EDUCATION IN SUPPORT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: LEARNING FROM THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 2016
“We ask our Scholars to think about how they will give back to society—much more deeply than working on a project, but how they will give back over a lifetime.”

-Reeta Roy, President and CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

I INTRODUCTION 10

A. The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program
   Figure 1 – Four Stages of the Scholars Program

B. The African Context

C. Purpose of the Report

D. Methodology

II A PROFILE OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS AND PARTNERS 12

A. Scholars
   Figure 2 – Share of Scholars at Each Level of Study
   Figure 3 – Number of Scholars by Country of Study
   Figure 4 – Location of Study
   Figure 4A – The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program Partner Institutions
   Figure 5 – Gender of MasterCard Foundation Scholars

B. Partners
   Figure 6 – Cumulative Number of Scholar Graduates, Actual and Projected

III EARLY LEARNING: RECRUIT, EDUCATE, PREPARE, TRANSITION 16

A. Recruit
   Figure 7 – Occupation of Primary Head of Household
   Figure 8 – Undergraduate and Graduate Scholars: Social Change and Career Aspirations

B. Educate
   Figure 9 – Tertiary (Alumni and Scholar) Broad Field of Study
   Figure 10 – 2014/15 GPA Distribution of Tertiary Scholars
   Figure 11 – Transformative Leadership Framework
   Figure 12 – Opportunities for Instructing, Modelling and Practising Transformative Leadership

C. Prepare

D. Transition
   Figure 13 – Secondary School Alumni Postsecondary School Specialization
   Figure 14 – Share of Secondary Scholar Alumni Employed or Pursuing Higher Education
   Figure 15 – Number of Tertiary Alumni Working or Continuing Their Education
   Figure 16 – Sectors of Employment: Tertiary Scholars Alumni

IV LOOKING TO THE FUTURE 48
The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is the largest private scholarship program ever implemented for African youth. The Program is built on the premise that all young people, no matter their starting point in life, should have the opportunity to obtain a quality education and pursue their aspirations. To this end, the Program provides education at secondary, undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as leadership development for tens of thousands of bright, young leaders who are striving to improve their lives, and who share a commitment to improving the lives of others.

While the Program originally aimed to support the education and leadership development of 15,000 youth, the Program’s reach has expanded now to over 30,000 talented students, and continues to grow. Through its network of universities and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, the Scholars Program ensures that students with great academic potential and very limited resources are able to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to join the next generation of ethical leaders.

Key Program elements include:
- Quality secondary or university education;
- Holistic financial, social and academic supports;
- Training and mentorship that reinforces the core values of transformative leadership and a commitment to improving the lives of others; and
- A network of like-minded young leaders committed to giving back.

This is an extraordinary time on the African continent. The majority of Africans now live in countries with greater peace and security, stronger democracies, growing economies and improved infrastructure compared to two decades ago. While the political, economic and social challenges are still great, there is enormous potential for creating sustainable, inclusive growth in the future. Education, however, especially at the secondary and tertiary level, is out of reach for the majority of Africa’s young people, and most of those who are in school do not have access to quality learning opportunities. In order to build on Africa’s unfolding progress and establish more equitable societies, youth must be able to access quality education, and develop the leadership skills they need to help create an era of shared prosperity across the continent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Educate, Prepare, Transition

Learning from the Scholars Program: Recruit, Educate, Prepare, Transition

Drawing on results from Mathematica’s research and other data sources, we identified a number of early findings from across the Program.

Recruit

During the recruit stage, partners select Scholars who meet the Foundation’s core criteria: economic disadvantage; academic talent; and leadership potential. In examining the efforts of the Foundation and its partners to recruit young people, we found that:
- The Foundation and its partners are successfully recruiting the right profile of youth who meet the Program’s criteria.
- A broader, multi-faceted definition of disadvantage as a selection criterion that includes aspects such as orphanhood, disability or living in conflict-affected areas, is more workable than a narrow definition of economic disadvantage based on income, and better reflects the range of challenges to accessing education faced by many African youth.
- Most secondary Scholars are academic achievers performing within the top national cohort upon entering the Program as measured by national exams.
- While recruiting Scholars at the secondary level, it is important to look for leadership potential and examples of service rather than leadership positions, due to these Scholars’ early stage in life.
- Recruitment of talented, disadvantaged African youth requires non-African universities to reach beyond the top high schools. For this reason, greater resources in time, travel and staffing are required.

