The Incentive Architecture Crisis: A Policy Framework for Engineering the Entrepreneurial University in Africa

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Executive Summary

Across Africa, we in the university community are grappling with a deep design problem that often presents itself as a cultural one. We celebrate innovation weeks, launch hubs and incubators, host pitch competitions, and articulate ambitious strategies around entrepreneurship. Yet the invisible operating system that shapes behaviour; our promotion criteria, resource allocation rules, legal protocols, assessment systems, and cultural signals still rewards academic insularity, risk avoidance, and conventional scholarship.

The result is a persistent “performance-reward gap.” We call for entrepreneurial behaviour but still primarily reward publications, classroom contact hours, and administrative compliance. We ask faculty to commercialise research without giving them time, protection, or upside. We urge students

to “be job creators,” while treating ventures as distractions from “serious academic work.” We invite industry to co-create, while locking them into slow, opaque processes.

This paper argues that if we want different outcomes, we must re-engineer the incentive architecture of African universities. Our institutions are not failing because we lack ideas, commitment, or talent. We are producing exactly what we are structurally designed to produce: academically competent graduates poorly prepared for market realities; faculty who rationally prioritise publication over commercialization; and administrators whose safest choice is stability rather than transformation.
The core proposition of this paper is simple:

Universities produce what they reward

To build entrepreneurial universities, we must change what we reward
We propose a comprehensive, multi-level policy framework that rewires incentives for four main stakeholder groups—faculty, students, administrators, and industry partners—while responding to African realities of resource constraints, regulatory complexity, and social expectations. The framework is not abstract theory. It offers concrete policy instruments: multi-track promotion systems, Innovation Derisking Funds, credit-bearing venture studios, outcome-linked leadership contracts, tiered industry partnership architectures, and an implementation roadmap that recognises our internal politics and capacity constraints.

We write this as part of the African university ecosystem, not as outside critics. The pronoun “we” in this paper is deliberate. We share responsibility for the current incentive misalignment, and we share the opportunity to redesign it. The question is not whether we value entrepreneurship in principle; the question is whether we are willing to rewire our systems so that entrepreneurial behaviour becomes rational, rewarded, and high-status within our institutions.

Part I: Diagnosing the Structural Pathology

1.1 The Dual Operating System Problem

Most African universities today are running two operating systems at once.

System A: Our Declared Mission

We have:

- Innovation hubs, accelerators, and “labs”
- MoUs with industry and development partners
- Entrepreneurship courses, minors, and clubs
- Speeches from leadership emphasising job creation and innovation
- Strategic plans with ambitious targets for commercialization and partnerships

This is the system we talk about.

System B: Our Actual Incentive Engine

But the behaviours that determine careers and budgets are usually governed by a different system:

- Promotion and tenure driven mainly by journal publications and conventional research metrics
- Legal and finance processes designed primarily to avoid risk and liability
- Course credit structures that treat ventures as extracurricular, not core learning
- Budget allocations that prioritise traditional academic functions
- Social prestige hierarchies that place conventional scholarship above entrepreneurial activity

This is the system we live in.
The problem is not that System A is insincere. Many of us genuinely believe in entrepreneurship and innovation. The problem is that System B is what actually governs behaviour. People in institutions quite rationally optimise for survival and advancement within the real reward environment.

If we ask a lecturer to invest 18 months in commercialising IP, but promotion depends almost entirely on publications, the rational choice is to stay away from commercialization. If we praise student founders on social media but penalise them indirectly through GPA and scholarship rules, the rational choice is to prioritise exam performance and conventional internships. If we call for partnerships but make every contract take 12–18 months to process, the rational choice for industry is to keep engagements superficial.

Until we align System A (what we say we value) with System B (what we actually reward), our entrepreneurship rhetoric will remain largely symbolic.

1.2 The Missing Middle: Where Transformation Dies
Between our institutional aspirations and the daily choices of individual actors lies what we can call the **Missing Middle**—the concrete mechanisms that make entrepreneurial behaviour a rational choice rather than a heroic sacrifice.
This gap shows up differently for different stakeholders:
For Faculty:
- No clear, codified pathway that links commercialization to promotion
- Ambiguous time allocation for entrepreneurial work versus teaching and research
- Unclear ownership and revenue-sharing rules
- High personal risk for little formal recognition or protection

For Students:
- Ventures compete directly with GPA, which still drives scholarships and postgraduate opportunities
- Social and family pressure to pursue “safe” jobs
- Fear that failure—especially visible failure—will follow them permanently
- Entrepreneurship framed as a side-hustle, not as serious academic work

