without prejudice

Students TOP ACHIEVERS 2019
INTRODUCTION

To the top students of 2019 – congratulations and best wishes for happy and successful futures. Your determination to succeed during your LLBs will stand you in good stead in this time of considerable uncertainty, when not only today is a challenge for many, but so too is the unmapped future.

Our cartoonist, Dov Fedler, has captured the joy of graduating, the excitement of starting work (for those who have), only to find oneself working from home, after little time to get to know one’s peers – never mind those in more senior positions. The feedback I get from those senior lawyers is how well the CAs are coping despite the situation. Perhaps it is because everyone is working in an unexpected way, developed in a short space of time, steering through unchartered waters which is providing a sense of everyone being in the same boat.

As we all look to a future that may be shrouded in mist, the great advantage these top students have is that of growing up in a technological age they need these skills in a myriad ways and during lockdown this skill will have been tested. It is said that working from home will undoubtedly be one of the ‘new-normal’ outcomes, as will staggered shift times. While law may be one of the oldest professions, and one of the most prestigious, it will be those who are flexible while having the ability to combine the law with technology, and practical business skills, who will be most successful in what is being termed ‘the new-normal’.

without prejudice wishes you all – the graduates of 2019 – much success as you make your way in our uncertain world. You have shown mental fortitude to reach the top five places at your respective universities – you will meet the challenges in your paths.

Myrie Vanderstraeten

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How law firms manage employee stress during COVID-19

MORNE VAN DER MERWE

With around a third of the world reportedly under some form of government-imposed lockdown due to COVID-19, anyone who can work remotely has swapped the daily commute and city views to a home-based office space, often already occupied by children and pets. Conference call participants have become used to seeing Spiderman building Lego on the floor, or a disinterested cat sauntering across a keyboard. But the stress of being isolated is also beginning to take its toll. Humans, by their nature, are social beings. Isolation is difficult under normal circumstances, but even more so when we are counting the daily human and economic cost of this pandemic.

For many remote workers, the workload has increased as a result of COVID-19 impacts and time is even more limited than before. For others, work has provided a welcome relief from the loneliness that comes from having to keep a social distance. For everyone, the stress of this pandemic can bubble to the surface, leaving us wondering about its personal implications and if life as we know it will return, sooner or later. For business and team leaders, managing this stress has become a business imperative.

To combat the detrimental effects of the stress caused by COVID-19 on employee health and well-being, Baker McKenzie in Johannesburg is using an innovative health and wellbeing programme developed by an internationally recognised health and performance educator and consultant, Richard Sutton. Even before COVID-19 began its global journey of destruction, we recognised the importance of implementing workplace health and well-being initiatives, and committed to creating a culture that supported and encouraged employees to build resilience in the face of the harmful effects of modern workplace stress.

Sutton, who has advised top athletes and Olympic teams, created a tailor-made health and wellbeing resilience programme for the firm that aimed to enhance overall employee well-being, help in the management of a variety of mental health and general wellbeing issues, and build employee resistance to the adverse effects of stress.

Employees are using Sutton’s online tool to manage the detrimental effects of stress brought on by the personal impacts of COVID-19. The tool includes a tailor-made Baker McKenzie Stress Code app, designed to promote and maintain positive lifestyle changes and facilitate successful stress management. Information on rebuilding and repairing the brain and body, as well as a section entitled “health hacks” are included in the app.

Sutton’s regular health and wellness podcasts, specifically recorded for Baker McKenzie, offer guidance and advice on dealing with key COVID-19 stressors. The podcasts also focus on performance augmentation (specifically in the area of cognition and behaviour) and are regularly updated and available for employees to access online when they are needed. Issues such as immune strengthening activities, nutrition and supplementation are also covered in the podcast. At a time when grocery shopping is not as easy as it once was, the podcasts share advice on healthy, immune-boosting homemade snacks that don’t require many fresh ingredients. Exercise routines are also available, with sessions on ways to keep fit and healthy at home during the weeks of isolation.

We have also implemented weekly yoga classes via the Zoom online app, continuing on from the regular lessons that took place in the new office gym before the lockdown began. In addition, our employees can participate in online Zumba classes aimed at keeping our teams connected, fit and healthy during the weeks of isolation.

Maintaining employee cohesion at a time when no-one is in the same building is also difficult and, as such, Baker McKenzie has implemented team building initiatives via group video calls, including regular townhall meetings, quiz nights, dress up days and challenges and activities to keep our teams focused, unified and motivated.

The world is changing but humans are adaptable. With the right tools and a focus on mental health and wellbeing, work is able to continue at full speed in cohesive teams, through the lockdown period and beyond. For now, pyjama days and bring your child/pet to work initiatives are everyday occurrences, and it could just be that, alongside the more formal wellbeing programmes, it is our shared humanity that provides us with the relief we need to be able to cope during this stressful time.

Van der Merwe is Managing Partner, Baker McKenzie (South Africa).
MAD2Ride 2020 – Across SA, For SA

KYLENE WEYERS

On 29 February, I embarked on what was the most significant, hardest and most enriching journey of my life.

Seventeen of us “MADsters” cyclists cycled 1600km from Johannesburg to Cape Town, in eight days. Closely followed the whole way to Cape Town by a pace vehicle, an ambulance, paramedics, chefs, a bike trailer, bike mechanics, and chiropractors, we rode approximately 200km a day, alternating between mountain bikes and road bikes on the varied terrain, and riding in all weather conditions (from extreme heat to heavy thunderstorms). We rode from Johannesburg to Kroonstad, to Bloemfontein, to Colesberg, to Victoria West, to Fraserburg, to Sutherland to Ceres and then to Cape Town. We slept in tents at each basecamp.

After eight gruelling days we arrived in Cape Town, and on the ninth day, we rode the Cape Town Cycle Tour as a victory lap.

We did all this to raise funds for the Make a Difference (MAD) Leadership Foundation, founded by Francois Pienaar in 2003. The Foundation identifies academically talented scholars around the country who have leadership potential but do not have the necessary financial resources, and offers them support in areas of education, career-development, mentorship, leadership and lifeskills development. The scholars range from grade 8 to final year university students.

Why did I do something this MAD? Because I am passionate about making a meaningful and sustainable difference in our country and helping raise the future leaders of SA. I also believe that we need to be the change that we want to see in this country.

I struggle to comprehend what we managed to accomplish. After crossing that finish line after the ninth day, I was physically shattered, but I have never felt more alive and fulfilled in my life.