For a small number of Scholars however, are struggling academically for a range of reasons, including difficulty in adjusting to a new culture and academic environment; health issues; and poor fit with chosen major. Partners are helping Scholars address these challenges through early identification, academic bridging programs prior to university, tutoring, summer school, and in limited cases, a change of majors or additional time to complete degrees.

University partnerships for joint recruitment share costs and knowledge among partner institutions. Relationships between NGOs supporting secondary scholarships and universities can create a pipeline for candidates to reach university.

Best practices identified by partners include beginning the recruitment process as early as possible; increasing collaboration with local partners; and ensuring current and alumni Scholars understand the recruitment process and become advocates for the Program.

Elite universities are adopting new recruitment and selection approaches. They are also expanding the number of disadvantaged students they recruit from Africa due to participation in the Scholars Program.

Academic Preparation

- Three-quarters of tertiary Scholars are performing well academically, at or above the 3.0 to 4.0 grade point level.
- While recruiting Scholars at the secondary level, it is important to look for leadership potential and examples of service rather than leadership positions, due to these Scholars’ early stage in life.
- Recruitment of talented, disadvantaged African youth requires non-African universities to reach beyond the top high schools. For this reason, greater resources in time, travel and staffing are required.
• Tertiary Scholars often need a range of support, including cultural sensitization (particularly for those studying abroad); introduction to unfamiliar pedagogical and learning practices; personal wellness and health counseling and services; and financial literacy training.

• Universities have strengthened and expanded these academic and support services, suggesting that institutions are making changes that can also benefit students outside the Program.

• Retention in and satisfaction with the Scholars Program is very high so far, suggesting that selection processes and wraparound services are working well for most Scholars.

Preparing for Transformative Leadership

• Collaborative efforts with partners and Scholars to define transformative leadership and develop consensus on skills and mindsets is resulting in new programming in modeling and practicing leadership, and new ways of thinking at partner institutions.

• Most Scholars have opportunities for instruction in transformative leadership, but access to programming is fragmented. There are even fewer opportunities for Scholars to model (through mentoring) and practice such leadership.

• Scholars require multiple forms of mentoring – academic, psycho-social, professional, and leadership – yet personal mentoring requires significant resources and is difficult to provide to all Scholars.

• All partners incorporate African contexts into their leadership training, but most leadership offerings lack a gender focus, according to a review of partners’ leadership programming.

• Expectations regarding what it means to be a transformative leader can place a heavy burden on some Scholars. Clarifying that transformative leadership does not require position or status, and can be exercised at multiple levels, can alleviate this burden.

Prepare

During the prepare stage, which overlaps academic and leadership training, Scholars take part in mentoring, career counseling, internships, service projects, and other opportunities to build their networks and help prepare themselves for the next phase of life. An examination of the processes and elements in this stage of the Program revealed the following:

• Secondary Scholars need additional assistance such as college counseling, information on university scholarships and support to complete applications for higher education.

• Africa Careers Network – a job placement service created by the Foundation in partnership with African Leadership Academy (ALA) – has placed hundreds of Scholars and ALA graduates into jobs and internships since 2012. Though it has helped develop a culture of internships in Africa, its high-touch approach will need modifications to be scalable.

• North American and African partner universities have expanded resources devoted to helping students find internships and jobs on the continent as a result of the Program. However, Scholars require additional country-specific information about the job market, including growth sectors and information about small, medium and large enterprises. Many Scholars could benefit from additional help in applying for positions through expanded, personalized, Africa-focused career counseling and mentoring.

• Networking with faculty, other Scholars, alumni and outside professionals is key to preparing Scholars for internships and employment, and for fostering opportunities for volunteering, career advancement and lifelong learning. All Scholars require more intentional opportunities to interact with role models and mentors in their prospective fields, and to practice career networking.