For Administrators and Leaders:
- Vice Chancellors and Deans evaluated largely on stability and compliance, not transformation
- Councils and Boards dominated by risk-averse profiles

- Legal and finance rewarded for preventing problems, not enabling innovation
- Few personal consequences for preserving the status quo; many consequences for failures associated with change

For Industry Partners:

- Limited visibility into university portfolios and pipelines
- Unclear IP and ownership structures
- Long, unpredictable timelines for agreements
- Partnerships perceived as CSR or "goodwill" rather than as core innovation infrastructure

Unless we deliberately build robust mechanisms into this Missing Middle—policy, contracts, metrics, budgets—our new programmes will keep crashing against the old incentive architecture.

Part II: The Faculty Challenge — Engineering Rational Risk-Taking

2.1 The Current Dysfunction

For academic staff, the choice architecture is often stark.

Pathway 1: Traditional Academic Success (Rewarded)

- Publish 3–5 papers a year in recognised journals
- Secure conventional research grants
- Carry full teaching load and participate in committees
- Build a clear case for promotion using familiar criteria

Pathway 2: Entrepreneurial Engagement (Structurally Penalised)

- Spend 12–18 months working on an applied research output or spinout
- Navigate complex, sometimes unclear IP and licensing processes
- Mentor student ventures, often outside official workload
- Risk failure without clear recognition in promotion criteria

In such a system, entrepreneurship is effectively an **unfunded, unprotected mandate**. The puzzle is not why most academics avoid commercialization; the real puzzle is why a few still persist.

2.2 The Entrepreneurial Tenure Track: Redefining "What Counts"

We need a **Multi-Track Promotion Framework** that recognises different but equally valid forms of academic excellence.

Under such a system, faculty can demonstrate excellence through:

Track A: Research and Scholarly Excellence

- Peer-reviewed publications
- Competitive grants
- Graduate supervision
- Scholarly leadership in conferences and editorial roles

Track B: Entrepreneurial and Societal Impact Excellence

- Licensed or commercialised IP with evidence of revenue or adoption
- Ventures based on university IP that raise external investment above set thresholds
- Student ventures mentored to market entry or growth stage
- Significant industry co-development contracts and collaborative projects
- Patents that are linked to real-world use, not just filing counts

The key is not to "add entrepreneurship" on top of existing expectations. The key is to **make entrepreneurial achievement an alternative and equivalent route to advancement**.

This implies:

- Promotion committees that include evaluators with commercialization and industry experience
- Revised regulations that explicitly codify entrepreneurial outputs as promotion-worthy
- Training for heads of department on how to assess entrepreneurial portfolios
- Annual performance processes that assign explicit weight to commercialization activities

When entrepreneurial excellence is structurally recognised as equal to research excellence, our rhetoric and our reward systems start to converge.

2.3 Time and Resource Protection: The Derisking Mechanism

Even with fair promotion criteria, faculty cannot realistically add entrepreneurship on top of full teaching loads, administrative duties, and publication targets. We need mechanisms that protect time and provide seed resources.

We propose an **Innovation Derisking Fund (IDF)** with three core functions:

1. **Teaching Load Buy-Outs**
    - Faculty leading significant commercialization efforts (spinouts, major licenses, large co-development projects) receive 50% teaching reductions for 12–18 months
    - Replacement teaching funded centrally through the IDF, not from departmental budgets
    - Allocation criteria transparent and tied to clear commercialization milestones
2. **Seed Operating Capital**
    - Grant-style funding of, for example, $5,000–$15,000 per project
    - Use for prototype development, market validation, early IP costs
    - Fast-track approval with simple applications and two-week decision timelines
3. **Legal and Administrative Support**
    - Pre-packaged legal hours for IP assessments, licensing negotiations, and company formation
    - Dedicated technology transfer staff assigned to active projects
    - Use of standardised agreements to accelerate approvals

We also recommend a **Failure Protection Clause**: where a faculty member undertakes a formally supported entrepreneurial project that fails, the effort is recorded as a recognised "research and innovation output" rather than as a negative mark. This encourages intelligent risk-taking rather than punishing it.

2.4 Ownership and Financial Upside: The Motivation Engine

Academic entrepreneurship will always be fragile if most upside goes to the institution while most risk sits with the individual.

