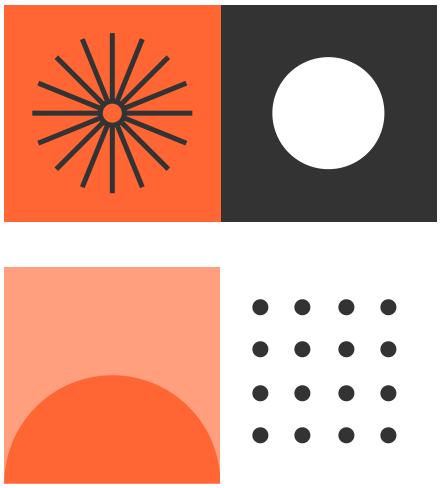
Cornerstone
Business Studies

NEWS · BUSINESS STUDIES · OCTOBER 2026

Cornerstone Institute Students Excel in INTERNATIONAL SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGE



5th	7.01%	+8.04
OF 15 INTERNATIONAL TEAMS	FINAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT	PERCENTAGE POINTS GAINED

Cornerstone Institute is proud to celebrate the outstanding achievement of its student team, **Cornerstone Flow Masters**, which secured **5th place out of 15 international teams** in the prestigious **2026 IPICS & SAPICS International Student Challenge – The Fresh Connection**, held on 12 and 13 October 2026.

The invitation-only competition was hosted by **SAPICS (The Professional Body for Supply Chain Management in South Africa)** and **IPICS (The Supply Chain Management Institute)**, in partnership with **Inchainge**, with university participation generously sponsored by IPICS. Facilitated by Professor Igor Lopes from Inchainge, the challenge brought together student teams from leading universities across South Africa, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Cornerstone competed against teams representing institutions including **Stellenbosch University, the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, UNISA, MANCOSA, University College Dublin, the University of Exeter, the University of Portsmouth and the University of Derby**, among others.

A CHALLENGING REAL-WORLD SUPPLY CHAIN SIMULATION

The Fresh Connection is an internationally recognised, web-based business simulation designed to develop strategic decision-making, analytical thinking and cross-functional collaboration. Students work in teams to manage a virtual company, making interconnected decisions across purchasing, operations, supply chain management and sales.

Over four competitive simulation rounds, teams were required to develop and implement strategies to improve their company's financial and operational performance, with **return on investment (ROI)** serving as the primary performance measure.

Participants had to evaluate supplier relationships, optimise inventory levels, manage production capacity, balance costs against customer service requirements, and coordinate decisions across business functions. Each decision influenced other areas of the business, requiring teams to consider trade-offs, respond to changing performance results and continuously refine their strategies.

AN EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR FIRST- AND SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS

What makes Cornerstone's achievement particularly remarkable is that **the team consisted entirely of first- and second-year undergraduate students with limited prior exposure to supply chain management principles and practices**. Despite their relatively early stage of academic development, they competed successfully against university teams in an international competition demanding advanced strategic thinking, financial analysis and integrated supply chain decision-making.

The Cornerstone Flow Masters demonstrated exceptional teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving and an ability to learn and apply new concepts under pressure.

Their performance improved consistently throughout the four rounds:

SIMULATION ROUND	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Round 1	-1.03%
Round 2	3.90%
Round 3	5.04%
Round 4	**7.01%**

The team transformed an initial negative ROI of -1.03% into a positive ROI of 7.01%, representing an **improvement of 8.04 percentage points**. Their consistent improvement demonstrated their ability to analyse performance outcomes, identify opportunities and make increasingly effective strategic decisions.

Finishing fifth overall, Cornerstone outperformed several established universities, including the University of Pretoria, University of Johannesburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, UNISA and MANCOSA, as well as participating universities from the United Kingdom and Ireland.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

Beyond the competition results, the experience provided invaluable practical learning opportunities. Students gained a deeper appreciation of how individual business functions contribute to overall organisational performance and why effective collaboration is essential in supply chain management.

Reflecting on the experience, team member Divan Friederich highlighted the value of moving beyond the departmental silos often experienced in the workplace. He particularly appreciated gaining insight into how decisions made by other business divisions influence overall organisational performance and understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of the supply chain.

CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

The Cornerstone Flow Masters team comprised:

Divan Friederich

Jean-marc Johannes

Rodene Blignaut

Haniem Theron

Cheryl Kleinsmidt

Achieving fifth place internationally, with a final ROI of 7.01%, is a significant accomplishment for a team of first- and second-year students competing against established university teams. Their performance reflects not only their individual capabilities but also the value of experiential learning in developing practical business skills.

Cornerstone Institute congratulates the team on their remarkable achievement and thanks SAPICS, IPICS, Inchainge and Professor Igor Lopes for providing this exceptional international learning opportunity.

> **The team's success is a testament to the potential of Cornerstone's students to compete confidently on an international stage, even at the beginning of their academic journeys.**

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