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**REAP**

Rural Education Access Programme

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Rural Education Access Programme

## TRACKING THE 2005 REAP COHORT

A review of the performance of students taken onto the Rural Education Access Programme at the start of their higher education studies in 2005



*Building a pathway to organic, broad-based social  
and economic empowerment*

Researched and written by Wendy Ngidi  
Edited by Kathy Lewis

July 2010

## REAP

### Rural Education Access Programme

REAP recruits young people from poor rural communities in all nine provinces of South Africa through a network of volunteers. In partnership with the state National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) it provides carefully selected young people with a study loan and supplementary grant enabling access to their chosen field of study in state universities. It provides a tailored student support and development programme to enhance their social, emotional and academic adjustment to higher education. It requires student responsibility and community service during vacations. Around 350 higher education students are supported each year. This unique programme of student support has consistently demonstrated that over 55% of each student intake graduates within five years. This is no mean feat given that studies of the national 2000 cohort found a 44% graduation rate across all races for South African state Higher Education institutions and a graduation rate for black students of 21% - 35%.

This report outlines the results of an analysis of the progress of the 143 students in REAP's 2005 cohort. By April 2010, 57% of the cohort had graduated and as 13% were still studying, there was a potential 70% graduation rate. This figure is very gratifying when compared with the 21% - 35% graduation rate for black students in the 2000 national cohort.

REAP students' performance illustrates some key factors that contribute to success and failure among undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds. The most notable phenomenon is that passing mathematics on any level in the final school examinations is a reliable predictor of undergraduate success. Forty-four percent of the students were interviewed telephonically to find out what has happened to them. Just over 60% of them were employed. The majority of the unemployed were women. Eleven of the interviewees had proceeded to post-graduate study.

There were many reasons for students leaving REAP. The majority were excluded by REAP for poor academic performance. Others left for a variety of personal reasons, including illness in the family, personal emotional problems, difficulties experienced with the language and method of instruction at university and lack of access to adequate accommodation.

Students who succeeded, attributed their achievements to hard work, having supportive families, the financial assistance they received and, in particular, to the support and development they received from REAP.

The report recommends several ways in which REAP can improve its services.



REAP would like to thank all the students who gave their time to be interviewed, and Irish Aid for making the research possible.



## Annexure 5

### Performance of Science and Commerce Students Compared with Grade 12 Results in Mathematics, Physical Science and Accountancy

#### B Sc students' grades as predictors of success or failure

STUDENT	INST	GRADE 12 SCORE	MATHS SCORE		SCIENCE SCORE		STATUS	YEARS OF STUDY
Masindi	UNORTH	M1200	HG	E	HG	E	D	4
Amigo	UNORTH	M1260	SG	B	SG	D	SS	6
Zamanguni	UNATAL	M1260	SG	D	SG	C	G	4
Teboho	UOFS	M1260	HG	D	HG	D	D	1
Petrus	UNORTH	M1200	HG	B	SG	F	D	1
Sindisiwe	UNATAL	M1440	SG	A	-	-	G	3
Mmathapelo	UNORTH	M1260	HG	E	HG	E	D	2
Sinegugu	UPE	M1260	SG	E	HG	E	D	3
Lungisani	UNATAL	M1260	SG	A	SG	B	G	5

Status: D = Discontinued, SS = Still Studying, G = Graduated

#### B Com students' grades as predictors of success or failure

STUDENT	INST	GRADE 12 SCORE	MATHS SCORE		ACC SCORE		STATUS	YEARS OF STUDY
Ivor	STELL	M1680	HG	A	HG	A	D	3
Romano	STELL	M1440	HG	B	HG	A	G	4
Aldrin	STELL	M1440	SG	A	HG	C	G	4
Silindile	NATAL	M1260	SG	A	HG	A	G	4
Lounery	UWC	M1440	SG	D	HG	A	G	3

#### B Acc students' grades as predictors of success or failure

STUDENT	INST	GRADE 12 SCORE	MATHS SCORE		ACC SCORE		YEARS OF STUDY
Makgotso	UOFS	M1440	SG	A	HG	D	3
Gcobisa	UOFS	M1680	SG	A	SG	A	3
Francis	UOFS	M1260	SG	D	SG	A	4
Mpho	UNORTH	M1200	HG	E	HG	E	5
Veronica	UOFS	M1440	-	-	SG	A	4
Makere-semese	UOFS	M1260	SG	D	SG	B	5

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose and context of the study

This study assesses the performance of REAP students by analysing what has happened to REAP's 2005 cohort. It continues the story started in the tracking study of REAP's 2002 cohort, which showed a potential graduation rate of 57% - 66%, compared with a national rate of around 40%. The current study identifies success indicators that may inform REAP's future student recruitment and selection practice and reflects REAP's contribution to improving the efficiency of higher education in South Africa.

### Methodology

Data drawn from records for all of the 143 students who entered the programme in 2005 (i.e., the 2005 cohort) were analysed to identify their academic progress until April 2010. School-leaving grades were analysed in an attempt to identify correlations between those results and university performance. Sixty-three of the cohort were interviewed telephonically to explore the reasons for their success or failure and to understand what has become of those who are no longer on the programme.

### Overall performance of the 2005 REAP cohort

The study reveals a 57% graduation rate. As 13% of the students were still studying in 2010, the potential graduation rate is as high as 70%.

Of those who had graduated by 2010, forty-one (50%) completed their studies in minimum time. This is in line with the national pattern of significant numbers of students needing an additional year or two to finish. Slightly more students (47%) graduated from technikons (now known as universities of technology, UOT) than universities, which is in line with the intake distribution across the two types of institution. It seems that changing courses and institutions is a primary reason for students taking longer than five years and that Law students take longest to complete their studies.



Of those were interviewed, a small number (11) had pursued post-graduate studies.

### School-leaving results and undergraduate performance

Passing mathematics on any level in the school-leaving examinations appears to improve students' chance of graduating. It was impossible to establish a relationship between school-leaving performance in other subjects, such as

