



## Meet the Southern African Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2025

*Eleven outstanding young graduates from Southern Africa have been announced as the Rhodes Scholars-Elect for 2025*

### NIAMH AHERN (Western Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)



**Niamh** (22) attended St Cyprian's Girls School and graduated from the University of Cape Town in March 2024 with a BA in Music, Psychology, and Afrikaans (with distinction). She is currently completing a BA Honours in Afrikaans at the same institution.

Niamh is exploring hauntology, place, and enfreakment in a comparative study of Afrikaans and Appalachian gothic novels for her Honours thesis, and has additional research interests in the medical humanities, digital humanities, and libraries and archives. She works as an Editorial Assistant at New Contrast and has previously volunteered at a local public library.

She was awarded a Merit Bursary from the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns and the Prof JJ Smith Scholarship from UCT's Afrikaans and Netherlandic Studies Section in support of her Honours degree, and received a Student Leadership Award (Team category) for her work as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Varsity Newspaper in 2024.

She is an active student leader currently serving as Managing Editor of Varsity Newspaper, Social Sciences Director of the African Research Society, Chairperson of the UCT Student Psychiatry Society, Technical Officer of the UCT Cortex Club, and Student Parliament Representative for the Students with Disabilities' Forum. She is a member of the UCT Symphony Orchestra during her undergraduate studies. Outside of these pursuits, she is a writer, musician, therapy dog handler, and occasional ceramicist.

At Oxford, Niamh hopes to cultivate expertise in African studies and develop research skills that will enable her to influence public library policy, special collections practice, and African archival integrity.

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### CHRISTIAN COTCHOBOS (Western Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)

**Christian** (27) grew up in Cape Town, matriculated at Diocesan College, and studied an MBChB at the University of Cape Town, where he graduated with first-class honours in 2022.

During this time, he also completed a BSc Honours degree, specialising in infectious diseases and immunology. He is currently a junior doctor in his second year of internship at Livingstone Hospital in the Eastern Cape. As an aspiring clinician-scientist, his goal is to improve surgical care through innovation research.

His current focus of clinical research is on improving intimate partner violence care provided by orthopaedic practitioners. He is completing a Master's thesis on this topic with UCT's Global Surgery Division.

Christian is a keen runner. At university, he was a national level 800m athlete and chairperson of UCT athletics. He relaxes by spending time in nature, hiking or trail running with friends, and playing guitar. At Oxford, Christian hopes to pursue an MSc in Musculoskeletal Sciences.



## WONDERFUL THABISO KHUMALO (Gauteng Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar -Elect 2025)

**Wonderful** (23) was born in Katlehong, a township located south east of Johannesburg, Gauteng. In 2024, he is completing his final year in the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.

He has held multiple leadership roles in the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences including the Chairperson of the Health Sciences Students' Council, as well as the Chairperson and President of the Medical Students' Council roles. Driven by his passion for teaching, he served as the Head of Pathology Education at Wrapitup Wits Medical Society for a 2-year period, where he delivered tutorials to 3rd and 4th year medical students.

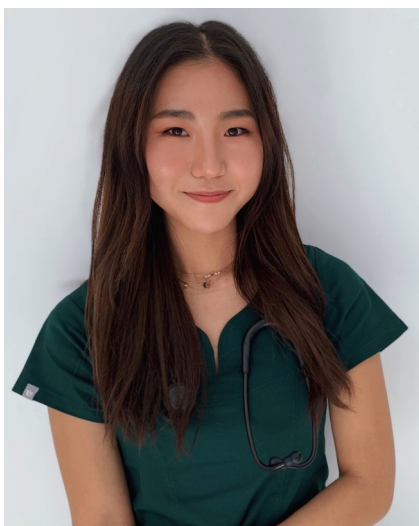
Wonderful has been recognised by the Golden Key Society for academic excellence and has received the University Council Merit scholarship award during his time at Wits. He is a multi-award winning public speaker, poet, and tutor.

When he is not tutoring junior students, he spends his time writing poetry, catching up on global politics, or watching football.

An aspiring Orthopaedic surgeon, he intends to pursue an MSc in Musculoskeletal Sciences to contribute extensively to research that will decrease the burden of musculoskeletal and rheumatological conditions on the health care sector and ultimately improve patients' quality of life.



## INAE KIM (Western Cape Regional Finalist SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)



**Inae** (26) is a South Korean-South African junior doctor currently working in Groote Schuur Hospital with a passion that lies at the intersection of clinical science research, specifically in viral hepatitis and hepatobiliary diseases, and global health. She is currently involved in research projects within the hepatobiliary surgery unit at Groote Schuur Hospital.

