

# REAP

## RURAL EDUCATION ACCESS PROGRAMME

*Accessing higher education for rural youth from poor communities*



### **MID YEAR PROGRESS REPORT June 2008**



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



## **REAP**

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Cover photo: Glenda Glover receiving Impumelelo Innovation Public -Partnership Award in Cape Town, May 2008



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## **REAP PROGRESS REPORT - June 2008**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the period January to June 2008. It has been a busy period where the young programme team was taken through the final selection process and implemented new student support initiatives.

This report contains statistical information of REAP's student body as well as a narrative and review of its first semester's programme activities reflecting on both the highlights and challenges.

### **2. STUDENT PROFILE**

REAP is currently supporting 330 students, 116 being first years and the remaining 214 being senior students spread across 20 higher education institutions across South Africa.

Included in the number are six students who participating in REAP's support programme whilst being funded by Kagiso Trust.

The gender breakdown narrowly misses the 50% balance with 166 males and 164 females. Whilst there are 4 more female continuing students, the higher intake has been with first year male students. Continuing students constitute 65% of REAP's caseload.

REAP offered access support to 126 students but only 116 accepted.

- Six students declined the following reasons:
  - three had offers of full cost bursaries
  - two students decided not to study in 2008
  - one student did not get into his chosen course of study
- three students failed to meet with REAP during the March & May field trips
- REAP withdrew an offer of support to a student when it was discovered that she had been dishonest in her application to REAP – she cited her grandmother as her guardian but at the institution she provided proof of her father's salary slip which meant she was ineligible for NSFAS funding.

The highest concentration of REAP's students is in Gauteng (29%) followed by the Western Cape (22%) and Kwazulu Natal (20%). Gauteng also peaked at having the highest intake of 38 new students followed by the Western Cape's 28 students.

As has been the trend since 2006 REAP students studying for degrees have outnumbered those studying for national diplomas. Sixty four percent (64%) of the students are pursuing degree courses as compared to the 36% registered for diploma courses. There is a steady increase in the number of students registered for the extended degree programmes at university.

For the first time new students opted for courses of study in Podiatry, Dental Technology, Nature Conservation, B Sc Construction & B Sc Property Studies. The engineering field still dominated by males with only 27% of REAP students studying engineering courses being females. Electrical engineering remains the

most popular course for both male and female students. Over 50% of the REAP student body are in the science and technology study streams which include engineering and the health sciences; 31% are in commerce and management fields of study.

Tables recording student numbers in terms of gender, provincial breakdown, where and what courses students are studying is provided at the end of this report.

### **3. SUPPORT PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES**

The selection process was a new experience for five of REAP's programme staff. A process was put in place dedicating certain days in the week for presentation of new applicants which gave student advisors time to follow up and engage with the applicant telephonically where additional information and clarification was needed.

The challenge for student advisors was being able to balance their attention between the needs of the first and senior students who voiced concern about the student advisors availability. REAP needs to look how best to maintain contact with senior students during the very busy period of final selection and confirmation of new students.

At the beginning of the year the programme team led by Clairissa Arendse as the programme manager had a full complement of 5 student advisors and programme assistant. By beginning of April however, the student advisor position in Kwazulu Natal was vacant. This position is currently being managed by Lynette Harding and Charity Bafana, the programme assistant.

The average caseload per student advisors is 66 students. Currently three student advisors are sharing the Western Cape caseload (71 students) in addition to their provincially based institutions. This is a challenge and requires careful planning to ensure that they have time between the two visits to complete the administrative tasks that follow a field trip. The ideal would be having a dedicated student advisor supporting students studying in the Western Cape. For the second semester the student advisors will be working together on a combined workshop programme for the Western Cape students.

Priscilla Adonis, a temporary administrative assistant provided back up support to student advisors. Her tasks entailed ensuring that all the necessary documents needed for the March & May field trips were ready as well as assistance in filing all the returned documentation on students' individual files.

Charity Bafana, the programme assistant, supported student advisors with data capturing, field trip preparations, minute taking at the meetings as well as ensuring that REAP's third newsletter was ready for distribution during the March field trip. She also assisted the director with administrative tasks.

### **3.1. Programme Development**

At REAP's strategic planning session in December 2007 one of the main foci was improving programme implementation. The proposals related to selection which included study guidance for Grade 11s, and a reworked student support and development programme was adopted.

During the past six months the following areas of development were focused on:

#### **3.1.1 Student Development Programme (SDP)**

REAP's concept of student development was broadened to include activities starting in first year and progressing through to final year that focused on the development of skills and experience to succeed at their studies and find employment. It sought to formalised a peer mentoring support system for first year students in particular.

Initially two institutions were identified as partners for the pilot implementation of REAP's student development plan for 2008. It has only fully taken off at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University as the student counsellor at the University of Johannesburg left. The major component was the training of REAP senior students a first year mentors and ensuring that students attended the academic and lifeskills workshops offered at the institution. Two students, Mary Ann Engelbrecht and Sindiswa Ntshangase were trained as mentors.

Although the student development programme was only formalised with NMMU, all REAP students received the amended contract that outlined the activities for each year of study. Where possible, student advisors identified senior students who could mentor first year students at their respective institutions. The student advisor had the added responsibility of supporting their mentors who had not had any training or were not part of the formal peer support system at the institution.

REAP has a total of 23 mentors at 11 institutions mainly in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and Gauteng. Given the change of student advisors for the KZN region, senior students were informally approached to assist first years during the first term.

With the exception of the three mentors (2 at NMMU & 1 at Rhodes) who received a stipend from their institution, all the other mentors are doing it voluntarily. REAP has granted them the concession that it could replace their community service obligation.

