



OUTSOURCED

Christian University

A Model of a Possible Future
of African Christian College



OUTSOURCING

When a company 'outsources' they are basically hiring someone else – outside of the company or organisation – to do a task. This is usually done because the outside company can do it cheaper, better, or easier than it can be done within the company. Many companies do this with different functions of their business including outsourcing to distant companies on other continents. In recent years, we've discussed ACC becoming a place where a company could outsource some data entry services for an American company.

Universities also outsource parts of their operations. This ranges from grounds keeping to human resources, but most often likely occurs in food services. Even now at African Christian College, we outsource our cafeteria to a catering company because we found ourselves to be less capable as meal planners, cooks, and employee schedulers than outsourcing the work to a capable, outside caterer.

This model offers a unique look at outsourcing . . . so the model is called Outsourced Christian University. (Please remember, the name is not important and is not the proposed name for the future; the name just represents the model.)

In this model, the educational process is outsourced. Yes, it proposes outsourcing the learning, teaching, and credentials to an outside source who can deliver the education cheaper, better, easier, or sooner than we could do on our own.

You may be asking: *How can African Christian College accomplish its mission and purpose as an academic institution if it outsources the primary function of a higher learning institution?* Great question. This model (like the others we've considered) keeps the most important things at the centre and does not compromise on the mission or Ends.

And, because of outsourcing, it allows for significant growth of available academic disciplines with significantly reduced initial and ongoing operational costs.

How does it work? The best way to understand this model is to see what it's like to be a student at Outsourced Christian University. Meet Phiwa . . .

