



PICTURE: TERRY HAYWOOD

MTHOKOZISI Bright Mazibuko prepares to jet off to the United States after winning a scholarship to Duke University, where he will study mechanical engineering

Bright Durban pupil wins US scholarship

AMELIA NAIDOO

APTLY named, Mthokozisi Bright Mazibuko is something of a celebrity in Gcabashe Road in KwaMashu, after beating 19 000 applicants to secure a scholarship to Duke University in the United States.

Everyone on his street – even a horde of little girls with skipping rope – who excitedly pointed to his house shouting “he’s there, he’s there!” – seemed to know of the 18-year-old’s achievement.

On cue, a beaming Mazibuko emerged to usher *The Mercury* in to the modest home he shares with his extended family of 15.

The shy teenager said that he was Durban’s first United States Achievers Programme (USAP) candidate to receive the

Reggie Howard Scholarship for a four-year undergraduate degree.

The scholarship was established in 1976 in memory of Reggie Howard, the first African-American president of the Associated Students of Duke University (the primary organ of undergraduate student government at Duke) and recognises outstanding students of African heritage.

Mazibuko was one of 12 Duke scholarship recipients from South Africa and will begin his mechanical engineering degree in August. He achieved five As and 100% in physical science in matric last year.

Susan Knowles, an education adviser at the US consulate in Durban, said she had found out about Mazibuko during his matric year when he

was involved with Project Citizen – a US civic education organisation.

An American Project Citizen member visiting Mazibuko’s high school, Ngabakazulu Comprehensive High School, had been so impressed with his public speaking, leadership and academic abilities that he had recommended the teenager as a USAP participant, Knowles said.

The education advising offices of the US consulates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban identified students from South Africa who had exceptional academic ability, were highly motivated, had demonstrated leadership potential and were of low-income backgrounds she said.

Mazibuko received a taste of campus life when he visited a few Duke campuses in April

this year when he was interviewed as a finalist.

“It was a lot of fun. I got to meet other Reggie Howard scholars, attend classes and do some social activities,” he said.

The youngster said he would miss his mother, Nombuso, who was initially reluctant to see him go abroad, and his five siblings. However, the opportunity would allow him to achieve his dream of working as an engineer in the automotive industry.

Although Duke University would pay for Mazibuko’s costs when he arrived in the US and USAP had paid for the application process, he would have to raise money for his airfare.

Readers who can assist him should contact Knowles at 084 950 0131.

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