Some of the most significant experiences that I had on our MAD2Ride tour were:

- On the first day of tour, I had a massive crash (not ideal for a first day of tour). It was raining, the roads were wet, slippery and filled with potholes, and we were going 35km/h on our road bikes. In an attempt to dodge two potholes, my wheel washed out and I crash-landed on the tar and rolled. I bust my elbow, pulled ligaments in my wrist and got a roadside on my leg, which developed into a huge hematoma. I immediately got back on my bike, and rode with these injuries for the whole tour – I call this grit, others say that I have a screw loose.
- On day 3, while we were taking a snack break in a little town, a very young disabled boy came up to us to ask what we were doing; we explained that we were raising money for the less fortunate. Ten minutes later, he came back and handed me a R5 coin and told me that he also wanted to donate. This gesture of kindness warmed my heart, as it epitomised exactly why we were riding from Joburg to Cape Town.
- On day 4, we rode 250km through the Karoo on our mountain bikes. Completing this day alone was a magnificent feat. We woke up at 3am to start riding at 4am, and we were out there for almost 15 hours (including breaks) and got to see the sunrise and sunset in one ride. A special moment was at around 4:30am, when we all stopped and switched off our bike lights to look at the stars for a while.
- Day 7 was our hardest day on tour, when we rode most of the way in 45 degree heat; at one stage the temperature reached 55 degrees. We had to dig really deep to complete this day in such extreme weather conditions (we called this day riding through the “Hades fire pit”).
- On day 8 of the tour (close to our finish in Cape Town), our captain took us on a surprise detour. We were coming down a road and suddenly saw around 150 of the scholars from the MAD Leadership Foundation, cheering and screaming for us in the street. We stopped our bicycles to greet them and we were all overwhelmed with emotion (and tears) as they are the very people that we are raising the money for.
I would like to share some of the meaningful lessons that I learned on this tour, which have impacted my personal and professional life (and can therefore be applied in business):

- We are better together. We may achieve a lot individually, but we achieve even greater and better things when we work together. Teamwork really does make the dream work. We only managed to complete MAD2Ride because we did it as a unified force, working together and helping each other every pedal of the way. Do not underestimate the power of a united group of people. Teamwork can ensure great success in the workplace and business objectives are better achieved when working together.

- Life and work gets hard, and there are always challenges on the way to our ultimate destination. Great lessons are learned during tough times, and this is where strength of character is built. Working through challenges shapes us and makes us more resilient human beings, which then equips us to complete tasks more efficiently and empowers us to achieve even more than we could before.

- Preparation is key. I could never have completed my journey had it not been for the months of hard training I put in, and the sacrifices I had to make during that time. From a business point of view, hard work and preparation needs to be invested into any task to ensure its ultimate success.

- Things will go wrong. Life (and work) does not always go according to plan, and it is important that we deal with those curveballs properly when they come our way. My crash really had the potential to spoil my tour. However, I did not let the crash define my journey, but rather used it to empower me to accomplish what I had set out to achieve.

- A good attitude is half the battle won. Ability is essential but, no matter how capable you are, tasks, challenges and business objectives can never be completed as successfully without a good attitude and mindset.

- The mind is a powerful tool. I pushed my mental limits to the very edge on tour. I went into some of my deepest, darkest places during the ride and it was my mental strength that saved me and helped me work through the very tough times.

- We really are capable of achieving more than we thought possible, in our personal lives and in our businesses. Don’t ever put a cap on your goals and dreams. Be intentionally driven to go beyond what you think your limits are.

Please let me also point out that you do not need to cycle from Joburg to Cape Town to make a difference in this country. Each of us can give back to our community, the country and the world, in our own unique ways. The most important thing is to be kind. Kindness takes all forms, whether big or small.

I am so grateful to our incredible support team for everything they did for us. They worked tirelessly around our needs to make sure that our nutrition, bikes, bodies and safety were completely taken care of so that we could just focus on getting through the cycle each day. I am also grateful, and incredibly happy, to have completed this journey with my fiancé. He made this tour even more special than it already was and I do not think I could have done it without him. I am honoured to have completed MAD2Ride with my fellow teammates, who have now become lifelong friends.

As I rolled my wheels over the finish line, I was overwhelmed with emotion, knowing that I had just achieved the seemingly impossible and given back to South Africa in a way that I could never have imagined. The experience will remain imprinted on my heart forever. 

Weyers is a Senior Associate with Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr.

The 21-year-old lawyer

A LY S S A  J O A N  S M I T H

In a world of social media, where instant gratification has become a priority, most 21-year-olds are searching through the latest filters on Instagram, trying to overcome procrastination whilst studying in their dorms or hanging out with friends.

At the age of 21, I began my career as the youngest candidate attorney at one of Africa’s leading law firms, Webber Wentzel.

It was interesting to see the reaction of my colleagues when they discovered how old I was - they seemed alarmed. “You are so mature for your age”, was the most common response, and my least favourite compliment. The comment implies that a per-
son of my age would have to appear older to perform well or be accepted in the legal sphere, which is simply not true. The correlation between youth and success should not be an anomaly. We have the ability to thrive in any environment – age is certainly not a limiting factor.

Once inside the corporate environment, I realised that the people you engage with will come to know you for who you are, which is why it is important to be self-aware. Amid the fast-paced corporate dynamic, the people you will encounter will inevitably influence you. If you haven’t taken the time to solidify those values that are meaningful to you, you may be easily influenced to adopt a lifestyle, habits or beliefs that do not accord with who you are as a person. This will likely lead to feelings of unhappiness, lack of fulfillment and exhaustion, which will hinder your growth and ultimately, your success. It is impossible to perform optimally in any environment when you are not centred within yourself or when you are simply unhappy.

I encourage you to take a step back from the overwhelming excitement of beginning your legal career and think about who you truly are as a person. Reflect on those things most meaningful to you, outline your values and identify what it is you want to gain from the dynamic. This will allow you to focus on your personal development within the corporate world. Prioritising your personal development will give you the discernment to accept those influences that will not only develop you intellectually but prove fulfilling.

There is no doubt that the legal profession is intense and, at times, can be overwhelming. Remember to acknowledge that you have entered into a period dedicated to learning and growth. You will make mistakes but these mistakes will be accompanied by an abundance of small victories. Be conscious of your perception!

"Beginning your journey, you aspire to align with the legends and connect with the important people in the room. As you elevate and mature, you realise you are the important person.

You are also destined to be legendary!"

-unknown

Smith is a Candidate Attorney with Webber Wentzels.

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**The augmented workplace – tips on how to get ready from a labour law and HR perspective**

**SHERISA RAJAH AND EMMA EL KAROUT**

A smart city is defined as ‘an urban area that uses different types of electronic Internet of Things (IoT) sensors to collect data and then use insights gained from that data to manage assets, resources and services efficiently. This includes data collected from citizens, devices, and assets that is processed and analyzed to monitor and manage traffic and transportation systems, power plants, utilities, water supply networks, waste management, crime detection, information systems, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other community services.’

London and New York are the world’s ‘smartest’ cities, according to the 2019 Cities in Motion Index (CMI), issued by the ISE Business School. Singapore has made enormous progress through its Smart Nation Project, which has zoned in on areas of urban living, health, digital government services, strategic national projects, transport, start-ups and services. The aim of this is to provide a better lived experience to its people.

