

REAP

RURAL EDUCATION ACCESS PROGRAMME

Accessing higher education for rural youth from poor communities



END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT July - December 2008



*Building skills & knowledge
Providing opportunity
Developing a community serving humanity*

Students with REAP in 2008 have been supported by:



Irish Aid



Oka Austria Horizont 3000, supported by funds deriving from the Austrian Development Corporation



FNB Bursary Programme



Anglo American Chairman's Fund



De Beers Fund

Oppenheimer Memorial Trust



Stichting Tania Ruth Leon Studiefonds voor zwarte Zuid-Afrikaanse vrouwen



Jackson Foundation



Anglo Gold Ashanti Fund

The D G Murray Trust



Barloworld/PPC Cement



Anglo Vaal Industries Ltd

Deutsche Bank



Deutsche Bank Africa Foundation



BoE Education Foundation



Home Choice Development Trust

McCarthy Limited



McCarthy Ltd



The Restitution Foundation



The Bishops' Lenten Appeal

Lord & Lady Laidlaw Foundation

Francisca Diez De Rivera, the Loewenstein Trust, Tydstroom Chickens (Pioneer Foods), apm Artistes Personal Management, guests at the wedding of Natalie and David Buckham, Rainbow Farms (Pty) Ltd, F C Carter Will Trust, Frederic Fish Trust, Catherine Stone, Maria Mosala (an alumnus), Telkom Giving from the Heart Programme, Stigting Projecten Zuid-Afrika, SSACI & Janssen Cilag.

REAP also provided support to students supported by Kagiso Trust.



REAP Regional Representatives at the National Meeting (July 2008)

REAP

Rural Education Access Programme
www.reap.org.za

Tel: 021 696 5500
Fax: 021 696 9572
Address: P O Box 198, Athlone, 7760
35-37 Birdwood Street, Athlone, 7764
Email: reception@reap.org.za

Director: Clairissa Arendse
E-mail: clairissa@reap.org.za

NPO registration no: 015-634
PBO Exemption no: 930 002 334

REAP is an associated body of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
REAP is in partnership with the National student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

Cover photo: REAP students at Kirstenbosch Gardens, Cape Town



KZN Students with Hector Motau, an external workshop facilitator



Joke't Hart, Jolande de Jonge (Dutch Donors), Constance Magou (REAP Graduate) & Clairissa Arendse (REAP Director)

REAP END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2008

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. STUDENT PROFILE	1
2.1 Numbers	1
2.2 Gender	1
2.3 Institutions	1
3. SECOND SEMESTER ACTIVITIES	2
3.1 Counselling and Support	2
3.2 August Field Trip	2
3.2.1 Workshops	3
3.2.2 REAP's Mentors	4
3.2.3 Liaison with institutional staff and external providers	5
3.3 Student Newsletter	5
3.4 Student Challenges	5
3.5 Review of the Student Development Programme	7
3.6 Donor Feedback	9
3.7 Community Service	9
3.8 Highlights	10
4. FINANCES	11
4.1 Streamlining of monthly payments	11
4.2 Budgeting and NSFAS Administration	11
4.2.1 Access Support Grants	11
4.2.2 NSFAS Administration	12
5. STUDENT PERFORMANCE	13
5.1 End year Results	13
5.2 Conditional Students	14
5.3 In-service training Students	14
5.4 Withdrawals	15
5.5 Graduates	15
6. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION FOR 2009	16
6.1 Grade 11 Pilot Project	16
6.2 National Meeting	17
6.3 Final Interviews and follow up by REAP	17
7. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS	18
8. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH	19
8.1 Advocating Student Support: Factors facilitating success	19
8.2 Socio-economic Profile of Students on the Programme	19
8.3 Tracking Student Performance	20
8.4 Urban Expansion	20
8.5 Partnerships	21
8.6 Saluting Tania Ruth Leon and Beva Runciman	21
8.7 Enhancing REAP and Student Support Capacity	21
8.8 Plans for 2009	21
9. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	22
10. CONCLUSION	22

1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period July to December 2008. During this period REAP focussed on the support of the 340 students spread across 20 higher education institutions as well as the recruitment and selection of new students for 2009.

The 340 students studied towards a variety of undergraduate degrees or national diplomas. One hundred & sixty three of the 340 were females. A student pass rate of 78% was recorded for the year with female students performing slightly better than their male counterparts. Diploma or university of technology students fared slightly better than the university (degree) students. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the students were registered at universities compared to 36% at the universities of technology. Forty-five graduates were confirmed for 2008.

2. STUDENT PROFILE

REAP supported 340 students in the second semester of 2008. An additional 10 students were taken on during the second semester. These students, 9 males and 1 female are students supported by Kagiso Trust.

2.1 Student Numbers

Gender	New	Continuing	Total
Male	72	105	177
Female	54	109	163
Total	126	214	340

The intake of 10 new first years shifted the gender balance ratio of 52:48% in favour of males.

2.2 Number of Students registered at Higher Education Institutions

Institution	New Students			Continuing Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
University of Tech	26	20	46	44	33	77
University	46	34	80	61	76	137
Total	72	54	126	105	109	214

Over the past three years, REAP has experienced an increasing shift in the number of students registering at universities for degree courses rather than national diploma courses at universities of technology.

2.3 Province of Study

Province	Male	Female	Total
Eastern Cape	21	20	41
Free State	24	17	41
Gauteng	62	38	100
Kwazulu Natal	26	40	66
Limpopo	4	6	10
North West	9	2	11
Western Cape	31	40	71
Total	177	163	340

As indicated in our June progress report, student advisors have an average caseload of 66 students. Two of the institutional hub areas, namely Gauteng and the Western Cape are shared by three student advisors. Almost 70% of REAP students in 2008 studied in Gauteng, the Western Cape and Kwazulu Natal.

3. SECOND SEMESTER ACTIVITIES

The programme team worked hard at supporting students in a holistic way.

3.1 Counselling and Support

The team of student advisors provided ongoing support to the 340 students at their respective institutions. During the second semester, the student advisors engagement with students is largely telephonic as only one field trip, where students are met on their respective campuses, takes place in August. Charity Bafana and Lynette Harding continued to manage the Kwazulu Natal caseload until Charlene Nel could take up the Student Advisor position in October 2008.

Students are required to contact their student advisor on a monthly basis before their monthly allowances will be paid. These contact sessions are used to monitor the students' wellbeing and academic progress. By the second semester the student has established a relationship with his/her student advisor and feels sufficiently comfortable to share their personal challenges and struggles. The period leading up to and the writing of final examinations is a very stressful period for students. At times student advisors have had to deal with students' disappointment of not qualifying to write some of the final examinations.

