**PRESS RELEASE: GRADSTAR – ’10 of the Finest’ Top Students announced!**

**South Africa’s Top 10 Students named by leading employers!**

After receiving thousands of entries from across the country and putting the entrants through a rigorous four-phase judging process, South Africa’s Top 10 university students have been unearthed from across the country, chosen from the Top 100 identified by the GradStar programme, now in its third year.

The GradStar programme, featuring Dr David Molapo as patron, sponsored by DHL, IBM, Comair, Accenture, Fasken and Epiroc, and set up by BlackBark Productions (creators of the Rising Star Awards) is a uniquely developed programme that focuses on quality connections, and compliments existing employer programmes. It is designed to provide previously unrecognised students with opportunities for employment and allow them to contribute positively to South Africa’s future growth.

These university students show the best potential as the country’s future leaders, and their assessment throughout the process is conducted by key assessment providers Khonology, employers and universities.

The final stage of judging, deciding on the "10 of the Finest", took place on 26th September 2018. The Top 100 were guided through workshops such as ‘How to prepare yourself for the World of Work – Work readiness Tips and Tools to make you stand out in the crowd!’ and ‘Survivor Island, A learning simulation uncovering the essential skills new graduates need to survive and thrive in today’s workplace', amongst others, and after hours of interaction with the employers, a consensus was reached:

**TEN OF THE FINEST**

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| **NAME** | **FIELD OF STUDY** | **UNIVERSITY** |
| Razia Adriaanse | LLM, Business Entities | University of the Free State |
| Kirsten Dempsey | Bachelor of Law | University of Pretoria |
| Craig Eckleton | Bachelor of Commerce, Economics & Finance | University of Cape Town |
| Bernice Mabaya | Bachelor of Commerce, Financial Sciences | University of Pretoria |
| Andile Madondo | Post-Graduate Diploma, Accounting | University of Cape Town |
| Dineo Moguru | Post-Graduate Diploma, Financial Management | University of Johannesburg |
| Michelle Oelofse | Bachelor of Commerce, Law (Cum Laude): LLB | University of Pretoria |
| Sitha Phillip | Bachelor of Commerce, Actuarial Sciences | University of Cape Town |
| Mike Thomson | BScBEng, Chemical Engineering | University of Cape Town |
| Roger Wyllie | Bachelor of Commerce, Accounting Sciences | University of Pretoria |

All Top100 Students were recognised at a Gala Dinner at Indaba Hotel, featuring successful entrepreneur Zipho Sikhlakahane and DHL Express CEO Hennie Heymans. The event was opened by the GradStar programme's patron, Dr David Molapo. “This is a worthy programme,” he says. “It is designed to uplift the student youth at this time of unrest, and provide an aspirational platform to assist them in achieving their potential.”

Tension was high before the "10 of the Finest" were announced at the end of the evening, and presented with their trophies by the employers who had assessed them earlier that day.

DHL’s VP of HR for Sub-Saharan Africa, Paul Clegg, offers the following words of wisdom for the students: “As you start on your career, finding a new first employer is one of the most important steps you will take in your life. Important and daunting and opportunities are scarce. Try to make sure you find an employer you connect with, one that will speak to your value system in what they do and how they engage with their staff and the world at large. The more you fit in to the culture of the organisation and believe in their purpose, the more you will find reason to contribute and to add value to the organisation. It is in adding value where you will find your engagement and connection and it is here when you will shine."

The GradStar competition process is designed to emulate the process that top employers use to find their future talent, and uses behavioural testing and personal interviewing amongst other methods as measurement tools. It allows students to familiarise themselves with the formal graduate programme application process, and enables them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses along the way.

“I am particularly proud of the GradStar programme for the way it develops our very young talent in South Africa,” says Laura Barker, MD of BlackBark Productions. “The Top 100 will each be connected with a business mentor, who has been recognised through our Rising Star Programme, to further ready them for the workplace. This is a unique and valuable opportunity for each graduate to draw upon the expertise and knowledge of those who have gone before them, and start their careers on a solid foundation.”

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**GRADSTAR SPONSORS**

DHL, Accenture, Comair, IBM, Fasken, Epiroc, Rand Refinery, Upstage, Dreamstream, AWS and PDA-Africa

**GRADSTAR JUDGING CRITERIA**

* Self-Motivation
* Problem Solving
* Responsiveness
* Innovation
* Discipline
* Altruism
* Self Confidence
* Leadership
* Attitude
* Logical Thinking
* Written communication skills
* General Knowledge
* Punctuality
* Appearance (Neatly Dressed, Well groomed)
* Social Interaction Skills (Body Language, Friendliness)
* Presentations Skills (Voice Projection, Clarity, Communication, Eye Contact)
* Presentation Structure & Layout

**MORE INFORMATION**

Visit [www.gradstar.co.za](http://www.gradstar.co.za) for more information or contact:

Khululwa Tom: Media Liaison (BlackBark Productions)

+27 21 788 2763 or khululwa@blackbark.co.za