Equally, President Ramaphosa recently announced his vision of a smart city in South Africa. Critics were quick to caution that this is no more than a ‘hi-tech utopia when we have bigger problems at home, such as load shedding, youth unemployment, rampant poverty, crime’.

Despite criticism, the multinational companies we represent are immersed in the IoT arising from smart city initiatives to improve their business strategies and ultimately, relevant for our world, their workplace strategies.

So the question for us, as employment lawyers, is how we advise companies using IoT and smart city initiatives in an environment that may not be conducive to that. We have to look realistically at what our clients, potential clients and future clients are doing, and how best we can grapple with their business sensitivities to service them properly.

New technologies have revolutionised each and every sector of the economy.

The financial sector has evolved into Fintech, real estate into PropTech, insurance into Insurtech. Even HR is no exception, and companies are now able to hire global talent on-
demand and virtually. Let’s start here, and leave the buzz words at the door. Efforts of companies have evolved well past 4IR, automation and similar.

Finding talent became somewhat more sophisticated as we moved from regular recruitment to headhunting and agency hiring, then using networks to recruit, and now entire online ecosystems to hunt for talent. ‘Talent marketplace’ was the term used to describe these digital swamps where everyone was a creative strategist or innovation champion. But they were just online routes to speed up an already-broken model that was hopelessly inadequate for the demands of a new herd of talent and the needs of newly forged enterprises, focused on the future.

In the wake of these inadequacies, rapidly growing online platforms have been upsetting the very nature of work as we know it, laying the foundations for the future of work into the next industrial revolution. The chief assets of these platforms are interactions and information, together with being the source of the value created, and their competitive advantage. Platforms are changing the game in the following ways:

- From controlling resources to orchestrating them;
- From optimising internal processes to externalising;
- From increasing customer value to maximising the value of the entire ecosystem.

We are now at the stage of looking at the augmented workplace. In this workplace, new technologies (AI and robotics) will essentially transform the future of work, enabling humans to hand over repetitive tasks to machines and free them to focus on high-value, strategic and creative work.

As we have come to understand it, an augmented workplace blends human skills and technology in the same tasks to streamline processes and achieve efficiencies. Importantly, machine learning is key.

It enables us to do our job faster and more efficiently. The likes of Facebook, Microsoft, and a few start-ups are already building the needed hardware and software to support an augmented workplace. Soon the virtual office will be the new norm, meetings become multiplayer games and interoffice memos are digital sticky notes on everyone’s virtual desk.

Ironically, collaboration might even improve in this new setup, as this will be the only way to get work done and might even be more efficient than emails and personal meetings.

There are key areas of change in a futuristic workplace:

- Transformation of sectors, roles and skills packages based on fluid operating models;
- Companies tap into required micro skills, instead of restricting their needs fulfillment to how one person can best deliver them;
- Use of IoT to create jobs in a digital ecosystem, built on a demand for digital skills;
- Rise of new workplace and talent models;
- Safe learning for those working in hazardous workplaces and industries and the ability to zone in on the person and not just an employee by:
  - hiring for potential;
  - fostering lifelong learning by talent reskilling;
  - celebrating creativity.

A recent article by Deloitte reported that 41% of companies have fully implemented or have made significant progress in adopting cognitive and AI technologies within their workforce. The notion that AI strategies are futuristic conceptions that may in some way impact how we advise is not true; it is being implemented in workplaces globally. While 34% of companies are in the midst of pilot programmes, only 17% of global companies report they are ready to manage a workplace with people, robots, and AI working side by side. This is the lowest readiness level in the five years of the Global Human Capital Trends survey.

We shouldn’t forget the role that smart cities play in fostering the rapid rise in in-demand talent through digital platforms. New ways of working enable new income opportunities through digital platforms, thus flipping the employment model upside down, as we move from earning a salary to a much more dynamic economic activity. These work methods are rooted in empowerment and autonomy—empowering people to take charge of how they earn, and autonomy to decide when and where to work.

We are witnessing a growing aspiration for more independent and flexible forms of working and this is not specific to any generation.

According to a McKinsey study, there are currently more than 160 million freelancers in Europe and the USA combined; this represents a fifth of the working-age population. Some 15% of these freelancers have reportedly already used a digital platform to find work, as it’s an efficient way to find clients.

Gender diversity is an economic growth imperative, and with the rise of platform technologies and augmented workplaces at our doorstep, there’s potential for this digitally enabled opportunity to balance gender representation in the economy.

Corporate social contribution in South Africa is vibrant as a result of businesses seeking B-BBEE compliance. Unfortunately, management of underlying programmes within companies, including those focused on graduate development, diversity and inclusion, and community partnerships are typically separated from those business areas focused on the future of work and digital transformation themes.

Layering over the filter of digital transformation on corporate social investment means harnessing opportunities that technology and the gig economy present. These include the impact on women as active economic contributors. In cases where societal norms, or the risk of violence, limit women’s mobility, technology and gig work can connect women to online education and job opportunities from the security of their homes. For this to thrive in South Africa, it is important to understand how existing laws apply, and whether additional or new regulations are needed. We need to find, and then protect, the balance between protecting citizens without stifling businesses innovation, which will require co-operation from businesses using IoT, government and the regulators regulating it. Softer guidelines documents may also be helpful; this can be organised by industry. Practice codes, and/or codes of conduct, and regulations need to be adaptive. Key areas of change we can already drive are:

- adjusting policies and procedures to respond to the changing nature of work;
- enabling and facilitating collaboration between government and corporates or private citizens - looking to public private partnerships.

As we defend employment claims in tribunals, we need to normalise atypical employment models.

No one place has the right formula for South Africa, given its uniqueness, but why not consider the best aspects from various places where similar experiments have already occurred, and lessons that can be learned?

As lawyers, we have a role to play in creating this sort of ecosystem for change. So let’s roll up our sleeves and be remembered.

This article was written prior to lockdown. Much of what the writers advocated had to be implemented in a short space of time showing how correct the writers were in their suggestion that ‘we need to normalise atypical employment models’. - Editor

Rajah is a Partner with Fasken (South Africa) and EI Karout is the Founder, One Circle HR.
Are you time poor? Stress rich?

HELEN BURT

Most lawyers I know (and certainly, I was one of them!) work shockingly long hours frequently under stressful conditions, dealing with tight deadlines and demanding clients.

Often management considerations are thrown out the window as one gets snowed under, moving from one matter to another. Rarely, if ever, do lawyers take a step back, and take a helicopter view of how effectively they are working and whether they could be working smarter, better and indeed managing their time more productively and effectively.

My clients generally grumble that they don’t have the time or the luxury to take ‘time-out’ and assess what is working and what is not in terms of practice management and time. Ironically, failing to do so leaves them with even less time — meaning they work less productively and efficiently.

So how best to tackle your ‘time-poor’, ‘stress-rich’ existence?

Take the time to sit down and analyse and redesign your current working practices — this is not only time well spent but will also prove beneficial to you, your practice and your clients in the long term.

