



Southern
New Hampshire
University



UPEARN

IMPACT REPORT 2022

by Hylton Bergh, UpLearn Programme Manager

OVERVIEW

UpLearn is the Scalabrini Centre's higher education initiative and forms part of Southern New Hampshire's Global Education Movement (GEM). SNHU programmes and tuition-based scholarships are accessed by refugees and people on the move in Cape Town, South Africa through this partnership between SCCT and SNHU.

In 2022, UpLearn underwent some structural and leadership changes that has allowed the programme to review its objective, of not only providing academic support and resources for students, but also developing refugee leadership through access to tertiary education. Students are being tasked to become more accountable for their studies and responsible for their own learning.

- Following the lifting of lockdown restrictions, we opened up the lab to its full capacity and students were encouraged to make use of this facility. A major focus was on ensuring continuous support to students with coaches and lab tutors always in attendance. Students are provided with insights through tutoring (in-person and group) sessions into feedback on submitted projects and content related issues.
- The Group Coaching model has become a stalwart in the methodology employed. Introduced in 2022, this model better cultivates peer-to-peer engagement, which in turn, promotes leadership.
- In April 2022, UpLearn launched the Continuous Learning Space (CLS) course in collaboration with Employment Access. Enrolled students at (SNHU) can access this competency-based programme for a refresher on mathematics and academic English if they need it. Non-degree candidates are also able to join CLS and are assessed as part of admissions to SNHU degree programmes.
- We encouraged our students to get involved in various school activities such as participating in graduation celebration events, peer-to-peer emotional support, gender-based violence interventions, World Refugee Day celebrations, and Girltrek Fitness Campaign. As a result of these activities (some of which were led by students) a culture of inclusiveness and welcoming was created where students felt empowered, responsible, and accountable.
- A Student Representative Council (SRC) was formed to provide a student-led space for students to give feedback. The elected SRC members work with UpLearn directly to funnel feedback to the programme. This has helped the team to improve the service we provide.



HIGHLIGHTS

- With the help of the student community, UpLearn celebrated the graduation of 68 students in 2022. The third of its kind, the graduation took place in June 2022, at St Agnes Hall, Woodstock in Cape Town. Graduates, together with family, friends and invited guests were welcomed by the UpLearn manager, who acknowledged the presence of academic dignitaries like Dr. Adrian Haugabrook, Vice President and Managing Director of Social Impact Collective at SHNU and Mrs. Rachael Sears, Vice President and Executive Director of GEM. Other attendees included representatives from UNHCR, Scalabrini Centre, the Scalabrini fathers and GEM Hub employees. The 68 degrees were awarded in three different concentrations: Logistics and Operations Management, Business Communication Management, and Healthcare Management. Rachael Sears handed out the awards to the elated graduates. Joy and gratitude was felt by all 200 guests and the day will not be forgotten.
- 85% of students who completed CLS and are now enrolled in the Associate of Science program are making substantial academic progress.
- UpLearn as part of the Scalabrini Centre joined the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium (CLCC) Community of Practice task force. As a member of the CoP taskforce, we contributed to the development of the CoP concept note and co-led a webinar introducing CoP to CLCC members. The Scalabrini Centre's Executive Director represented UpLearn at CLCC Conference held in Copenhagen.

IMPACT

33 AA GRADUATES
35 BA GRADUATES



35

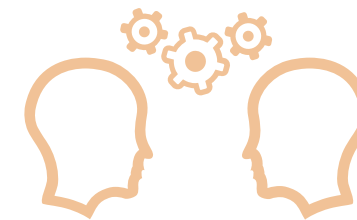
INTERNSHIPS
COMPLETED IN 2021

3000

IN LAB TUTORIAL
SESSIONS

67

GROUP COACHING
SESSIONS COMPLETED



37

COMPLETED CLS



88

ADMISSIONS FOR 2022



ALL ROADS LED TO UNIVERSITY

From Bashombana's first day at university in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to attaining his qualification at UpLearn in 2022, the road to completing his degree was a long and onerous one. Bashombana's pursuit of a university education was filled with barriers, but he refused to give it up. Making use of the support structures within the UpLearn team, and his own grit and determination, Bashombana can finally say that he is a university graduate.

A DREAM DERAILED

Bashombana completed his high school career in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and was set on his journey toward becoming a doctor. Sadly, in his first year of studying medicine, Bashombana was forced to press pause on his dreams as the political instability in DRC forced him to leave home in search of safety. This led him to South Africa, where he was hoping to be able to continue his studies.