## Annexure 4 South African Higher Education Institutions in 2005 and 2010

Name in 2005	Name in 2010	Merger of
Border Technikon	Walter Sisulu University	Eastern Cape Technikon, University of Transkei & Border Technikon
Cape Technikon	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Cape Technikon & Peninsula Technikon
Durban Institute of Technology	Durban University of Technology (DUT)	Natal Technikon & ML Sultan Technikon
Eastern Cape Technikon	Walter Sisulu University	Eastern Cape Technikon, University of Transkei & Border Technikon
Mangosuthu Technikon	Mangosuthu University of Technology	Not merged
Medunsa	University of Limpopo - Medunsa Campus	University of Limpopo & Medunsa
Peninsula Technikon	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Cape Technikon & Peninsula Technikon
Port Elizabeth Technikon	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Port Elizabeth Technikon, Vista university & University of Port Elizabeth
Rand Afrikaans University	University of Johannesburg	Rand Afrikaans University, Wits Technikon & Vista University
Rhodes University	Rhodes University	Not merged
Technikon Pretoria	Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	Technikon Pretoria & Technikon Northern Gauteng
Technikon Northern Gauteng	Tshwane University of Technology	Technikon Northern Gauteng & Pretoria Technikon
Technikon Free State	Central University of Technology	Not merged
Technikon Witwatersrand	University of Johannesburg	Rand Afrikaans University, Wits Technikon & Vista University
University of Cape Town	University of Cape Town	Not merged
University of Fort Hare	University of Fort Hare	Not merged
University of Natal	University of KwaZulu Natal	University of Natal & University of Durban - Westville
University of Port Elizabeth	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)	Port Elizabeth Technikon, Vista University & University of Port Elizabeth
University of Potchefstroom	North West University	University of the North-West, Vista University & Potchefstroom University
University of Pretoria	University of Pretoria	Not merged
University of Stellenbosch	University of Stellenbosch	Not merged
University of the Free State	University of Free State	Not merged
University of the North	University of Limpopo	Medunsa & University of the North
University of the Western Cape	University of the Western Cape	Not merged
University of the Witwatersrand	University of the Witwatersrand	Not merged
University of Transkei	Walter Sisulu University	Eastern Cape Technikon, University of Transkei & Border Technikon
Vaal Technikon	Vaal University of Technology	Not merged
Vista University	-	Merged with several institutions around the country



### Annexure 3 Graduates Not Supported by REAP Throughout Their Studies

	Student	Institution	Course	Years of support	Reason
1	Mpho	University of the North	B Accountancy	4	Poor academic progress
2	Janice	Peninsula Technikon	ND Horticulture	2	Poor academic progress
3	Lovely	Technikon Pretoria	ND Electrical Engineering	4	Poor academic progress
4	Thandiswa	Eastern Cape Technikon	ND Mechanical Engineering	1	Received a bursary
5	Aldrin	Stellenbosch University	B Com	1	Poor academic Progress
6	Rethabile	Technikon Free State	ND Computer Science Engineering	1	Did not want NSFAS loan
7	Benjamin	Wits Technikon	ND Mechanical Engineering	2	Poor academic progress
8	Sindisiwe	University of Natal	LLB	2	Lost contact
9	Sandile	University of the Witwatersrand	B Cur	2	Changed courses
10	Dineo	University of the Western Cape	B Dentistry	2	Changed courses
11	Tshidiso	Technikon Free State	ND Electrical Engineering	2	Unknown
12	Thato	Technikon Free State	ND Electrical Engineering	1	Unknown
13	Johannes	University of the North	B Sc IT	1	Poor academic progress
14	Octavia	University of the Free State	BA (Media Studies)	3	Unknown
15	Sandiswa	PE Technikon	ND Travel & Tourism	1	Poor academic progress

physical science and accountancy, and undergraduate success. This implies that many factors determine success and failure in addition to school-level academic results.

#### Employment

Forty of the students who were contacted were employed. The finding that all but three of those who were working had graduated supports the view that a tertiary qualification improves chances of employment. The majority of those who were employed earned R8000 - R11 000 per month. Most were re-paying their NSFAS loans and generally contributing more than 50% of their income to their families.

However, graduate unemployment is also a reality in South Africa and is borne out by the finding of this study. Sixteen of the students contacted were unemployed. The majority of these were women. Twelve of the sixteen unemployed interviewees were graduates. The phenomenon of twelve unemployed graduates, of whom only two had completed their studies at the end of 2009, is cause for concern. It is a national issue that is beyond REAP's capacity to research.

The unemployment time varied up to two years. Some attributed their unemployed status to lack of experience. Others did not understand why they could not find jobs. Most of the unemployed had remained in cities to be close to resources and opportunities. Unemployed graduates in rural areas experienced challenges in accessing job-seeking resources like the Internet and newspapers and often could not cover the cost of transport to the nearest town to seek work.

#### Reasons for leaving REAP

The majority of the students were excluded from the programme by REAP for poor academic performance. Non-consultation and break down of communication with the student advisor was prevalent among students who voluntarily withdrew from the programme. Some students withdrew for health reasons and a few students received bursaries and no longer needed REAP support.

#### Individual factors affecting success or failure

The intricate and nuanced determinants of failure and success are individualised. Students seem to carry heavy emotional burdens, such as parental illness, loss of loved ones and other family challenges, all of which impacted on their studies. The dominance of English as the language of instruction in higher education and a style of teaching that is very different from practice in schools were prominent challenges for students. Students who move province to study seem to need more time to adjust and may need added support. Scarce and inadequate student accommodation at the institutions also contributes to failure.



The most commonly mentioned determinants of success are family support, REAP financial support, support from REAP's student advisors and hard work. The REAP workshops were highlighted as a crucial developmental hallmark of the programme.

These factors indicate the strength of REAP's holistic model of student support. Students experience diverse challenges that impact academic performance, but those who have received additional academic and emotional support through the interventions of student advisors have coped and completed their studies, whereas students who failed to involve their student advisors in their challenges tended to discontinue their studies voluntarily.



## Annexure 2 Intake and Status per Institution

Institution	Intake	Discontinued	Still Studying	Graduated
Border Technikon	4	3	1	0
Cape Technikon	3	2	1	0
Durban Institute of Technology	15	3	0	12
Eastern Cape Technikon	4	0	1	3
Mangosuthu Technikon	4	2	0	2
Medunsa	1	0	1	0
Peninsula Technikon	10	0	1	9
Port Elizabeth Technikon	3	2	0	1
Rhodes University	1	0	0	1
Technikon Pretoria	4	2	0	2
Technikon Northern Gauteng	1	1	0	0
Technikon Free State	14	4	0	10
Technikon Witwatersrand	4	1	0	3
University of Cape Town	3	1	1	1
University of Fort Hare	1	1	0	0
University of Natal	10	1	1	8
University of Port Elizabeth	4	2	1	1
University of Potchefstroom	4	2	1	1
University of Pretoria	3	0	1	2
University of Stellenbosch	9	3	2	4
University of the Free State	12	6	1	5
University of the North	8	3	1	4
University of the Western Cape	7	1	2	4
University of the Witwatersrand	3	1	0	2
University of Transkei	1	0	0	1
Vaal Technikon	8	2	2	4
Vista University	2	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>82</b>

\* One deceased



<b>Science &amp; Engineering</b>	Bachelor of Science	17	8	
	Bachelor of Science (Engineering)	1	0	
	ND Analytical Chemistry	2	0	
	ND Building	1	1	
	ND Engineering	22	11	
<b>Total: Science &amp; Engineering</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>47%</b>

<b>Health Sciences</b>	B Cur (Nursing)	5	4	
	MBChB (Medicine)	2	-	
	ND Biomedical Science	6	5	
	ND Environmental Health	2	2	
	ND Radiology	2	2	
<b>Total: Health Sciences</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>76%</b>

