE AGAINST HUNGER

With a broad focus that considers the immediate needs of the learners, not just the long-term needs of the institution, the PPS Foundation partnered with international hunger relief organisation, Rise Against Hunger Africa (RAHA) to distribute meal packs to academic institutions facing the daily reality of food vulnerability. PPS staff, executives and Foundation trustees rolled up their sleeves and packed well over 50 000 food packs.

As an international brand with an extensive and well-established infrastructure and network of contacts, the partnership allowed us to expand our reach and mobilise our volunteers. Going forward, we can only foresee this beneficial partnership continuing to grow.

CARING4GIRLS

Research has shown that underprivileged South African girls can miss as many as 50 school days a year as a result of their lacking access to sanitary towels. The right to healthcare and sanitation is one of the most fundamental of all rights, and too many young women in South Africa have had their education negatively impacted because they do not have adequate access to otherwise widely available sanitary and hygiene products.

While the discussion around a woman’s monthly cycle topic is a taboo one, especially in rural communities, it is a reality that must be taken into account if impoverished young women are to be empowered.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

PPS professionals are made up of a group of well-rounded individuals who have the most versatile and diverse professions. However, knowledge is only part of the success. In a fast-paced world, paying it forward is crucial.

Volunteerism is encouraged from all members and employees of the PPS Group, regardless of the specific unit or region. So, we hope to see even more familiar PPS faces volunteering for or suggesting their own initiatives in the future.

Employees and members who would like to get involved should keep an eye out for PPS Foundation communications, as we are always on the lookout for an extra few pairs of nurturing hands.

It is only by working and nurturing together that we will create the lasting positive change that we know this country and its people deserve.

.getPlayer()
Employee volunteerism is central to the character and mission of PPS Foundation. Only by having ‘skin in the game’ can we truly claim to embody the purpose for which PPS Foundation was established. It is through our volunteer initiatives that we make a difference both internally and to society at large.

There are many obstacles between South African students and the academic success that will set them on the path toward taking control of their lives. Through employee volunteerism, not only do we encourage our staff to directly confront those challenges, but we also aim to spread awareness of these daily trials and tribulations that so many of us remain blissfully unaware of.

While exploring the impact of and plans for employee volunteerism at PPS Foundation, we got in touch with PPS Senior Compliance Specialist, Fawzia Abrahams, who was deeply involved in volunteer activities during 2018. Having taken on and guided a mentee of her own, Fawzia is no stranger to the satisfaction of getting involved in the initiatives undertaken by PPS Foundation, among the most impactful of which was Caring4Girls - a partnership entered into between PPS Foundation and the Imbumba Foundation. The Caring4Girls initiative undertook the distribution of sanitary towels to students in those areas that lack physical or financial access to what should be a common amenity.

Ultimately, this initiative aims to support the academic ambitions of the country’s young women through preservation of their health and dignity. In this way, their focus can be on planning for the future and attaining the grades that will support it.

In Fawzia’s own words, “Caring4Girls speaks strongly to my values of education and empowering girls. Specifically, because just donating a sanitary towel keeps a girl in school longer than girls out there that don’t go to school because of the dignity aspect of not having a sanitary towel.”

Of course, from conducting blood drives to actively participating in Nelson Mandela Commemoration Month, PPS Foundation has been involved in a number of volunteer initiatives and we will continue to find value in such involvement in the coming months.

“I definitely see employee volunteerism expanding in 2019 because I believe 2018 had a greater impact on employees. More and more employees started actively being involved on certain projects and they saw the benefits of it. I believe that 2019 will be another benchmark.”
The partnership between PPS Foundation and the innovative, skills-building GetReady programme is aimed at graduates who are struggling through the disheartening experience of unemployment. By offering them case study-based mentorship and the development of future-fit skills, we enable them to better and more confidently navigate the sometimes gruelling journey toward gainful employment. On top of that, GetReadySkills provides them with instruction in value-add skills that will make them respected additions to any professional team.

**FUTURE-FIT SKILLS**

Skills such as complex problem solving and networking are difficult to codify and, therefore, are often not offered as a part of a structured university curriculum. Nevertheless, these and other proficiencies offered through this collaboration, have been earmarked by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as being the in-demand skills of tomorrow’s employer.

These are the competencies that will grow more and more valuable, as automation proliferates and Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes an everyday reality in the professional environments of the future.

Being able to lead, to communicate effectively and to work harmoniously as part of a team are already highly valued traits. And they promise to become even more so, as technology replaces human labour in the performance of routine tasks. Being comfortable in complexity and able to systematically break down and resolve challenges that may overstep the parameters of a machine’s logic will become more important as an ever greater number of repetitive tasks are entrusted to automation.