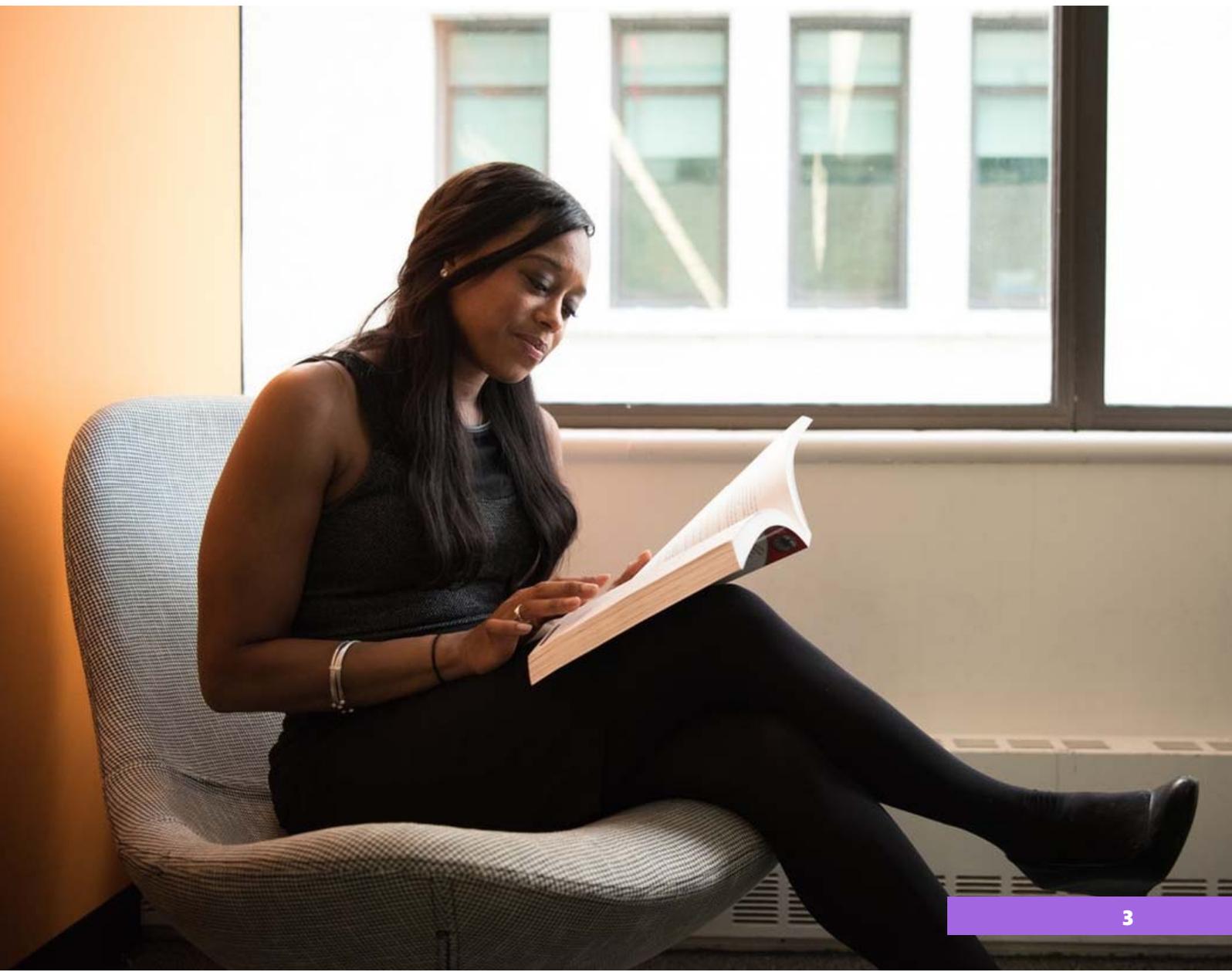
Phiwa

When Phiwa was preparing for college, she knew she wanted to study engineering because it's projected to be in high-demand in Africa's near future and she enjoys the analytical thinking it requires. Because her faith and church are very important to her, Phiwa also wanted to study at a Christian university . . . but she faced a difficult choice between a Christian education or her desire to become an engineer.

Then, Phiwa found Outsourced Christian University.

She didn't quite understand the university at first, but she loves it and cannot imagine a more perfect place for her to get her engineering degree and grow her discipleship to Jesus.

And she loves her new friends! The students at Outsourced are from all over Africa and are studying for degrees in teacher education, business, psychology and counselling, theology, medical services, and many more.





Online Learning

Technically, Phiwa is not getting her engineering degree from Outsourced Christian University – even though that is where she is studying. She is officially enrolled with an outstanding, reputable, and accredited university online that Outsourced has partnered with to offer degrees in many different subjects. This allows Phiwa to be able to study engineering even when there are not many other students who are engineering students at Outsourced Christian University.

She completes her coursework through the online platform of the degree-granting university. Her lecturers are not on-campus but teach using quality, distance education strategies that are proven and effective. Her lecturers are well-respected scholars and teachers, trained in online learning. Her classmates and lecturers are from all over the world – and even though they don't meet in person for class, she feels quite connected to them in addition to her friends on campus.

Couldn't Phiwa have just stayed at home and earned her engineering degree online? Yes, most likely. So, what's the point of choosing Outsourced Christian University?

What makes it special?

Outsourced Christian University provides Phiwa and other students the things they need for success emotionally, physically, socially, educationally, and (most importantly) spiritually.

A benefit for Phiwa is that she has reliable, fast internet service available on campus to complete her studies. Whether it is needing to participate in a live, online discussion or access online resources for completing and submitting assignments, she knows she can count on the internet service on campus to get her work done. For this Phiwa is grateful . . . but it's not an adequate reason to choose Outsourced over staying home as internet access can be solved in many other ways.

Every good online university offers student support for technology and academic success, but even that support is offered from a distance. Phiwa – who has had few opportunities for the independent study environment that online learning requires – feels largely unprepared for online study. It's the personal support provided by Outsourced that is helping her succeed. Outsourced is staffed with chaplains, counsellors, mentors, and Student Guides who work with students.

Phiwa frequently seeks out assistance from some of the Student Guides on campus. These people have helped her with technology issues, to better manage her time, and with her academic writing and research skills. This has significantly improved her overall academic performance.

In Phiwa's case, none of the Student Guides can help her with the engineering concepts since none of

them have studied engineering. (And, sometimes she gets jealous of her friends who are studying subjects where the Guides have more knowledge.) Even so, Phiwa has found that though they may not be able to explain predictive analysis to her, the Student Guides are specialists in learning and have consistently been able to help her find the answers or information she needs to understand the concepts and to succeed in her studies.

