**THE 2014 FIRSTRAND LAURIE DIPPENAAR SCHOLARSHIP FOR POSTGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDY AWARDED**

**Three academically gifted South African students with excellent leadership qualities and the potential to be future destiny changers were each awarded R600 000 to pursue postgraduate studies at the internationally recognised university of their choice in the FirstRand Laurie Dippenaar postgraduate scholarship awards this year**.

2014 is the eighth year that this prestigious scholarship has been awarded. The value of the scholarship was increased to R600 000 per year and a total of R1.8 million was awarded to three students. The scholarship is available to South African citizens for postgraduate study in any discipline at an internationally recognised university of their choice. Excellence is the only criterion for selection.

The scholarship was awarded to three exceptional candidates. **Michael Schmid** is a BSc Mechanical Engineering graduate from UCT. He was the top student in the engineering faculty in his final year. He wishes to do a MPhil in Micro and Nanotechnology Enterprise at the University of Cambridge. **Andrew Linden** has a MBusSc in Actuarial Science, awarded with distinction in the dissertation. He wishes to play a role in determining the future of the NHI strategy and will read for a MSc in Global Health Science at the University of Oxford. **Gift Pule** has a BSc Honours in Medicine from the University of Cape Town, awarded first class. He is currently a research assistant in the Division of Human Genetics at UCT while doing a MSc in the same discipline.  He wishes to do a PhD in Stem Cell Research at Manchester University.  He is interested in African disorders, specifically sickle cell anaemia.

The final adjudication panel was once again so impressed by the quality of applicants that a FirstRand Assistance bursary for a lesser amount was awarded to **Sydelle Willow Smith** who has a BA Honours degree, awarded cum laude, in Social Anthropology from UCT and will attend the University of Oxford to read for a MSc in African Studies.

“The candidates that we interviewed are blessed with the finest intellects I have encountered anywhere. They all have excelled academically, have strong leadership characteristics and have contributed to the upliftment of people less fortunate than themselves. It is an extremely rewarding and humbling experience conducting the interviews. I have learnt that we have phenomenally talented young people in South Africa.” – Laurie Dippenaar, Chairman, FirstRand.

“What an experience it is to interact with highly gifted and hardworking young South
Africans. The experience and opportunity to be inspired by these young people has revived my high hopes for South Africa.”…. Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, Vice Principal: Research and Innovation, Unisa.

As a result of the growing awareness of this leading scholarship, 116 qualifying applications were received in 2014. Applications were received from graduates from all of the major academic universities.

“I would once again like to thank all South African universities for promoting this scholarship among their outstanding postgraduate students. The final adjudication panel was again hugely impressed by the quality of all the applicants and, in particular, the final ten who were invited for interviews.” said Beth van Heerden, FirstRand CSI Executive

**Applications for the 2015 FirstRand Laurie Dippenaar Scholarship for Postgraduate International Study will open on Tuesday 16 December 2014 and close on Thursday 26 February 2015.**

Details and the application form will be available on the FirstRand website, [www.firstrand.co.za](http://www.firstrand.co.za) from end November 2014.

**Process**

The following factors are taken into account in the awarding of the scholarship:

* academic excellence;
* leadership qualities;
* community involvement;
* potential to be a destiny changer;
* preference is given to applicants under the age of 35; and
* first-time overseas study.

A preliminary evaluation process was followed with three people evaluating each application. The preliminary judging panel of 18 members consisted of representatives from FirstRand, RMB, FNB, Tshikululu Social Investments and four prior scholarship recipients. A list of 27 applicants (long list) was selected and interviewed either in person or telephonically by a combination of Beth van Heerden, Jonathan Stilwell and Adrian Arnott. A short list of ten candidates was selected for the final interviews for the FirstRand Laurie Dippenaar scholarships.

The 2014 final adjudication panel was:

* Laurie Dippenaar;
* Estelle Dippenaar;
* Sizwe Nxasana;
* Pat Goss;
* Mamokgethi Phakeng;
* Clare Digby and
* Francois Hugo.