During the March field trip, student advisors could see the benefits of first years being supported and guided by their mentors. The first years had a clear understanding of the support they would receive from REAP as well as their responsibilities. Furthermore, linking with someone who showed an interest in them, being part of a group helped them cope in their new environment as well as informing them of the support services available on their campus.

The senior students selected as mentors felt recognised by REAP and well placed to provide first years with a very hands on view of REAP given their own experience as a REAP student.



Not only have the first years benefited from the relationship and experience but the mentors as well. REAP mentors have to submit monthly reports to their student advisor. As early as March a mentor wrote:

*“I am incredibly happy that for the past month all members of the group has duly attended all workshops and given their participation during the sessions. At times they show such maturity that I actually feel like I am learning more from them than they from me”*

What emerged from the mentor reports is a clear sense of responsibility, engagement with and recognition of their mentees strengths and challenges.

The strength of the mentorship programme was evident as mentors served as a supportive bridging for our first year students leading up to REAP’s first meeting with them in March. First years were able to connect with someone familiar with REAP from the outset and who assisted them with orientation through the introduction of the resources such as financial aid and student counselling available on campus. Mentors were able to inform the first years of what they could expect in terms of REAP and vice versa. For the mentors, their engagement with their mentees and each other encouraged the development of interpersonal and leadership skills as well as working together as a team.

First year students were tasked with writing a report on their orientation experience. Mbongeni who comes from Ndumo in Kwazulu Natal related his experience as follows:

*“When I came here (PMB), it was not easy. I felt like I was in a dark cell although I had wished to come to this place. In fact I was in six’s and sevens since I was not sure of what was going to happen in the new environment... I would often do a self introspection thus asking myself silly questions like – Would I cope with the way of life in this highly civilised environment.*

*On the following week of my arrival, there comes the orientation. The daylight which was fading in my life was starting to brighten my life. The marrow was no longer constantly signalling such intimidating views in my mind. I had hoped that during this period I would make friends. I had a sigh of relief.*

*On the first day nothing much was done but we played some games just to socialise and get to know each other. On the second day we were taken by mentors to the various lecture theatres and to the various faculties and we were shown everything, no stone was left unturned. It was a busy day because we ended at around 7.30pm.*

*Moreover Rome was not built in one day.....The second week was the most fantastic of all. We had social activities which included games and the cultural evening. We had all the time in the world to mix and know each other. This really marked a turning point in my life”.*

*He goes on to “advise all fellow new students to come early and engage in this programme because it is of great help. Just imagine a case whereby you arrive in a place you know nobody and you know nothing. The first thing that invade the mind is fear of the unknown and once a person is dominated by fear s/he sees nothing. Engaging in this programme also helps because when lectures commence you know where to go.”*

The senior students bought into the SDP as they could see its benefits in helping them cope with their academic load and planning their options for employment. They supported the idea of having focused workshops for particular years of study. They did however express reservations about the challenges of managing their time effectively to complete the required tasks. Students in the Health Science faculties raised concern about attending workshops as their training takes them away from campus during the week.

In the focussed group workshop with students in Kwazulu Natal, a second year student shared with the group how she had benefited from attending the CV Writing workshop. Her concluding comment was that she was not surprised she was not contacted for positions she applied for before then.

A final year Information Technology student in the Free State who had not had a CV until he attended the workshop offered at his institution shared his positive experience of having a copy on hand when a friend employed at Transnet informed him that they were recruiting final year students.

### **3.1.2 Donor Feedback Report**

In the past senior students were requested to submit donor feedback reports each year in May. This was not a good time as their primary focus is on preparing for their mid year exams and did not prioritise this task. REAP has changed the due date to the end of the year, a more apt time for them to reflect on the past academic year. The benefit for REAP is that all students, not just the seniors will submit reports. These reports can then be submitted to the donors with our final report early in the following year.

### **3.1.3 Community service**

All REAP students have an obligation to undertake three days of community service. Although they are encouraged to return and plough back in their communities during the June vacation, the health science students in particular, stay on at the institution for extended periods to complete the practical components of their course. REAP has been flexible in recognising this as their community service as they are doing it without any payment. A fuller report of community service undertaken by the students will be provided in the next progress report.

### **3.1.4 Streamlining of monthly payments**

REAP's modest non-refundable grant is tailored to students need and enable registration, the purchase of books and technical equipment, travel and a small monthly subsistence allowance for meals and/or accommodation. Students have to request these allowances on a monthly basis. Previously payments were processed on request once the student had spoken to their student advisor. In May 2008 the payment process was changed. Students submit their financial requests by a given date to ensure that the monies are paid into their account by month end and available at the beginning of the new month. This new process allows for student advisors to effectively use the time to engage with the student issues relating to their adaptation, progress and challenges instead of finances being the primary reason for the student's contact.

### **3.1.5 Reworked application form**

REAP amended the application form for new students to include more information about the applicant's plans, study choices and personal goals.

### **3.1.6 Grade 11 Pilot Project**

Since REAP's inception, a recurring challenge has been the widespread lack of career guidance for learners wanting to further their studies at a institution of higher education resulting in an ill prepared student. Students have to wait for confirmation of a place to study and for funding to register which delays their arrival at the institution and they miss the orientation programme.

The idea of piloting a Grade 11 project was shared at the 2007 national meeting for regional representatives and pre-application forms were made available. Only 153 forms were returned from two Western Cape areas. The process was hampered by the fact that most of the forms did not have any academic results attached and that the potential applicants were not targeted as the forms were freely distributed.

At REAP's strategic planning session in December 2007 the task team working on the Grade 11 project tabled a proposal which was accepted in principle. The project's objective is to have better prepared potential REAP beneficiaries for HE studies. The process of preparation and guidance would also inform and refine REAP selection process and should in turn improve REAP's graduation rates. The project is progressing slowly. Potential applicants from the two Western Cape areas have been shortlisted and plans in place to conduct the telephonic interviews during July.