The tools of study, research, writing, learning, and critical thinking are basically the same for all academic disciplines. This is the expertise of the Student Guides on campus. One thing that makes Outsourced Christian University special, then, is the personal academic support provided to the students studying online by the Student Guide staff and mentors.

Though Phiwa may have been successful in getting her online degree on her own, she recognises that the academic support provided by being a student at Outsourced has helped her learn more deeply and be more successful than she would have otherwise.





Spiritual Formation

Central to the mission of Outsourced Christian University is to graduate students who demonstrate Christian character and servant leadership. This is what Phiwa was looking for when she sought a Christian university. She has a deep desire to grow her understanding and love of God and for how to live that out in her daily life and her church.

A few of Phiwa's online lecturers may be Christian, but the online programme is not taught from a decidedly Christian perspective. This is disappointing, but unsurprising. But, the community and programmes at Outsourced Christian University help fill that gap in her studies. Phiwa is actively involved in a Vocational Formation group with other students to discuss what it means to be a Christian in the workplace, a Christian professional, and a Christian engineer. These groups seek to help students make sense of the intersection of their faith, their studies, and their calling.

Each day, Phiwa enjoys attending the Chapel services where they sing, pray, and are encouraged in God's Word. She was very nervous the first time she had to lead in the Chapel service, but it has helped prepare her for future times when she'll teach the women in her congregation at home. Since the students are generally not in class together (because their classes are online in many different disciplines), the daily Chapel gathering is one of the most important and helpful ways that community is built among the students at Outsourced Christian University.

Another way that the on-campus students build community is through the eight subject courses in Bible, theology, and ministry that all the students at Outsourced must take in addition to their online studies. These courses are taught by qualified, capable lecturers on campus with a purpose of increasing biblical and theological understanding and preparing the graduates for excellent service in their churches and communities after graduation.

Though these courses and activities are extra work compared to her online peers who are not at Outsourced, Phiwa finds these classes refreshing because they are relevant to her life, they strengthen her faith, and they are in person.

When some serious problems arose at home, Phiwa utilised the services of the on-campus counselors and has also taken initiative to get personal and spiritual mentoring from one of the staff members she respects and wants to model her life after.

Phiwa and her friends are active in local congregations and also participate in evangelism and other programmes to support and build up the church organised by the university. She is learning so much that will help her outside of being an engineer, but as a Christian woman, mother, and leader in her home church.

Therefore, the most important difference that Outsourced Christian University makes is the spiritual formation of students not available through online, independent study.



Graduation

Phiwa is so excited about her graduation from the university. Like most of the students at Outsourced, she will receive two papers at graduation:

One is her **engineering degree** that is awarded by the reputable online university partnering with Outsourced. This is her credential for professional work and a bright economic future. It is certainly something to be proud of.

The other is an **Advanced Certificate in Christian Leadership** from Outsourced Christian University that Phiwa earned from completing the Bible, theology, and ministry courses and participating in other faith-based programmes on-campus. This is a credential that reflects her personal spiritual growth and future commitment to Jesus, the church, and the Kingdom of God.

Phiwa is thankful that for her success as a university student and for the ways God led her to Outsourced Christian University. She is confident that not only did Outsourced help her in her academic studies, but it provided her a community, formed her spiritually, and transformed her life forever.



An 'Outsourced' Education

So, how does an educational institution with Christian commitments outsource the central educational part of the university and still accomplish its goals? As Phiwa shows us, it is through the following:

- ◆ Partnering with a reputable university to provide the educational programme and credentials. This could allow a place like African Christian College a much faster path toward offering degrees in numerous disciplines while avoiding the significant investments and ongoing costs associated with needing facilities and qualified lecturers for each academic discipline.
- ◆ Amplifying the institutional strengths of spiritual formation and student support to help students be academically successful and to grow spiritually. From a personnel perspective, it will be much easier and less costly to employ Student Guides and spiritual mentors – essentially campus pastors – instead of lecturers in dozens of disciplines. It also reduces the need to have a minimum number of students in each discipline for it to be viable to continue.
- ◆ Maintaining a commitment to students' study of the Bible, theology, and ministry by requiring everyone to also attend and earn a certificate in Christian Leadership that will prepare them for excellent service in the church and ministry.

Outsourcing the education as a university may sound strange, but it is a realistic, achievable possibility for the future.