University-Industry Collaboration Colloquium: Season VI
The Collaboration Dividend

3 – 4 December 2026 @ Lord Charles Hotel, Somerset West Cape Town

Event Synopsis

The 6th edition of Africa's longest-running university-industry collaboration gathering convenes at the Lord Charles Hotel in Cape Town. The conversation now shifts from intent to industrial consequence: whether the partnerships actually produce returns that justify the effort—research that reaches the market; intellectual property that withstands commercial scrutiny; talent pipelines that survive first contact with the workplace; and joint ventures that outlast the press conference announcement.

The colloquium brings together researchers, technology-transfer professionals, corporate innovation leaders, policymakers, legal specialists, entrepreneurs, and practitioners from across the sciences, engineering, health, the creative industries, business, and the social sciences. The programme is designed for anyone whose work sits at the intersection of knowledge and application, regardless of disciplinary home.

Sessions will move beyond principle to practice. Participants will examine how partnerships are structured, how risk and reward are allocated, how confidential information is protected, and how ideas move from laboratory or studio to product, policy, or performance. Case studies will include both successes and instructive failures, because the dividend is rarely automatic.

Academia and industry still operate with different incentives, timelines and vocabularies. The former still speaks in method and publication; the latter still speaks in margin, speed and time-to-market. Season VI is for those who must work across that divide every week and who need clearer, more honest evidence of what the collaboration is actually worth on the ground.

P.S

The Western Cape is not a neutral backdrop. It is one of the continent's densest corridors of research universities, technology transfer offices, medical-device clusters, Agri-tech and green-energy ventures, and a labour market that still cannot absorb the graduates those same institutions produce. The colloquium uses that tension as its working material.

Who Will Leave With an Advantage?

Academia
Professors and lecturers who want impact beyond the journal. Deans, DVCs, research directors, technology-transfer practitioners, curriculum designers, WIL educators and postgraduate supervisors expected to deliver both papers and pipelines.

Industry & Business
CEOs and MDs looking for the next advantage. R&D and innovation leads. HR and L&D leaders responsible for graduate talent. CSI/ESG managers who need partnerships that are more than branding. Business-development executives who treat universities as more than a "nice to have."

Government & Policy
Officials and advisors who write the rules that either enable or quietly strangle collaboration. Public-private partnership coordinators who have to make the theory work on the ground.

Support Ecosystems
Incubator and accelerator managers. Technology-transfer officers. Founders already working with universities (or who want to). Skills and youth-employability leaders. Anyone building the connective tissue between lab and market.

The Value of Presence

- Africa's collaboration problem is specific.

Risk-averse capital, thin early-stage funding for university IP, and curricula that still treat industry as a guest lecturer. The colloquium is built for that stack of constraints, not a generic "innovation ecosystem" template imported from silicon valley.

- This is where the "collaboration dividend" actually gets priced.

Most university–industry events celebrate partnership. This one asks the harder question: what is the return on those partnerships — for graduates, firms, and institutions — and how do you design for it instead of hoping it appears.

- You leave with methods, not just slides.

Sessions include pitching research to industry funders, protecting confidential information under South African law and practical IP-to-market routes (licensing, spin-outs, joint ventures).

FIRESIDE CONVERSATIONS

- The culture clash is on the agenda.

Academia speaks journals and methodology. Industry speaks deadlines and ROI. The "Publish or Perish / Profit or Pivot" panel treats that gap as the main problem to solve, not a footnote.

- It addresses the parts people usually skip.

Trade-secret protection, accessibility as design principle rather than afterthought, the gig economy's effect on entrepreneurial ecosystems, and decentralised finance as a new set of rules for founders.

- Cape Town is not the backdrop. It is the case study that does half the work.

The Western Cape is one of the few African ecosystems where research commercialisation, start-up spinouts, and graduate pipelines are happening at the same time. Attendees who want continental partnerships get a working laboratory instead of another panel on "potential." Somerset West puts that ecosystem in one room, away from the usual CBD noise.

- Missing it means waiting another cycle.

A year spent outside this room is a year of graduates designed for a labour market that has already shifted, and of research that never finds a buyer.