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Only R500 in her pocket and determination: cum laude graduand triumphs

Growing up in rural Namibia, Aune Angobe had never used a computer before she enrolled at university. And prior to her master's studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT), she had never travelled south of Windhoek. But nurtured by the "tender care" of her grandparents over many years, Aune said, she's learnt the value of education – and opportunity.

Aune will graduate an MSc Molecular and Cell Biology degree *cum laude* on 19 July, achieving over 95% for her course.

Aune was born in Ongongo village in the Omusati region and raised by her late grandparents. "I was privileged to have grandparents who had always known the value of education. I attended primary and secondary school in the northern part of the country under their tender care. Throughout my schooling journey I'd always enjoyed science subjects, and I have no doubt that I was a scientist from birth! Despite my poor family background, I studied hard and matriculated with good grades. In 2013, I was granted admission to the University of Namibia for an honours degree programme in science (microbiology), which was funded by a government loan," she said.

After completing her undergraduate studies in 2017, Aune was employed and never had any intention of furthering her studies. However, things changed mid-2018.

"I started developing a strong feeling about furthering my studies and looked for opportunities at several universities, both in Namibia and in South Africa. Excitingly, I got news of admission to UCT from Associate Professor Inga Hitzeroth, a potential project supervisor for my MSc in Molecular and Cell Biology," she said.

One of Aune's major hurdles was funding. "I remember clearly that when I arrived in Cape Town, I did not have funds to cater for my accommodation and living expenses. I had only R500. I was accommodated by a friend where I stayed for about two weeks. During this period, my supervisor, my friend and I were constantly worried about how I was going to survive.

"We then decided to approach Student Housing. I went there and cried my lungs out to them. I clearly remember the officer asking me how I'd left Namibia without knowing where I was going to stay. My response was: "I don't know, but I just want to study." They eventually granted me accommodation. Soon after that, my supervisor introduced me to Aunt Vivien of

the Cohen Scholarship Trust, who went out of her way to make sure that my stay in Cape Town was fully funded; and I eventually settled in comfortably," she said.

In addition to funding, being in a foreign country was never an easy transition. "I always felt like an outsider and struggled to overcome the language barrier. Being far from my support system, especially my family and friends, I really felt the gap," she said.

Aune shared: "My advice to others going through the same experience is that persistence is key; and where there's a will, there's always a way. So don't give up. To current students, self-confidence is key. Always believe in yourself and keep pushing, no matter the circumstances."

Story by Helen Swingler, UCT News



Aune Angobe

Photo: Supplied

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