Although REAP has embarked on this project, a lot more thinking and engagement is needed before it can be implemented as an element of the selection process.

## **3.2 FIELD TRIPS**

Two field trips were conducted during the first semester, one in March and the other in May. The March trip was to orientate and contract with students whilst the May trip focused on adaptation and coping with their academics. The May visit took the form of focussed group discussions giving students an opportunity to reflect and share their learnings from their first term experiences and planning for the approaching mid-year examinations. Individual sessions were conducted with students where needed.

Student attendances at both meetings were high. Five of the 19 students who did not attend the March meeting were withdrawn from the programme, the reason being lack of contact. In May many more students (29 in total) could not meet with their student advisor as they were busy with tests.

### **3.2.1 Contracting & Orientation**

For the contracting field trip both group and individual sessions were conducted with students. Group meetings provided the opportunity for students to engage with REAP regarding the nature of REAP's support and their contractual obligations as REAP beneficiaries. REAP's financial aid package in particular

needed to be clarified as a few students initial understanding was that REAP was a fullcost bursary!

Combined contracting meetings for both first and senior students had a positive spin off. First year students were able to link with senior students doing similar courses and could learn from the seniors' experiences. Despite the many challenges they face, there are a number of support systems available to the student at the institution and at REAP that they need to utilise to facilitate their succeeding in their studies.

Students recognition that they needed to take responsibility for prioritising and managing their studies presented the platform for the introduction of REAP's detailed student development programme.

The individual sessions gave students the space to talk about personal issues and needs not easily shared in a large group. Despite the many challenges they face, their courage to succeed and use the opportunity afforded them to further their education was evident. Time was also spent with each student tailoring REAP's financial support to meet their needs. Student quickly realised that with limited financial support, they had to forego their wants and prioritise their needs. It was found that more time was needed for individual sessions with students.

Student advisors were accompanied by another staff member during the March field trip. The sharing of responsibilities, the benefit of having two people engage in discussions with institutional staff and all the sharing that followed added value to the field trip.

### **3.2.2 May Visit**

In May all student advisors, with the exception of Lynette and Charity who supported the Kwazulu Natal students, travelled unaccompanied. Although a daunting thought for Kanyisa and Phumla navigating the busy highways of Gauteng and the long winding roads of the Eastern Cape respectively, both returned with a sense of achievement.

The agenda of the May visit was to facilitate group discussions with students regarding

- (a) their challenges and explore workable intervention strategies,
- (b) preparation for the June examinations
- (c) ascertain the progress being made with regard to the student development and
- (d) brief them on their community service obligation to be undertaken in the June vacation.

The May contact meeting also provided the opportunity for REAP to obtain outstanding documents from students and complete their NSFAS loan agreement application forms. Student advisors having time to walk around institutional campuses observing student interactions, publicity around students' issues and concerns and information available on notice boards proved a valuable exercise.

The timing of the May visit is important. A problem was experienced with students' attendance where the visits were scheduled after the second week. This

is understandable as it is usually the final week of lectures leading up to the June examinations

Students worked well in groups and were at ease with each other. They were very vocal, engaged in the discussions and in some instances openly shared their personal, academic, family and health problems. There was much anxiety about the upcoming examinations and fears of failure, even exclusion, were voiced. It was a rewarding experience that much of the solutions came from students themselves. The value of having combined meetings with first and senior students was evident as it provided opportunities for learning from each others experiences.

Student advisors could observe the personal growth & development of first year students within a period of two months. Students were very appreciative of the REAP branded winter jacket given to them.

### **3.3 Student challenges that emerged during the first semester**

#### **Students with outstanding balances**

Although students are advised to monitor their fee accounts closely, some fail to do so and only discover a problem when they are not allowed to register for the new academic year because of outstanding fees.

Three students at the University of Kwazulu Natal experienced such problems. While one student managed to borrow monies to settle her account herself, the other two did not have any resources they could draw on for support and needed REAP to intervene on their behalf. They however all attended classes and have secured financial aid for the 2008 academic year.

#### **Students who don't qualify for financial aid from the institution.**

*A second year student from Kwazulu Natal registered late as she did not secure financial aid through the institution. Upon investigation it was established that although she had applied for support, she was not eligible based on her family's combined income. The difficulty though is that her parents are not married and her father, although employed does not support her in any way. The institution was of the opinion that the student would have to take action against her father to ensure that he supports her in her studies - a lengthy and time consuming process that she can least afford. With the support of family members she was able to register. Her applications at a number of financial institutions for loans have been unsuccessful. Despite her mother raising a personal loan of R10000, she still owes the university R22 000.*

#### **Lack of student accommodation**

Many first year students are confronted with the reality of arriving at the institution only to find that they have not secured accommodation. In some instances, it is because the student did not apply for residence accommodation. However at all institutions the demand for student residence far exceeds what is available.

*The excitement of being granted support to further one's studies at a tertiary institution can easily be lost when confronted with the reality of not having a place to stay. A student from Ingwavuma in Kwazulu Natal in desperation resorted to staying at a shelter in Gauteng. In Port Elizabeth a student had to return home once he had registered until he secured accommodation in Motherwell. As a result he missed the orientation for new students as well as some of the initial lectures. REAP's student advisors actively assisted the students by liaising with the institution, recognised private residences and enlisting the help of senior students.*

It can take students as much as the first term to secure affordable accommodation during which time they have moved from one place to another. The preoccupation with finding accommodation most definitely impacts on their ability to focus on their studies.

Private accommodation is expensive; affordable accommodation comes at a cost of living in overcrowded unsafe environments and far away from campuses. This brings along a range of challenges related to personal safety, not being able to stay late to access campus facilities such as libraries and computer laboratories as they rely on public transport or shuttle services that operate until a certain time.