To pay for his university fees, he needed an income but once in South Africa, Bashombana struggled to find employment. Eventually, Bashombana found a job as a security guard, but the job was not well paid. He then sought out the help of various bursaries and scholarship schemes for funding. Unfortunately, these attempts were rejected - in South Africa, public tertiary funding opportunities are only available to South Africans and private funding is not easy to come by.

This forced Bashombana to make the difficult decision to stop pursuing his education. "It was impossible for me to start thinking first of being at the university before having money for rent and food." He had to move forward with life in a different way. "I decided to live my life. I had a family. I got married and had my first child."

Although Bashombana's journey took a different route, he never stopped thinking about studying. "I told myself that if it would require that I sit in the same class as my daughter, I would still try to have a university degree".

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A DECISION MADE FOR FAMILY

In a short space of time, Bashombana worked his way up from the security guard of a factory to the factory shop manager. This gave him the confidence to approach the company he was working for to fund his studies, and they agreed. Bashombana could finally press play on his dreams again and registered to study Logistics and Management through [UNISA](#).

In Bashombana's first semester at UNISA, the company that he was working for went into liquidation and shut its doors. He was retrenched and forced to halt his studies, again. "From there, I told myself I am not going to speak about school anymore. I had a family to look after, so I had to look for any work that I could find." And that was what Bash did. He went on to work in various industries, finding mostly contract work, for the next little while.

THE FOURTH ATTEMPT

In 2018, a friend of Bashombana's contacted him about an opportunity to study through Scalabrini's UpLearn Programme - UpLearn supports students through academic coaching and leadership development on a competency-based degree with Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) Global Education Movement. Would this be the time that it worked out? Again, without wasting any time, Bashombana applied to UpLearn and was accepted. By this stage, Bashombana was driving for Uber. This allowed him some flexibility to study while being able to support his family, but it was not without its challenges.

Bashombana's family had grown to four - with his wife struggling to find employment, he was the sole breadwinner. Uber drivers earn their income on the road - being at the UpLearn lab to use the computers meant losing out on driving time and the money that could have been earned then. Bashombana persisted and "by the skin of my teeth", he passed his first two years (Associate of Arts degree).

The second half of his degree turned out to be the most challenging.

A TIME OF GRIEF AND GRIT

It was the year 2020 and for Bashombana like many people, the lockdown meant no income. With the stress of no money coming in, Bashombana struggled to concentrate on his studies. Tragically during this time, Bashombana's brother passed away, and together with his pregnant wife, they lost their baby eight months into their pregnancy. Bashombana and his family were living with a mixture of grief and stress, but he was not going to give up! Instead he tapped into the support structures available to him.

Bashombana credits the support that he received from UpLearn for getting him through. "At this time, we were offered laptops which made it easier to work from home. We also received data that allowed us to submit our projects remotely. Most importantly, the follow-ups from the coaches made sure we remained on track. I must especially mention [to] Christine Kalala, who was my coach then. At the time, I told her I was giving up as everything was not going well. Her advice kept me grounded until I finished the programme." The UpLearn Team was a pillar of strength for Bashombana during this difficult time. The Welfare Team also stepped in by providing him with food assistance.

A UNIVERSITY GRADUATE

Bashombana now holds a bachelor's degree in management with a concentration in Operations and Logistics. He remains a familiar face within UpLearn, as he volunteers his time to help coach the current cohort of UpLearn students. "I think that is what motivates me to always come here, despite the financial challenges that I might have, to give back to this programme. I now have this degree that will increase my chances of being employed somewhere, but the programme itself also teaches you other things, like how to respect people. Even if I don't get a job with it, it changed me as a man".

LOOKING FORWARD...

- In 2023, using both the in-lab support, tutorials, and the coaching group methodology, UpLearn intends to facilitate problem-solving around technology, language, and social barriers by transferring important skills that will make students more responsible and independent. This will create avenues for peer support while linking students to consistent personal and academic support.
- We are planning to work closely with the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the student community to enhance student empowerment, and remove barriers to inclusiveness by continuing to increase student participation and volunteerism in the programme.
- By incorporating UpLearn into the Employment Access Programme, we will establish strategies aimed at fostering increased collaboration between the programme's two arms. This will ensure that prospective students are directed towards UpLearn as a pathway to advance their education, and that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in the workforce post-graduation.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930075335) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).

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