• Annual partner and Scholar conferences are important opportunities for networking, sharing best practices, and building community among Scholars, partners and the Foundation. So far, however, only a small minority of all Scholars are able to attend these events.

• The digital Baobab platform – a community platform for tertiary Scholars and alumni – could be a model for other networking and lifelong-learning platforms if successful. Active participation by Scholars in the design of the Baobab platform and its degree of customization are noteworthy.

Transition

Scholars access a variety of resources to help them make the transition to further education, entrepreneurship and/or employment as they embark on their journey as ethical leaders. A review of how Scholars transition from the Program showed that:

• A majority of tertiary Scholars have, or intend to, return to Africa. Nearly 50 percent of tertiary Scholars from the first two cohorts studying abroad returned home after graduation, and the majority of those remaining abroad expect to return to Africa within five years.

• The Foundation’s flexible definition and timeline for return to Africa, its focus on Scholar choice, and support to Scholars applying for internships and jobs on the continent seem to be facilitating return and ‘give-back’ among early cohorts of tertiary Scholars studying abroad.

• Research on career paths of African alumni at international universities over the past five decades shows that rates of return to the continent are higher for alumni who pursued advanced degrees compared to those who studied at the undergraduate level.

• Fifty-six percent of tertiary alumni are employed and 56 percent are continuing their education (this includes a small percentage that are both working and studying). Eighty-one percent found employment within two months or less. Just over half of these alumni are satisfied with their current jobs. Most tertiary graduates found employment in the private sector, followed by NGOs and the public sector.
Data from the first cohort of secondary Scholars show that 85 percent of alumni surveyed were able to transition to higher education after the Program. This is a significantly higher rate than the seven percent transition rate from secondary school to university in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Most secondary level alumni are pursuing further studies in STEM fields, and at equal rates by men and women, suggesting that the Foundation is helping young women overcome barriers to studying in the sciences, mathematics and computing fields.

Some secondary school alumni would like additional help to develop transferable skills, and some secondary and tertiary alumni request greater support for the transition from school to work, including additional career advisory services.

Both secondary and tertiary Scholars are highly motivated to give back to their communities, and a large majority of alumni Scholars volunteer.

Some Scholar alumni are already making a difference in their countries of origin through social ventures, but accessing financing for these ventures remains a significant challenge.

**Considerations**

As larger cohorts graduate in coming years, Scholars’ needs for assistance to successfully complete their schooling and transition to further education, employment or entrepreneurship will expand considerably. The Foundation needs to consider the following as it works with partners and Scholars to continue to develop the Program:

**Recruiting Scholars and Expanding Access to Education for Disadvantaged Youth**

- While partner institutions have changed their practices in order to recruit disadvantaged African students, more could be done to expand access to education for talented African youth. Demand for secondary and higher education among these youth still far exceeds supply. More could be done by universities, NGOs, governments, funders and the private sector to expand access to education for greater numbers of talented, disadvantaged youth. The Program must continue to strengthen its efforts to reach vulnerable youth.

- One of the main barriers continues to be cost. Low-cost and flexible forms of education financing, including student loans and work-study programs, should be developed to serve this population. The Foundation could play a catalyzing role in this area.

- At the secondary level, move away from countries where access to and quality of secondary education is improving and redirect Program resources to countries where secondary education needs, particularly in terms of access and leadership development, are especially acute.

**Educating Scholars Academically and as Transformative Leaders**

- Additional support services should be made available to the small number of Scholars who are struggling academically.

- To build transformative leadership, more opportunities need to be created for Scholars to model and practise these skills and mindsets. Given the growing number of Scholars who will be participating in the Program in future years, alternative, scalable models for mentoring should be explored. All Scholars should be encouraged to seize opportunities to practise transformative leadership while studying.

- Safe spaces for girls should be incorporated as part of leadership training at the secondary level and an explicit gender orientation should be included in all leadership programming for Scholars. Secondary Scholars could also benefit from more opportunities to strengthen their employability and life-skills.

- The Foundation and its partners should clarify expectations regarding leadership development, emphasizing that transformative leadership is a lifelong journey that can take many forms and can occur at multiple levels, from family to community to society at large.