<b>Agriculture</b>	Bachelor of Agriculture	3	1	
	ND Horticulture	1	1	
<b>Total: Agriculture</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50%</b>

<b>Technology</b>	ND Information Technology	5	3	
	ND Food Technology	2	1	
<b>Total: Technology</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>57%</b>

<b>Education</b>	Bachelor of Education	3	1	
<b>Total: Education</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33%</b>

<b>Law</b>	LLB	12	3	
<b>Total: Law</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25%</b>

<b>TOTAL: ALL DISCIPLINES</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>57%</b>
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ND = National Diploma

## 1. The purpose of the tracking study

Although REAP students consistently achieve annual promotion rates in excess of 80%, the real measure of our impact is the number of graduates we produce and the time they take to complete their studies. The objective of this tracking project was to document and understand what has happened to the students who were recruited onto the REAP programme in 2005, five years after commencing their studies. The purpose of the exercise was to assess and report on the performance of REAP students and to identify possible indicators of success to inform REAP's future recruitment policy and practice.

## 2. Context

This is the second tracking study that REAP has conducted. A study of REAP's 2002 intake (Freeth and Ngidi 2005) showed that there was a potential graduation rate of 57% to 66%<sup>1</sup> compared with the then estimated national overall graduation rate of 40%. The conclusion of the first tracking study was that students supported by REAP have a better chance of graduating, although they do take longer than minimum time to complete their studies.

The previous tracking study highlighted serious systemic problems in South Africa's schools and challenges faced by higher education institutions resulting from a combination of underprepared undergraduate students and profound changes that were taking place in the sector, including a massification drive by the state to increase dramatically the number of young people participating in higher education, institutional mergers and the implementation of system-wide quality assurance mechanisms.

In the intervening years, the effects of these changes have continued to exert pressure in the sector. The response of institutions to the academic, social, psychological and economic needs and realities of a massive influx of students whose schooling has not prepared them to meet the demands of tertiary education have been uneven and slow (Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007). At the same time, the situation of South African schools has, if anything, worsened and there is widespread acknowledgement, including in government, that schools are in crisis<sup>2</sup>. The new Ministry of Basic Education is implementing another wave in a long succession of changes in curriculum and assessment, but the road to widespread excellence in the schooling system will be long and arduous. The combination of a very high national school dropout rate<sup>3</sup>, a low rate of

<sup>1</sup> Many students were still studying at the time of the study. The figures quoted included those with a good chance of graduating as assessed by the higher education institutions.

<sup>2</sup> Graeme Bloch, an education policy analyst at the Development Bank of Southern Africa, describes South African schooling as "a national disaster" (2009: 58)

<sup>3</sup> In 2009, just under 36% of the 1.55 million people who started school in 1998 registered for grade 12 (Taylor 2010)



participation in higher education among black South Africans in the 18 – 25 age group (12%, compared with 60% of whites) and a higher education dropout rate of 50% is a recipe for social and economic breakdown. In the medium-term, there is little hope that any significant improvement will occur in the crucial interface between school and university, especially for the most marginalised young South Africans who are REAP's constituency.

In this context, this second tracking study evaluates REAP's contribution to enhancing the ability of rural, disadvantaged students not only to access higher education but also, crucially, to succeed in their undergraduate studies in a reasonable time period. It reflects REAP's contribution to improving the efficiency of higher education in South Africa and the quality of the educational experience and performance of REAP's target beneficiaries.

As a service delivery organisation, REAP operates in a deep fissure created under apartheid that persists, despite investments of enormous effort and huge sums of money since 1994. This study reinforces the continued need for REAP. The average annual national intake of first year students to higher education is 150,000. Seventy-five thousand of those young people do not emerge with a qualification<sup>4</sup>. Most of them join the growing ranks of the unemployed. The impact of REAP's graduation rate of 57% - 70% (figure derived from this study), i.e., some one hundred graduates, may seem tiny in this context, but the ripple effect of real and sustainable change that accrues to individuals, families and communities should never be underestimated. Every REAP graduate who finds employment and builds a career is a paving stone laid in the pathway to organic, broad-based social and economic empowerment for the poorest and most marginalised South Africans.

### 3. Methodology

A list of all the students who started on the programme in 2005, i.e., the 2005 cohort<sup>5</sup>, was drawn from the REAP database, which was also the source of basic demographic and academic information. Further information was extracted from student files. Information regarding the status of students (whether they were still studying, had terminated their studies or graduated), especially those who were not supported by REAP throughout their studies, was sought mostly from the financial aid bureaux at the higher education institutions (HEI). The final phase of data collection involved a questionnaire. Due to time constraints and based on past experience of low response to questionnaires, students were contacted telephonically. Some of the information obtained from the questionnaires pertained to working status and individual factors that had

<sup>4</sup> See article entitled "Transforming the future: changing the way higher education facilitates learning in South Africa" for comments by Prof Ian Scott of UCT's Centre for Higher Education Development. *REAP Annual Report 2008 - 2009*.

<sup>5</sup> REAP uses the term "cohort" to refer to a group of students who start their studies in the same year, i.e., the group is referred to as "the 2005 cohort" in perpetuity, regardless of the varied progress of individuals within the cohort.



## Annexure 1 Intake and graduation by Course

Note: percentages for such small numbers are not meaningful and should not be read as significant. They have been included for interest only. There are many possible reasons for variations in graduation rates across disciplinary clusters, including individual circumstances. While the individual circumstances of students who did not graduate have been probed in this study, it was not deemed appropriate to try to identify patterns within a small sample.

Category	Course	Intake no.	Graduates	%
Arts & Humanities	Bachelor of Arts	7	6	
	Bachelor of Music	1	0	
<b>Total: Arts &amp; Humanities</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>75%</b>

Public Administration & Social Services	Bachelor of Social Work	2	1	
<b>Total: Public Administration &amp; Social Services</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>50%</b>

Social Sciences	Bachelor of Social Science	2	2	
<b>Total: Social Sciences</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

Physical Education, Health Education & Leisure	ND Sport Administration	2	1	
	ND Travel & Tourism	3	1	
<b>Total: Physical Education, Health Education &amp; Leisure</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40%</b>

Commerce & Management	Bachelor of Accountancy	6	4	
	Bachelor of Commerce	5	4	
	Bachelor of Business Science	1	1	
	ND Auditing	1	0	
	National Higher Certificate (Accountancy)	14	10	
	Bachelor of Administration	2	1	
	ND Office Management	3	3	
	ND Business Management	3	1	
	ND Marketing	2	2	
	ND Public Relations Management	1	1	
	ND Human Resource Management	2	1	
<b>Total: Commerce &amp; Management</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>70%</b>



MChB	Bachelor of Medicine
ND	National Diploma
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
PE	Port Elizabeth
REAP	Rural Education Access Programme
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SG	Standard grade
SUN	University of Stellenbosch
TOFS	Technikon Free State
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
UL	University of Limpopo
UN	University of Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
UOT	University of Technology
UPE	University of Port Elizabeth
UPOT	Potchefstroom University
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VUT	Vaal University of Technology
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
Wits Tech	Technikon Witwatersrand

contributed to a student's failure or success. The data was analysed using Microsoft Excel and descriptive techniques.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

One hundred and forty-three students were recruited onto the programme in 2005. Half of the sample (71) were women and the other half (72) were men. Students were recruited from all nine provinces of South Africa. More than a quarter of the students (27%) were recruited from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This was followed by the Eastern Cape (EC) with 19%. Gauteng and Mpumalanga shared the lowest number (3%) of students.

