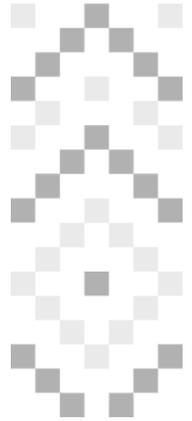


03 March 2026



Creative Brand Lab 2026 Sparks Real World Innovation

Department of Graphic Design



The 2026 CBE and FADA Academic and Industry Skills Development Collaboration, known as the Creative Brand Lab, took place on 20 and 21 February at the University of Johannesburg's Auckland Park Bunting Road Campus. This two day, high impact interdisciplinary bootcamp brought together seventy Marketing Management Honours students from the College of Business and Economics and forty seven third year Graphic Design students from the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture.

Created as an authentic career centred skills development experience, the Creative Brand Lab provided a dynamic collaborative environment where brand strategy and visual communication intersected. Students worked in response to real world communication challenges presented by the Department of Optometry, allowing them to test their abilities within a professional industry aligned context.

Participants engaged with an impressive line up of expert keynote and industry speakers, including Dr Thebe Ikalafeng, Fiona O Connor from Havas International, Tumelo Rantsane from Opel South Africa, and an interactive design thinking workshop facilitated by Brett Will using chocolate making as a creative problem solving tool.

Throughout the programme, students participated in collaborative activities focused on digital marketing, advertising copywriting, content development, and brand voice alignment in accordance with the University of Johannesburg corporate identity. Through teamwork, applied research and creative execution, they will produce strategic social media campaign concepts and polished digital portfolio outputs that meet professional standards.

The bootcamp strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration, enhanced workplace readiness, and exposed students to valuable knowledge sharing and industry practices that will support their future employability. The event was an outstanding success, and we look forward to reviewing the final campaign concepts and portfolio submissions that will showcase the depth of learning and innovation fostered through this initiative.

Due to the collaborative structure and strategic importance of the project, Prof Ilse Struweg, Dr Jade Turner, and Dr Ronel Toerien from the College of Business and Economics have requested that the submission deadline aligns with the CBE schedule. The final deadline is set for 13 April, during the week following the academic recess. This alignment is essential, as CBE intends to formally present the completed project outcomes to the Department of Optometry and the MEC for review and approval. Students have already been assigned to their respective interdisciplinary groups in preparation for this next phase.