- Given the variation in Scholars’ access to transformative leadership training, the Foundation should develop additional leadership programming and ensure it is accessible to a wider group of Scholars.

**Helping Scholars Prepare Themselves to Succeed in Work and Life**

- The Foundation and its partners should expand their repository of internship and career opportunities for Scholars, focusing on online systems scalable for thousands of Scholars, and supplemented by the Program’s network of industry and employer partners.

- Scholars, particularly girls and young women, should be supported to develop strong peer and professional networks.

- Comprehensive career guidance services at the secondary level should be strengthened. The Foundation could play a role in improving awareness of the multiple pathways available to youth in secondary school, including tertiary vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment.

- Scholars interested in seeking jobs and internships in Africa should start early and seek support from university career services, faculty and personal networks, as this process can take many months and is highly competitive. The Foundation could play a facilitation role by partnering with employer and professional networks to create internships and career opportunities for graduating Scholars.

- The Program could benefit from strategic communications efforts that build a wider recognition of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program – among youth and relevant institutions and employers globally. This type of investment could pay off for Scholars as they move through their careers, and could help the Foundation and its partners recruit talented youth to the Program.

**Transitions to Further Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship**

- As research shows that there are higher rates of return for African alumni studying at the graduate level, the Foundation should place greater emphasis on supporting graduate Scholars for study abroad at institutions offering specialized programs not widely available on the continent. At the same time, the Program should continue to support secondary and undergraduate Scholars at institutions in Africa, where access is still limited by cost and other constraints.

- As larger numbers of Scholars graduate with each passing year, the need to support Scholars’ career transitions increases, as does the need for greater investment and innovations to assist them.

- To improve success during the job search, tertiary alumni recommend that Scholars obtain work experience while still in school as a way to overcome strong competition for employment.

- Due to the shortage of formal sector jobs in Africa, many Scholars may choose the path of entrepreneurship. The Foundation should consider skill-building in entrepreneurship and enterprise development, connecting Scholars with funding sources, and facilitating access to advisory services and innovation hubs.
The low share of Scholars pursuing a career in public service may suggest a role for the Foundation, its partners and governments to create established career pathways or fellowship programs for Scholars in the public sector.

It is still early days for the Scholars Program; while initial data from the first two, very small cohorts of tertiary students studying abroad show that just over half of alumni are returning to the continent upon graduation, continued research and tracking will be needed to monitor trends over time. In order to effectively judge the long-term impact of the Program, continued investment in a longitudinal study of Scholars could greatly inform this and other scholarship programs for disadvantaged youth.

**Looking to the Future**

Five years on, it is still too soon to draw definitive conclusions regarding the Scholars Program. During the first years, focus has been on building the foundation for the Program: creating appropriate criteria and processes for recruiting and selecting Scholars and partners; strengthening the partner network; and establishing a suite of support services for Scholars making extraordinary transitions at the academic, social, cultural and professional levels.

Program development efforts will now take on new challenges. The Foundation will expand its programming on transformative leadership, preparing Scholars for successful transitions. Together with partners and Scholars, the Foundation is also working to build a stronger Scholars Community, including both alumni and current students. The Foundation, its partners and Scholars have already started to work on this initiative. Additionally, a number of new developments are being considered. Some of the new efforts and potential pathways are outlined below.

**New Developments in the Scholars Program**

**Recruit** – To strengthen the partner network in Africa and offer more opportunities for Scholars to study at quality institutions on the continent, the Foundation will develop more partnerships with leading African universities, supporting more Scholars to study at the undergraduate level in Africa. The Foundation and its partners will recruit more Scholars from groups that are still not represented in large numbers in the Program, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented countries (including those in francophone West Africa).

**Educate** – The Foundation will develop additional transformative leadership content, resources and curricula. Additional leadership courses will be developed on the digital Baobab platform with an explicit gender focus. Scholars will be provided with more opportunities to model transformative leadership (through group mentoring via the Baobab platform and teacher mentors at secondary schools), and additional possibilities for practising transformative leadership through service learning projects, leadership positions in school activities and other efforts. We will scale up and multiply our existing tertiary Scholars convening efforts, eventually reaching all tertiary Scholars.