In a fast-changing world, GetReadySkills aims to infuse graduates with the agility and competencies they’ll need, if they want to keep up in a fast-paced world.

**GETREADYSKILLS MENTORSHIP**

In a collaborative effort, the Professionals Connect database was used to select unemployed graduates for a 6-month mentorship programme that would develop their capabilities. This afforded graduate participants the opportunity to network and to glean professional insights from the extensive experience of the mentors to whom they were assigned. Two cohorts of graduates were inducted into the programme in 2018, and each candidate was awarded a certificate of completion at the end of their participation.

**SOLVING REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS**

The basis of the effectiveness of GetReadySkills’ approach is the tact applicability of the competencies gained to actual challenges faced by industry-relevant businesses in the real world. Case studies are presented during workshops, and participants collaborate to devise solutions to these challenges. Exceptional solutions that are generated during these workshops are then presented to the affected companies as potential answers to their problems. This serves the dual purpose of familiarising graduates with the sorts of difficulties faced in the working world, as well as giving them the opportunity to market themselves and the solutions they helped to develop.

The partnership with GetReadySkills gives the PPS Foundation yet another route toward engaging the young minds of South Africa, preparing them for the myriad challenges they’ll face as they transition from academia to an ever-changing global market.

In the words of its passionate CEO and co-founder, Manqoba Zungu: “GetReady is an innovative, case study-based mentorship programme which transforms and transitions graduates from a state of unemployment, depression, hopelessness and purposelessness to a state of being motivated, confident, employed, purpose-driven individuals, who are essentially now participating in the economy of the country which then makes them feel like credible individuals and citizens that are actually adding value to society and their families.”

A 6-month programme, the first 2018 cycle of GetReady commenced on 3 February, with 76 potential candidates selected through the Professionals Connect database. Of these, the total intake was 24 mentees – 13 of them coming from the PPS Foundation network. With the partnership between PPS Foundation and GetReadySkills allowing each organisation to leverage the strengths of the other, the collaboration between the two entities has proven to be an effective one, multiplying the impact that either might have individually.

According to Manqoba, “The partnership between GetReadySkills and the PPS Foundation is of immense importance, not only to GetReadySkills, not only to PPS Foundation but to society at large.”

The purpose has been to help equip graduates with complementary skills that are highly sought after in the corporate world but that may have been left underdeveloped while they pursued their respective specialisations. These future-fit skills include the ability to solve complex problems, to think critically, to include the ability to solve complex problems, to think critically, to present their ideas with confidence and to work harmoniously as a part of a team.

These are the skills predicted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to be necessary skills to develop professional success in a fast-paced and technologically advanced future. And so, these are the tools with which PPS Foundation and GetReadySkills enable our graduates.

In this way, we are not simply preparing graduates for the professional environment as it exists today. These competencies and the professional agility they enable, will continue to hold participants of the programme in good stead, well into an unclear future of unique and, as yet, unimagined challenges and opportunities.

Only by steeling them against the uncertainty of tomorrow, will we truly enable our best and our brightest – and, by extension, our nation as a whole – to fully realise their potential and be competitive in a globalised world.

“I would like to just say ‘Ngiyabonga’ which essentially means thank you very much from the depth of my soul, from the depth of my heart to the PPS Foundation because GetReadySkills wouldn’t be where it is today without the partnership with PPS Foundation.”

MANQOBA ZUNGU
While finding a job is at the forefront of most graduates’ minds, the reality is that this is far from being the epitome of success and is no way a guarantee of financial security. Even graduating at the top of one’s class and finding immediate employment would still mean that an unprepared professional is only one bad decision or accident away from disaster. Without comprehensive financial awareness and understanding, these graduates are operating at a disadvantage that leaves the sustainability of their success at the mercy of the unforeseen.

That is the thought process behind the offering of Consumer Financial Education (CFE) workshops, developed to shore up the weaknesses in the financial literacy of graduates whose familial and educational backgrounds often leave them unprepared for the nuances of navigating the choppy waters of South Africa’s volatile economy.

Facilitated by qualified PPS Financial Planners, these workshops have been well-received by students who encouragingly recognise the need for financial literacy in achieving their mid and long-term ambitions. These are not irresponsible youngsters lacking appreciation for the importance of ensuring their financial security. These are the savvy professionals of tomorrow, distinctly aware of the economic context of South Africa, and they’re enthused by the opportunity to learn how to financially insulate themselves and their families, now and into the future.

If we can meet that enthusiasm with practical knowledge, we can kick-start an economically sound generation full of financially literate graduates, in whose hands the country’s future will look brighter than ever.

