

Training a new wave of professionals

The first in a four-block series of courses for candidates interested in becoming a Certified Property Manager® (CPM®) took place at Wits Enterprise from 1 to 4 July 2019. The first block of courses included Marketing & Leasing for Office Buildings, and Leading a Winning Property Management Team. It was led by Shannon Alter CPM, one of the instructors with the Institute of Real Estate Management in the US

Shannon Alter is a real estate leader, a global trainer and the instructor for Block 1 CPM, now offered at Wits Enterprise in partnership with the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM).

The IREM partnership was brokered by Saul Gumede CPM, a board member of the South African Institute of Black Property Practitioners, with the aim of fostering the development of the South African Chapter of IREM and professionalise the property management business once a certain number of candidates have passed through the programme.

Students can complete the education programme in one of two ways: they can take Blocks 1 to 4 through the IREM partnership with Wits Enterprise; or, if they hold Wits's Postgraduate Diploma in Property Development and Management or a BSc in Real Estate, they can waive Blocks 1 to 3 and proceed directly to Block 4.

According to executive programme coordinator Professor Samuel Azasu, it was important for Wits to obtain a licence for both of these study options in order to provide courses that give an alternative entry point for certification to people currently in the industry who may not hold a degree.

"The course is challenging and involves a lot of work for the students, but it's a great opportunity to stay relevant in a fast-evolving industry," says Alter. "As an IREM CPM, you can operate worldwide. IREM has

a presence in more than 40 countries, and I've been fortunate to teach in eight of those. It's exciting to help the various Chapters and students – and to lay the foundation in South Africa for raising industry standards and implementing worldwide best practices."

Alter obtained her CPM certification in the early 1990s, and was convinced to become part of the IREM faculty of instructors by former colleague and fellow CPM Alan Alexander. Although Alter's primary job is as a speaker/trainer, she says that being an IREM instructor is definitely the best role in IREM. "No matter how many real estate professionals you have in your network, the opportunity to teach industry professionals helps you connect with even more around the world," she says. "It's a great way to give back to the industry, and to encourage the next generation of professionals to become part of the real estate community."

Alter's career began in hospitality at Westin Hotels. Like many in the US, she "fell into" the real estate space after her former boss at a hotel group joined a property management company. "It was a great opportunity that has served me well," she says. "I have been very fortunate to work in many areas of commercial real estate – office, retail, mixed-use and industrial. If you're thinking of joining this industry, go for it! If you're new to the industry, go before you're ready, as they say – you can learn along the way."



"The IREM community is fantastic. The Chapter in South Africa is working on identifying mentors for current students, and I've personally encouraged students to take advantage of the chance to talk with their instructors and find out everything they can about IREM. We're here for you. A great example is Nandi Malindi, who is the Executive Director and Treasurer of the IREM South Africa Gauteng Chapter. She obtained her CPM in Chicago in 2017; this year she'll be speaking at the IREM Global Summit on a panel regarding breaking the glass ceiling and empowering women in real estate."

While the majority of course attendees at Wits Enterprise have some background in real estate, there's plenty of information about IREM standards they haven't been previously exposed to. "What we bring to the table is global best practices and how to put them into place," says Alter. "We give professionals an opportunity to become part of this quickly expanding global industry. Ethics are a cornerstone of our business, so it's required that every CPM candidate takes our ethics class. Doing the right thing at the right time is one of the foundations of the real estate environment – no matter the country or culture."

Block 2 CPM for non-property-degree holders will be held in October. 🌸

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