Setting clear goals

By creating clear goals and actions, you identify which activities will be the most beneficial to you and the success of your practice.

Then focus on these activities and ditch everything else.

Prioritising wisely

Stephen Covey, co-author of First Things First (Simon and Schuster, 1994) provides a useful ‘matter task identifier’ to help assess and classify the importance of a matter and, therefore, what you should be prioritising and focusing your time and energy on:

- Important and urgent — Tasks that must be done. Do them right away.
- Important but not urgent — Tasks that appear important, but upon closer examination aren’t. Decide when to do them.
- Urgent but not important — Tasks that make the most “noise,” but when accomplished, have little or no lasting value.Delegate these if possible.
- Not urgent and not important — Low-priority tasks that offer the illusion of “being busy.” Do them later.

Learn the power of ‘no’

Unless a matter is urgent or you are required to be at a particular meeting, learn the power of ‘no’. It is important to develop the skill of respectfully but firmly saying ‘no’ when and where appropriate and required — thereby avoiding unnecessary time-wasting meetings and activities.

Plan ahead

Taking a few minutes at the end of each day to plan ahead and work out a plan and ‘to do’ list for the next day’s work is far less time-consuming and more productive than jumping into the next day with no clear idea of what your goals are, what you wish to achieve for the day. The result? You end up wasting more time focusing on the wrong things.

Of course, sometimes the best laid plans go awry and unexpected urgent matters may arise. However, by doing this simple task, even if unexpected issues do crop up, you will be better able to manage the unexpected and to more efficiently refocus and pick up where you left off.

Remove, avoid distractions

Become aware of how often you look at your smartphone, monitor your inbox or answer any and all calls that come through to you. How often are you interrupted by people ‘popping in’ to your office or by your line reports demanding facetime with you — just when you were getting to the heart of an important matter?

Unless a matter is urgent or you are required to be at a particular meeting, learn the power of ‘no’. It is important to develop the skill of respectfully but firmly saying ‘no’ when and where appropriate and required.

By becoming more aware of these ‘self-sabotaging’ behaviours and working out a clear plan and schedule for checking your inbox, sitting down with your line reports to discuss the matters they are working on, returning calls, engaging with colleagues — you will be more attentive and focused, and better able to tackle each matter more effectively — which ultimately means you will have to spend less time on it!

Don’t hesitate to delegate

Far too often I see clients unwilling to ‘let go’ of work and delegate activities and work load to their line reports and junior associates; this is ultimately self-sabotaging and fool-hardy.

You may need to shift perspectives and sometimes misguided beliefs around delegating work and better utilise and engage with line reports — allowing you to spend your time more fruitfully on dealing with the more complex, revenue-generating matters.

Practice self-care

However, while you may put in place all the best time management practices, unless you are supporting your physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, you will not be able to function optimally.

Create and develop a ‘self-care’ plan to help ensure that you function at your most ‘high-performing’, and effective, which will mean less time-wasting.

Burt is an Empowerment Coach.
Top students 2019

University of Cape Town

Steven Clowes
How has being a top student helped you so far? It helped me secure articles at a leading law firm and earned me scholarships, financial prizes and academic book vouchers.
What are you doing this year? I am currently completing my articles at ENsafrika in Johannesburg, in the Dispute Resolution department.
Where do you see yourself in five years? Working in the Dispute Resolution space, mostly in commercial and public law litigation, and hopefully having completed a Masters.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Prior to law, I completed my Economics Honours. I would have continued to specialise in development economics and policy development.
What are you reading at the moment? The light-hearted, Rosy is my Relative by Gerald Durrell.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Definitely. The legal fraternity is already having to adapt by adopting modern technologies to continue dispensing justice.

Lauren de Bruyn
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has opened the door to a number of opportunities, including getting my articles at Bowmans and being awarded scholarships.
What are you doing this year? I am a candidate attorney at Bowmans in their Sandton office, currently doing a rotation in M&A.
Where do you see yourself in five years? In five years, I hope to still be at Bowmans. I would like to have completed a Masters and be considering a secondment.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have gone into Behavioural Economics. I would love to explore this field further – I believe there is an interesting overlap with law.
What are you reading at the moment? A Gentleman in Moscow – Amor Towles.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Not fundamentally, but I have been exposed to incredible leadership during a time of crisis which I hope to emulate.

Patrick Heron
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has helped me adjust to the demands and overall new experience that I have encountered entering the professional world.
What are you doing this year? I am currently serving my first year of articles of clerkship at Webber Wentzel.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself most likely being in a law firm five years from now.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I probably would have furthered my commercial background and then transitioned to forging a career in politics.
What are you reading at the moment? Ruska by Edward Rutherford.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I believe so. COVID-19 has and will dramatically affect several aspects of society that will inevitably influence my career path.

Jessie Moore
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has provided me with various opportunities, scholarships and the privilege of doing my articles at a top law firm.
What are you doing this year? I am completing my articles at ENsafrika in Johannesburg in the Employment Law Department (and am loving it so far).
Where do you see yourself in five years? Working as an Employment lawyer, specialising in labour dispute resolution, labour policy and employment equity.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I probably would have pursued Journalism or become a High School teacher.
What are you reading at the moment? Educated by Tara Westover. I highly recommend it.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Absolutely. COVID-19 has already prompted the profession to embrace new technologies and innovative ways of providing excellent legal services in a rapidly changing world.

Nicola Stipinovich
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has opened doors to great opportunities in difficult times.
What are you doing this year? I am doing my articles at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr and loving it.
Where do you see yourself in five years? Practising in a law firm (still to discover my area of passion!) after hopefully taking some time to study further.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I had a secret passion to study Oceanography.
What are you reading at the moment? A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I think it will affect the ‘how’ of our work, to be more innovative and efficient... overall a positive impact.

Elouise Basson

How has being a top student helped you so far? It helped me to find a job in my faculty, and has also helped me to believe in myself, that I can achieve literally everything, if I put my mind & heart to it!

What are you doing this year? I’m working at the Faculty of Law as a private research assistant while I’m also busy with my LL.M.

Where do you see yourself in five years? As a State Prosecutor.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Education, because I’ve actually changed from Education to Law. Being a Teacher was not for me!

What are you reading at the moment? Lots and lots of research about human dignity, defamation and crimen injuria to complete my LL.M.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Definitely! But positively – in this time of lockdown, I’ve already changed my motto to “Life is too short – do and make your dreams come true!”

Onalenna Leporo

How has being a top student helped you so far? Other than availing countless life-changing opportunities to me, it has always been a positive propellant in my pursuit of greatness.

What are you doing this year? I am currently pursuing a Master’s degree at the University of the Free State with a specialisation in private law.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I have come to learn that, subconsciously, I have an amazingly satisfying interest in academia. That’s where I see myself.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Forensic anthropology. This field has always been my second passion.

What are you reading at the moment? My current read is the Grammy Award winning book Becoming by former US first lady, Michelle Obama.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? The epidemic is affecting our economy negatively. I have no doubt that it will affect my career in future.