SPREADING FINANCIAL EDUCATION INTO THE COMMUNITY

One of the hopes behind Consumer Financial Education workshops (and there is evidence of this being the case) is that attendees will take what they have learned back into their families, their peer groups and their communities with them. In this way, each participant of such a workshop will serve as a pebble of awareness dropped into the pool of his or her community. The ripple effect of their financial education will spread outward to empower individuals and communities that are beyond the conventional reach of PPS Foundation. This will also help to broaden our footprint and spread awareness of the Foundation and its mission.

The Consumer Financial Education workshops were hosted in conjunction with the Black Management Forum (BMF), a thought leadership organisation whose purpose, in their own words, is to “influence socio-economic change in our country, in pursuit of justice, fairness and equity.” This involves, among other things, facilitating developmental programmes for black managers, both locally and internationally.

With a purpose so closely aligned to our own, a partnership between PPS Foundation and BMF seemed to be almost fated.

In 2018, PPS Foundation and BMF partnered with one another and leveraged each other’s strengths to present Consumer Financial Education workshops to learners who belonged to or were exposed to the BMF’s Student Chapter. The first of these was hosted by the North-West University’s Mafikeng Campus on 16 May 2018. Other institutions included Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela University, Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Johannesburg.
Financial literacy is sorely lacking in South Africa. While universities might do a good job of imparting the mastery of a graduate’s chosen skill set, they do little to pave the way to a future of sound financial decisions. That’s why volunteers like Wynand du Preez - regional manager for Specialist Support Services at PPS, have been working in partnership with the PPS Foundation and facilitating Consumer Financial Education workshops for young South Africans.

Professional success can only carry you so far if it’s not supported by financial freedom and Consumer Financial Education workshops aimed to enable the former by informing the latter.

While one might worry about the oft-derided millennial generation’s willingness to learn, a lack of financial education is thankfully not due to a lack of desire and the response from students has been encouraging. Aside from a handful of smartphone addicts, the overwhelming majority have been keen and eager to learn how to take control of their future finances, invest wisely, and make their money work for them.

“You know we always hear all these negative things about our youth - how lost this generation is, and how there’s no hope for them, how they have such short attention spans and do not want to learn. What I’ve learned personally in these sessions, is that there’s a lot of youth out there who have got a lot of energy, a lot of will for life and a willingness to learn about finance,” says Wynand.

So far, that hope has been rewarded with inspiring glimpses into the potential future of South Africa and her youth.

“You know, the millennials often have a negative tag attached to them, but these millennials are very keen to actually make a change. That was so inspirational for me to be part of, and to know that it doesn’t stop there. Even engagement with some of them later on tells me that these guys are really serious and if that’s the future of South Africa then there are still very high hopes for us,” says Wynand.

Our hope is that it will be an organically sustainable and expanding solution, with attendees of the workshops taking what they have learned back into their households, their communities and their peer groups. With millions of South Africans still in the dark about the financial options and opportunities available to them, this can only serve the benefit of all South Africans in the long run.
At the heart of the PPS Foundation brand is the PPS infinite circle, which symbolises the sustainability of our mission of Nurturing Potential. Sustainability of operations, without constant infusion of funding to keep the gears turning, is of utmost importance to the successful execution of PPS Foundation’s mandate. And it is only through actively cultivating the culture of ‘paying it forward’ that this vision of sustainability can be realised. The Alumni Programme is a primary driver of that culture, leveraging the goodwill of PPS Members and the brand’s extensive network of graduate professionals to assist in the accomplishment of the Foundation’s various initiatives.

SUCCESS IS BETTER, SHARED

By building and maintaining robust and informative lines of communication between PPS Foundation and its alumni association comprised of the past beneficiaries of our initiatives and support programmes, we are building an effective knowledge exchange platform.

The purpose of this platform is to keep PPS Alumni connected to the various initiatives that the PPS Foundation undertakes. By keeping this community engaged with the PPS Foundation activities, we encourage their ongoing involvement in student support programmes, skills development workshops, volunteer programmes and any other initiatives that may benefit from their expertise and desire to help others in the way PPS Foundation once helped them.

Better than most, these alumni understand that truly, Success is Better, Shared. Having come full circle, from being beneficiaries of PPS Foundation’s efforts to becoming active contributors, PPS Alumni are thus woven into the infinite circle whose symbolised sustainability they now help to enable.

THE BENEFITS OF NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

While PPS Foundation’s Bursary Programme is a flagship programme, the proven benefit of non-financial support in enabling academic success, especially in the early years of study, cannot be ignored. Studies conducted in the South African scholastic context clearly indicate that the full wrap-around support, consisting of both financial and non-financial student aid programmes, is exponentially more effective than bursaries alone could ever be.