Where a student has not made contact, the student advisor follows up. Getting hold of students is a challenging task at times and often leads to student advisors contacting family members. On two occasions the student advisors learnt that their student had dropped out of university without informing REAP. Both students did not qualify to write their final examinations.

3.2 August Field Trip

The August field trip is the third and final face to face contact meeting with students for the year. Student Advisors travelled individually during this field trip and without assistance and support of another colleague.

The primary focus of the visit was to engage with students individually to:

- review their first semester academic performance, plan and set goals for the second semester
- reviewing their finances
- finalise any outstanding National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loan applications & ensure that they apply for financial aid through their respective institutions for 2009
- Follow up on peer mentoring activities and community service
- Where possible workshops or group sessions were facilitated by either the student advisors or an external facilitator

The second focus was meeting with institutional staff to follow up on support provided to REAP students, plan for the rest of the semester and enlist their continued assistance for 2009. This will be elaborated on in a later section (institutional liaison).

A high turn out (94%) of students honoured their appointments with their student advisors.

Only 21 students who could not meet with REAP staff for the following reasons:

- A final year Free State student was attending a psychometric assessment with his sponsor in Johannesburg
- Students could not be reached on their mobile numbers
- Students were writing tests
- A student was not on campus as she had an appointment with a potential sponsor
- A student was ill
- Students completing their in-service training found it difficult to meet with REAP staff as they were often based away from their institutional town
- 2 students at the University of the North West's campuses of Potchefstroom and Mafikeng could not meet their student advisor at the van der Bijl Park campus
- A student did not return to the institution for the second semester as he was academically excluded

Individual meetings with students provide an opportunity for students to open up and share very personal matters.

A student shared with his Student Advisor his belief that he was being bewitched and therefore attended church services from Friday to Sunday which resulted in him being very tired and sometimes falling asleep while studying or in class. He did not attribute his tiredness to the lack of sleep over weekends but to the fact that he was bewitched.

Given the many roles played by the student advisor as counsellor, mentor and confidant, engaging with students' experiences and issues is emotionally taxing. A structured support system for debriefing is in place for student advisors.

3.2.1 Workshops

Students continued to participate in the academic development and career preparation workshops offered at their respective institutions. Students at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) continued with the structured programme of support REAP formalised with by their student counselling department.

During the August field trip REAP facilitated the following workshops. All the workshops, with the exception of that in the Eastern Cape, were presented by external facilitators. Phumla Hobe, the student advisor for the Eastern Cape, an experienced reproductive health facilitator conducted the workshop for her own students.

Institution	Month	Topic	Students
Kwazulu Natal	August	Motivation & Goal Setting	First years
	August	Values & Relationships	First years & Seniors
Gauteng	August	Gender & Leadership	van der Bijl Park bases students (Vaal University of Technology & University of the North West)
Bloemfontein	August	Managing your own Finances	Bloemfontein based students
Western Cape	August	Motivation	Cape Town based first years
	August	Career Preparation	Cape Town based senior students
Eastern Cape	August	Unplanned Pregnancy	Port Elizabeth based students (NMMU)

A first year student from Kwazulu Natal shared his experience after attending the motivation workshop.

It was an honour for me to be part of the workshop. I had found an opportunity to search myself. who I really am. It made me realise that if other people are able to make it, what would stop me. Whatever obstacles I come across, I will be able to manage them. I didn't perform very well in my June results but I have learnt from my mistakes. I'm definitely sure that my December results would be much better than those I got in June. I will pass whatever it takes.

Although the workshop topics varied a key theme was one of motivation linked to knowing and living out one's purpose and goals and the value of taking responsibility for one's actions.

The value of external facilitators

In August 2008 the Kwazulu Natal (KZN) team arranged for a combined workshop of all REAP students studying in KZN following a request from students during the May visit. Forty five students attended and included 11 students from Pietermaritzburg. A senior student in Pietermaritzburg took charge of arranging their transport to Durban. There was much excitement and the room buzzed as old friendships were rekindled and new ones made. Students used the opportunity to move into groups with people they did not know. Despite the large number of students, the facilitator was able to hold their attention through his lively interactive engagement with them as well as drawing on their own experiences. General lessons drawn from the workshop were the importance of respect, the recognition and appreciation of diversity but more importantly the central one being not forgetting where one comes from and the values instilled by one's family.

A first year's comment after the combined KZN student workshop:

I want to continue to be part of the REAP family. Yesterday I saw what it is like to be a member of REAP. Everybody was so supportive and friendly, so I don't want to waste this opportunity I have been given.

Student Advisors were able to observe students interaction with each other, participation and who took on the leadership roles in their respective groups. An interesting confirmation was that students identified as possible mentors for 2009 stood out in the workshop.

Student advisors being observers in external facilitators' workshops provides constructive feedback to both the facilitator and REAP in terms meeting our expectations and whether their services should be used in the future.

3.2.2 REAP's Mentors

At the beginning of the year student advisors identified and selected 23 senior students to mentor our first years at 11 institutions primarily in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and the Western Cape. The mentors supported the first years in familiarising themselves with their new academic environment as well as information about REAP's support and expectations of their beneficiaries.

In meetings held with the mentors they highlighted the difficulty of meeting with their mentees in the second semester given both parties demanding academic programmes of both parties. One mentor withdrew after June as she had not fared well academically and felt that she would not be a positive role model as her own morale was low. Another mentor at the University of Pretoria completed his studies in June. The support of his mentees was taken over by another REAP mentor at the university.

During the August visit, the identification and selection of mentors for 2009 either followed a process of the student advisors' identifying students who met the criteria for taking on this role or calling for nominations from students. Students were reluctant to volunteer as mentors as they perceived it to demand additional work. In both processes student advisors emphasised that a final decision was dependent on the students' end year results. Four mentors volunteered to continue in their role as REAP mentors for 2009.

Despite the challenges experienced, the mentorship programme of support was well received by the mentees and most of the mentors continued in their role for the second semester providing the necessary support where needed.

Where no formal arrangement for training and support of mentors was in place at institutions, greater assistance and support was required of the student advisor. It was therefore necessary to link with student counselling to set in place a formal support system for students identified and selected as REAP mentors for 2009.

3.2.3 Liaison with institutional staff and external service providers

Student advisors continue to support students as best they can and refer them to their student counselling departments for further support where warranted. Much attention has been given to building support systems to assist students with their social and emotional issues but we recognised too, the need to pay greater attention to the monitoring of our students' academic progress.