Chantal Marais

How has being a top student helped you so far? I was able to get a bursary during my studies and afterwards getting a job was not so difficult.

What are you doing this year? I’m currently doing my articles at a small law firm in Pretoria - Davie de Beer Attorneys.

University of the Free State

Keena Matete

How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student has assisted me being chosen to partake in certain programmes that prepared me for practice.

What are you doing this year? I am currently looking for articles.

Where do you see yourself in five years? In the coming five years, I aspire to be a practising attorney.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Had I not studied law, I would have studied a BA in Public Administration as I have always been interested in governance studies.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading an amazing book by Chris Fabry Overcomer. It instigates spiritual growth in me as a young Christian.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? COVID-19 is bound to strain the economy, which will affect the recruiting capacity of companies, thereby narrowing future job prospects.

Elian van Colfer

How has being a top student helped you so far? It created endless business opportunities for me. I got into one of the most prestigious firms in South Africa.

What are you doing this year? I am currently doing my articles at Phatshoane Henney Attorneys in Bloemfontein.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself in a law firm, building my way to become a director of the firm.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have applied for Physiotherapy.

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading The Great Gatsby. Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No. I believe that it will come to an end. The economy will return to normal once it ends.

University of Johannesburg

Shanese Booyens

How has being a top student helped you so far? As a top student I received awards including monetary
awards. I received internal academic bursaries from UI which paid a portion of my tuition fees. But I personally haven’t experienced anything different from all other students.

What are you doing this year? I am currently pursuing a Master’s degree in commercial law at the University of Johannesburg.

Where do you see yourself in five years? In five years I hope to be an admitted attorney with two years post-admission experience in the corporate banking sector.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? My second choice would have been to study psychology.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading The 5 AM Club: Own Your Morning. Elevate Your Life by Robin Sharma.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all our lives. I believe we will come out of this stronger with personalities that adapt more easily. Apart from the personal effects I don’t believe my career will jeopardised at all.

Takudzwa Dende
How has being a top student helped you so far? I earned my reputation in the faculty, tutoring positions, and I was able to inspire and mentor others, and I secured articles.

What are you doing this year? I am taking a gap year, travelling and I will be assisting at an NGO, The Jafuta Foundation in Victoria Falls.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I would have qualified as an attorney, working at a global law firm.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have studied Social Work (although when I was in Primary and High School, I wanted to become a dermatologist).

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading Fiona Ford’s Still an Inconvenient Youth and Malcolm Gladwell’s Talking to Strangers.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Technology is advancing and allowing people to work from home and attend lectures online and as such, COVID-19 will not affect my career plans.

Brooke Badenhorst (nee Hanson)
How has being a top student helped you so far? It afforded me the opportunity to tutor first year law students for three years, an experience that was of great personal significance.

What are you doing this year? I am studying an LLM in Tax law at the University of Johannesburg.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself practising at a firm but will keep myself open to the various opportunities the legal profession offers.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have pursued a career in Development Studies, a field I keep a keen interest in.

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading Empires in the Sun by Lawrence James.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? It will have an impact on the legal industry. That impact is dependent on our willingness to innovate and adapt.

Gabrielle Liang
How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student has definitely helped me become more confident which I believe is something very important to have.

What are you doing this year? I am currently enrolled in a postgraduate LLM programme in International Commercial Law at the University of Johannesburg.

Where do you see yourself in five years? In five years, I see myself at a law firm practising international trade which I am passionate about.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have chosen either accounting or computer science had I not been able to study law.

What are you reading at the moment? I’m reading The Magic of Thinking Big by David J. Schwartz.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? COVID-19 has affected everything; it goes without saying that my career in trade law is included in its wide effects.

Bennie van Zyl
How has being a top student helped you so far? I obtained a bursary which paid for my entire undergraduate studies. I attended quite a lot of posh functions and established more connections.

What are you doing this year? I am busy studying an LLM in commercial law while tutoring at the law faculty.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Either going into academia after having finished my doctorate or working in a legal team at a bank or insurance company.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? In my matric year, I alternatively applied to study a BA in psychology.

What are you reading at the moment? Kwikspace v Sabodala Mining (for my work) and Tower of Swallows, The witcher series by Andrzej Sapkowski, (for pleasure).

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Definitely. It will restrict access to courts and precedent will have to be established by the courts in many respects.

Magdalene Haripersad
How has being a top student helped you so far and what are you doing this year? I have reaped many awards and scholarships throughout my academic career. It is one of the reasons I am
Magdalene Harpertsad

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I have always been passionate about accounting; people say lawyers are not good with numbers; I believe that I am the exception! I hope to study accounting – hopefully in the next five years.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading Marshall Goldsmith’s How Women Rise. It looks at behaviours that hold women back and how to overcome these challenges.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I do not think that it will really affect my career. However, I was still learning and getting used to the working environment and had to transition to working from home which has been a huge adjustment.

Courtney Kantor

How has being a top student helped you so far? It has helped me financially more than anything; being a top student led to many scholarships and bursaries over the years.

What are you doing this year? I am doing a full research LLM at UKZN, analysing how artificial intelligence could impact legal education in South Africa.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I can easily see myself either at a law firm or completing my PhD – both would be gratifying.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I always liked the idea of being a journalist; I love writing and digging for information.

What are you reading at the moment? The Liberation – Kate Furnivall (in addition to hundreds of journals for my thesis!).

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No. Luckily, I have 2020 to research independently from home. By 2021 I am certain the virus will be contained.

Lervashni Padayachee

How has being a top student helped you so far? It is a confidence booster, it helped me secure a good job and form a good network with others.

What are you doing this year? I am currently serving my articles at Venns Attorneys in Durban and I have been a part of the public law team thus far.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I hope to grow within Venns and to become a partner. I would also like to further my studies and pursue my master’s and doctorate.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Veterinary science was my alternate option as I am very passionate about animals.

What are you reading at the moment? Driven, the Virat Kohli Story by Vijay Lokaipally. I am a cricket fan and this book is the tale of one of the most outstanding batsmen of this era.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No. Through prayer and abiding by the regulations put in place by President Ramaphosa, I am certain that we will soon overcome these tough times.

Nthandokazi Nozapho Shazi

How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student has certainly helped my self-confidence more than anything; I am more confident in my ability to reach my dreams. It has also helped me attain a scholarship which has covered my tuition for this year.

What are you doing this year? I am currently a Master’s student, studying Shipping law at the University of Cape Town.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I definitely see myself in a law firm. I want to become an admitted attorney before I pursue any other career path.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have studied Political Science – debating in high school instilled in me a passion to serve in government and a passion for government ethics.

What are you reading at the moment? The 8th Habit by Stephen R Covey – it’s a book that makes us realise that we can all be leaders, irrespective of position.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No, I don’t think so. I hope that government will make the right choices and work diligently in order to restore our economy; it won’t happen overnight but it will place us in a stronger position in the long run.