Figure 1 below presents a graphical representation of the breakdown of students' recruitment by province. Figure 2 contains a map of South Africa that shows where the provinces are.

Figure 1: Provincial origin of the 2005 cohort

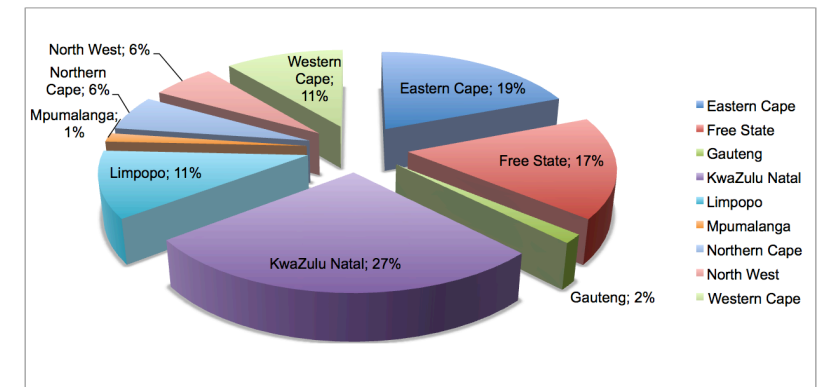




Figure 2: Map of South Africa showing the provinces in 2010



#### 4.2 Academic performance in the final school-leaving examination

Grade 12<sup>6</sup> results were recorded for all students. For purposes of this study and in line with the selection criteria applied in 2005, scores in key subjects for admission to higher education, namely mathematics, English, accountancy and physical science, were analysed. The formula for calculating the Grade 12 aggregate score and determining the hurdle rate for admission to higher education was changed in 2008. In 2005, scholars could write the Grade 12 examinations on three levels: higher, standard and lower grade. A mix of levels was permissible and higher education institutions set specific admission criteria for different courses<sup>7</sup>. Calculating the aggregate depended on subjects taken and the level of each subject and cannot be translated directly into percentages

<sup>6</sup> Frequently referred to in South Africa as the "Matriculation" or "Matric" year.

<sup>7</sup> University-level courses of study have come to be called "programmes" in South Africa, but REAP continues the practice of referring to "courses" because the word "programme" is used to describe so many different things, including REAP itself.

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#### Acronyms

BA	Bachelor of Arts
B Acc	Bachelor of Accounting
B Com	Bachelor of Commerce
B Cur	Bachelor of Nursing
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
B Sc	Bachelor of Science
B Soc Sc	Bachelor of Social Science
B Tech	Bachelor of Technology
CESM	Classification of Education Subject Matter
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CUT	Central University of Technology
DIT	Durban Institute of Technology
DoE	Department of Education
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EC	Eastern Cape
EC Tech	Eastern Cape Technikon
HEI	Higher education institution
HG	Higher grade
IT	Information technology
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
LG	Lower grade
LLB	Legum Baccalaureus or Bachelor of Laws



support programme in addressing the challenges faced by individual students and REAP's success in selecting able young people and assisting them to graduate. REAP is encouraged by the picture of its impact that emerges in this report. We have no doubt that there is still a need for our programme and that there is potential to bring about further improvement.

REAP is an intensive programme that requires expert human intervention. We estimate that in 2010, the average cost per year of undergraduate study is R72,000. Our support and development programme increases this by a mere R12,000, an investment that seeds upliftment for our graduates and, through them, has the potential to create generations of educated, self-sufficient and active people who take responsibility for their own growth and the development of their communities.



The support we offer our students is small compared with the enormity of the challenges they face. In our view, it is just enough to make a vital difference in a significant number of cases. We are in the business of generating hope in a context where despair is an ever-present threat. At REAP, we take a long view because the path to organic, broad-based social and economic empowerment for the most marginalised South Africans takes time to construct. The optimism we need to sustain our effort and improve our service is generated by our graduates' success and the stories they tell of how our belief and investment in them contribute to that success.



or symbols of performance. A score of M1680+ indicates performance of 80% and above.

Half of the students accepted onto the programme achieved a Grade 12 score of M1260 or more (see Table 1). The wide variation in scores reflects differences in admission requirements for courses and institutions. REAP's decisions were made on the basis of individual cases. In some instances, students with very low Grade 12 aggregates were accepted as exceptions, on an experimental basis and as late admissions to the cohort. They had to be accepted by the institution for the course they wanted to pursue and to show determination in getting themselves to get to the institution.

**Table 1: Grade 12 aggregate results**

GRADE 12 SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
M1680+	4
M1440	24
M1260	43
M1200	25
M950	19
S1260	6
S1200	2
S950	17
S720	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>

Table 2 shows the cohort's performance in four subjects that are commonly regarded as key indicators of potential to succeed in higher education.

English language competence is a crucial skill for success in higher education as English is a common medium of instruction in South African universities. All but one of the students for whom information is available passed higher grade English in Grade 12, which is a strength in the REAP selection process.

A total of one hundred and seven students (75% of the cohort) passed Grade 12 mathematics. Of these, twenty-five passed on the higher grade. Perry argues that mathematics is "a key gateway subject" for higher education (2005, cited in Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007: 33). However, although black South Africans comprise 78% of the population, they represent only 26.8% of the group that passes mathematics in Grade 12 (Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007). The prevalence of mathematics passes in the cohort is thus another strength of the REAP selection process.

**Table 2: Performance in Grade 12 key subjects**

SUBJECT	HG	SG	LG	Total for subject	Subject not taken	Missing information
English	138	1	0	139	0	4
Mathematics	25	81	1	107	32	4
Accounting	23	31	0	54	85	4
Physical Science	31	41	0	72	65	4

HG = Higher Grade, SG = Standard Grade, LG = Lower Grade



Twenty-three of the fifty-four students who took accountancy in Grade 12 passed it on the higher grade. A total of seventy-two students wrote physical science and thirty-one achieved a higher-grade pass.