The student development programme has been formalised with one institution namely, NMMU and the programme team has forged ahead to develop a partnership with their institutions for a structured support programme in the form of workshops and mentoring for 2009.

REAP staff's attendance at conferences such as provided good networking opportunities to meet key institutional staff in student support service departments other than financial aid, student counselling and student housing (see Staff Training and Support page 18).

Institutions are constantly seeking to develop and improve programmes to support and retain students with the aim of ensuring the successful completion of their studies. For REAP it is important to keep abreast with developments at all institutions as well as the higher education sector. Although our field trips provide the opportunity for such engagements, it requires at time extended stays in institutional towns to meet with all role players.

3.3 Student Newsletter

The second newsletter for 2008, produced by Charity Bafana, the programme assistant was distributed to students during the August visit. The newsletter focused on the importance of students getting to know their campus & informing students of the staff changes at REAP.

3.4 Student challenges that emerged during the second semester Students having to deal with poor academic performance

During the contact sessions with students it was evident that students who had not fared well in their June examinations were disappointed and embarrassed. For many of the first years, particularly those who excelled at school it was their first experience of failure and the realization they are responsible for their own success.

One student advisor gave the following account of a student who avoided contact and would not provide her with his academic transcript:

He had obtained an "A" aggregate with endorsement (M1680) in his final Grade 12 examinations. Due to his performance at school and his family circumstances, his teachers did their best to assist him in every possible way which resulted in him securing a bursary from the Jacob Zuma Trust. He registered at university for law. Although his contact was not as regular as expected of students, his student advisor did not give up on him. She called him repeatedly during the August field trip until he met with her. He was devastated that he had failed 3 of his 5 courses. This was compounded by the fact that although he had a bursary, he had no idea of their terms and conditions. His student advisor was of the opinion that he was used to having things done for him and was overwhelmed when suddenly he had to manage on his own. Sadly though, he was one of the students who did not see the need to attend workshops and tap into the support services available at his institution. He did not write his final examinations.

From discussions with students a number of reasons were provided for their poor performance. These included living off campus, the difficulty of accessing campus resources, support services and study groups. Other challenges related to their not having a strategy preparing for or managing their time during examination periods. It was once again apparent that the period leading up to and during examinations is the most stressful period when additional support is needed.

Campus residence is in very short supply and high demand at most institutions. Only about 20% of students can be accommodated. Criteria for entering residence and retaining a space are usually based on academic performance ironically resulting in those who need it most not being accommodated.

Kanyisa Diamond, the student advisor for Johannesburg institutions reported a noticeable difference between students who were progressing well and those who were not.

Passing in the life of a student plays a significant role in their self esteem. The students, who have not done well, hung their heads in shame, they were teary and some were having thoughts of dropping out already. The sessions were generally heavy. Then one looks at the group of students who have passed, they are confident, they know what it is they did wrong in the examination where they did not obtain the marks they hoped to obtain, where they need to improve and what they need to do. One also finds that, those are the students who attend their student development meetings and workshops. This observation made me wonder. Where does one give the most emphasis in support?

This observation that proactive students, who seek additional support for either academic and/or personal development, fared better was a common point noted at the First Year Experience Conference hosted by the University of Stellenbosch in September 2008.

Where students failed, they doubted their suitability to the chosen course of study. Several students who had not done well in their June examinations were referred to student counselling for an assessment and advised to change either their stream or course of study. Students have not always followed through on these recommendations.

However, changing courses is no guarantee that the student will succeed as is demonstrated in the following case. A further challenge is how to assess whether the student has the academic ability to sustain his/her studies and at what point support should be withdrawn; this is an ongoing tension for REAP.

Noxolo was taken onto the programme in 2007 when she was accepted to study law. Her first year proved a challenge as she lived off campus, took time to adjust to her new environment, coping with the demands of tertiary studies as well as her mother's chronic medical condition. After a slow start she managed to pass 5 of the 8 courses taken in 2007 and qualified for financial aid at the institution.

Although REAP renewed support for 2008, she was still considered "at risk" academically and close monitoring continued. Noxolo's mid-year results did not reflect her confidence in her academic performance as she once again only passed 50% of her semester courses. She failed her two legal courses, i.e. Criminal Law and Family Law. She was referred for a career assessment which indicated her suitability for the Social Sciences. In the second semester she registered in the Social Science faculty taking both Philosophy and Sociology.

In her appeal for REAP's continued support she indicated that Legal Studies was not what she had expected it to be and admitted she had chosen it for the wrong reasons. Noxolo was allowed to continue with REAP and was placed on conditional status with an action plan to improve her performance in the final examinations. There has been no improvement in Noxolo's final results as she only passed one of four courses. She was granted an opportunity to write three supplementary examinations. She only managed to pass one, failed one and did not write the third one.

In October as she was preparing for her final exams, she was hospitalised and treated for a heart condition. This she felt affected her emotionally.

In reviewing her academic performance, she has not once passed all her courses. A pattern of passing only 50% of her courses with border line results has emerged over the past two years. Noxolo will not continue with REAP for 2009 as she has not met our conditions for continued support.

Students not complying with REAP's conditions for continued support

REAP has a number of conditions that student has to comply with to be eligible for continued support. The most important one being progression to the next year of study.

One student who failed his mid year examinations was reluctant to sign REAP's conditional agreement. The reasons provided was that he could not attend any additional support workshops and consultation sessions with his lecturers as he had classes all day until 19h00. His Student Advisor tried her best to accommodate him but he would not co-operate. He performed poorly in his final examinations and has not had REAP's support renewed for 2009.

Time to participate in the student development programme

Many students voiced their concerns about the fact that they could not fully participate in the student development programme as required by REAP. At some institutions the students attend a series of workshops to be certificated. Not all can attend the full programme because of their lecture schedules. Students voiced concern about the number of workshops they are expected to attend in addition to focusing on their academic workload

3.5 Review of the Student Development Programme

During the last quarter the programme team reviewed and worked at streamlining the Student Development Programme for 2009 taking into account the feedback received from students.

Students recognised the value of the student development programme but at times had to balance the demands of their academic workload with meeting REAP's requirements to attend workshops and meetings with their mentors. The need to ensure a good balance between the student's academic workload and personal development was strongly recommended.

For 2009 priority workshops were identified with greater flexibility for a tailored plan for students having a tight academic programme that does not allow time for any additional activities. The need to identify and bring on board external services providers to facilitate student workshops was another aspect REAP has to follow through.