On a more anecdotal note, our own experience has served as testimony to the truth of this assessment. One cannot discuss the matter with a beneficiary of PPS Foundation without the topic turning to the immense value that graduates, interns and young professionals have gotten out of mentorship and student support programmes. Whether it’s career advice, interviewing and CV-writing tips, networking opportunities or soft skills development, experienced mentors have proven to be force multipliers. The input and ongoing presence of mentors have given PPS Foundation graduates the ability to approach their career development from an informed perspective.
The PPS Foundation Graduate Programme offers graduates the opportunity to work within one of the PPS Group’s business units, gaining invaluable on-the-job-experience and an opportunity to network with professionals within one’s chosen field. Supported by their fellow graduates, these new additions to the professional world are offered all the support and professional insights they need to succeed. We caught up with two of our alumni involved in the programme, to find out how they found the experience.

Q: What is your name and what do you do?

TdT: I’m Tylan du Toit and I was part of the 2018 Graduate Programme at PPS.

PP: My name is Preshaven Padayachee and I was a graduate in the year 2017.

Q: What professional field are you in?

TdT: With the graduate programme I was put in PPS Short-Term Insurance in the servicing department.

PP: I studied a BSc Medical Science. I majored in anatomy with electives in Physiology and Pharmacology. I am currently a Junior and Technical Specialist in the Research & Development team in PPS.

Q: How has the journey of being an intern evolved from your first day as a PPS employee to now?

TdT: When I first got here, I was very scared. Being an introvert, it’s not my kind of thing dealing with people. I was terrified. I didn’t know what to do, what was going to be expected of me. With the graduate programme, we met once a month. That equipped me to get to know the other graduates and made me feel more comfortable in the space. Where I am now, I am happy in my job. I have been given more responsibility and I have learned a lot throughout the graduate programme from the start ‘til now.

PP: My journey as an intern helped me to develop greatly. Especially in my skills and development. It also helped me evolve my characteristics and personal traits to a point that I am able to sell my brand as well.

Q: What do you think is the single most important benefit of being exposed to the world of work through the PPS Foundation’s Graduate Internship Development Programme?

TdT: For me personally, the single most important benefit is that I was given the opportunity to find my feet. Not all graduate programmes enable you to just take your time, make mistakes and ask for help. This graduate programme gave me the opportunity to make those mistakes and grow within myself and my field.

PP: With the PPS Foundation’s Graduate Programme, it helped to develop a multitude of skills, from soft to hard skills, which helps you understand the current working environment, the progress and adapting to the current environments. Especially considering all the different external factors that could affect our image.

Q: How important is it to bridge the gap that graduates face between the academic and professional worlds? Why?

TdT: It is very important. To bridge that gap in the future will be important for graduates so that they don’t sit in the same position as I did, not having enough confidence to do the job or speak up when necessary. So, by bridging that gap they would be more enabled to be more confident, to be more efficient when they get here and to just be happier in that space.

PP: I think it’s highly important. The number of skills and development you get during your academy days don’t necessarily prepare you for the working world. You utilise many different skills, from social skills, to soft skills that can complement the industry and affect your career opportunities.

Q: As a PPS Foundation Alumni, how would you like to contribute to the PPS Foundation’s work targeted at young professional graduates?

TdT: I would first try and be more involved with their volunteerism programmes. The PPS Foundation had a food packaging initiative last year, where they helped pack more than 40 000 food packages for students who are less fortunate and who don’t have access to food and can’t afford food themselves. I’d like to be part of that. Be part of more of those types of programmes. My mentor played a very big part in my graduate programme. She built me, she pushed me when I didn’t know I needed pushing. I am so grateful for her and I’d like to be that person to somebody else in the future.

PP: With regards to the Foundation, I would like to first get a little more experience and exposure, and then I would like to help new graduates or interns to strengthen their weaknesses and help them and motivate them.
2018 was a year of implementing and continuously refining the early initiatives that were developed and piloted in 2016 and 2017. PPS Foundation’s Nurturing Potential tagline came into being and many notable projects were made a reality through the execution of our mandate and programmes.

We are grateful for every contribution and the enthused participation in our programmes and initiatives. This gave us the impetus to continue doing this important work in a space that aims to harness the talent of future graduate professionals.

Having obtained our Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) status in 2017, the work carried out in 2018 was intended to build confidence in the capabilities we pride ourselves in and the network of partners that enables them, giving all relevant stakeholders room to join us in contributing towards enlarging the circle of mutuality.

Donors who make financial contributions towards the public benefit activities we drive will receive a Section 18A certificate and could qualify for a tax deduction.

We encourage you to make a difference and contribute to the PPS Foundation by visiting: https://ppsfoundation.pps.co.za

You can contribute towards providing opportunities for future professionals.

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#NurturingPotential | #EducateAFutureProfessional | #SuccessIsBetterShared

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