

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS. A research report submitted to the Augustine Research Fellowship on the 4th of November 2011 by Dr. D. Simango

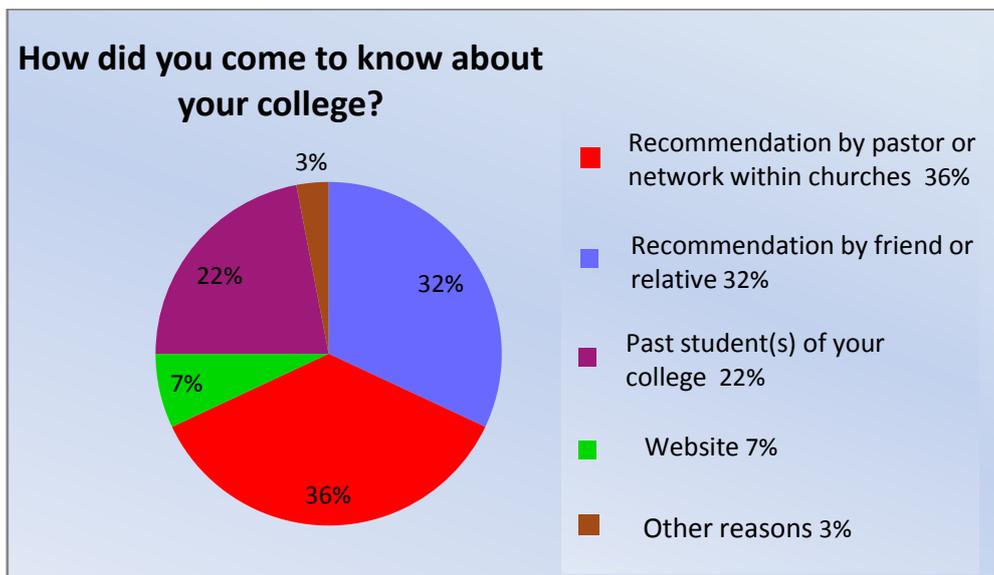
1. INTRODUCTION

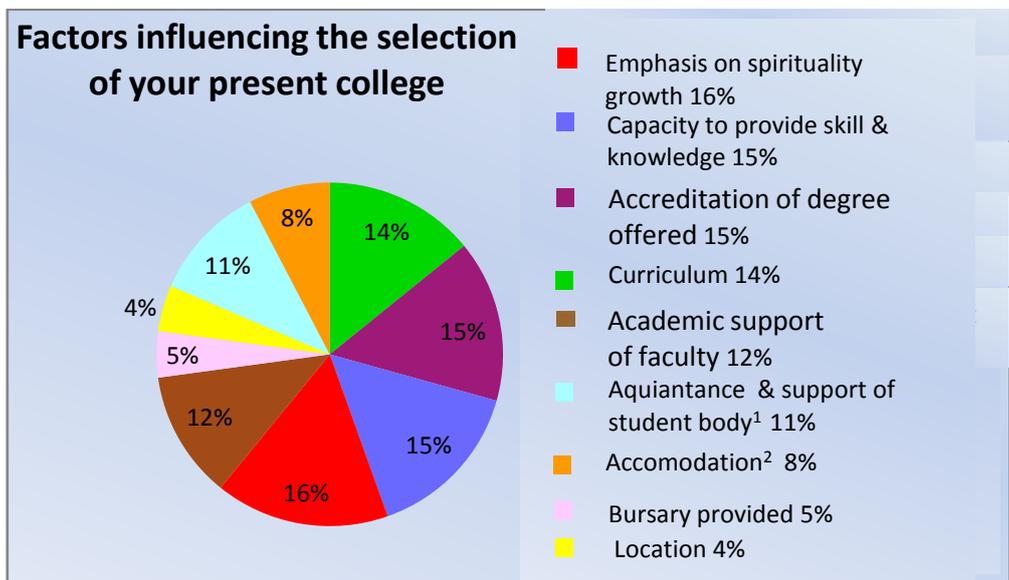
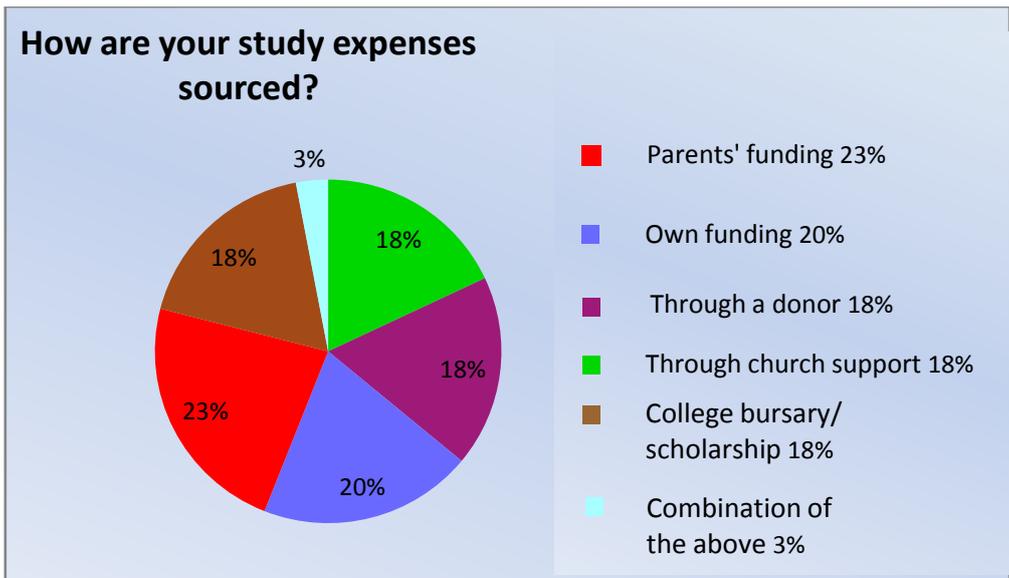
The steering committee for the Augustine Research Fellowship (ARF) identified the need to broaden their understanding of factors that influence students' choice of theological institution.