Nothando Valentaine Mthinkhulu

How has being a top student helped you so far? I was able to get bursaries and scholarships to fund me throughout my degree and I secured a job with an International law firm which is amazing. Hard work really does pay off.

What are you doing this year? I am doing articles at Baker & McKenzie in Johannesburg; it is such a wonderful and humbling opportunity. I always look back to where I come from and I am grateful.

Where do you see yourself in five years? For now, I am not sure what I want to do with my life, but I remind myself that it’s okay as I am still young. I am happy with where I am right now.
Nelson Mandela University

Bianca Johnston
How has being a top student helped you so far? It instilled values of determination, self-discipline and consistency. Through these I have crafted an exceptional work ethic that allows me to achieve the goals that I set for myself.
What are you doing this year? I am currently serving articles at Pagdens Attorneys.
Where do you see yourself in five years? In the next five years I aim to be a well-established Attorney with a Master’s degree.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? If hadn’t completed my BCom Law and LLB degrees I would have liked to have been a pharmacist.
What are you reading at the moment? The Leader who had no Title by Robin Sharma.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? It is uncertain the effects that COVID-19 will have on careers going forward. All one can really do is give yourself the best chance to stay relevant and relied upon in your field.

Twaambo Mukuni
How has being a top student helped you so far? So far, the only benefits have been in-house varsity benefits, for example being on the Dean’s list. I haven’t had the ground-breaking career start that would be expected of a top student. Hopefully, this is yet to come.
What are you doing this year? I am at home for the year. I will hopefully begin the equivalent of articles in October. Job opportunities in Zambia are far less than in SA.
Where do you see yourself in five years? In five years, I would like to be a seasoned advocate specialising in commercial law.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? If not law, I would have done something IT-related. Perhaps computer hardware engineering. I have always loved computers.
What are you reading at the moment? Digital Fortress. A techno-thriller novel by Dan Brown. It is brilliant.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? The global economy coming to a screeching halt has lessened my chances of getting a job. I may have to wait longer. I hope that if COVID-19 does affect me, it will be positively.

Danielle Lotter
How has being a top student helped you so far? I think it helped me to better cope with stress and the workload.
What are you doing this year? I am a postgraduate associate at the NMU Law Faculty where I am pursuing a Master’s in Criminal Justice.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself as an admitted attorney at a law firm or part of the NPA.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have studied psychology.
What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading The Cutting Edge by Jeffrey Deaver.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, I do think COVID-19 will affect my career in the long run, especially with its effect on the economy.

Daniel van der Merwe
How has being a top student helped you so far? It assisted me in crafting a mindset to become an astute legal practitioner. Practically, recalling various legal topics assisted me in solving legal problems.
What are you doing this year? I am currently doing my articles at Brown Braude & Vlok in Port Elizabeth.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself at a law firm at this stage.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have pursued a career in engineering.
What are you reading at the moment? I am reading a Civil Procedure handbook and a book on health lifestyle changes.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? It is too early to say. Apart from legal challenges, COVID-19 presents far more negative social and economic consequences.

North West University

Ngcenso Mbatha
How has being a top student helped you so far? My dedication towards my academics awarded me the opportunity to secure employment despite my age. I have applied this dedication to my career.
What are you doing this year? I am serving my articles at a small and independent law firm, JG Vonkeman Attorneys, in my hometown of Vryheid in KZN.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself at a prominent law firm and working towards becoming a seasoned professional in the field.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Civil or Mechanical Engineering. In high school, my subjects were tailored towards engineering.
What are you reading at the moment? It ranges from the 2019 Gangster State by Pieter-Louis Myburgh to Why Nations Fail by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Certainly. There’s a lot of uncertainty in the market right now and that is a source of anxiety for me. However, the legal profession is particularly resilient and presents many opportunities.

Nellis Barnard
How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student has allowed me to qualify for post graduate studies and also enabled me to apply for candidate attorney programmes at various law firms.
What are you doing this year? I am currently enrolled at the Northwest University for a Master’s degree in International Trade Law.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I would like to be an admitted attorney, and practising at a law firm that specialises in Corporate/Commercial Law, International Trade Law or Intellectual Property Law.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? If not Law, I would probably have studied for a degree in accounting or Economics.

What are you reading at the moment? Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, it would be naive not to think so; The economy is currently at a stand-still and will take some time to recover, which affects every profession, including the legal profession.

Joshua Bassingthwaighte
How has being a top student helped you so far? My academic achievements have assisted me financially through bursaries, enabling me to pay for my study expenses.

What are you doing this year? I decided to continue studying and am currently completing a Master’s degree in International Trade Law at the NWU, Potchefstroom.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I hope to be a successful lawyer, with a good track record, at a reputable law firm.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? My other field of interest is engineering, specifically mechanical or mechatronic engineering.

What are you reading at the moment? My LLM studies keep me busy reading legal literature on international trade, but I’m also reading Heaven by Randy Alcorn.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I think COVID-19 will change the legal field dramatically; apart from increased litigation, it will help digitise the legal profession.

Leandri Notnagel
How has being a top student helped you so far? Legal firms want hard-working Candidate Attorneys; good marks prove that and give you a head start.

What are you doing this year? I am currently serving my articles at Hannatjie van der Merwe Attorneys in Potchefstroom.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Working towards being a partner at my law firm or running one of our branches.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Education: I had wonderful teachers and I would like to pay it forward and help children find their purpose in life.

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading Dean Meyer’s Pooi.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? It will have a positive effect as we need to find solutions in difficult circumstances for never-before-seen legal problems.

Marcell Posthumus
How has being a top student helped you so far? Working hard at University created the foundation and skills which one doesn’t always have the opportunity to acquire as a candidate attorney.

What are you doing this year? I am currently completing my two years practical vocational training at Otto Krause Attorneys in Roodepoort.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I aspire to be an admitted practising attorney at the law firm where I am currently employed.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I considered qualifying as an accountant and I initially studied towards a BCom Law degree.

What are you reading at the moment? A romantic novel. I enjoy reading them as it helps me to relax and escape reality.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, positively as well as negatively in the way we treat our clients, interact with our colleagues and approach the law in general.

Lian Smith
How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a “top student” is an absolute personal exercise. It has helped me hone my self-discipline and work ethic.

What are you doing this year? Right now I’m engaged in my articles at Yammin & Hammond Inc. in Bedfordview, focusing on commercial law.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Five years from now, I aim to be practising as an advocate within the Johannesburg area.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? If not for Lady Law, I would’ve been a filmmaker.

What are you reading at the moment? The ingredients on the back of my shampoo bottle... It’s a long list.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? The Corona Pandemic is definitely set to alter court operations. It has brought about an opportune acceleration in the move from paper-based proceedings towards electronic mediums.

Bianca Balt
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has taught me that knowledge will serve you well throughout life and made me realise how much I still want and have to learn.