She obtained both MBChB and BMedSci (Hons) specializing in Infectious Diseases and Immunology as part of the intercalated programme at University of Cape Town with first class honours. During her studies, she has obtained various awards and scholarships including multiple class medals and the Faculty of Health Science Surgery Prize in her final year of studies.

Inae has held various leadership positions during her studies such as in International Association of Student Surgical Societies, executive committee of South African Surgical Student Societies and Vice President in UCT Surgical Society. She was awarded the Klaus-Jürgen Bathe Leadership Scholarship for demonstrating high intellectual power and leadership potential.

At Oxford, Inae hopes to harness both her passions in global health and clinical science research by pursuing research in liver diseases, whilst also pursuing studies to understand how to take research and use it to advocate for changes within the healthcare sphere. She hopes to champion and celebrate diversity through her own identity.

## JACOB LUND (Western Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)

**Jacob** (22) graduated from the University of Cape Town in March 2024 with a BSc in Mathematics and Applied Mathematics and is currently in the process of completing a BSc Honours in Mathematics at UCT.

Jacob has taken on mathematical projects in a broad collection of fields, ranging from categorical topological, to quantum complexity, to classical chaos. He shares his enthusiasm for mathematics by teaching, and has run mathematical thinking workshops for first years, with the aim of breaking down "maths-anxiety".

He has received the class medal for all core mathematics courses during his undergraduate, and all applied mathematics courses since second year, and was awarded the Harry Crossley Research Fellowship for his honours year, based on his research potential. His third-year project "The early universe as an open quantum system: decoherence and complexity" was published in the Journal of High Energy Physics.

Jacob is also a co-creator and moderator of isiXhosa.click, a free online open-source dictionary which has received a grant as a part of the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources' Digital Humanities Open Educational Resources Champions initiative.

In his free time, Jacob can usually be found on a mountain or in the climbing gym.

At Oxford, Jacob hopes to pursue an MSc in Mathematical Sciences, followed by a DPhil in mathematics with the intent of exploring the nexus of pure and applied maths, particularly on how insights from traditionally pure fields can be used to solve pressing problems.







## Meet our Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2025

### TSHEGOFATSO MASENYA (Gauteng Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)



**Tshegofatso** (26) is a medical doctor with a deep commitment to healthcare, social equity, and educational access. Currently an intern at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, Tshegofatso is known for her work both in clinical settings and in community-driven projects that aim to address systemic inequalities. She is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics from the University of Cape Town, where she also earned her MBChB degree.

She is the founder of *GoShare*, a donation-based crowdfunding platform dedicated to assisting “missing middle” students in securing the funds needed to settle their outstanding university fees. She also leads a health education series under the Golden Key International Honour Society, promoting health literacy among young adults. Her previous leadership roles include heading health promotion with SHAWCO Health, coordinating outreach for the Rural Support Network, serving on the Health Sciences Students’ Council, and serving as head of entrepreneurship with the UCT chapter of ABSIP (Association of Black Securities and Investment Professionals).

Recognized as one of South Africa’s Top 10 GradStar students, Tshegofatso is a member of the Global Shapers Community, part of the World Economic Forum’s network.

Outside of her professional life, Tshegofatso is a voice-over artist, a Formula 1 enthusiast, and an avid reader with a particular interest in African literature.

Tshegofatso will be heading to Oxford University, where she aims to deepen her expertise in health systems and policy, empowering her to drive impactful change with a focus on advancing universal health coverage in South Africa’s public health sector.

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### PHEMELO MATIE (Western Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)

**Phemelo** (22) is a final-year LLB student at the University of Cape Town, where she graduated with distinction in 2023 with a BA in Law and IsiXhosa Communication.

As an Allan Gray Orbis Foundation candidate fellow, she co-founded Legal Standpoint, an award-winning legal tech start-up aimed at increasing access to legal education in South Africa. Though she has since stepped back from the start-up, her commitment to making the law more accessible remains strong.

Phemelo is actively involved in her church’s campus ministry, serves as a children’s church teacher, and tutors legal writing in the law faculty. She has also held various roles in student governance within her residence, faculty, and UCT societies.

Phemelo believes businesses can and should be a force for positive social impact and development, and aims to pursue an MSc in Sustainability, Enterprise, and the Environment at Oxford. Through this degree, she hopes to harness business as a tool for positive transformation, driving sustainable change, investment, and development in communities.

In her spare time, Phemelo enjoys attending music concerts and cherishes spending quality time with her family and friends.





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### OYAMA MZAYIDUME (Eastern Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)



Oyama (22) was born and raised in East London, before attending the Diocesan School for Girls (DSG) in Makhanda, where she was elected head girl in her matric year. She is a final-year LLB student at Rhodes University, Makhanda and is deeply proud of her Eastern Cape roots.

