

## **The trick: hard work and study buddies**

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“Now the burden on my shoulders has been removed.” With these words Solomon Mahlangu High School’s top achiever Olwethu Bitterhout described his relief after receiving a bursary from the National Department of Public Works in Pretoria.

“I had immense pressure as my parents could not afford for me to further my studies. But, now it is a different story and I will commence with my studies in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Cape Town,” said Olwethu who passed matric with seven distinctions. “The bursary allows for me to study engineering, although my first choice is astronomy. But I will finish engineering and I will follow my lifelong dream.”

He said his biggest challenge in school was peer group pressure as he had friends who liked to party and used alcohol. “Whilst being part of the group, I did not realise I was actually busy destructing my future. “Luckily during Grade 7, I realized this is not the way I to my dream of becoming an astronomer and reach for the stars.” He lost his friends, but gained the first steps of getting closer to his dream.

Through studying hard he achieved top scores in matric and consequently received a bursary, which means all expenses will be paid for the duration of his studies, provided that he keeps his academic record on track. “An achievement does not come from something special. “It comes from hard work and learning. I love learning, I listen intensively, am curious and like to question things.”

His life has been influenced by his brother Sizwe Bitterhout, who is eight years his senior and currently employed at Kromberg & Schubert in Uitenhage. “Sizwe has always been challenging me through debates. When enjoying a meal, he will come up with interesting topics and we will leave the table three hours later.” Olwethu said since his childhood days, he loved to go out at night and watch the stars.

“It fascinates me and I have so many questions that I would like one day to find the answers to regarding the universe at large. “The sky is not the limit to me. I want to be among the stars. Each and every day a star is born, so on a daily basis there are new things to study!” Olwethu needs to be in Cape Town on March 4th. The delay is due to the FeesMustFall campaign that last year had an immense destructive effect on South African universities.

Olwethu said the campaign must apply to students who really cannot afford to study, provided that firstly they qualify to further their studies. "If FeesMustFall applies to all it will have an immense negative effect on the country's economy. "I really hope it can be sorted out as I cannot afford to have my studies disrupted by this campaign," said Olwethu.

His advice to learners is to study hard. And also to have study buddies. "It helps a lot to study with friends with whom you share the same values. My friends Pini and Douw and I were always challenging each other," said Olwethu. For the last three years they were dubbed Solomon Mahlangu's Siamese triplets. All three excelled and Pini will be doing mechatronics at UCT whilst Douw will study computer science at NMMU.