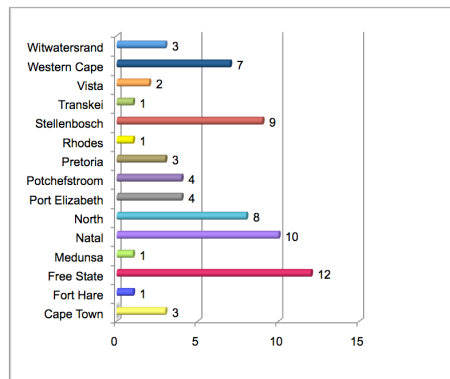
Thus, although REAP did not overtly target the top achievers, its academic selection criteria were rigorous. At least two<sup>8</sup> members of the cohort received full-cost bursaries from other organisations after achieving good results. This phenomenon is entirely in keeping with REAP's mandate of facilitating access to higher education and is a desirable outcome for those with high potential whose personal circumstances make them hard to find for bursary providers.

### 4.3 Students' situation at the beginning of their studies

The data indicate that the students were supported at twenty-seven higher education institutions across the country<sup>9</sup>. The data also indicate that slightly more students were enrolled at technikons<sup>10</sup> (52%) than universities (48%). The institutions with the highest attendance were Durban Institute of Technology (DIT) and Technikon Free State (TOFS).

#### 3.3.2 Course selection at the start of studies

Figure 3: Intake at universities



Although REAP gave preference to course choices in areas of national skills shortage, it did not exclude any courses because it believes that students do best when studying courses of their choice. The preferred courses were the National Diploma in Engineering (twenty-two students), B Sc (eighteen students), National Higher Certificate in Accounting (fourteen students) and LLB (twelve students). It should be noted that the National Higher Certificate is a two-year course: all the students who

completed it successfully continued to obtain a National Diploma in Accounting (three students), Cost and Management Accounting (three students) and Internal

<sup>8</sup> The number may be higher, as not all students could be contacted for the study.

<sup>9</sup> A list of the higher education institutions that existed in 2005 is provided in Annexure 4. Several institutions have since been merged and/or changed their name. These changes are indicated in the list.

<sup>10</sup> The term technikon was discontinued in 2008. These institutions are referred to as Universities of Technology (UOT).



value of REAP's holistic model of student support, especially for students who come from poor rural backgrounds.

## 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered, based on the findings:

1. REAP should review its selection and support of LLB students. The tracking study highlighted the overwhelming workload of Law students. This, and the high demand for English language skills, should be emphasised to students at the beginning of their studies and a system of support for developing reading skills should be put in place, along side mentoring from senior Law students. Where universities have English language development programmes (and very few do not), REAP LLB students should be referred for assessment and assistance at the start of their studies as a matter of course.
2. REAP should review B Sc students' challenges to determine whether the trends identified in this study persist and adapt and its selection and support strategies accordingly.
3. Based on the finding that there are many factors that impact academic progress, REAP should review its policy of placing students on "conditional" status to include a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of the individual. Factors that should be taken into account include the student's course, Grade 12 results, personal challenges, the availability of additional academic and personal support at the institution, and family involvement. REAP should engage with donors whose academic requirements for continued support may be too high. As REAP's student advisors are close to the full picture of individual students' circumstances and performance, it is suggested that these decisions be entrusted to the REAP Forum of student advisors and their managers.
4. REAP should consider another category of students: those who are excluded due to poor academic performance but manage to continue and pass courses without REAP's support and have the potential to complete their studies. REAP should publicise the opportunity for such students to apply for readmission to the programme (see the example of Ivor in section 4.5.2).
5. The incidence of students leaving REAP without discussing their reasons with their student advisors is cause for concern because this individual relationship of support, coaching and counselling is the heart of the Programme. The REAP Programme Team should workshop ways to strengthen and monitor the relationship.

## 7. Conclusion

This study highlights the difficulty of establishing broad and conclusive bases for predicting who is likely to succeed in higher education and some of the reasons why South Africa undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to complete their studies. It reinforces the value of the REAP access and



campus in her last six months of study and enjoyed the experience but felt that she missed out on a lot when she was living off-campus. She had completed her studies and was looking for work.

### 5.5.5 Success stories

#### Lesiba (ND Metallurgical Engineering, Technikon Witwatersrand)

Lesiba completed his studies in the minimum time. He attributed his success to having a good support system at home, the REAP workshops and having a student advisor. He reported having made poor choices such as drinking and partying with women friends when he started working, which got him into a lot of debt. He attributed this to not having the guidance of his student advisor. He was rectifying his mistakes and recognised the need for guidance in life. He was employed as a production assistant in a mining company in Middleburg and earned more than R15,000 per month, from which he supported his parents and he was repaying his NSFAS loan.

Marry-Anne (LLB, UPE) had just completed her degree when she spoke to REAP. She described REAP as "a pillar" and said they had managed to make her education hassle-free. She reported being able to do well in her studies because she did not have to worry about finances. She also felt that the REAP workshops had helped her to develop holistically, as she was applying the skills she learned in her work. Mary-Anne acknowledged the excellent support of her student advisors. She was also a mentor and found the mentoring programme an excellent support system for new students. Marry-Anne was working as an aspirant prosecutor for the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in Port Elizabeth.

Yvonnia ND Office Management, Technikon Free State attributes her success to hard work, determination and having the support of her family. She completed her studies in minimum time and registered for a further two-year diploma in project management. She was working for the Tswane Metropolitan Municipality as a project administrator. She reported feeling sheltered and provided for as a REAP student and being challenged to come to terms with the 'real world' when she moved to Pretoria to start working. She was the only breadwinner in her family and was supporting her sister's studies at CUT.

### 5.5.6 Overview of individual stories of failure and success

An analysis of individual factors that predict failure or success indicates, once again, that academic performance at school alone is not a reliable predictor of success. Two students who achieved the highest aggregate score in Grade 12 had not completed their studies. Personal and social factors such as bereavement, illness, accommodation problems and family challenges play an important role in determining the success or failure of students. The stories told by REAP students from the 2005 cohort illustrate the contribution to success of social factors such as family support, personal values of hard work, additional institutional support and, most importantly, REAP support. This highlights the



Auditing (five students). Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of the cohort's intake and graduation by course.

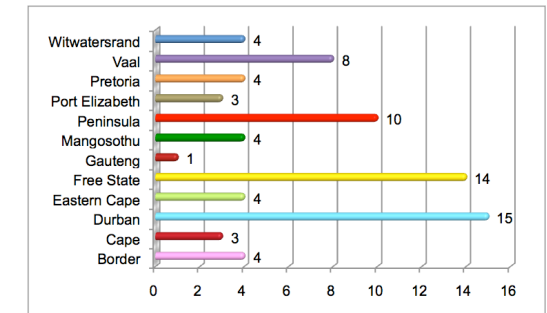
## 4.4 Students' status after five years

### 4.4.1 Graduates

The REAP cohort graduation rate is exceptional when compared with reported performance of national cohorts. By April 2010,

- Eighty-two (57%) of the students who enrolled for the first time in 2005 had completed their studies and graduated.