A transparent and non-negotiable **revenue-sharing framework** is essential. For example (illustrative percentages):

- **Phase 1** – first $500,000 in cumulative revenue
  - Faculty: 50%
  - Department: 20%
  - University: 30%
- **Phase 2** – $500,001 to $2,000,000
  - Faculty: 40%
  - Department: 25%
  - University: 35%
- **Phase 3** – above $2,000,000
  - Faculty: 30%
  - Department: 30%
  - University: 40%

For spinouts:

- Founding faculty hold a meaningful equity stake (e.g., 15–25%)
- University holds an equity position (e.g., 10–20%) plus, where appropriate, royalties
- Vesting schedules, IP licence terms, and conflict-of-interest rules are clear and standardised

The design principle is simple: **in the early stages, the individual who takes the risk should see the largest share of reward**. Institutions benefit from a larger pipeline and long-term outcomes rather than by maximising extraction from each project.

2.5 Cultural Elevation: Making Entrepreneurial Faculty High-Status

Universities are profoundly status sensitive. Once entrepreneurial success becomes high-status, behaviour follows.

We can engineer new status signals:

- Named titles such as "Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship"

- High-profile institutional awards for innovators, with prizes at least equal to traditional research prizes
- Prime speaking slots for entrepreneurial faculty at graduation and flagship events
- Visibility in university branding and fundraising materials

When entrepreneurial professors become visible heroes of our institutions—alongside traditional scholars—we signal to early-career academics that this pathway is legitimate, respected, and supported.

Part III: The Student Challenge — From Academic Optimisation to Venture Creation

3.1 The Rational Student Dilemma

Our students often face a stark, rational choice.

Safe Path:

- Focus primarily on maximising GPA
- Choose safe internships in established companies or public sector
- Minimise risk of failure that can jeopardise scholarships or postgraduate opportunities
- Receive strong family approval and clear social recognition

Entrepreneurial Path:

- Dedicate substantial time (20+ hours per week) to a high-risk venture
- Face possible GPA decline
- Manage family and community expectations that may view entrepreneurship as reckless
- Navigate uncertain outcomes with limited financial buffers

Given this configuration, a rational student often chooses the safe path—even if they are highly motivated and talented. If we want more student entrepreneurs, we must redesign the system so that **venture creation is not structurally punished**.

3.2 Ventures as Legitimate Academic Work

The most powerful lever is to recognise venture creation formally as **academic work**.

We propose **credit-bearing venture studios**, structured as:

- Semester- or year-long courses where the primary "assignment" is building a venture or validated solution
- Academic work including market research, customer discovery, technical design, financial modelling, and impact framework
- Joint supervision by faculty and industry mentors
- Assessment based on rigour and learning, not just success

Ventures developed in these studios can:

- Substitute for a traditional thesis or capstone
- Count as core credits within relevant programmes

- Appear on transcripts as rigorous academic experiences (e.g., “Entrepreneurial Venture Project”)

Assessment frameworks might weigh:

- Depth of problem understanding and customer discovery
- Quality of prototype or solution design
- Financial and operational planning
- Reflection on learning, pivots, and lessons from failure

This reframes student entrepreneurship from “optional side-hustle” to “elite applied learning pathway.”

3.3 Failure as a Protected Learning Outcome

Fear of failure—in front of peers, family, and future employers—is a major deterrent. Universities can deliberately design **safe-to-fail** spaces.

A structured **Academic Failure Protection Framework** could include:

- **Safe-to-Fail Designation** for ventures undertaken within official programmes, ensuring no academic penalty for honest failure
- Requirement for a structured post-mortem that analyses hypotheses, decisions, evidence, and learning
- Recognition of this post-mortem as a legitimate assessment output

Accompanying this, universities can:

- Provide formal documentation to employers and postgraduate programmes explaining the rigour of entrepreneurial coursework
- Emphasise that structured failure in this context is a signal of initiative, resilience, and analytic capability

When failure is de-stigmatized and reframed as sophisticated learning, more students will step into entrepreneurial work.

3.4 Cultural Status Engineering: Making Founders Aspirational

Students are acutely sensitive to peer recognition. We can deliberately construct environments in which founders are admired in the same way top scholars or top athletes are admired.

Examples:

- “Founder Walls” and digital showcases of student ventures in prominent spaces
- Special distinctions at graduation for students who built significant ventures or social enterprises
- High-production-value pitch nights and demo days that become flagship events
- Scholarships and stipends for student founders with high potential

When first-year students walk onto campus and see founders celebrated, they internalise that "building something" is an aspirational path, not a fringe activity.

