1000 South African High School Graduates to Access Tuition-Free Degrees Online

University of the People's (UoPeople.edu) President, Shai Reshef has announced 1 000 places for South African students at the non-profit, tuition-free, accredited, online American university for 2015. The decision comes following the news of matric results in early January pointing to an education crisis in South Africa.

South Africa's 2014 school pass rates of final year students were recently released, indicating a discouraging drop for the first time in five years after changes to the education system. Low quality educational standards have constrained growth in Africa's second-largest economy, with businesses struggling to employ skilled workers in a country with over a 25 percent unemployment rate. 70 percent of the jobless in South Africa are under 35. In a survey last year by the World Economic Forum, South Africa's education system was ranked the fifth-lowest among 144 countries, with its score in mathematics and science the worst of the group.

University of the People presents a genuine alternative for South African high school graduates who luck out of securing limited seats in local universities. "There is no need for the thousands of qualified high school graduates who will be left out of higher education this year to remain shut out," says President Reshef. "University of the People identifies South African high school graduates as students who are driven and ambitious and particularly in need and deserving of access to quality higher education. The right to a quality education mustn't be a matter of one's geographical or financial situation; Access to education must be an equal and basic right for all, rather than a privilege for the few."

University of the People believes that access to higher education is a key ingredient in the promotion of financial stability, leading to global economic development and peace. Dedicated to democratising higher education globally, University of the People exemplifies employing an online solution for potentially millions of people. The University has enrolled students from 150 different countries to date, including 44 from South Africa, where retention rates are

comparatively high.

"Online education can be provided at significantly less expense than traditional education and utilising it can mean the difference for millions of individuals to successfully attain education or remain shut out of education, as is the status quo," says Professor Barry Dwolatzky, Director of Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE) at Wits University and a 2013 recipient of the South African IT Personality of the year award. Dwolatzky, a strong proponent of digital technology and information in South Africa, sits on University of the People's Advisory Board for Computer Science.

University of the People is changing the way online learning is perceived through international accreditation, alliances with prestigious educational institutions (such as Yale University for research and New York University for accepting students) and partnerships with global corporations (such as Hewlett-Packard for internships and Microsoft for scholarships). The unique focus at the online University is on small classes, peer interaction and personal attention. Online access need only be basic – broadband connections and video capability are not required.

The University offers degrees in Business Administration and Computer Science on a tuition-free basis. Students only pay for exam processing fees of $100, meaning that a student can study towards an accredited Bachelor's Degree for as little as $4000.

South Africa, take heed – young adults in need of education can be serviced with the delivery of quality education at low-cost. It is the viable solution to conquering inequalities in educational attainment and is available at everyone's fingertips.