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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**AVANADE'S 15 FOR 15 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME MAKES DREAMS**

**COME TRUE FOR LOCAL GIRL**

Lerato Tlokane is a second year B Com Financial Science Student at the University of Pretoria (UP) and one of only five recipients of Avanade’s 15 for 15 Scholarship Programme at UP.

The Programme aims to support five female students in their tertiary studies in partnership with the University, and focuses on promoting the enrolment of more female students for degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The Programme is expected to benefit at least 45 students globally over the next five years, with the first 15 beneficiaries having been selected from UP, University College London and California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, USA.

The inaugural beneficiaries of the scholarship were chosen based on several criteria, which emphasised the need to assist female applicants to complete their university education in STEM related fields.

Lerato, who hails from Nellmapius in Pretoria, is a former student of Jafta Mahlangu High School in Mamelodi West. She explains that not being able to afford tertiary education is very stressful and for her it was a setback as she was one of the top students in her class. With the support of her teachers at Jafta Mahlangu High School however, she was able to register at UP with funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Unfortunately, like many students, she soon realised that her NSFAS bursary did not cover all her expenses. The Avenade Scholarship that was recently awarded to her will provide some welcome relief from the financial burden of her studies on her and her family.

“I have embraced some of the most unfortunate events of my life as inspiration and motivation to keep pushing for better results. You have to believe in yourself and one day things will change for the better,” she says.

Lerato believes in making the best of the little that she has and in taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves to her. “I have learnt to refuse being defined by anything less than greatness. I effectively take advantage of any opportunity I am provided with and that has proven my merit throughout the entire course of my life,” she adds.

She says that she will continue to work hard towards achieving her degree in Financial Science, while enjoying being a student at UP. “When I tell people that I study at UP they are impressed because they regard UP as very good university that produces smart graduates,” she says proudly.

Lerato wishes to encourage young women in the townships to never give up on their dreams regardless of where they come from and their upbringing. “The future looks bright, if you believe in yourself and effectively work hard towards your goals, you can achieve anything,” she concludes.

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