**Prepare** – To do more to help Scholars position themselves for success after the Program, the Foundation will focus on assisting secondary Scholars in their pursuit of university and/or vocational studies, and will provide short-term post-graduation bridge programming, focused on soft skills development, digital literacy and entrepreneurship training. For university Scholars, the Foundation will develop career exposure events in countries with high concentrations of Scholars and will create an industry mentorship program. The Foundation will also explore opportunities to support education finance.

**Partners** – In addition to recruiting additional African partners, the Program will support the expansion of partnerships between North American, European and African institutions through faculty and Scholar exchanges, joint programming, additional online courses and conferences. Going forward, undergraduate Scholars will increasingly study in Africa while graduate Scholars study abroad. The Program’s international partnerships will also provide technical support to strengthen institutional capacity at African universities.

**Future Learning** – The Foundation will continue to invest in research and evaluation in order to learn from and improve the Program, and track its impact. Increasingly, these efforts will help us engage Scholars and partners as active participants in all phases of the learning cycle.
I. INTRODUCTION

A THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is the largest private scholarship program ever implemented for African youth. The Program is unique in supporting education at the secondary, tertiary and graduate levels and in providing both financial support and a range of services and training such as mentoring and internships that support the development of each Scholar as an individual and a leader.

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is built on the premise that all young people, no matter their starting point in life, should have the opportunity to obtain a quality education and pursue their aspirations. Originally aiming to support the education and leadership development of 15,000 youth, the Program has so far doubled that commitment, to over 30,000 bright, young leaders from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Through a network of university and NGO partners, the Scholars Program ensures that students with great academic potential but very limited resources are able to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to join the next generation of ethical leaders. The vision of the Program is that these young people will make a lasting impact in their communities and regions, and as a result, help usher in a new era of equitable and inclusive prosperity in Africa and beyond.

The Scholars Program is designed in four interlinked stages: recruit, educate, prepare and transition. During recruitment, partners select Scholars meeting the Foundation’s core criteria of economic disadvantage, academic talent, leadership potential and commitment to contributing to social transformation on the continent. During the educate stage, Scholars undertake both academic and leadership training, equipping themselves with the capacities and mindsets required to make successful contributions to their economies and societies. During the prepare stage, which overlaps with academic and leadership training, Scholars take part in mentoring, career counselling, internships, service projects and other opportunities to help prepare themselves for the next phase of life after the Scholars Program. Finally, Scholars access a variety of resources to help them transition from the Program to further education, entrepreneurship or employment.

B THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

This is an extraordinary time for Africa. The majority of Africans now live in countries with greater peace and security, stronger democracies, growing economies and improved infrastructure. Sub-Saharan Africa is the third-fastest growing region of the world, with 4.6 percent average annual growth in GDP, just behind East Asia (6.7 percent) and South Asia (6.3 percent).12 As the continent witnesses an era of unprecedented growth, employers are demanding ever greater numbers of skilled workers. Job seekers, including youth, are keen to participate in this wave of economic growth, and to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.13 Despite these gains, some daunting challenges still remain. Economic growth has not been inclusive. Income disparities in some countries are widening. Corruption remains pervasive and unemployment among young people is increasing.14 Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 200 million people aged between 15 and 24.15 In order to build on Africa’s unfolding progress and help create more equitable societies, youth must possess the knowledge and skills employers seek.

Most of these skills are acquired through secondary and tertiary education. Yet access to quality education at secondary and tertiary levels, while improving, still remains stubbornly low across Sub-Saharan Africa, especially for the poor and the most marginalized. According to UNESCO, secondary school gross enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest of any region of the world at only 41 percent.14 There is significant variation across countries, and depending on gender. For example, among poor and rural populations, and for girls, these rates are even lower. Tertiary enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa is also the lowest of any world region at 9 percent, compared to 73 percent for high income countries and 33 percent globally.16 According to the Brookings Institution’s Center for Universal Education, for those who do access education, the quality of learning is often very low, with “little mastery of core academic content and higher-order thinking skills.”17 Additionally, youth are not sufficiently acquiring transferable or 21st-century skills – the mix of academic and applied skills such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration and resilience that are increasingly identified as necessary for success in school, life, and work.18

To answer these questions, Section II examines who these young Scholars are and where they are studying. Section III identifies key learning during each of the Scholars Program’s four stages. Section IV traces the paths of the first two cohorts of secondary and tertiary Scholars who graduated in 2014 and 2015 to examine their early choices and impact. Finally, the report concludes by discussing how learning from each of these stages informs the direction of the Program.