Figure 4: Intake at technikons



- Eighteen (13%) were still studying. Of these, two were only eligible to graduate at the end of 2010 because they were enrolled for medical degrees, which take six years to complete.
- Forty-two students (29%) had discontinued their studies. Sadly, one of these students died in a car accident.

There was thus a potential graduation rate of almost 70%, if all the students that were still studying in 2010 completed their studies.

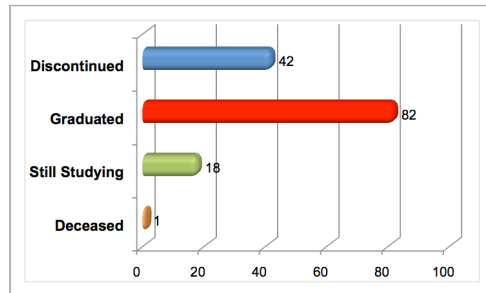
A national study by the Department of Education of students who started their studies in 2000 indicates that only 30% had graduated after 5 years (Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007: 12). Fifty-six percent (56%) had left without graduating and 14% were still studying. The overall potential graduation rate for the 2000 national cohort is thus 44%<sup>11</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that the cohort of REAP students were recruited from rural schools that are typically under-resourced and came from family backgrounds of very low socio-economic status.

<sup>11</sup> Scott, Yeld and Hendry (2007) disaggregated the DoE data according to type of institution and selected courses (defined by the categories set out in the national Classification of Education Subject Matter (CESM). They found that the national average graduation rates for black students over five years varied from 21% - 35%.



Figure 5: Student status by April 2010



Scott, Yeld and Hendry's research shows that after four years, less than one third of the 2000 national cohort had graduated. As most of these students would have been registered for three-year courses, this figure indicates low levels of efficiency in the higher education system. The performance of REAP students is comparable (see Table 3). Forty-one

students (29%) graduated in minimum time. This number excludes two students registered for six-year medical degrees who were only eligible to graduate at the end of 2010. Thirty-two students needed an extra year to complete their studies and nine needed five years to complete their studies.

As more students were registered for national diploma courses at technikons than for degree programmes at universities, it is not surprising that 43% of the graduates completed bachelors degrees and 47% obtained national diplomas.

Annexure 1 gives a detailed breakdown of graduation by course. The numbers of students within each of the disciplinary clusters is too small to make meaningful comparisons of students' performance across disciplines.

Table 3: Time taken to complete studies

Time to complete	No. of students
Minimum time (3 year courses)	37
Minimum time (longer courses)	4
Minimum (3 years) +1 year	32
Minimum (3 years) + 2 years	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>

#### 4.4.2 Students who were still studying

Eighteen students were still studying in 2010, of whom three were registered for a law degree, the LLB. It is always difficult to track course changes, but the data indicates that eight of those who were still studying had changed courses, and in some cases institutions.

**Portia (ND Internal Auditing, Border Technikon)** reported feeling challenged by language issues. She experienced a huge change because classes at the institution were in English, whereas she had been taught in Xhosa in high school. She was also accustomed to a "cramming, reciting and regurgitating" method of learning at school, but she was required to learn for understanding at the institution. She found it very difficult to cope with the amount of work as a result. Portia did not complete her studies. When interviewed, she was unemployed and disillusioned about her future. She felt that she could make a success of herself if given another chance.



**Sandile (B Cur, Wits)** reported experiencing discrimination in the Department of Nursing at Wits. He felt the academic assessment was unfair. He said a lecturer told him that his mind was blank and he was blank. At this point, he decided to change courses. He had completed a degree in Industrial Psychology and was planning to start his own business.

#### 5.5.4 Accommodation

**Sisanda (ND Electrical Engineering, PE Technikon)** could not secure accommodation at the institution. She lived with her aunt in a township<sup>13</sup> and did not have enough time to study because of the travelling distance and expectations that she would help with household chores in return for her accommodation. Her academic progress was poor as a result and she did not meet REAP's minimum academic requirements. Sisanda did not complete her studies. At the time of research, she was completing a learnership<sup>14</sup> in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality as a pharmacist's assistant.

**Joe-Marie (ND Food Technology, Peninsula Technikon)** attributes her failure to not having enough time to study because she did not live on campus. She had unstable accommodation and often had to move. She finally moved to

<sup>13</sup> Residential areas around South African cities that are often slums consisting of a mix of extremely basic state-provided housing and self-built shacks are referred to as "townships". Services such as electricity, water and sanitation tend to be poor, population density is high and they are concentrated areas for crime, much of it violent, as many township dwellers are unemployed. The vast majority of township residents are black. Townships tend to be located far from business districts and time, means and the cost of travel to work or university are a significant burden for township dwellers.

<sup>14</sup> A "learnership" is a state-funded in-service training programme administered by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in which the employer is paid to provide training and the student receives a small stipend. The theoretical component is delivered by registered education provider, e.g., an FET college. The learnership system was designed to replace the apprenticeship system that had flourished under the apartheid government but that was discredited for its perpetuation of a "master-servant" relationship. Implementation of the learnership system is under review because its success has been questioned.



**Marion (LLB, UWC)** reported that it had taken her a long time to complete her degree because she had an emotional burden. Her family was not supportive of her studies. She had no contact with her family, had not used counselling services at her institution and said that she preferred to manage her problems on her own. She was in the final year of the LLB.

**Mondli (ND Analytical Chemistry, Mangosuthu University of Technology)** attributes his failure to personal problems. He changed course twice while he was on the programme. Initially he registered for a foundation B Sc programme<sup>12</sup>, followed by 1<sup>st</sup> year B Sc, which he failed. He then registered for a B Ed with majors in science courses, which he passed very well. He then changed back to the B Sc without consulting his student advisor. When he failed again he was excluded from the programme. At the time of his interview his mother was paying for his studies at Mangosuthu, but he reported having to interrupt his studies when his mother could not afford the fees. He said that he had still not discussed his personal problems with anyone.



**Francis (B Sc Engineering, UCT)** achieved the maximum aggregate score (M1680+) in Grade 12. He received a bursary from the Premier of the Free State. During his studies in 2005 strange things started happening to him: he would find his door open in the morning when he was sure he had locked it before going to sleep. He also had terrible nightmares. These experiences affected his academic progress. His student advisor referred him to a psychologist at the institution for counselling. Francis was advised to take a break and go home. As a result, he lost his scholarship. His family attributed the problems to witchcraft and Francis received assistance from a traditional healer. When interviewed, he was registered at CPUT for a diploma in electrical engineering. He said he had not had any strange experiences since 2005.

### 5.5.3 Language and academic performance

**Likhabiso (BSc Dietetics, University of Natal)** is from the Free State. She found it difficult to adjust to the languages at the institution (Zulu and English), as she was accustomed to Afrikaans and Sesotho. She also struggled with chemistry. She was referred to the student counselling centre where she was assigned a chemistry tutor. She passed chemistry and continued attending weekly sessions until she completed her studies.