Part IV: The Administrative Challenge — Rewarding Courage Over Stability

4.1 The Leadership Incentive Problem

Vice Chancellors, Deputy VCs, and Deans operate under strong pressures toward stability:

- Keep enrolment stable
- Avoid financial crises and scandals
- Maintain peace with staff and councils
- Deliver on conventional reporting requirements

In many systems, leaders are rarely penalised for lack of innovation, but they are closely scrutinised when transformation efforts encounter visible failures or controversies. Rational leadership often concludes that **incremental management is safer than bold transformation**.

4.2 Outcome-Linked Leadership Contracts

We can rebalance this by linking leadership evaluation and compensation explicitly to innovation outcomes.

A **performance contract** might allocate:

- 50% of evaluation to traditional metrics (enrolment, finances, governance, satisfaction)
- 50% to innovation and entrepreneurship metrics, such as:
    - Growth in industry-funded research and IP revenue
    - Number and quality of spinouts, licences, and co-development projects
    - Graduate outcomes in entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented roles
    - Faculty participation in commercialization efforts
    - External innovation capital mobilised

Compensation can include:

- A baseline salary tied to stability metrics
- A significant performance component (e.g., 20–30% of base) tied to innovation outcomes
- An exit bonus linked to achieving defined multi-year innovation milestones

This does not undermine traditional responsibilities. It **elevates innovation and entrepreneurship from "nice-to-have" to a central leadership duty**.

4.3 An Entrepreneurial Council: Governance Composition Reform

Councils and Boards play a decisive role in approval of policies and budgets. If councils are populated predominantly by profiles trained for risk avoidance, innovation will remain marginal.

We propose that councils adopt **composition requirements** that ensure:

- A substantial proportion of members (e.g., 30–40%) have deep experience founding or scaling ventures, managing innovation portfolios, or leading commercialization at research institutions
- Members have demonstrated experience managing—not just avoiding—risk in uncertain environments
- Diverse perspectives, including women and younger leaders with lived experience of the contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystem

Such councils are more likely to ask "How do we manage this innovation risk intelligently?" rather than "How do we avoid it altogether?"

4.4 Reducing Administrative Friction

Legal, finance, and procurement systems are often optimised for large, predictable, low-variation transactions, not for flexible, time-sensitive innovation projects.

A practical response includes:

- **Pre-approved standard templates** for common agreements (student projects, short consulting engagements, pilot licences, co-development projects)
- **Service-level standards** (e.g., "standard IP licence decisions within 30 days")
- **Dedicated innovation legal and finance teams** with KPIs related to deals enabled and turnaround times
- A Council-approved **innovation risk budget**, within which appropriately structured failures do not trigger sanctions

By shifting from a culture of "no by default" to "yes, within a clear risk framework," we enable administrators to keep the institution safe **and** entrepreneurial.

Part V: The Industry Challenge — From CSR to Co-Investment

5.1 The Structural Mistrust Problem

Our relationships with industry often sit in an uncomfortable middle:

- We want co-development, IP licensing, and strategic partnerships
- Industry wants speed, clarity, and return on investment
- Yet many engagements are locked at a CSR level—short one-off projects, sponsorships, and events—because neither side trusts the other's processes and delivery capacities

To shift from charity and sporadic sponsorships to genuine co-investment, we need structured partnership architectures.

5.2 A Tiered Partnership Architecture

We can organise industry engagement into tiers that match different levels of commitment and risk.

Tier 1: Strategic Partners (Deep, Multi-Year)

- Multi-year commitments (3–5 years)
- Significant financial and in-kind contributions

- Joint governance of research and innovation agendas
- Preferential access to relevant IP and talent

Tier 2: Challenge Partners (Problem-Focused, Medium Commitment)

- 12–18-month collaborations focused on clearly defined business or societal problems
- Co-designed challenges that integrate faculty, students, and company teams
- Shared IP arrangements tied to contributions and risk

Tier 3: Talent Pipeline Partners (Recruitment-Focused)

- Lower financial commitment
- Focus on curriculum input, internships, guest lectures, and recruitment
- Structured mechanisms to evolve into higher tiers if trust and mutual value develop

Such a tiered architecture allows companies—and us—to choose entry points that match readiness and ambition, while creating pathways to deepen partnerships over time.

5.3 Shared-Risk, Shared-Reward Portfolios

The most powerful relationships are portfolio-based, not transaction-based.