Accommodation closer to campus is usually the most expensive, REAP is presented with the dilemma of *"whether the student should stay at a comfortable acceptable place and be faced with a huge loan at the end of the year or must they sacrifice and stay where it is cheaper at the expense of their comfort and basic rights to decent housing"* (Kanyisa, student advisor for Gauteng).

Students living off campus inevitably need additional support to supplement the shortfall not covered by their institution's limited or lack of provision for private accommodation as well as the daily costs of commuting to campus.

Although the ideal would be for REAP to lobby for the reservation of spaces for our students and identify affordable accommodation, we also need to allow some flexibility when budgeting for private accommodation costs.

### **Students living in residence**

Students in residence have their fair share of challenges ranging from problems with their room mate not respecting their space, having personal belongings and food stolen as well as not sharing the same values of cleanliness. Many university residences are situated off campus and working late on campus where there is no shuttle service is problematic.

### **The cost of books and printing**

Lecturers require students to purchase their prescribed textbooks. Students face challenges ranging from institutions not making any provision for book monies as part of financial aid, waiting up to six weeks for the books to be ordered by the bookshops when they run out of stock to not being able to sell or buy second hand books as books change or students opt to buy the latest editions.

At institutions in remote areas of the Eastern Cape, students either travelled to East London or relied on lecturers to purchase their books. Wits University has a system of students borrowing books from their departments which they return at the end of the year but at times the demand is greater than the supply and books may not be the latest editions.

With a limited budget from both REAP and the institution's financial aid, students are struggling to purchase all the books they need. Furthermore, they have to download coursework reading and lecture notes from the institutions website at a cost and need credit to do so. Where funds are available in the student's individual budget allocation, REAP has made provision for a small printing and photocopying allowance.

### **Bridging funds while students await payment from the institution**

Students who have secured financial aid from the institution have to wait a month or two before book and meals payments are made to them. Students rely on REAP to assist them particularly at the beginning of each term.

A common challenge echoed across campuses was that they had to stretch their budget even further to cope with the rising food and transport costs.

REAP's access package (grant has different categories of expenses. This will be reviewed to provide flexibility in meeting students' needs. Increased access packages will be budgeted for in 2009.

### **Student protests and disruptions on campus**

Disruption on a number of campuses throughout the country as students protested about not being able to register due to outstanding fee accounts, lack of student housing, lack of academic staff and the racial incident at UFS.

### **Student coping with electronic modes of communication**

First years in particular had to learn to use the computer and access information on line or via email. For many this was a new experience. However, a disabling factor is the insufficient access or availability of such technology and resources at the institution. A senior student at Durban University of Technology was asked to assist first years set up their personal email addresses. REAP students are encouraged to use the email to communicate with or forward important information to their student advisor to build their confidence as well as improve their writing skills. Load shedding across the country affected students attending classes and using the computer facilities for the completion and submission of tasks and assignments.

### **Racism**

This emerged in discussions in the Free State and Gauteng. At the University of Johannesburg first year students are still subjected to initiation rituals where black students are expected to clean the rooms of seniors and wash their dishes. Students have observed that senior white students target black students for these tasks.

### **Meeting with REAP**

Although most of the students honoured their meetings and appointments with their student advisor a common concern voiced were the timing of our engagements, more particularly group meetings as these happened during class time. Students were anxious about missing lectures and having to catch up. Although students are keen to meet over weekends, to have minimal disruption to their academic programme, this is not always possible where the student advisor has to cover many campuses spread across the province. A further challenge is that meeting facilities at institutions only available during working hours for security purposes. Alternate meeting venues have to be found when meetings with students extend beyond the institution's office hours.

Our student advisor in Gauteng met with a student until 6pm one evening only to find that they had been locked in and had to call an emergency number to be let out! Furthermore meeting students in the evening is not always practical for those who live off campus and the safety issue comes to the fore.

### **Meeting students studying at distant/satellite campuses**

REAP is still supporting continuing students at Walter Sisulu University (Mthatha), Fort Hare (Alice), University of the North West (Potchefstroom & Mafikeng) and the University of Limpopo (Polokwane). Meeting these students at their campuses during field trips has proven difficult given the distances to be travelled.

With the exception of a visit to students in Polokwane, students in the Eastern Cape and North West had to travel to East London and van der Bijl Park respectively to meet with their student advisors during March. For all these students it meant missing one day of classes. Students at satellite campuses are disadvantaged especially when workshops are planned for students in institutional hubs.

### **Students with other bursaries**

Some of our students are fortunate to source fullcost bursaries for the duration of their studies. However, they too have their fair share of challenges. A second year Agricultural Engineering student being supported by the Free State Dept of Agriculture has not received any payment for the 2008 academic year. He is an orphan who without REAP's meal allowance would not have been able to support himself.

### **Issue of language and part time classes**

Students continue to struggle with English as a medium of instruction where lecturers talk fast making it difficult for them to follow, understand and take notes. Although classes are presented in English at previously Afrikaans institutions, at times questions are asked and answered in Afrikaans, leaving them at a disadvantage and feeling excluded. Some courses are presented in Afrikaans and text books are in English. Students with neither English nor Afrikaans as a home language find coping with Afrikaans lectures an even greater challenge. Students have to refer to English text books for additional information.



At Fort Hare a final year student has to attend evening part time classes because of the low number of enrolled fulltime students. The challenge he faces is that he is unable to consult lecturers during the day as they are unavailable.

### **Merged institutions sharing resources**

Students at under resourced campuses have to visit another campus to access libraries and computer facilities. Students at the better resourced campuses have to cope with the influx of students and the sharing of their resources. At some institutions, where shuttle services are provided between campuses, students say they are inadequate and lead to overcrowding and anger. At another institution the shuttle service has been terminated and students have to rely on public transport to commute between campuses.