The benefits of the student development programme are evident where it is structured and in place from the outset. It is apparent that where meetings and workshops are co-ordinated and pre-arranged by REAP, students have demonstrated a greater commitment. This once again highlights REAP's enabling role, the importance of the student advisor knowing what is being offered at the institution and the formal linking of students to the support services on their campus. Thereafter there is a monitoring role of whether the student acts on the information provided and his/her demonstration of taking responsibility for his/her own development and learning.

In reviewing the mentorship component of the student development programme, it was decided that greater emphasis would be placed on support in the first semester. By the second semester, a greater level of independence is expected of first years. Although contact with their mentors is encouraged during the second semester, it would be based on need and students' willingness to continue the relationship.

The programme team agreed on the role of REAP mentors being one of welcoming and facilitating their mentees adjustment at the institution as well as informing them about REAP, its expectations of beneficiaries and procedures to access support.

For 2009 REAP seeks to formalise mentors commitment to the programme and provide them with the necessary information of what is expected of them in the form of a manual with guidelines on what and how they need to support their mentees.

In December 2008, 18 mentors were taken on a leadership and survival training camp run by Outward Bound in Grabouw. The mentors accompanied by their student advisors found the camp challenging, invigorating and quite soul searching. One student faced with challenging personal circumstances shared with her team the valuable lesson she learned about not carrying excess emotional baggage. Student advisors had the opportunity to get to know their students, observe who took risks and how they tackled challenging tasks.



A strong recommendation was that new mentors would benefit from such training prior to them taking up their role as it has the potential for both personal growth and establishing the basis for team work amongst themselves and student advisors. Only three of the mentors will be continuing for 2009.

3.6 Donor Feedback Report

Despite REAP changing the return date for the submission of the donor feedback report, there has not been a good response. This required follow up by Student Advisors and delaying the confirmation of continued support for 2009. One of the challenges is that students complete a written form and either post or fax it back to REAP. For 2009 students will be encouraged to submit their report electronically.

Some of the common challenges that emerged from their reports related to:

- First years finding their feet in a new learning environment
- Coping with the academic workload & English as a medium of instruction
- Living off campus
- Learning to manage their finances and making ends meet
- Learning to use electronic forms of communication especially the use of computers and emails
- Recognising the need to seek assistance from others

Some of the highlights mentioned were:

- Obtaining REAP support
- Passing their courses
- Experiencing diversity and meeting new people

For REAP one of the highlights is witnessing the first years in particular, gain confidence and mature as they adapt to independent living and learn to take responsibility.

3.7 Community Service

All REAP students have an obligation to undertake three days of community service. REAP has recently been disappointed with the response of students in fulfilling this obligation. For the first time REAP has been able to capture on our database who fulfilled their community service obligation. It is hoped that this will improve the monitoring, tracking and ultimately the reporting of community service activities.

For the students who completed their community service, the majority exceeded the 3 days required. Many students return to their former schools to tutor, motivate and inform grade 12 learners about the opportunities at higher education institutions.

An encouraging fact has been that a number of students were able to complete their community service in fields related to their studies and have had the benefit of applying what they have learnt as well as learning about what is expected in a professional work environment. Law students volunteered at Legal Aid Clinics and their local Advice Office; a first year B Business Science student developed a website for his former high school.

A second year Physiotherapy student, Nonkululeko Nsimbini had this to say of her experience:

I was working at the Mosveld Hospital as a Physiotherapist. I was doing everything that a physiotherapist does. As a second year, I was assessing patients, work out a treatment plan for them and treating them. Anything that I was not sure of the other physiotherapists were there to help. At the end of each day I had to report to my supervisor on everything that I did and the challenges I faced. For me it was okay besides the workload was too much.

I learnt a lot from the community service. I was able to link the theory that I studied to the practical and work out a treatment plan for my patients. I was also given a chance to work with other qualified physiotherapist; that made me to gain knowledge from them. It also gave me a chance to be aware of what I have to expect when I'm qualified. It helped me to get used to the hospital because soon I will be working there. I have also learnt to respect patients regardless of their age.

Some students voiced the challenges of finding organisations in their communities. They were encouraged to link with either an outreach organisation or programme at their institution providing community service. Although health science and senior students who served as REAP mentors for the year were exempted from doing community service, they too will need to submit a report on the service they provided as their training to the community and support to fellow REAP students respectively.

REAP will be holding students accountable for completing their community service obligation. Where support has been renewed for 2009, a student has agreed to do complete their community service for both 2008 & 2009.

In an attempt to enlist the co-operation of organisations to accommodate students to do community service, where required REAP will provide students with a letter that confirms their contractual obligation to render a voluntary service.

3.8 Highlights

- Very few students needing additional funding from REAP to cover outstanding fees as more comprehensive financial aid is being provided by the institutions.
- REAP staff attending conferences – First Year Experience, Student Service Practitioners etc
- Training opportunities with regard to report writing and counselling skills
- Debriefing sessions helpful in terms of providing a space for student advisors to ventilate but at the same time to challenge and look for ways to management difficult cases.
- Students who have passed all their courses
- Students who demonstrate passion for their chosen field of studies

A second year nursing student at NMMU wrote:

After I passed grade 12 at Khanyisa High School I decided to do nursing, so I applied at Walter Sisulu University in Umtata and at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. I was accepted at both but decided to leave my home town for independence so I chose Port Elizabeth. I chose nursing because I enjoy working with people and making a difference in a person's life even if it's small.

Doing nursing helped me realise that life is precious and you have to take care of your health because I used to be ignorant regarding lifestyle but now I am able to choose right from wrong. Sometimes the burden of books can be heavy and discouraging, but since I have my friend who is doing the same course and my family for support, I hang on because I have a goal to reach.

- Student Advisors meeting with institutional staff, particularly, the residence officers bore positive results as a number of students living off campus were able to move into student accommodation. Institutions such as the University of Free State and Durban University of Technology were willing to reserve a limited number of spaces for REAP students for 2009. This however proved a challenge especially for REAP's intake of new students as they needed names by the end of October 2008.

4. FINANCES

4. 1 Streamlining of monthly payments

In May 2008 REAP introduced a payment system where students submitted their requests by a given date to ensure that the monies are paid into their accounts by month end and available at the beginning of the new month.

This process has worked well for both the programme team and finance department. Most of the students make their requests timeously resulting in the finance department having to process as many as 60 payments per day in the 5 days preceding the new month to ensure payments reflect in students' accounts by the start of the new month.

Student advisors have been able to use the monthly telephonic consultation to focus on the students' adaptation, progress and challenges and not just on their financial needs as the primary reason for their contact with REAP.