A **portfolio funding model** might:

- Support a cohort of early-stage projects within a defined thematic area (e.g., agri-tech, fintech, health innovation)
- Use staged gates: concept validation (university-funded), proof-of-concept (co-funded), and pilot (industry-led)
- Share revenue and IP according to pre-agreed rules

This structure acknowledges that most projects will fail, but that a few successes can pay for the entire portfolio. Industry reduces risk by entering at later stages; the university reduces risk by spreading early-stage bets.

5.4 Pilot-First Agreements

To escape "negotiation death spirals," we can adopt **pilot-first contracts**:

- Use simple templates for time-limited pilots under which complex IP and revenue-sharing questions are deferred until evidence of potential exists
- If a pilot shows promise, both sides invest more time and legal resources into a full agreement
- If it does not, the sunk legal and managerial costs remain modest

This speeds up experimentation while preserving space for structured agreements once there is something worth arguing about.

Part VI: Implementation Roadmap — From Vision to Systems

6.1 Sequencing Change

Rewiring incentive architecture is complex. Attempting to do everything at once can overload our institutions and trigger backlash. We propose four overlapping phases over roughly 5 years.

Phase 1 (Months 1–12): Establish Legitimacy and Rules

- Create a high-authority task force (VC-led, Council-backed)
- Draft and approve core policy reforms: multi-track promotion, recognition of entrepreneurial outputs, basic partnership framework
- Establish an initial Innovation Derisking Fund (with external support where necessary)
- Approve standard legal templates for common innovation transactions

Phase 2 (Months 6–24): Generate Proof Points

- Pilot entrepreneurial promotion cases in a small group of departments
- Launch initial credit-bearing venture studios in key faculties
- Secure a small number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 industry partners
- Introduce visible cultural signals (Founder Wall, innovation awards, high-profile events)

Phase 3 (Months 18–36): Scale and Institutionalise

- Roll out entrepreneurial promotion track across the institution
- Expand venture studios and entrepreneurship-integrated curricula
- Implement the tiered partnership model more broadly
- Standardise fast-track administrative processes across units

Phase 4 (Months 30–60): Consolidate and Lead

- Position the university as a regional innovation hub
- Formalise an entrepreneurial alumni network and venture support mechanisms
- Engage actively in regional and continental networks of entrepreneurial universities
- Influence policy debates based on demonstrated practice

6.2 Managing Resistance

We should assume resistance. Not all resistance is bad; some surfaces legitimate risks that require design fixes. But we need strategies.

- For faculty concerned about "corruption of scholarship," we emphasise that we are adding an option, not eliminating traditional pathways.
- For administrators worried about liability, we provide explicit risk frameworks and protections.
- For students and families fearful of risk, we design scholarships and safe-to-fail policies that reduce downside.
- For council members skeptical of entrepreneurship, we provide data, peer examples, and start with limited, well-governed pilots.

6.3 Mobilising Resources

The required investments are real but manageable, especially if we blend sources:

- National innovation funds and government support tied to job creation
- Development partner funding framed around youth employment and industrialisation

- Strategic industry partnerships under the tiered architecture
- Philanthropy and alumni giving focused on innovation endowments
- Reallocation of a portion of existing research and development budgets
- Recycling a share of IP and spinout revenue back into the derisking fund

Over time, our objective is to build a **self-reinforcing financial loop**: early investments generate IP, ventures, and partnerships whose returns partially finance the next cycle of innovation.

Part VII: Measuring Transformation — The Accountability Framework

Transformation without measurement becomes rhetoric. We propose three layers of metrics.

7.1 Activity Metrics (Quarterly)

These answer: *Are we doing the work?*

- Number of faculty applying for entrepreneurial support
- Number of students in credit-bearing venture programmes
- Number of industry partnerships initiated
- Volume of applications to Innovation Derisking Funds

7.2 Output Metrics (Annual)

These answer: *Are we producing tangible outputs?*

- Faculty promotions through entrepreneurial tracks
- Number of registered ventures emerging from university programmes
- IP disclosures, patents, and licences
- Industry partnership revenue and co-development projects
- External funding mobilised for innovation

7.3 Outcome Metrics (3–5 Years)

These answer: *Is the system changing?*

- Spinouts reaching meaningful revenue or employment thresholds
- Graduate employment in innovation- and entrepreneurship-related roles
- Growth in external research and innovation funding
- Reputation as an innovation hub within national and regional ecosystems
- Alumni engagement and giving from entrepreneurial graduates

A commitment to annual public reporting—internally and to key partners—creates accountability and keeps us honest about progress and setbacks.

Part VIII: The Political Economy of University Transformation

8.1 Recognising Resistance Networks

Transformation challenges power, status, and comfort.