### **Challenges implementing REAP's Student Development Plan (SDP)**

Although students see the benefits of attending workshops, at times it clashes with their class time table. It is apparent that where students have not been linked to the student counselling and or academic development programmes at the institution in a formal way, students have not followed through on REAP student development programme.

REAP recognises we have to formalise our agreements and partnerships with support services at institutions to ensure greater student participation.

With the exception of one institution, REAP has an informal system of peer support operating amongst REAP students. REAP working towards ensuring that there is a peer support system at each campus by engaging with institutions for REAP mentors to be incorporated into their existing peer mentoring programme for training and support.

Students have found the task of vacation or weekend employment a further challenge. Their major concern was that employment opportunities in their communities back home were scarce. They were encouraged to look at weekend rather than vacation employment, or being prepared to sacrifice part of the vacation to remain in town to gain the necessary work experience.

### **3.4 Liaison with institutional staff and external service providers**

The building and strengthening of the existing partnerships with institutional staff and external workshop providers is key to the success of our holistic programme of support. The institutional liaisons are vital as REAP needs to keep abreast of changes and new developments at the institution.

During the March and May field trips, contact was made with both the student counselling and financial aid departments. Meetings and discussions with student counselling focussed on REAP's programme of student development with particular reference to the provision of career assessments, presentation of workshops as well as establishing the nature of their peer mentoring programme. These have been ongoing discussions. The ongoing engagement with student counselling staff has helped REAP's programme team crystallise what it wants to achieve with regard to career assessments for first years in particular.

There was unanimous support from the institutions student counselling departments to partner REAP with the implementation of the student development programme. At some institutions they were willing to facilitate weekly support group meetings for REAP students or workshops as requested.

Although the peer mentoring programme at institutions did not always form part of student counselling, when approached they were keen to accommodate senior students identified by REAP as mentors in their peer mentoring training programme. At an institution where mentors were also linked in terms of course of study, they were prepared to assign mentors for REAP students. REAP therefore needs to be clear the role REAP mentors will play and should guard against the students having more than one mentor.

At financial aid the focus was on how the institution could assist REAP with the completion of the NSFAS loan agreement forms in terms of the National Credit Act. Although the staff was very willing to assist at most of the institutions, this did not go as smoothly as anticipated. Where possible student advisors used their May contact meeting with students to complete the loan agreement forms.

During the May visit, student advisors met with staff in the Academic Development Departments to ascertain the support available to first year students in particular. It was encouraging to learn that some academic development departments monitor students' progress closely and provide early interventions to students identified as being at risk. The academic development department is certainly an important link for REAP when engaging with the academic challenges of supporting our students.

Given students' challenge regarding on campus accommodation highlighted earlier in this report, meetings with student housing departments at most of the institutions were also prioritised for the May visit. Although REAP has had a positive response at some institutions willing to reserve places for our students, they have requested applicants details as early as September. REAP's shortlisting of prospective students starts in September but confirmation of support is only done once the student has had an offer of a place to study.

Another positive development has been Kanyisa, the student advisor for Gauteng's engagement with the Thuthuka, a project of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA). She has successfully negotiated for REAP students following the chartered accounting programme at the University of Johannesburg to join their support programme which encompasses extra academic support in addition to the development of academic and life skills.

These initial meetings were fruitful and point to opportunities for REAP for greater collaboration.

In implementing the student development plan REAP student advisors needs to forge closer links with the various institutional support programmes, such as academic and career development, which extend beyond student counselling and wellness at their respective institutions. As student advisors continue to establish new contacts at their institutions, more time is needed to maintain and strengthen

these relationships with the aim of them leading to strong partnerships. For REAP to effectively have a small staff

### 3.5 Workshops

During the first semester the workshops focused primarily on the development of academic skills especially time management and examination preparation for the first years and planning and goal setting for the senior students.

<b>Institutional hub</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Service Providers</b>
All centres	Orientation to HE & Campus life & services available Contracting re REAP obligations and financial aid including NSFAS	REAP student advisors
Gauteng	Sexuality & Goal Setting Motivation and how to ask for what you want	Hector Motau (Marang Consulting) Prof Jonathan Jansen
Pretoria	Sex, relationships and goal setting	Hector Motau
Bloemfontein	Motivation (all students) Study Skills HIV/AIDS and Sexuality	Thabiso Mathibedi CUT Student Counselling Centre Erica Raolane (Marang Consulting)
Port Elizabeth	Sex and Sexuality	REAP student advisor
East London	Relationships and Voluntary Counselling & Testing	REAP student advisor
Grahamstown	Relationships and Voluntary Counselling & Testing	REAP student advisor
Polokwane	Sex and Relationships	Dr Sathekge

Students were encouraged to attend the academic development workshops being presented at their respective institutions. They found these workshops motivational but mentioned that they preferred the joint workshops, especially those focusing on lifeskills to be organised for all REAP students as they enjoyed the interaction with students from other institutions.

REAP did not arrange for any workshops in Cape Town and Kwazulu Natal for the first semester given the absence of a dedicated student advisor. During the May visit, the focus group meetings in Kwazulu Natal had elements of team building incorporated.

KZN students requested a combined workshop for all REAP students. This will be explored for the August field trip.

Students have enjoyed having workshops facilitated by external service providers and benefited from engaging with them as positive role models. The added value

of having external facilitators conduct lifeskills workshops in particular is evident in students' requests and feedback.

### 3.6 Budgeting and NSFAS Administration

The implementation of the new NSFAS procedures has delayed our submission of loan applications. To date we have only been able to process loans for 21 students. REAP plans to submit its final loan applications by the end of October to ensure that fees are settled by the end of the year.