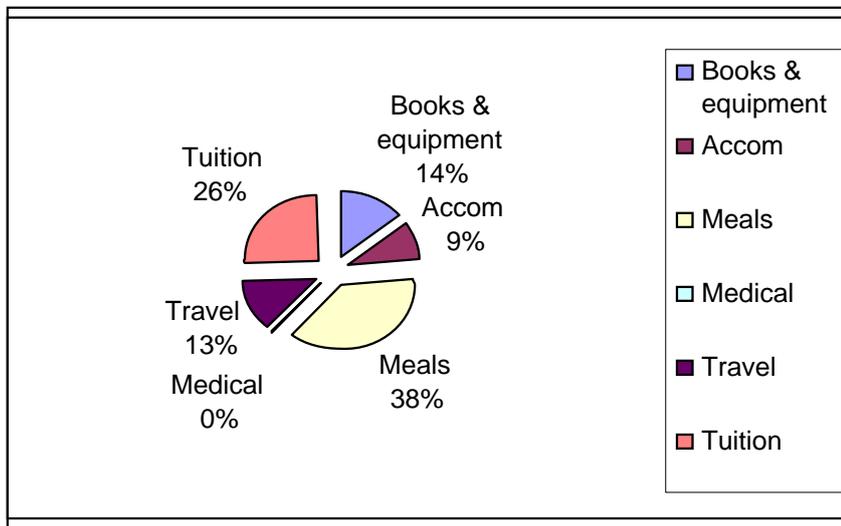
Payments are withheld where students have not had their monthly telephonic consultation with their student advisor.

4.2 Budgeting and NSFAS Administration

4.2.1 Access Support Grants:

A total of R2 292 172 in direct student payments was processed for accommodation, books, tuition expenses etc in 2008. These expenses are referred to as "access packages."

For 2008 REAP has not had to provide students with top up funding to cover outstanding balances as in previous years.



An ongoing challenge REAP faces is the underspending of access support funding. A number of possible reasons have been noted for this. They are: students’ accessing full-cost bursaries, improved financial aid support packages from their institutions and students not needing the full access grant for reduced periods of study which included students who withdraw from REAP for the second semester.

REAP has engaged with this issue and considered possible strategies to utilise unspent funding. Given the impact of the global economy on donor funding REAP has held back on out of the ordinary expenditure in favour of ensuring sustained support for current students beyond 2008.

4.2.2 NSFAS Administration

The implementation of the new NSFAS procedures delayed our submission of loan applications. Twenty one applications were submitted in June 2008. The bulk of our loan applications were submitted in the second semester following our August contact meeting with the student to ensure proper completion of the agreement forms.

REAP processed a total of 75 loan applications totalling R1 593 652 in 2008. The loans for continuing students were primarily processed by HE institutions. Only 1 of the 15 loans processed for senior students was a second loan to cover the shortfall on the institution’s NSFAS award. REAP continued the practice of consulting with the financial aid officers in cases where loans needed to be processed for senior students.

REAP obtained authorisation from NSFAS for 4 students (three Rhodes 1st years & one WITS University final year) to exceed the maximum loan of R38000.

REAP prioritises it’s NSFAS allocation covering the costs of our first year students. In 2008 REAP did not utilise its full allocation as an increasing number of first years accessed financial aid through their institutions and received confirmation of other sponsorship, in particular, full-cost bursaries after REAP had facilitated their registration.

Furthermore, there has been a steady decline in the number of second loans REAP needed to process for senior students. This is an encouraging indicating that institutions are providing financial aid awards that can cover students’ study costs.

Breakdown of No of Loans

Loan details	First years	Seniors	TOTAL
Minimum Loan (R2000)	0	1	2
Maximum Loan (R38000)	2	0	2
Exceeding maximum loan	3	1	4
Total no. of students assisted	58	17	75
Total applied for	R1 271 635	R322 017	R1 593 652
Average Loan per student	R21 924	R18 942	

5. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Given the many ways of reporting pass rates for example, half or more courses passed, the number of courses passed over the number of courses taken or the number written, etc. For 2008 REAP has opted to report on the pass rate using the criteria of students having passed 50% or more of their courses and being allowed to proceed with their studies. This group is further broken down into a second category of students who have passed all their courses.

5.1 End Year Results

<p>Pass rate: 78% (students who have passed half or more of their courses)</p> <p>Females: 80% Males: 75%</p> <p>First Years: 78% Continuing: 78%</p> <p>University pass rate: 76% University of Technology: 81%</p>
--

Of the 340:

No of students	%	Commentary
266	78%	Passed half or more of courses taken 98 first years, 168 continuing students
181	53%	Passed all their courses 63 first years, 118 continuing students
59	17%	Failed more than half courses taken. Included in these results are the students who withdrew from REAP in the second semester
6		Doing in-service training
86		Obtained 173 distinctions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 1 student obtained 6 distinctions ❖ 3 students each obtained 5 distinctions ❖ 8 students each obtained 4 distinctions ❖ 9 students each obtained 3 distinctions ❖ 28 students each obtained 2 distinctions ❖ 37 students each obtained 1 distinction

REAP top achievers for the year have been:

1. Moletsi Mjika, an Electrical Engineering student at CUT passed 10 of 12 his first year courses with distinction.
2. Telman McGowan, 1st year B Comm, UJ obtained 9 distinctions for 12 courses taken in 2008. He obtained 6 in the second semester.
3. Esau Jele, a Civil Engineering student at CUT passed 8 of his 12 second year courses with distinction.

5.2 Conditional students

Students are placed on conditional status with REAP when they have failed more than 50% of their courses or if they failed their major courses. They commit to seek additional academic and social support to improve their performance. Where students have not met the agreed results, exclusion from REAP is likely. In 2008 a total of 70 students were placed on conditional status.

Of the 28 students who were conditional for the first semester 21 were reinstated and 7 were withdrawn. One conditional student who could be reinstated did not meet with his student advisor during the August visit as he had secured a bursary his study costs.

Forty two students (43) were placed on conditional status for the second semester, the majority (30) being first year students. Twenty one (21) students were reinstated while 22 did not have support renewed for 2009.

At the end of 2008 REAP reviewed the conditional status of first year students taking into account the fact that they only had spent months at a tertiary institution, a limited time to adjust to a new learning environment and coping with the academic demands of managing a number of courses. REAP has opted for a more lenient stance of still letting the student work on a plan to improve his/her performance without the threat of losing REAP support should he/she not fare well in the final examination.

5.3 In-service training students

A total of 6 students registered for in-service training for the second semester, including the two who continued with their second training placement to qualify for their diplomas.