- **Senior faculty** may fear that new criteria will dilute the value of the paths through which they built their careers.
- **Legal and finance staff** may fear personal exposure if innovation projects fail.

- **Council members** may worry about mission drift or political fallout.
- **Students and families** may fear that entrepreneurship is too risky in a context with limited safety nets.

Treating these groups as obstacles is counter-productive. We need to understand their rational incentives and design responses that address legitimate concerns while keeping the direction of travel.

8.2 Cultivating and Protecting Champions

Transformation requires people who are willing to put their reputations on the line—faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and external partners.

We can support these champions by:

- Giving them resources and authority, not only rhetoric
- Providing high-level political cover and explicit backing
- Recognising and celebrating their work visibly
- Connecting them into peer networks inside and outside the university

8.3 Crafting the Narrative

Finally, there is the story we tell about what the university is.

A conservative narrative says: "Our job is to protect traditional scholarship and issue degrees. Entrepreneurship is a distraction."

An updated narrative says: "Our job is to produce graduates and research that shape society. In today's economy, that requires combining knowledge with the capacity to build, adapt, and innovate."

We need to communicate this narrative consistently, with humility and evidence, across all our channels—with staff, students, councils, governments, partners, and the public.

Part IX: Sustainability — Making Transformation Irreversible

Short-term initiatives can be impressive yet fragile. The real test is whether entrepreneurship remains central when champions move on or political winds shift.

We propose embedding entrepreneurship at multiple levels:

- **Policy**: codifying entrepreneurial tracks, innovation KPIs, and council composition rules in statutes and regulations
- **Finance**: establishing innovation funds with endowment-like structures and earmarked budget lines
- **Curriculum**: integrating entrepreneurship as core options within degree structures, not only as electives
- **Culture**: building rituals, stories, awards, and alumni structures that make entrepreneurship part of our identity
- **External Accountability**: committing publicly to metrics, benchmarks, and reporting

When entrepreneurship is written into the "constitution" of the institution—its statutes, budget formulas, curriculum rules, and public positioning—it becomes much harder to roll back quietly.

Part X: The African Context — Challenges and Tailored Strategies

We cannot simply copy-paste models from Stanford or Aalto onto African universities. Our contexts matter.

We face:

- Tight and volatile public funding environments
- Underdeveloped venture capital and angel networks
- Complex regulatory systems for companies and IP
- Deep social expectations around secure employment
- Infrastructure constraints in energy, connectivity, and logistics

But we also have distinctive opportunities:

- Large youth populations hungry for opportunity
- Untapped markets with real problems in agriculture, health, education, and finance
- Diaspora communities with capital and experience
- Development partners focused on youth employment and innovation
- Growing continental integration through AfCFTA and regional economic communities

Our models can and should reflect this by:

- Building **regional hubs** that serve multi-country ecosystems
- Creating deliberate **diaspora bridges** for mentorship and investment
- Emphasising **social and inclusive innovation**, not only pure commercial ventures
- Leveraging **frugal innovation** as an advantage
- Working with governments to create **co-investment and procurement mechanisms** that favour university-developed solutions

In short: African entrepreneurial universities will not look exactly like their global peers. They will be shaped by our constraints and our strengths.

Part XI: Conclusion — From Rhetoric to Architecture

We in the African university community have already spent more than a decade talking about entrepreneurship.

We have incubators, innovation hubs, competitions, and courses. We have strategic plans and MoUs. Yet, in many of our institutions, the **core architecture of incentives remains largely unchanged**.

- We still reward publications far more than commercial or societal impact.
- We still reward stability more than intelligent risk-taking.
- We still treat ventures as peripheral to "real" academic work.

This paper has argued that if we want entrepreneurial universities, we must **re-engineer what we reward**—for faculty, for students, for administrators, for leaders, and for partners.

The decision in front of us is not about whether entrepreneurship is desirable; almost every strategic plan already says it is. The real decision is whether we are willing to:

- Rewrite promotion and tenure rules

- Reshape leadership contracts and council composition
- Redesign curriculum structures
- Re-orient legal and financial processes
- Reallocate resources and political capital

We write as part of this system. The question is not what “they” will do. The question is what **we** will do—in our faculties, our departments, our senates, our councils, our ministries, our partnerships.

If we are prepared to change what we reward, then the entrepreneurial university in Africa stops being a slogan and becomes an achievable design.
If we are not, then we should at least be honest: we will continue to produce exactly what our current incentive architecture is built to produce.
The choice is still ours.