



PRESS RELEASE

University of KwaZulu-Natal wins first prize at the 14th International MultiComfort House Students Contest

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Johannesburg

The first prize of the 14th International Saint-Gobain MultiComfort House Students Contest was awarded to Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Their project “Solar.Creek.Community” combines innovation and vernacular architecture with a climate driven approach to create sustainable communities.

From second to first place: South Africa shines!

In 2016, South-Africa participated in the Saint-Gobain MultiComfort House Students Contest for the first time and Miguel Carvalho, James Russwurm and Tiago Vasconcelos from University of Johannesburg came second place.

This year, 68 students from four different universities in southern Africa entered the competition; University of Johannesburg, Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), University of Botswana and University of KwaZulu-Natal (Durban).

In total, 34 projects were submitted. Seven shortlisted projects were showcased at the national stage in Johannesburg; six projects from the University of Johannesburg and one from the University of Kwazulu-Natal.

Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, won the southern Africa stage, giving them the opportunity to champion their proposal to an international jury that included representatives from the Dubai municipality, architects and industry experts.

Competing against 50 teams from 28 countries, the South African team was awarded the first prize for its project “Solar.Creek.Community”. A feat accomplished in only six weeks, as opposed to six months for the northern hemisphere participants.

“The reward of getting recognition at this stage is a testament to hours of work we invested in this project to demonstrate that the South African architectural community is capable of competing at a global stage,” explain Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi.

Chaired by Pierre-André de Chalendar, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Saint-Gobain Group, and Mr. Dawood AbdulRahman Al Hajiri, Director General of Dubai municipality, the international final was held in Dubai (United Arab Emirate) from 12 – 15 May 2018.



“Having won the second prize in 2016 with the University of Johannesburg when we participated in the international stage for the first time was a major highlight for South Africa. To win this year with the University of KwaZulu-Natal is an enormous achievement and certainly one of the biggest highlights in my Saint-Gobain career,” concludes Sibusiso Mthembu, Saint-Gobain Coordinator for the southern Africa stage of the contest.

An international competition rewarding sustainable and comfortable architecture

Created in 2004, the Saint-Gobain MultiComfort House Students Contest is an international competition dedicated to architecture and engineering students to encourage the design of comfortable and sustainable living spaces.

This year, participants had to design a vision for a transcultural vibrant community development located in the perimeter of the cultural village of Dubai. The design had to propose a combination of residential and public spaces to maximize energy-efficiency and wellbeing. The challenge laid in Dubai’s very hot and humid climate. Students had to find a way to reconcile the reduction of energy consumption of cooling and ventilation systems with an aesthetic and highly efficient building envelope. This without compromising comfort, and while preserving the environment.



Left to Right: Vahin Parmananda (University of KZN student), Pierre-André de Chalendar (Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Saint-Gobain Group), Mr. Dawood AbdulRahman Al Hajiri (Director General of Dubai municipality), Mthokozisi Sibisi (University of KZN student).

Additional links:

- Saint-Gobain Group press release: [HERE](#)
- Southern Africa MultiComfort House Students Contest: [VIDEO](#)
- Solar.Creek.Community by Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi: [PDF](#)
- Solar.Creek.Community by Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi: [MOVIE](#)

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