Siyakudimisa Msweli, an Electrical Engineering student at CPUT completed his first in-service training placement with French-SA Technical Institute in Electronics (a project CPUT partners with France) and fared well. He then moved to the Overberg Toetsbaan to complete his remaining 6 months of in-service training. Based on his academic performance he secured postgraduate funding for both his Bachelor and Master of Technology degrees.

Where students received a monthly stipend from their training companies, minimal financial support was needed. REAP assisted all 6 students with some support for meals, travel and or private accommodation.

5.4 Withdrawals

A total of 11 students were withdrawn from the Programme in the second semester for a variety of reasons listed below.

Reason	No	Institution		Study level		
		Degree	Diploma	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Dropped out	4	4		4		
REAP support withdrawn	3	1	2	1	1	1
Academic Exclusion	2	2			2	
Suspended Studies	1		1			1
No contact with REAP	1		1		1	
	11	7	4	5	4	2

All students with the exception of one (lack of contact) were withdrawn for academic reasons, that is, they were either academically excluded after the first semester or failed to qualify to write their final examinations.

5.5 Graduates (completed studies during or at end of 2008)

Qualification	No. of graduates			Institutions
	M	F	Total	
ND Accounting	1		1	TUT
ND Agriculture Management	1		1	MUT
ND Animal Health	1		1	UNW
ND Internal Auditing		3	3	CPUT, VUT
ND Cost & Management Acc		1	1	DUT
ND Computer Systems Engineering	1		1	VUT
ND Human Resource Management	1		1	DUT
ND Electrical Engineering	2		2	CPUT, UJ
ND Building		1	1	CPUT
ND Information Technology	1		1	CUT
ND Management		1	1	DUT
ND Marketing	1	2	3	CUT, TUT, VUT
B Arts	1		1	UNW
BA Communication		1	1	UFS
BA Psychology		1	1	UNW
BA Politics		1	1	UNW
B Accounts	1		1	UFS
B Admin		2	2	UP, UWC
B Agriculture		1	1	UL
B Education	1		1	UNW
B Soc Science	1	2	3	UKZN, UP, RU
B Sc Information Technology	1		1	UNW
LLB		1	1	UFS
B Social Work	1	2	3	UP, US, WITS
B Commerce (Accounting)	2		2	UKZN, US
B Commerce		1	1	UKZN
B Cur (Nursing)	1	3	4	UL, WSU, UKZN, UWC
B Economics	2		2	UCT, UFH
MBChB	1	1	2	UKZN, WITS
Totals	21	24	45	

28 students obtained university degrees while 17 obtained diplomas.

- ❖ 4 students completed their course in June 2008 – 2 Commerce students (VUT & DUT), 1 Electrical Engineering (UJ) & 1 Education student (UNW)
- ❖ One student changed from B Business Science to B Economics in order to graduate
- ❖ 25 of the 45 graduates completed in minimum time
- ❖ 4 graduates needed an extra 6 months (one semester)
- ❖ 16 graduates needed an extra year

A further 9 were expected to graduate. Some of the reasons are:

- 1 student still having to complete a further period of in-service training
- 1 student at Walter Sisulu University did not obtain her final results
- 7 did not obtain sufficient credits to graduate and will have to register in 2009 for the outstanding courses.

6. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION FOR 2009

As indicated in our June progress report in 2008 REAP focused on a special project to address our recurring challenge of learner's lack of career guidance and under-preparedness for higher education studies. By focusing on an early recruitment strategy from Grade 11, REAP hopes to have better prepared students for higher education studies.

6.1 Grade 11 Pilot Project

The project progressed very slowly for two reasons. REAP recognised that a lot more thinking and engagement is needed before it can be presented as an element of the selection process. Secondly, staff capacity for 2008 was already stretched given the absence of a programme manager and student advisors having to manage their caseload in addition to responsibilities relating to REAP's selection and recruitment for 2009 and the student development programme.

Potential applicants from the two Western Cape areas were shortlisted based on their June grade 12 results. Although we had 43 applications only 18 were shortlisted for telephonic interviews during the July school vacation our aim clearly being one of guidance and not career assessment. Only 15 were interviewed as the other 3 could not be reached on the numbers they provided.

During the interview the following were explored with each applicant:

1. study options and plans made for tertiary studies
2. his/her eligibility for REAP support e.g financial need, where s/he intends studying
3. whether s/he received a REAP application form for 2009.

A second interview to follow up on whether they had acted on our discussion with them was planned for September. Of the 10 REAP was able to reach, all except one had followed through on applying for a place to study, student accommodation and financial aid. Reaching learners telephonically proved a challenge.

Learnings

- A number of learners had not yet made any application to a tertiary institution as they waited for the June grade 12 results
- Although learners had an idea of what they wanted to do, there was a clear lack of knowledge about the minimum academic requirements for their proposed study choices.
- Those who had REAP application forms obtained them from a REAP student doing her in-service training at the municipality. They had a good understanding of what REAP was about.
- Of the 15 interviewed; 8 submitted application for REAP support

- Of the 8 applications received, 3 were offered REAP support; 2 who REAP considered were awarded Municipality bursaries
- Reasons for students not receiving REAP support:
 1. changing study choices – courses offered were not any of applicants study choices
 2. poor academic results
 3. not having a place to study
 4. opting to study at an institution not supported by REAP

At the REAP planning session held in December 2008 a date was set to arrange for an external facilitator to assist us in engaging and developing a suitable model for a project of this nature.

REAP has a network of more than 75 volunteers recruit rural learners who wish and have the potential to further their education at a tertiary institution. They guide them through REAP's application and selection process.

6.2 National meeting

At the beginning of July (1 -4) REAP brought together 45 regional representatives for a 3 day meeting in Cape Town. They were hosted at the University of Cape Town. The meeting focused on affirming and appreciating their voluntary service, the strengthening of relationships between the representative and REAP staff through a process of information sharing as well as continued training to improve the selection of REAP beneficiaries. REAP had to revisit and restate its selection criteria, especially that of academics, given the implementation of the new national senior certificate examination and scales of achievement.

From 2006 regional representatives have played a greater role in the selection interview of short-listed applicants. As many as 500 applicants across the nine provinces are interviewed for REAP support every year; a critical part of the selection process that guides and informs REAP's decision about who should be offered support.

At the national meeting REAP introduced two new tools to improve and ensure standardisation of the interview process. There were concerns about the process requiring more time but regional representatives were willing to give it a try and provide REAP with the necessary feedback.