## 4. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

### 4.1 Interim Mid-year Results

<b>Preliminary pass rate: 82%</b> <b>(Students who have passed half or more of their courses)</b>	
Females: 85%	Males: 77%
First Years: 76%	Continuing: 87%
University pass rate: 79%	University of Technology: 87%

At the time of finalising this report results of 284 of the 330 students were known

#### Of the 284:

No	%	Commentary
234	82%	Passed half or more of courses taken 72 first years, 162 continuing students
134	47%	Passed all their courses 37 first years 97 continuing students
50	18%	Failed more than half courses taken
8		Doing in-service training
74		Obtained 130 distinctions

- 1 student withdrew from his studies during the first semester (deregistered for personal reasons)
- The primary reason for outstanding results is where students are doing year courses and only write their examinations at the end of the year. Students have to go to their respective departments and lecturers to obtain a record of their progress marks which is not updated immediately on the system.

REAP has three top mid-year achievers who each obtained 5 distinctions. They are:

1. Majika is a first year, engineering student at NMMU. He passed 5 of 6 semester courses with distinctions
2. Lucyiano Visagie, a second year B Accounting student at University of Free State wrote 11 semester courses and obtained 5 distinctions
3. Rynold Deli, a second year Law student at Free State University passed 5 of 7 semester courses with distinction

Three students obtained 4 distinctions, while 10 and 16 students obtained 3 and 2 distinctions respectively.

#### **4.2 Conditional students**

For the first semester 28 students were placed on conditional status as they failed their final examinations in 2007. Students are only given one chance to improve their academic performance by committing to seek additional support which include supplementary instruction, tutorial attendance, consultation with the lecturers as well as the participation in academic development skills workshops and counselling; they understand that REAP will withdraw support if they do not meet our academic requirements. To date 13 students have been reinstated as full beneficiaries, 5 have had support withdrawn and a final decision is still pending for 10 students.

#### **4.3 Inservice training students**

Eight students spent their first semester completing their in-service training placements. Six will continue with their in-service training for the second semester as they need 12 months practical experience in order to graduate. Two students will return to their institutions for the second semester to complete the remaining theoretical courses needed for their diplomas.

REAP supported them by facilitating their registration. Most students received a monthly stipend from their in-service training company. However, REAP has had to assist five students with some allowance to cover either meals, travel and or private accommodation.

### **5. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION FOR 2009**

One of the recommendations from the 2007 national meeting for regional representatives was the earlier distribution of application forms. Amendments were made to the application form and distributed to representatives in May. REAP is looking for ways to streamline the selection process. A national meeting is planned for July to once again acknowledge the regional representatives contribution and provide further training to improve and streamline the selection process.

### **6. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS**

A full Board meeting took place in April 2008. The internal appointments of Director and Programme Development Manager were confirmed as a co-directorship for the period June to the end of September to ensure that all responsibilities were covered.

As of the 1 June 2008 Clairissa Arendse took over the directorship from Glenda Glover. Clairissa's leadership, wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience of the REAP programme will certainly take the organisation to greater heights.

REAP is delighted to have retained Glenda's skills, knowledge and expertise as she moves into the new and exciting position of Programme Development, which will give REAP the opportunity to play a more significant role in the Higher Education sector.

Glenda has led REAP since 2003 weathering many challenges along the way. This did not deter her commitment to achieve the organisation's vision and mission. The REAP Board and staff members are very appreciative of the contribution Glenda has made to the organisation both internally and externally. Under her leadership, REAP has established itself in the higher education sector, gained valuable partnerships with donors, community based & higher education stakeholders. Her hard work and efforts in leading the organisation culminated in REAP receiving a Gold Impumelelo Award in May 2008.

The Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust rewards exceptional projects, which involve partnerships with the public sector that enhance the quality of life of poor communities in innovative ways. Approximately R1 million is distributed annually to the most exceptional award winning poverty reduction projects. The programme is based on the core value that government has the primary responsibility for the delivery of social services. However, government does not have to provide all these services alone. To make an impact on improving service delivery in South Africa, effective collaboration is required between government, the private sector and civil society.

Plans are underway to have the vacant Programme Manager position filled as soon as possible to release Clairissa into the full time position of Director.

## **6.1 Staff training & support**

Staff had the opportunity to attend various training sessions relating to management, career guidance, the Financial Aid Practitioners of South Africa conference as well as a research capacity building workshop.

Following the May field trip a debriefing session facilitated by a Community Development Resource Association consultant was held 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.

## **6.2 Finances**

REAP has been in an extremely fortunate position in terms of donor funding for the past two years. Our funding base has grown from 15 to 26 donors to date. Our objective to sustain the financial position of REAP.

The utilisation of available funds has not been without its challenges. The nature of our activities is unique in relation to any other normal activity expenditure within the NGO arena. Financial management, therefore has had to play a vital role in strategising around issues of underspending, together with programme

management ensuring that while our students needs are met financially, they are taken care of holistically, creating success all round, not only for REAP, but most importantly ensuring that our donors receive good reporting and REAP achieves results.

## **6.3 Research**

**6.3.1 Research Project:** The year long research looking at “*Factors that enable success for disadvantaged Higher Education Students*” undertaken by Research and Academic Development with financial support from Irish Aid is nearing completion. The final report is in the pipeline.

**6.3.2 Scoping and feasibility study:** Lord and Lady Laidlaw Foundation requested REAP to consider supporting students from the informal and townships of South Peninsula of Cape Town. Tracey Bailey, an independent researcher has undertaken this study on REAP’s behalf as we aware of our limited capacity in this regard.

## **CONCLUSION**

The first semester at REAP has not been without its challenges highlighted in the report. Although some of the issues are and can be addressed at an organisational level, others require REAP assuming a lobby and advocacy role.