D METHODOLOGY

This report draws on data from participating Scholars, research briefs, and interviews with Scholars, Foundation staff and partners in order to distill learning from the Program. It also includes a review of a recent tracking survey of international alumni from other programs for comparative purposes. All data on Scholars are anonymized to preserve confidentiality.

Mathematica. Questions that the Foundation hopes to address in this report and through its wider learning agenda include:

- Is the Foundation meeting its goals of providing quality education to disadvantaged and talented youth?
- Is the Scholars Program fostering the skills and mindsets of Scholars as transformative leaders?
- Are Scholars returning to their home countries and regions to give back?
- Is there evidence of early contributions by Scholars to the economies and societies on the continent?
- Are Scholars satisfied with the Program?
- Is the Scholars Program a catalyst for broader change within implementing institutions?
II. A PROFILE OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS AND PARTNERS

A. SCHOLARS

As of August 2016, 19,338 youth are currently enrolled in or have graduated from the Scholars Program. Two-thirds of these Scholars are women, and the majority are studying in Africa. Through university and education-ngo partners, the Foundation supports Scholars at three different levels of study: secondary, undergraduate and graduate. So far, the Foundation has committed to supporting over 30,000 MasterCard Foundation Scholars through 2025.

Of the 19,338 current Scholars:

- 16,677 are secondary school Scholars, studying in Africa through the Foundation’s four ngo partners: Forum for African Women Educationalists or FAWE (Ethiopia and Rwanda); Campaign for Female Education or Camfed (Ghana); BRAC (Uganda); and the Equity Group Foundation (Kenya) through its Wings to Fly program.
- A further 2,274 are tertiary-level Scholars pursuing undergraduate degrees at universities in Africa (64 percent), North America (22 percent), as well as EARTH University in Costa Rica and the American University of Beirut (14 percent). A small percentage (six Scholars) will be joining University of Edinburgh, the Program’s first partner in Europe.
- Finally, 387 of the Scholars are studying at the graduate level in master’s degree programs. Seventy percent of these Scholars study at universities in Africa. (Figures 2, 3 and 4). For a full list of the Foundation’s partner institutions, see Figure 4A. MasterCard Foundation Scholars hail from 50 countries, with the majority originating from Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Rwanda and Ethiopia.

B. PARTNERS

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program Partner Institutions

**Secondary Education Partners**
- BRAC
  - Uganda
- Campaign for Female Education (Camfed)
  - Ghana
- Equity Group Foundation
  - Kenya
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
  - Ethiopia and Rwanda

**Tertiary Partners**

- African Institute for Mathematical Sciences**
  - South Africa, Cameron, Senegal, Ghana, Tanzania and Rwanda
- African Leadership Academy
  - Located in South Africa with implementing partners in Germany, France, Canada, USA, Zimbabwe and Kenya
- Ashesi University
  - Ghana
- Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)
  - Rwanda
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
  - Ghana
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)
  - Ghana
- Makerere University
  - Uganda
- University of Cape Town
  - South Africa*
- University of Pretoria
  - South Africa*
- University of British Columbia*
  - Canada
- University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley)*
  - USA
- University of Toronto
  - Canada
- Wellesley College
  - USA
- McGill University*
  - Canada
- Michigan State University*
  - USA
- Stanford University
  - USA
- University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley)*
  - USA
- University of Toronto
  - Canada
- Wellesley College
  - USA
- American University of Beirut
  - Lebanon*
- EARTH University
  - Costa Rica
- University of Edinburgh
  - Scotland

*Universities with undergraduate and graduate Scholars.
**Universities with graduate Scholars only.
*Not yet reported
In line with the Foundation’s aim to provide quality education to talented and marginalized youth, and in recognition of the unique barriers to women and girls’ education and leadership in Africa, two-thirds of all Scholars are women. These figures vary slightly by Scholar education level: 66 percent of secondary school Scholars are women, while 62 percent of undergraduate and 57 percent of graduate Scholars are women. (Figure 5).