Regional representatives, REAP staff, board members and donors shared in an enjoyable evening of celebration on 3 July 2008. All Regional representatives who had served REAP for at least one year were given certificates as a token of REAP's appreciation for their contribution in assisting rural youth to access tertiary education and break the cycle of poverty in their families and communities.

6.3 Final Interviews and follow up by REAP

Of the 2500 forms distributed, close to 900 were returned to REAP for consideration. As can be seen in the table below 537 applicants were interviewed.

Provincial Breakdown of Total Number of Interviews

Province	No of Regions	No of students interviewed		
		M	F	Total
Kwazulu Natal	6	80	89	169
Free State	2	8	10	18
Eastern Cape	4	33	66	99
Gauteng	2	24	18	42
Mpumalanga & Limpopo	3	50	49	99
North West	2	13	18	31
Western Cape	2	8	24	32
Northern Cape	2	25	22	47
Total	23	241	296	537

The regional representatives implemented the changed interview process which involved the applicants' completion of a questionnaire prior to their interview. They reported that the amended process required much more time to complete. Applicants had to complete a questionnaire that preceded their interview. A strong recommendation from the representatives is for the process to be streamlined and for the provision of further training to help them with its implementation. REAP is mindful of the fact that the regional representatives are volunteers, most gainfully employed and that our selection processes should encourage their continued support. REAP will look at ways to sustain regional representatives' commitment and involvement by separating the recruitment and selection processes.

As of September 2008 the programme team worked through all the application forms received from Regional Representatives. All the data capturing was done by a temporary assistant so that the programme team could devote time to contacting all of the interviewed applicants to ascertain whether they had had any responses from the institutions and liaising with their respective schools for their September trial examination results. All applicants who had a provisional offer of a place to study and met REAP's minimum academic requirements for their chosen course of study were placed on a provisional listing of likely candidates.

The telephonic engagement with applicants took time. Some could only be reached after hours as the contact details provided were not their own. Although many learners made application for a place to study, very few grade 12 learners had provisional offers from the institution.

7. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

A full Board meeting took place in October 2008. Although Clairissa Arendse and Glenda Glover moved into their new position of director and Programme Development Manager respectively in June, neither could move into their fulltime roles as the position of the programme manager remained vacant for the second half of the year and management tasks had to be shared. Clairissa continued to manage and steer the Programme team. The usual annual strategic planning workshop was shifted to mid 2009 as the organisation opted to follow through the strategy of assessing and building capacity for management.

7.1 Staff training & support

To make and maintain working connections with higher education institutions and to keep up abreast with what is happening in the sector different REAP staff members attended the Financial Aid Practitioners, First Year Experience, Student Affairs and Corporate Social Investment in Education Conferences. These fora enabled us to share our experiences and advocate for student support, and to be motivated and stimulated by new research findings, innovative developments and the experience of others.

Following the August field trip a second debriefing session was facilitated by a Community Development Resource Association consultant for the programme team. Given the nature of the work student advisors have to deal with students sharing their personal, inner struggles and challenges. These counselling sessions leave student advisors feeling emotionally taxed and in need of a space to share and reflect on their experiences. The need is greater when student advisors travel unaccompanied and do not have someone they can share their experience with. The facilitated debriefing sessions have not only provided space for sharing but more importantly to the opportunity to explore and discuss deeper underlying issues of student support.

8. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

From the middle of the year REAP had, for the first time, capacity dedicated to programme development and research, enabling the activities detailed below.

8.1 Advocating student support: Factors facilitating success

In mid 2008 REAP completed a year long research project and distributed a substantial research report entitled *Factors facilitating success for disadvantaged Higher Education students* widely within the sector. Coincidentally the release of these research findings was just prior to the successful first South African First South African Year Experience Conference held at Stellenbosch University in September.

REAP was able to distribute the report to the many delegates attending this conference and the research was indeed quoted in one or two of the presentations. Considerable interest has been shown in the report – which is available in both full and summary forms on the REAP website – www.reap.org.za.

The report does not necessarily say anything new to practitioners in student support services but sets out a comprehensive South African picture. One of the challenges is the marginalisation of student support services at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in South Africa and the need for integrated mainstream attention to supporting the diverse under prepared first time entrants to higher education to improved retention and graduation rates.

Undertaking the research and producing the report was but the first step in REAP's advocacy work for students in need of support. A plan to use the report to encourage dialogue on how support might be delivered is in place for 2009 with briefings, colloquiums (in partnership with HEIs) and press articles planned.

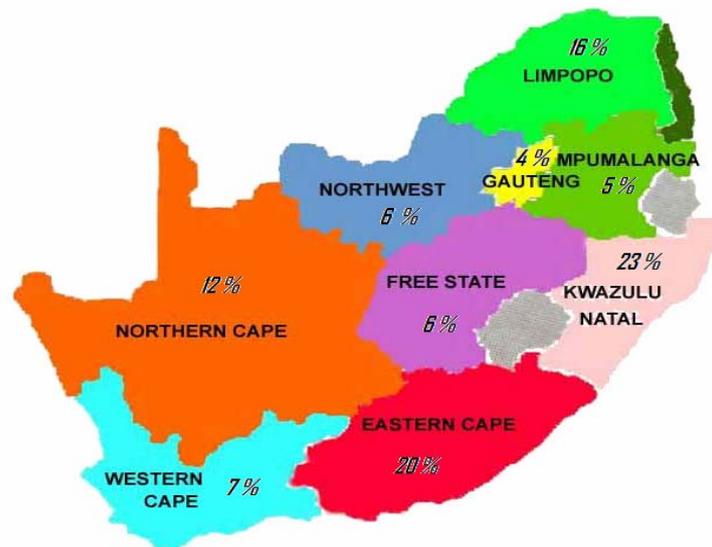
8.2 Socio-economic profile of students on the Programme

This profile will be in the upcoming REAP annual report and on the REAP website.

One in every three REAP application forms (from students on the Programme in 2008) was scrutinized. The gender balance showed a slightly skewed (3%) balance in favour of males. Sixty (60)% of students came from Kwazulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces. Household sizes ranged from two to eleven people. No households had fewer than two (2) adults and there was an average of four children per household. Forty-seven percent (47%) of households had no member employed while thirty-seven percent (37%) had one person employed and fourteen percent (14%) had two people employed. Forty-five percent (45%) of households were receiving one or two social grants but there was not a significant number of child grants recorded. In ninety percent (90%) of households the REAP student was the only student.

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of households had an income of R 3000 or less with fifty-one percent (51%) having a monthly income of between R 100 and R1400.