The highlights have been the implementation of decisions taken at the strategic planning meeting in December 2007 to refine and improve REAP’s selection and support programme to enhance results. However, a proud moment for REAP was receiving the gold Impumelelo Innovation Public-Partnership Award.

A full programme of activities is planned for the second semester: the August meeting with students, workshops, the strengthening of the selection process for 2009 which will include a national meeting for our regional representatives as well as reporting, sharing and debating with stakeholders our research findings.

REAP continues to strive to develop and improve it’s support programme through the building of partnerships with institutions and other stakeholders. For REAP to achieve this, there is sound reason for reducing both the number students and institutions supported.

REAP thanks our Board members for their continued support and our donor partners for their financial support which has assisted 330 students to access and continue with their studies at higher education institutions.

## Student Statistics

GENDER	NEW	CONTINUING	TOTAL
Male	63	105	168
Female	53	109	162
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>330</b>

### Institutional Breakdown

PROVINCE	INSTITUTION	TOTAL	NEW		CONTINUING	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	Walter Sisulu	7	0	0	4	3
	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Univ	19	5	5	2	7
	Fort Hare Univ	3	0	0	3	0
	Rhodes Univ	11	3	2	3	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Free State</b>	Central Univ of Tech	19	6	2	7	4
	Univ Free State	18	0	5	7	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>

<b>Gauteng</b>	Wits Univ	17	7	3	3	4
	Univ of Jo'burg	32	9	9	12	2
	Pretoria Univ	20	4	2	7	7
	Tshwane Univ of Tech	20	3	1	8	8
	Vaal Univ of Tech	6	0	0	5	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>

<b>Kwazulu Natal</b>	Durban Univ.of Tech	21	3	3	7	8
	Mangosutho Tech	2	0	0	2	0
	Univ of Kwazulu Natal	43	9	9	5	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>

<b>Limpopo</b>	Univ Limpopo	10	0	0	4	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>North West</b>	North West Univ	11	0	0	9	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Western Cape</b>	CPUT	20	2	5	4	9
	UCT	16	5	3	7	1
	Univ. Stellenbosch	13	5	2	2	4
	Univ. Western Cape	22	2	2	4	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>

Institutional Hub	University		Univ of Technology		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Bloemfontein	7	11	13	6	<b>37</b>
Cape Town	25	26	6	14	<b>71</b>
Durban	14	29	12	11	<b>66</b>



Eastern Cape	16	12	4	8	<b>40</b>
Gauteng/Pretoria	29	22	29	15	<b>95</b>
Limpopo	4	6	0	0	<b>10</b>
North West	9	2	0	0	<b>11</b>
TOTAL	<b>104</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>330</b>
	<b>212</b>		<b>118</b>		

### Summary table of Streams by Gender and Institution

Stream	University		Univ Tech		Total		Overall
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<b>Arts</b>	4	5		1	4	6	<b>10</b>
<b>Built Enviro</b>	3			4	3	4	<b>7</b>
<b>Business</b>		1	2	4	2	5	<b>7</b>
<b>Commerce</b>	24	22	12	11	36	33	<b>69</b>
<b>Education</b>	5	4		1	5	5	<b>10</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	12	3	33	9	45	12	<b>57</b>
<b>Humanities</b>	4	16			4	16	<b>20</b>
<b>Law</b>	9	10			9	10	<b>19</b>
<b>Management</b>	2	6	8	10	10	16	<b>26</b>
<b>Medical</b>	11	26	2	7	13	33	<b>46</b>
<b>Science</b>	28	14	4	5	32	19	<b>51</b>
<b>Technology</b>	2	1	3	2	5	3	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>162</b>	
	<b>212</b>		<b>118</b>		<b>330</b>		

### Study Streams grouped by Field of Study, Institution and Gender

Stream	University	M	F	Univ. Technology	M	F
<b>Arts (10)</b>	BA	3	3	Journalism		1
	Communication		1			
	Drama		1			
	Journalism	1				

<b>Built Environ (7)</b>	B Sc Construction Studies	1		Building		3
	B Sc Property Studies	1		Town & Regional Plan		1
	B Sc QS	1				

<b>Business (7)</b>	B. Business Mgmt		1	Marketing	2	4
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<b>Commerce (69)</b>	B Accounts	4	1	Accounting	2	2
	B Bus Sc (Act Sc)	1		NHC: Accounting	9	3
	B Bus Sc (Fin.)	2		Cost & Mgmt Accounting		1
	B Com	5	7	Internal Auditing		4
	B Com Acc	9	12	Financial Info Systems		1
	B Com (IT)	1	1	Taxation	1	
	B Economics	2	1			

<b>Education (10)</b>	B Education	3	3	B Education		1
	BA Education	2	1			

<b>Engineering (57)</b>	B Eng (Chem.)	1	1	Chemical Engineering	2	
	B Eng (Elect.)	2	2	Civil Engineering	5	4
	B Eng (Mech)	3		Computer Systems Eng	2	
	B Sc Engineering	2		Electrical Engineering	14	3
	B Sc Agric Eng	1		Industrial Engineering		2
	B Sc Civil Eng	1		Mechanical Engineering	7	
	B Sc Mining Eng	2		Metallurgical Engineering	1	
				Mining Engineering	2	

<b>Humanities (20)</b>	Social Work	3	7			
	Social Science		5			
	BA Politics		1			
	BA Psychology	1	2			
	B Comm Devmt		1			

<b>Law (19)</b>	BA Law	4				
	LLB	5	10			

<b>Management (26)</b>	B Admin	1	4	Agric Management	2	1
	B Com HRM	1	2	Hospitality Management		1
				Human Resource Mgmt	2	4
				Logistics	1	
				Management	1	1
				Public Management		1
				Public Relations		2
				Sport Administration	1	
				Travel & Tourism Mgmt	1	