<sup>12</sup> Many South African universities have introduced extended or "foundation" programmes, through which the base degree is extended by the addition of an extra year at the beginning. The foundation year is orientated to the degree and addresses critical foundational knowledge in the discipline, academic literacy and numeracy where needed. These programmes carry credits for the first year of the degree and build the capacity of students whose schooling has not prepared them adequately for university so that they can successfully tackle their studies.



**Table 4: Students who changed courses or institutions**

Student	Gen	Initial course	New course	Initial instit	New instit
S'negugu	F	ND Civil Engineering	-	EC Tech	VUT
Asnath	F	ND Analyt Chem	B Sc Agriculture	VUT	U Limpopo
Mondli	M	B Sc	ND Analyt Chem	UN	Mango
Angurs	M	LLB	-	U Potch	UNISA
Johnny	M	B Ed	Banking	UPE	UNISA
Faizel	M	B A International Studies	LLB	SUN	-
Francis	M	B Sc Engineering	ND Elec Engineering	UCT	CPUT

Of the eighteen students, seven were eligible to graduate at the end of 2010, three indicated that their studies would take longer, and for the remaining eight, the date of completion was not indicated.

### 4.4.3 Students who had discontinued their studies

The data indicates that forty-two or 29% of students discontinued their studies. Annexures 1 and 2 indicate students who discontinued their studies by course and by institution. Sections 4.4 and 4.5 contain stories of some of these individuals.

### 4.4.4 Students pursuing post-graduate studies

Eleven of the sixty-three students who responded to the questionnaire were pursuing post-graduate studies. Six were studying towards a B Tech and four were doing honours degrees. One student was registered for a post-graduate Diploma in Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. One student was studying towards a second undergraduate qualification – the B Com Accounting through UNISA. His first qualification was a National Diploma in Accounting and he had received credits for some courses in the degree. One student had been awarded a bursary; all the others were funding their studies themselves or receiving support from their families.

### 4.5. Predictors of success

#### 4.5.1 Grade 12 aggregate score

Two of the four students who achieved the highest Grade 12 scores had graduated, one was still studying and one had discontinued his studies. Two of the three students with the lowest school leaving scores had also graduated. This suggests that Grade 12 scores are not the most reliable predictor of success. Table 5 below presents the number of graduates by the Grade 12 aggregate score.



Table 5: Grade 12 aggregate scores and graduation rates

GRADE 12 AGGREGATE	INTAKE NUMBER	GRADUATES
M1680+	4	2
M1440	24	17
M1260	43	27
M1200	25	11
M950	19	6
S1260	6	3
S1200	2	2
S950	17	12
S720	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>82</b>

#### 4.5.2 Grade 12 mathematics score

Seventy-nine percent of the students (65 of 82) who graduated passed mathematics in Grade 12. Correlation of final school mathematics grades with graduation and withdrawal rates suggests that passing mathematics at school, even on the standard grade, gives students a slightly higher chance of completing undergraduate studies. Of the forty-one who graduated in minimum time, only five did not take mathematics as a Grade 12 subject. Of these five, three completed diplomas in office management, one qualified for a diploma in sports management and one for a degree in nursing.

In general, the high incidence of Grade 12 mathematics passes among those who graduated in minimum time appears to support the view that mathematics is a key contributing factor to undergraduate success. Table 6 presents a comparison of Grade 12 mathematics grades of those who graduated and those who discontinued their studies.

Table 6: Grade 12 mathematics as a predictor of success or failure

Mathematics Performance	Graduated	Discontinued
Higher Grade	14	7
Standard Grade	50	21
Lower Grade	1	0
No Mathematics	16	12
Results unknown	1	2
Total	<b>82</b>	<b>42</b>

#### 4.5.3 Grade 12 accountancy and physical science scores

Attempts to predict academic success by correlating graduation rates with other Grade 12 subjects revealed no pattern of success or failure in the results of commerce and science students. This suggests that factors other than school-

## 5.5 Individual determinants of success or failure

### 5.5.1 Parental illness

**S'negugu (B Sc, UPE)** is from Pietermaritzburg. She had to go home frequently because her mother was ill and she felt needed because she is the eldest child. She fell behind in her work, could not cope and did not complete her studies. When interviewed she was employed by the Department of Education as a laboratory assistant at a school in Pietermaritzburg. She reported that her mother was in good health.

**Sifiso (ND Human Resource Management, DIT).** Sifiso's mother became very ill and could not work as a result. Sifiso found part-time work to support his family and struggled to keep up with his studies as a result. He did not discuss his challenges with his student advisor until he was at the threshold of being excluded from the programme. When he eventually did speak to his student advisor he was referred to a psychologist at the institution's student counselling service. The psychologist helped him get academic concessions. He continued to see the psychologist until his studies were completed.

### 5.5.2 Personal and emotional challenges

**Ivor (B Com, Stellenbosch University)** was excluded from the programme because he did not do well in his first year of study. Ivor was one of the students who could not be contacted for interviewing. University records indicate that he was able to secure a university loan and bursary from Stellenbosch and continued his studies. He managed to reach third year and passed Financial Accounting, a major that carries many credits, but failed a few elective courses, which collectively carry fewer credits than his major. The financial aid officer at the university reported that Ivor owed the institution R3000, which is a possible reason for his not being able to register for the balance of his studies. She said that he had a high chance of completing his studies because he had passed all his major courses. Numerous unsuccessful attempts were made to contact Ivor in order to understand his academic challenges. It should be noted that he obtained a maximum Grade 12 score (M1680+) and passed both mathematics and accountancy on the Higher Grade with distinctions.

**Johnny (B Ed, UPE)** reported struggling with his studies because of emotional problems. He witnessed the fatal stabbing of his brother in 2004. Johnny was also stabbed, but survived. Along with his emotional struggles, he did not get accommodation at the institution. He lived far from campus and could not make ends meet because transport was expensive. He did not discuss his challenges with his student advisor, decided to leave university and cut off communication with REAP. He did not complete his studies and when interviewed was working as a bank teller and studying through UNISA.



abandon his studies and find work. He too did not discuss his challenges with his student advisor.

**Asnath (ND Analytical Chemistry, VUT)** withdrew from the programme for health reasons. When interviewed, she reported that her health had improved enough for her to be registered at the University of Limpopo for her final year of studies.

Two students, **Sandile (B Cur, Wits University)** and **Dineo (B Dentistry, UWC)** decided to change courses without consulting their student advisors. They had both graduated from their new courses.

These stories indicate a need for REAP to inquire more closely into the circumstances of students who drop off the programme, within the constraints of being able to make contact with them. However, there are also positive reasons for students to leave REAP. **Manfred (MBChB, Medunsa)** received a full bursary from the Limpopo Department of Health and did not need further REAP support. **Thandiswa (ND Mechanical Engineering, ECTech)** received a bursary from a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and also changed institutions to Peninsula Technikon. At the time of the study, she was doing a B Tech in Mechanical Engineering.