B. PARTNERS

The Foundation began with three founding university partners - Ashesi University in Ghana, EARTH University in Costa Rica, and American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon - and has since built partnerships with 21 additional universities and education NGOs to deliver the Program to Scholars at the secondary, undergraduate and graduate levels. Twelve partners are in Africa, nine are in North America and three are universities in other regions. As two of the first partners selected under the Program, the American University of Beirut and EARTH University provide a global perspective, allowing for interaction among Scholars from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. EARTH enables Scholars from Latin America and Africa to specialize in fields such as environmental conservation and tropical agriculture. AUB provides opportunities for Scholars from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Africa to specialize in health sciences.

North American universities, though host to a small share of all Scholars, provide high-quality learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate studies outside of the continent. African Leadership Academy, a two-year college preparatory program, does not host Scholars, but places a select number of its students as Scholars at universities in Africa, North America and Europe. Camfed supports thousands of secondary school Scholars, and helps to place a large share of these at higher education institutions in Ghana. University of Edinburgh joined as the first partner in Europe, offering on-campus opportunities for Scholars at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as online master’s degree opportunities for Scholars across the network.

Over time, institutions in the Program have developed relationships and have built a strong collaborative network. For example, KNUST and Arizona State University (ASU) have partnered to create an accelerated master’s degree program at ASU in disciplines relevant to Africa’s sustainable development. Other examples of collective efforts include: joint presentations at international conferences on topics such as internships in Africa; co-sponsored research with the Foundation on issues such as women’s transformative leadership; participation in working groups on transformative leadership and transitions; joint recruitment efforts; and curricular partnerships.
III. EARLY LEARNING: RECRUIT, EDUCATE, PREPARE, TRANSITION

The findings in this report span the Program’s four stages: recruit, educate, prepare and transition, and touch on many aspects of Program implementation and early outcomes.

A RECRUIT

Defining Selection Criteria

Identifying and selecting thousands of academically talented, economically disadvantaged youth primarily from Africa was never regarded as a simple proposition. With millions of youth potentially fitting this description, the Foundation and its partners faced an enormous task.

Unlike many high-profile scholarship programs such as the Rhodes Scholarship or Fulbright Scholar Program, The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program adopted a model in which the Program’s university and education-NGO partners carried out the process of selecting Scholars using the Foundation’s qualifying criteria.

An early challenge in recruiting Scholars was to clearly define the Program’s core criteria, namely economic disadvantage, academic talent, and both potential and commitment to give back as a leader. Defining and measuring economic disadvantage was particularly challenging, but critical given the Foundation’s goal of providing access to education for talented youth who otherwise would have been unable to afford it.

Early in the Program, the Foundation asked its partners to use a common definition of “economic disadvantage”: individuals whose household incomes fall within the bottom two quintiles of income distribution in their countries. This definition, however, proved rigid, difficult to measure, challenging to compare between countries and unworkable from the perspective of partners. The Foundation and its partners later settled on a more flexible and multi-faceted definition of disadvantage, which included a variety of markers. In addition to household income, it includes dwelling type and location, status of parents (deceased or alive), parents’ education level, family size, disability, and whether a student lives in a conflict-affected area or is a migrant or refugee. This definition has proven more workable and has enabled the Foundation and its partners to reach a range of individuals who face distinct challenges to accessing quality education.

The second criterion – academic promise – being fairly straightforward, has allowed partners to continue their regular practice of examining a student’s grades, performance on national and entrance exams, and written applications. The third criterion – leadership potential and commitment to give back – is less clear cut. This focus sets the Program apart from other international scholarship programs, and has resulted in the attraction and advantage of young people distinctly motivated to create positive change in their communities.

Partners gauge these qualities through written submissions and interviews where possible, and seek demonstrations of an applicant’s leadership and service through positions held, awareness of community needs, and efforts to challenge the status quo.