<b>Medical (46)</b>	BSc Com Health		1	Biomedical Technology	1	1
	Dietetics		2	Dental Technology		1
	Medicine	3	5	Emergency Medical Care	1	
	Nursing	4	11	Homeopathy		1
	Occupational Therapy		1	Radiography		3
	Optometry	1		Podiatry		1
	Pharmacy	3	2			
	Physiotherapy		1			
	Speech Therapy		1			
	B Sc Medical Sc		2			

<b>Science (51)</b>	B Agriculture	6	1	Analytical Chemistry		1
	B Science	7	7	Environmental Health	1	2
	B Sc Actuarial Sc	3		Food Technology	1	2
	B Sc Biodiversity		1	Landscape Technology	1	
	B Sc Biological Sc	1		Nature Conservation	1	
	B Sc Biomed Sc	1	1			
	B Sc Biotechnology		1			
	B Sc Chemical Sc	1	1			
	B Sc Environ Sc		1			
	B Sc Geology	8	1			
	Dip Animal Health	1				

<b>Technology (8)</b>	B Sc (Computer Sc)	1		Information Technology	3	2
	B Sc (IT)	1	1			

### Summary of Students' Province of Origin

Province	NEW			CONTINUING			TOTAL		
	Male	Female	Tot	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Eastern Cape	11	14	25	18	22	40	29	36	<b>65</b>
Free State	4	3	7	16	7	23	20	10	<b>30</b>
Gauteng	4	2	6	4	2	6	8	4	<b>12</b>
Kwazulu Natal	16	12	28	17	31	48	33	43	<b>76</b>
Limpopo	12	6	18	19	15	34	31	21	<b>52</b>
Mpumalanga	1	1	2	3	4	7	4	5	<b>9</b>
Northern Cape	5	8	13	6	12	18	11	20	<b>31</b>
North West	3	3	6	16	5	21	19	8	<b>27</b>
Western Cape	7	4	11	6	11	17	13	15	<b>28</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>330</b>

PROVINCE	STUDENT NOS			%
	NEW	CONT	TOTAL	
EASTERN CAPE	25	40	65	20
FREE STATE	7	23	30	9
GAUTENG	6	6	12	4
KWA ZULU NATAL	28	48	76	23
LIMPOPO	18	34	52	16
MPUMALANGA	2	7	9	3
NORTHERN CAPE	13	18	31	9
NORTH WEST	6	21	27	8
WESTERN CAPE	11	17	28	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>330</b>	

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>HOMETOWNS</b>
<b>EASTERN CAPE</b>	Addo, Aliwal North, Bityi, Burgersdorp, Cathcart, Cofimvaba, Dimbaza, Duncan Village, Dutywa, Ezibeleni, Graaf Reinet, Grahamstown, Herschel, Humansdorp, Idutywa, Ilinge, Khayelitsha, Keiskammahoek, Kingwilliamstown, Libode, Lusikisiki, Matatiele, Middelburg, Molteno, Mount Frere, Mqanduli, Mthatha, Nqamakwe, Palmietfontein, Queenstown, Qumbu, Sterkspruit, Timane, Tsomo, Whittlesea
<b>FREE STATE</b>	Bethlehem, Botshabelo, Hertzogville, Ladybrand, Maokeng, Motse-Thabong, Sasolburg, Thaba Nchu, Thembalihle, Theronville, Villiers, Vrede, Witsieshoek, Zamdela, Zastron
<b>GAUTENG</b>	Mapopane, Shoshanguve, Tembisa, Rosslyn, Kromkuil, Klipgat
<b>KWAZULU NATAL</b>	Bergville, Bothas Hill, Chithwa Village, Dalton, Donnybrook, Elandskop, Escourt, Ezakheni, Ezimpisini, Greytown, Imbali, Ingwavuma, Jozini, Kokstad, Kwangwanase, Ladysmith, Listar Farm, Madadeni, Maluti, Margate, Mariannhill, Merrivale, Mooi River, Ndumo, Newcastle, Nqutu, Osziweni, Pietermaritzburg, Port Shepstone, Richmond, Qotho, Ubombo, Umzimkulu, Umzinto, Vryheid, Wartburg, Zwelibomvu
<b>LIMPOPO</b>	Apel, Atok, Boleu, Driekop, Dwarsriver, Ga-ramokgopa, Giyani, Humulani, Koloti, Kutama, Lenyenye, Letaba, Lwamondo, Mafarana, Mahwelerens, Makgodu, Makonde, Moetladimo, Mokopane, Motetema, Mushung, Muwaweni, Polokwane, Sekhukhune, Seshego, Sibasa, Sifahla, Sinthumule, Steelpoort, Thohoyandou, Tshilwavhusiku, Tzaneen
<b>MPUMULANGA</b>	Groblersdal, Hazyview, Hlalanikahle, Hlukvukani, Kriel, Moganyana/Moganyaka, Nebo, Schulzental
<b>NORTHERN CAPE</b>	Concordia, de Aar, Ipokeng, Keimoes, Kimberley, Mankurwane, Nababeep, Okiep, Phutanang, Port Nolloth, Steinkopf, Upington, Vergenoeg
<b>NORTH WEST</b>	Brits, Garankuwa, Jericho, Jouberton, Klerksdorp, Lenatong, Maboloka, Magong, Mmakau, Mogwase, Silverkrans, Ramatlabama, Taung, Witkleigat,
<b>WESTERN CAPE</b>	Bongolethu, Bridgton, Ceres, Citrusdal, Gansbaai, Genadendal, George, Hawston, Hermanus, Knysna, Lamberts Bay, Malmesbury, Montagu, Mossel Bay, Oudtshoorn, Paternoster, Piketburg, Plettenberg Bay, Saldanha.