**Rithabile (ND, Computer Science Engineering, TOFS)** decided in consultation with his family that he did not want to incur debt through the NSFAS loan. His mother and sister paid for his studies. He was completing a B Tech in IT and planned to continue studying to PhD level. It was not clear whether there had been a significant improvement in his family's financial circumstances since he was first accepted by REAP or whether he had failed to fully disclose their financial position in his application.

There are also incidents of students who were excluded by REAP because of poor academic performance in their first year and who nonetheless went on to complete their studies. **Aldrin (B Com, Stellenbosch University)**, **Johannes (B Sc IT, University of the North)** and **Lovely (ND Electrical Engineering, Technikon Pretoria)** all managed to graduate despite failing and being excluded by REAP. REAP does try to select students who are resilient and determined and these stories raise the possibility that, for some young people, rejection by REAP is a spur to renewed effort.

**Sandisa (ND Electrical Engineering, Mangosuthu)** died tragically in a car accident. He was on track in his studies, achieving above average grades and distinctions until the last semester of the theory part of the course, when he reported not being able to write two exams because of what he described as a 'mental breakdown'. His family sought help from a traditional healer and he was able to resume his studies. He died shortly before he started in-service training. His twin sister, Mandisa, was also supported by REAP. She did not complete her studies, although she had only one major subject outstanding for a diploma in sport management.



leaving results are more influential in determining students' failure or success. For example, the B Sc student who completed her studies in minimum time passed mathematics on standard grade and did not do physical science as a subject in Grade 12. The student with the highest mathematics score (HG, B) failed and discontinued his studies after one year. The four students who passed physical science on the higher grade all discontinued their studies.

Tables showing commerce and science students' Grade 12 results in mathematics, physical science and accountancy, their status in 2010 and duration of studies are provided in Annexure 5.

## 5. Where they are now: results of personal engagement with students

An attempt was made to telephone all one hundred and forty-three students, mostly on their mobile phones, as this is the most widespread means of telecommunication in South Africa. Telephone numbers were sourced from the REAP database and student files. The challenge anticipated from the beginning of the administration of the questionnaire was a low response rate resulting from changes in contact details. Despite the challenges, sixty-three were contacted successfully.



### 5.1 Employment

Of the sixty-three students who were contacted, forty were working, sixteen were not working and seven were still studying.

All but three students who were working had graduated, indicating that a tertiary qualification improves chances of employment. This is supported by a recent study of post-school youth in South Africa, which found that individuals with tertiary education were more likely to be formally employed (Cloete 2009).

Further analysis of those who were working indicated that twenty-five were employed on contracts and fifteen were permanently employed. The data shows a balance between private sector and government employment, with eighteen students employed by government and nineteen employed by the private sector. Three did not indicate where they were employed.

### 5.2 Patterns of unemployment

A close inspection of students who were unemployed showed that twelve of the sixteen were women. Four of the unemployed had not completed their studies and three of these are women. The longest time of unemployment was twenty-four months. Five of the longest unemployed students had obtained the



following qualifications: National Diploma in Computer Science Engineering, National Diploma in Public Relations, BA, B Social Science and a National Diploma in Sport Management.

### 5.3 Some reasons for unemployment

Two students said that they completed their studies at the end of 2009. One of these (**Phindile, ND Environmental Health, Mangosuthu Technikon**) finished her diploma in minimum time and completed an internship. She had been waiting for a full year to be placed in a community service position. Phindile attributed her circumstances to a scarcity of community service positions for graduates in the Department of Health. She had worked as a domestic worker for six months in order to sustain herself and her family.

When asked what they thought was the main reason for not finding work, four students said they felt that they did not have enough experience. One student had been employed, but resigned and went home for personal reasons. A few students found it difficult to respond to this question because they believed they were doing everything possible to find work: "I don't know" was a frequent response. Methods students used to search for jobs included newspapers, the Internet and word of mouth.

Only six students were living in rural areas at the time of the study. The majority had remained in cities and moved in with relatives and friends in order to be closer to job opportunities and resources. For example, **Athenkosi (B SocSc, Rhodes University)** had moved from Queenstown in the rural Eastern Cape to live with relatives in Khayelitsa near Cape Town. In contrast, **Xolani (ND Marketing, VUT)**, who had moved home to Malelane in Mpumalanga, a very rural area, said his biggest challenge in looking for work was limited access to resources like newspapers and the Internet and he often lacked money to travel to the nearest town. His experience illustrates the vicious cycle of rural poverty.

Although most of the forty who were employed were graduates, the phenomenon of twelve unemployed graduates, of whom ten had graduated before the end of 2009, is a national issue and beyond REAP's research capacity.

The following stories highlight the challenges of unemployment:

**Rahohang** completed a National Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Heavy Current) at UJ in July 2008 (he needed an extra semester to finish). He described his efforts to find work since then. In 2008 he sent applications to ninety-nine companies and said he had lost count of the number of applications he sent in 2009. When he was interviewed he was sending an average of eight applications per week.

Rahohang is from Welkom in the Free State. When contacted, he was living with a friend in Pretoria. He is the first person in his family to obtain a higher education qualification. His family is very poor, his mother is unemployed and



his two siblings completed Grade 12 but were not able to further their education because of lack of finances. Even though he was unemployed, he was still the only breadwinner in the family and was supporting them by doing occasional piecework.

**Catherine** completed a degree in agricultural management at the University of Limpopo. When interviewed she was registered for a part-time honours programme in agronomy through UNISA. Her mother, a pensioner, was paying for her studies.

Catherine initiated an agricultural project in her village in Marble Hall, Limpopo. She volunteered her experience to her community and secured outsource partnerships with the local municipality, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Affairs. The project had not yet received funding but there was promise of community development through her efforts. Even though Catherine was creating opportunities for herself and her community she reported feeling frustrated because she was not earning an income and was still dependent on her mother.



### 5.4 Those who left REAP during their studies

An analysis of the reasons for leaving REAP indicates that poor academic progress is the main reason for withdrawal. On a positive note, students leave the programme when they receive full-cost bursaries from other organisations.

Of the students who responded to the questionnaire and who terminated their studies, the only reason for leaving REAP was poor academic performance. Among students who were still studying, there was a greater variety of reasons for leaving REAP. A worrying phenomenon in this group is a breakdown of communication with the REAP student advisor where students decide to leave the programme without discussing their reasons with REAP, which undermines REAP's capacity to take steps to help these students address their problems and continue their studies.

**Xolile (ND Civil Engineering, ECTech)** decided to register at VUT because she was told that the Civil Engineering Diploma from ECTech was not recognized (the source or accuracy of this claim are not known). She failed to communicate her decision with her student advisor and discontinued contact.

**Johnny (B Ed, UPE)** did not have accommodation at university and reported struggling to find taxi fare to the institution. He said his living conditions outside the institution were not conducive to studying and he decided to