Oyama enjoys thinking about the relationship between law and politics and the influence this has on how courts adjudicate disputes. She has received awards for being the top student in her class for two years. Oyama is a keen mootist, having participated in moot court competitions at Rhodes as well as nationally and internationally. She won and was awarded the Best Speaker prize at the Kate O'Regan Moot (2024).

While at Rhodes University, Oyama tutored first-year Politics and Law students, sang in the Rhodes University Chamber Choir and served in residence leadership structures.

She was awarded an Abe Bailey Travel Bursary for 2024.

At Oxford University, Oyama hopes to pursue a Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) degree. She spends her free time reading and listening to podcasts on pop culture, history and current affairs.

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### MICHAEL PETRUS (BLMNS Regional Finalist, Namibia Scholar-Elect 2025)

**Michael** (24) is a final-year medical student at the University of Namibia, pursuing a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) with a keen interest in improving access to timely, safe, and quality surgical care.

He founded the Namibian Student Surgical Society and serves on the Executive Committee of the International Association of Student Surgical Societies, where he focuses on equipping African medical students with the skills and knowledge needed to address surgical challenges in their communities. His current research centres on enhancing the quality of diabetic care in rural Namibia, proposing strategic healthcare delivery improvements. Michael has also contributed to discussions on critical healthcare challenges in Namibia, including universal health coverage and food insecurity.

Michael was selected as one of 25 international delegates for the Future Surgeon Delegation at the World Congress of Surgery in Malaysia, an experience that further deepened his commitment to improving surgical systems in low-resource settings.

As Junior Mayor of Windhoek, Michael led impactful community initiatives, including HIV PrEP awareness campaigns targeting youth and a city-wide clean-up effort to combat a Hepatitis E outbreak. He also represented Namibia internationally in debate, captaining the national team.

Beyond medicine, Michael is a professional photographer, using photography as a storytelling tool. He has worked as a freelance photographer for Agence France-Presse.

At Oxford, he plans to pursue studies addressing critical healthcare challenges in Africa, focusing on the intersection of healthcare policy, innovation, and technology to improve surgical systems and expand access to quality medical care across the continent.







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### ANQI QU (Gauteng Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2025)



**Anqi** (23) grew up in Johannesburg and attended St Mary's Girls School in Waverley, where she was elected head girl in her matric year. She is currently a student at the University of Chicago, pursuing a double major in Economics and Statistics, along with a joint M.S. in Computer Science.

Anqi is passionate about the transformative potential of new technologies, particularly AI. Her economics honours thesis explores applications of AI in economics, focusing on how machine learning can improve accessibility and responsiveness in economic research through "silicon agents."

Outside of academics, Anqi is a member of the Chicago Debate Society, where she served as Vice President last year and represented her university at the World University Debate Championships for the past two years. She is also an avid reader, amateur rock climber, and perfumery enthusiast.

At Oxford, Anqi hopes to pursue a DPhil in Economics with a focus on Machine Learning.

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### JEREMY SIMPSON (KwaZulu-Natal Regional Finalist, KZN Scholar-Elect 2025)

**Jeremy** (24) graduated from the University of Cape Town in March 2024 with a BCom (Hons) in Economics and a BSc in Economics and Mathematics. Currently he is working as a Management Consultant with Boston Consulting Group. In this role, Jeremy has worked in Global Health as well other strategy and business transformation engagements. While at UCT, he won two class medals in his honour's year and placed 3rd in his cohort. In his final year, his thesis explored the Informal Sector's role in South Africa's Macroeconomy using a Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium model.

Jeremy was also an active member of VARSITY Newspaper while at UCT, serving as a news reporter, deputy editor-in-chief and eventually its Publisher. Jeremy is an avid music lover and a singer, having sung in the Cape Town Youth Choir at university. In addition to choral music, he loves musical theatre and every opportunity he gets to perform it in the car with his sister.

While at Oxford, he hopes to pursue studies in Economics and Energy Systems with a focus on using multidisciplinary methods to address the challenges that developing countries will likely face from the Just Energy Transition.



Reflecting on the recent round of selections for the Rhodes Scholarship, Ndumiso Luthuli, National Secretary for Southern Africa commented

*"Given the demand annually, we were delighted to be able to award an additional Scholarship this year, thanks to the generosity of Rhodes Scholar donors who have flow-funded a 10th Rhodes Scholarship for South Africa. We have no doubt that the new cohort of Rhodes Scholars selected this year will continue to 'fight the world's fight' in the 121 year-old tradition of the Rhodes Scholarship."*

The Southern African National Secretariat has fulfilled its mandate again this year. Following rigorous rounds of selections over the last three months, across the constituency, 11 Rhodes Scholarships (2025) have been awarded to an extraordinary cohort of young leaders. We wish the Southern African Scholars-Elect for 2025 every success and happiness at Oxford University and look forward to their future impact and leadership in the years ahead.