What are you doing this year? I am doing my practical vocational training, working in both the Trade Mark Enforcement and Prosecution departments at Spoor & Fisher.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself practising successfully in the broader context of Intellectual Property Law.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have gone into medicine.
What are you reading at the moment? The Lifeboat by Charlotte Rogan
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, COVID-19 will have long-lasting, game-changing ramifications for all careers, including mine.

Roberto Barreiro
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has given me a sense of belief in my abilities and the value of working hard.
What are you doing this year? I started my articles in January at intellectual property firm Kisch IP.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself within a law firm as a Trade Mark attorney.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I’m passionate about sport so most probably sports journalism.
What are you reading at the moment? The President’s Keepers by Jacques Pauw. I do recommend a podcast called ’Making SMEs Matter’ hosted by Marnus Broodkyk.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I foresee remote working becoming more prevalent than ever before. It’s difficult to determine with certainty how it will affect my career.

Malachizodok Mpolokeng
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has taught me the importance of passion, commitment and a strong work ethic. It has given me access to numerous opportunities, including articles at one of the top law firms in the country.
What are you doing this year? I am serving articles at Werksmans Attorneys in the firm’s Insolvency, Business Rescue & Restructuring practice.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself practising as an attorney at Werksmans.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I have always loved cars, especially BMWs, I would have pursued a career in automotive design or engineering.
What are you reading at the moment? Most of my reading consists of business newspaper articles covering global and national responses to the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? It has had a devastating global impact that will result in tough economic conditions in South Africa, now and in the future. Much of legal practice, in the months and years ahead, will centre on issues stemming from this.

Lucinda Strydom
How has being a top student helped you so far? It is well known that the law is extremely competitive; being a top student, I was exposed to different opportunities and obtained a position as a candidate attorney more easily.
What are you doing this year? I am a candidate attorney at Haasbroek and Boezaart Inc. in Pretoria.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself being an established legal practitioner, notary public and a conveyancer.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have wanted to become an accountant.
What are you reading at the moment? I am currently focusing on reading more in the field of law I wish to practise.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I believe that if COVID-19 is used as an opportunity for reassessment and transition, the pandemic will not negatively impact on law firms in the long run.

Roxanne Westphal
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has opened many doors, and provided me with opportunities that I would not have obtained had I not put in the hard work.
What are you doing this year? I am doing my articles at Kruger & Co Incorporated Attorneys in Pretoria.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself as a practising attorney, but would like to have completed my LLM as well.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have gone into criminology.
What are you reading at the moment? I am reading The Guardians by John Grisham.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, I do believe so. Job opportunities may lessen as a result of the economy. However, this has forced and will continue to force the legal field to shift to a digital system, and will change the way we think and work.

Rhodes University
Jeremy de Beer
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has opened a world of opportunities; the work ethic required to be a top student prepared me for working in a big law firm.
What are you doing this year? I am articled to ENSafrica in Cape Town where I am specialising in competition law.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself working at a big law firm, or potentially at the Bar, either in South Africa or abroad.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I briefly considered teaching but in hindsight I would probably do something IT-related as I am very interested in issues pertaining to data privacy.
What are you reading at the moment? I am re-reading The Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien – one of my all-time favourites. I plan to read something by Simon Sinek next.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No, I think that this epidemic has forced us to challenge conventional ideas such as working from the office, but I do not think it will affect my career.

Siphosetu Matebese
How has being a top student helped you so far? I have found new ways to maximise my time, to not give in but deliver under pressure in the workplace.
What are you doing this year? At the beginning of 2020 I started serving my articles at ENS Africa in Cape Town; in the Banking and Finance Department.
Where do you see yourself in five years? Five years from now, I see myself having been admitted as an attorney, still in practice, with more academic qualifications.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? As a foodie or food warriors’ lover, I would have gone to a culinary school and become a private chef.
What are you reading at the moment? *The 5 AM Club: Own Your Morning, Elevate Your Life* by my favourite author, Robin S. Sharma.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, especially with learning being remote. I am grateful to be able to produce and deliver in these unprecedented circumstances.

Christopher Stroud
How has being a top student helped you so far? Working hard as a student equips you with the ability to manage challenging novel tasks expeditiously and effectively. Employers love this.
What are you doing this year? Candidate attorney at Pieterse TRM Erasmus Tax Attorneys – an exciting boutique law firm specialising in tax planning and dispute resolution.
Where do you see yourself in five years? I will have completed an MComm (Tax), and I’ll be climbing the ranks at Pieterse TRM Erasmus.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would probably have pursued a career in academia (English literature or music theory), alternatively a career in epidemiology.
What are you reading at the moment? Sapiens by Yuval Noah Harari and *Confronting the Corrupt* by Paul Hoffman, SC.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No. Our firm’s excellent and dynamic leadership has allowed us to continue remotely, servicing clients at the same standard.

Micaela Pathar
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has definitely motivated me to continue to work hard to reach my new goals, and hopefully inspire other young women to do the same.
What are you doing this year? I am currently doing my PVD at Webber Wentzel in Johannesburg. In my first rotation, working for Dario Milo in his Media law team.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I love the law, and would really enjoy practising law in the near future. However, life is full of opportunities and I would prefer not to box myself in, career-wise.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Without a doubt, a career in the film industry. I took a short film course during my law studies and thoroughly enjoyed it.
What are you reading at the moment? Currently re-reading one of my favourite plays, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, retention rates might lower considering the financial implications of COVID-19. This might change the course of my career but I’m optimistic about what the future holds nevertheless.

Stellenbosch University

Ferdinand Botha
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has certainly opened some exciting doors. I have received offers for postgraduate study at Oxford and Cambridge.
What are you doing this year? I am currently a research assistant at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg, Germany.
Where do you see yourself in five years? Hopefully at the Bar.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have pursued an academic career in philosophy.
What are you reading at the moment? *The Dark Forest* by Cixin Liu.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Quite possibly, but it is impossible to say at this stage.

Matthew James
How has being a top student helped you so far? It has given me access to multiple opportunities I otherwise would not have had (interviews, Master’s courses etc).
What are you doing this year? This year I’ll be doing a banking graduate program as an analyst at either HSBC or Barclays in London.
Where do you see yourself in five years? Ideally, I would like to start and run my own venture capital business in the coming years.
What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have gone into accounting or finance. However, I’m ironically in finance now anyway.
What are you reading at the moment? *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey, it is a brilliant read and I highly recommend it.
Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes and no. It will change the way work is conducted globally but it shouldn’t affect the long term.

Liesl Rabie
How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student helped me stay diligent and has increased my optimism for a valuable future career.
What are you doing this year? I am currently at the University of Stellenbosch where I am studying BAcc Honours.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I hope to be a qualified chartered accountant where I will be making a large impact in the world of business.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have studied BAcc and followed the path of a chartered accountant without the desirable additional legal knowledge.

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading Factfulness by Hans Rosling.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I am studying; the possibility exists that it may lengthen my studies. Also, I aspire to become a chartered accountant. The economic toll of the virus could affect many businesses, where the impact will be seen in future audits.