Student origin



8.3 Tracking student performance

Tracking and assessing REAP student undergraduate performance, especially completion of successful studies is essential for monitoring and evaluating REAP's outcomes and impact. It is, as reported previously, however not a simple task. A minimum time frame of 4 years has to be looked at. More usually this time frame needs to be 5 years. Students who leave achieve initial success and obtain bursaries (more in the last few years) leave the programme and are often difficult to track. Two small projects have commenced, looking at the sustained study and graduation rates of an additional cohort of students taken on in 2006 with loan only support and B Com students taken on since 2004. The additional 2006 students were those that were not taken onto the full programme with financial support as REAP's allocations were fully subscribed. The poor performance of many B Com accounting student is of concern to REAP. Information gathering for these two small studies is well under way and will be completed in 2009. Other studies are planned where we will track particular cohorts and annual drop out rates, especially looking at students who qualified to continue with their studies but do not return to the programme.

8.4 Urban expansion

During 2008 REAP was approached by a Foundation who wished to support students from the southern peninsula of Cape Town. REAP was already supporting a very small number of students from the township of Tembisa in Gauteng at the request of Deutsche Bank whose CSI programme was supporting schools in Tembisa. They wished to continue support to learners who have qualified for higher education. A scoping exercise was undertaken to assess need and identify role players. Although the scoping report was undertaken for internal planning purposes a summary is available on the REAP website. A disappointing finding of this report was that a very small number of socio-economical disadvantaged students were meeting HE entrance criteria. Some schools were found to be very poorly resourced with substantial challenges. The communities in which the schools operate were riddled with violence, drug abuse & crime. It was also identified that there were a number of independent educational or youth development initiatives taking place. A decision was taken by the board to engage in limited recruitment of students from the southern peninsula area of Cape Town for 2009 and the recruitment of these young people was undertaken in the last quarter of the year.

Experiences of urban communities' needs and students' potential for success present REAP with the multi faceted question of further urban expansion.

8.5 Partnerships

Time was also dedicated to working with the new REAP director in building varying donor partnerships. REAP is providing support to full cost Eric Molobi Scholarship students of Kagiso Trust and was able to provide partial tuition bursaries to two senior nursing students through Janssen Cilag.

8.6 Saluting Tania Ruth Leon & Beva Runciman

The late Tania Ruth Leon was a South African teacher from Wellington who immigrated to the Netherlands during apartheid. There, amongst the many social actions she initiated, she founded the Dutch Womens Bursary Fund, subsequently to be known as the Tania Ruth Leon Foundation (*Stigting Tania Ruth Leon Stiefonds voor Zuidafrikaanse vrouwen*). This Foundation, through a partnership with REAP and Catholic Education Aid Programme (CEAP) has assisted hundreds of black South African women to acquire qualifications in fields of study traditionally dominated by men. Twenty years of support to black South African women was celebrated in Amsterdam in 2006 and two long standing office bearers of the Foundation visited REAP in Cape Town in November 2008. This visit prompted some historical information gathering and the naming of the REAP board room after Tania Ruth Leon.

REAP has a tradition of naming rooms after people who have made significant contributions to the development of the Programme, keeping our history alive. And so, we also named the director's office after Beva Runciman, the CEAP director between 1990 and 1998, who grew CEAP, participated in establishing a framework and structure for student financial aid with others secured the inclusion of NGOs as partners in the Act that set up the NSFAS and has continued to champion REAP as a very active Board member.

8.7 Enhancing REAP & student support capacity

Since the second half of 2006 REAP has experienced capacity constraints and ongoing staff turnover. While the delivery of the programme of student support has been sustained (the primary core business of REAP) we have not always been able to make the advances we would have liked or taken up the opportunities that came our way.

In the last half of 2008 a proposal for internships at REAP was developed. It is envisaged that this will build capacity for student support in a planned and organised way and will provide the organisation (and maybe others) with trained student advisors. It was envisaged that REAP could accommodate two such interns. Financial support has been secured and two young graduates were recruited in an open web based process to commence their year long internship early in 2009. An unexpected temporary vacancy due to maternity leave provisions has enabled REAP, at least in the short term, to bring a third young graduate into the intern programme.

8.8 Plans for 2009

Work in 2009 will see a number of the initiatives reported on above taken forward. Co-hosted seminars engaging with the *Factors that facilitate success* research findings are intended. Partnerships both with HEIs, CSI and funding partners will be deepened. Tracking of student performance is planned as well as a review of recruitment and selection methodology.

9. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The REAP annual financial statements 2008 have been fairly presented in accordance with the organisation's accounting policies.

Finance & sustainability

REAP is privileged to have a number of funding partners who have sustained their relationship with the Programme and often increased their grant contributions over the last few years. REAP has also attracted new funding partners as South African Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives and overseas foundations alike seek to educate and skill young people to provide them with an opportunity of meaningful employment and sustain the South African economy.

Grants received are primarily for student support, the core business of REAP. REAP seeks to provide individual tailored support to students and requires student accountability for continued support. This methodology is an aspect of student development practice. In this context budgeting becomes complex with many variables and REAP has experienced under-expenditure challenges in recent years. This is partly due to students on the Programme receiving bursaries from other sources during their studies and then not requiring the full financial support budgeted for by REAP. Other students have not continued with their studies as expected for a range of reasons. While we may be able to predict patterns and plan budgets accordingly the context is volatile and REAP is not yet sure whether the increase in bursary funding will weather the global economic recession. We can assure our partners however that we are transparent and careful about our finances and that we are seeking ways to improve budgeting and appropriate student support spending.

Through wise risk free investments we have been able to build a small reserve of about R 2 million (referred to in the audited statements as the Fr Noel Stanton Fund) which at current operational levels could sustain REAP for about 4 months. This fund also cushions REAP in terms of cash flow needs when grant income is delayed. Generally speaking, however, REAP partners have been exceptional in insuring grants are paid in advance enabling REAP to confidently take students onto the Programme.

Our thanks and gratitude extends to all our Donors who have shown commitment to the programme and for their continuing commitment to the financial sustainability of REAP.

The impact of the global economic crisis had a huge affect on some of REAP's donors and we are grateful to report that through all of this they have managed to continue with support for 2009.

10. CONCLUSION

Despite the staffing challenges experienced during 2008, the entire REAP staff demonstrated their dedication and commitment to providing a holistic support programme to students with minimal disruption. The work of REAP would not be possible without the support of donors, the board, regional representatives and our partners and supporter in the Higher Education sector.

We thank you for your support and look forward to strengthening the relationships and partnerships necessary to ensure the success of the young people we are able to assist each year.