A questionnaire was developed with this in mind. Five theological institutions in the Western Cape participated in the research. The information received from these colleges has been collated and the results are reflected below.

2. RESULTS

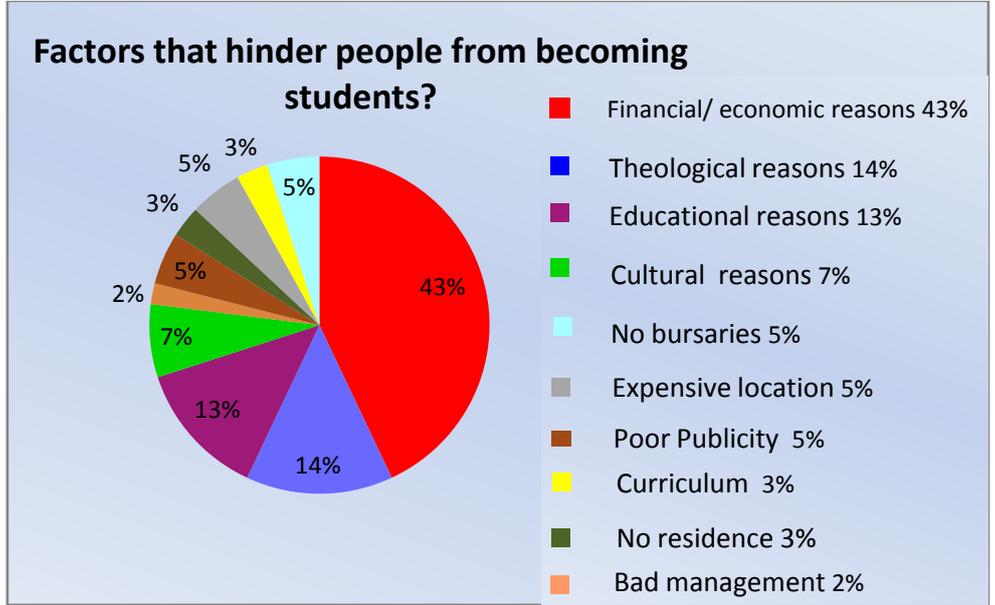
2.1 Factors that influence students' choice of theological institutions





¹ The two categories *Acquaintance with student body* and *“Lively/ supportive student body”* in the student’s questionnaire have been combined under the category *Acquaintance & support of the student body* in the present research report.

² The two categories *Availability of accommodation* and *Availability of adequate accommodation for my family* in the student’s questionnaire have been combined under the category *Accommodation* in the present research report.



2.2 The majority (95%) of students would strongly recommend their institutions to others because of the following reasons³:

- Supportive student community
- Academic support of the faculty
- The college teaches good theology, good training, education & sound teaching
- The college has good lecturers; friendly lecturers
- The content of the curriculum is good
- The curriculum enhances spiritual growth and “prepares the student spiritually to face real issues of life.
- The college encourages godliness.

³ These reasons are not arranged in a hierarchical order.

- Support from the lecturers
- Supportive student body; “family atmosphere”.
- Godly lecturers & student body.
- Good study facilities.
- Availability of accommodation.
- Qualified lecturers
- Accreditation of the degree offered
- Offers financial help to students.

2.3 The minority (5%) would not recommend their institutions to others because of the following reasons:

- Training is too expensive
- College has no residence
- College training no longer recognised by the churches (CI)
- College has lost its sense of community
- Not all lecturers are good
- Difficult spiritual environment.
- Reputation of bad administration

3. WAY FORWARD

a. How students came to know about their colleges

From the results above, it very clear that students get to know about their theological institutions through recommendations by their pastors or advisory network within their churches. Therefore, college governance policy needs to aggressively campaign to make congregations throughout the country aware of their role of preparing men and women for ministry.

b. How students’ study expenses is sourced

The results of the research show that the two main sources of funding for the students is parental and own funding. These results imply the possibility that if the parents are unable to fund their children’s theological education then most likely their children would not be able to study theology. The same can be said of the students. If students are unable to fund their own theological education, most likely they would not be able to study theology. Therefore, it is imperative for churches, donors and theological institutions to partner together in putting funds aside for students. Students should be encouraged to apply for this financial support.

c. Factors influencing students’ selection of their present colleges

The results of the research show that the top three main factors influencing students’ selection of theological institutions are the institutions’ ability to emphasize spirituality, to provide skill & knowledge and to offer degrees accredited by the local universities. Therefore, if theological institutions are to attract many students, they are to emphasize Bible-based spirituality, provide ministerial skills and knowledge, and degrees that are accredited by the local universities.

d. Whether or not students plan to pursue vocational ministry after completing their studies?

The research results show that 74% of students studying at theological colleges intend or plan to pursue vocational ministry this is encouraging. Indications are that these theological colleges are generally attracting the right candidates who desire to pursue vocational ministry. However, it would

be very interesting to effect a follow up research on these students 10 years after graduation to see whether or not they will be in vocational ministry.

e. Students' thoughts on factors that hinder people from becoming students at theological institutions

The results of the research show again that the lack of financial resources/ funds is the main hindrance to theological studies. This re-emphasizes the need to raise funds/ scholarships/ bursaries for students. Therefore, churches, donors and theological institutions are strongly encouraged to partner together in raising financial support for students.