Stefano De Villiers Filippi

How has being a top student helped you so far? It has enabled me to obtain a job with a top firm of my choice.

What are you doing this year? I am currently studying BAccounting Honours at the University of Stellenbosch, which is possible because I studied BAccLB.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I will most probably still be in one of the top accounting firms, but hopefully working in Europe.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have loved to be a professional sportsman playing either cricket or golf.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading King and Maxwell written by David Baldacci.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I don’t think there will be any significant impact on my career, especially after the pandemic comes to an end.

University of the Western Cape

Nicolette Amy Bouah

Helped you so far? It has encouraged me to stay disciplined, motivated and confident in my own academic abilities and personal life.

What are you doing this year? I am pursuing my LLM at UWC in the fields of International Family Law and Children’s Rights.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I would like to have completed my articles and returned to university to complete a doctorate degree.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have studied to be a teacher because I love learning and helping others reach their academic goals.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading a World War II spy novel – Charlotte Gray by Sebastian Faulks.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? No, I do not believe so. However, it may propel law into the digital age.

Charles Britz

How has being a top student helped you so far? Apart from exposing me to opportunities, it has taught me the importance of being intentional, grounded, and persistent with my goals.

What are you doing this year? I am a first year candidate attorney at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr in Johannesburg.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I anticipate being in a law firm but also contributing to academia. Entrepreneurship and philanthropy will be at the forefront of my endeavours.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I have always been fond of architecture and photography. I would probably have immersed myself in the creative space through those.

What are you reading at the moment? The Art of the Good Life by Rolf Dobelli.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Indirectly. It is crucial that the legal field adapts to the technological age to achieve more efficient, sustainable and productive ways of working. Lessons learned from the pandemic have been invaluable.

Tammeron de Wit

How has being a top student helped you so far? The legal industry is very cut-throat and competitive; being a top student has helped me secure interviews at firms.

What are you doing this year? I’m a candidate attorney at Bluet Maasdorp Attorneys in Cape Town, for the next two years.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I’ve always loved academia, and wasn’t sure that practice was for me, but in the last four months I’ve learnt so much that I know for certain this is where I want to be.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I think I would have been a teacher. I love learning, and you are able to impart knowledge to others.

What are you reading at the moment? I’m reading Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I think it has emphasised the need for the legal industry to have a more modernised approach.

Luciano Heneke

How has being a top student helped you so far? Being a top student has helped me land a Graduate Lecturing Assistant (GLA) position in
corporate law, as well as articles of clerkship at ENSAfrica.

What are you doing this year? I am studying towards my LL.M in Corporate Law at the University of the Western Cape and I am also a GLA at the university.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I am commencing my articles of clerkship at ENSAfrica in 2021. In five years I see myself as a Senior Associate at ENSAfrica.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? My career choice would have been that of a Chartered Financial Analyst. This career is still an option as I completed my BCom Law degree, majoring in finance and investments.

What are you reading at the moment? The majority of my reading is related to my dissertation which is based on the Solvency and Liquidity test.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, the effects of this pandemic will be felt for years to come.

**Tyron Leslie Roode**

How has being a top student helped you so far? It has made my CV more appealing to employers and clients.

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**University of the Witwatersrand**

Christopher De Sousa

How has being a top student helped you so far? My results provided me with articles for 2021 and a job with a mining company in the interim.

What are you doing this year? I commence with articles next year. For experience, this year, I am a legal intern for a mining company.

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What are you doing this year? I am doing my articles at ENSAfrica.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I see myself contributing to the radical advancement of law insofar as the fourth industrial revolution is concerned.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I probably would have pursued a career in performing arts.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes, I believe it will contribute to the digitisation of law in many respects.
Where do you see yourself in 5 years? I hope to be an Associate at a firm. Ideally, I would have obtained an LLM in Taxation as well.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have loved to be in corporate finance and investment; most likely working at an investment firm.

What are you reading at the moment? Due to COVID-19 I am reading constantly. I am concurrently reading *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell and *The Silmarillion* by J. R. R. Tolkien.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? The economic landscape will change. There will be greater localisation of manufacturing and business closures which will keep practitioners occupied.

Erin Hickey

*How has being a top student helped you so far?* It has been self-validating. Additionally, being a top student is beneficial when applying for articles.

*What are you doing this year?* I am doing my articles at Bowman Gilfillan and loving it!

Where do you see yourself in five years? In five years I see myself happily working for a law firm.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Palaeontology, but I discovered, through studying Archaeology, that I don’t like digging through dirt for hours. Therefore, Forensic Pathology.

What are you reading at the moment? Re-reading *Christine* by Stephen King.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Currently no. However, it depends on the ultimate global effect which, at the time of writing, cannot be quantified.

Zeenat Emamally

*How has being a top student helped you so far?* My results have opened up bursary opportunities, so the cost of my postgraduate studies has been covered in full.

*What are you doing this year?* I am completing an LLM in Human Rights Advocacy and Litigation at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I hope to be in the social justice sector, and working at a law clinic or human rights organisation.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I would have loved to lecture English literature, with a focus on the Romantic era.

What are you reading at the moment? I could never focus on just one book! I am currently reading *Steppenwolf*, *The Goldfinch*, and *Black Beauty*.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? Yes. The pandemic will cause human rights violations which I, as a social justice practitioner, will need to deal with.

Orea Vidjak

*How has being a top student helped you so far?* Being top 5 helped me receive offers from prestigious law firms across South Africa and, therefore, I had a variety of choices for articles.

*What are you doing this year?* I am doing my articles at Biccard Bollo Mariano Incorporated (BBM), a firm in Rosebank.

Where do you see yourself in five years? So far, I have found that I much prefer the academic aspect of law, as opposed to the practical aspect. Based on this, in five years I see myself back in academia.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? I have always had an interest in medicine; both of my parents are doctors. Had I not been able to study law, I would have pursued medicine.

What are you reading at the moment? I am currently reading the world-renowned book, *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne, which has encouraged me to approach this stressful year of articles in a more positive manner.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? I believe that there will be a silver lining in this pandemic; it will force attorneys to use the internet to advance the legal profession.

Ryan Hosking

*How has being a top student helped you so far?* Other than helping me get a job, I have been well-prepared for articles. The choice of some of the more challenging electives, tough at the time, has paid off.

*What are you doing this year?* I am doing articles at Allen & Overy.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I have various ideas about where I would like to be in five years. While I do want to pursue further studies at some point, I also see the benefit of building up work experience.

What would your career choice have been had you not been able to study law? Most likely, a consultant or a position in a development-oriented international organisation.

What are you reading at the moment? I am reading *The Wolf of the Plains* by Conn Iggulden - a historical novel about the conquests of Genghis Khan.

Do you think COVID-19 will affect your career in the long run? We transitioned from a working office presence to an online presence in a matter of weeks; our capabilities have remained the same. Many law firms may opt to do more online work in future - the pandemic has illustrated that it is entirely possible.