Finding Scholars: Universities Adopt New Ways of Doing Business

Partners face the challenge of putting these Program principles and criteria into action. At the secondary and tertiary level, they employ a range of processes for recruiting and selecting Scholars, and in some cases have developed new practices to ensure they reach youth matching the Foundation’s three core selection criteria. A review by researchers at Mathematica of how partners recruit and select Scholars found that some institutions use a “targeted” method of recruiting, by partnering with a small number of organizations (such as NGOs or secondary schools like African Leadership Academy) that facilitate access to candidates. Some partners use a “diffused” approach, based on widespread advertising through the Internet, radio, social media, newspapers, and in the case of universities, recruiting trips. Other partners use a “hybrid” of these two approaches. Partners at the secondary and tertiary levels identify a number of best practices in recruiting, including beginning the recruiting process as early as possible, increasing collaboration with local partners, mobilizing current Scholars and alumni of the Program, and budgeting for intensive communication with applicants.

Secondary School Partners

While most secondary school NGO partners already had selection processes in place for reaching marginalized youth, the exception was BRAC. Originally based in Bangladesh and operating in Uganda since 2006, BRAC was well established with over 180 offices nationwide, but had not previously offered scholarships. It had to develop processes for recruiting and selecting Scholars. BRAC and the Equity Group Foundation in Kenya use a diffused approach, mounting nationwide communication campaigns and using a standard application that includes national exam results as one of its filters. FAWE in Ethiopia uses a targeted approach, partnering with a small number of schools and other organizations to recruit applicants. Camfed recruits Scholars through a hybrid approach of both targeted and diffused recruiting, partnering with organizations through its local networks and advertising in three districts in Ghana. At all the NGO partners, a representative selection committee composed of staff members and community leaders helps to select Scholars.

Tertiary Partners

Tertiary partners adopted a variety of innovations to address the challenge of reaching underrepresented and disadvantaged populations in Africa. These partners also use a range of targeted, hybrid and diffused methods depending on the partner. U.S. partners, including Stanford, Michigan State, University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), Wellesley and Duke University conduct annual, joint recruitment visits to the continent, offering informational sessions and application support at a variety of high schools. Canadian university partners, including University of Toronto, McGill University and University of British Columbia hold similar joint recruitment visits to Africa. The American University of Beirut ‘dovetails’ the Scholars Program recruitment criteria with its other scholarship programs for disadvantaged youth.
U.S. universities have also built targeted relationships with EducationUSA offices within American embassies to facilitate applications for U.S. universities and student visas. In partnership with African Leadership Academy, the Foundation also convened a headmasters meeting in 2013, connecting heads of African high schools with university partners and building relationships to create a pipeline of applicants. The meeting also facilitated knowledge transfer; secondary schools learned how to better position their students to apply to international universities, and universities gained an understanding of the challenges facing headmasters and secondary students, such as access to information on university opportunities, application processes, and funds to cover test and application fees.

In some cases, North American universities altered their admissions requirements or waived application fees (which can be US$100 or more) to facilitate applications from African Scholars. Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Rwanda has partnered with Bridge2Rwanda, a non-profit organization that assists talented Rwandan students to apply to competitive universities. Once CMU in Rwanda identifies potential Scholars, Bridge2Rwanda works with them to prepare for and take examinations, and complete their application to CMU, Rwanda.

Participation in the Program has also helped the Foundation’s tertiary African partners, which include some of Africa’s leading universities, attract and recruit economically disadvantaged students beyond the small number of national scholarship recipients that they currently select based on national exam results. African universities are often in a strong position to assess levels of disadvantage among potential Scholars (e.g., through interviews and home visits). African universities have built partnerships with the Program’s secondary school NGOs, who are supporting thousands of Scholars to complete a quality secondary education, thus creating a pipeline of students prepared for study at the university level in Africa.

One of the recruitment strategies utilized by the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) was to work closely with secondary school partner FAWE to recruit young women from disadvantaged backgrounds. This was not a practice that AIMS had prioritized before, suggesting that such twinning relationships among partners can be productive and can lower recruitment costs.25 Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), a large public university in Ghana, expanded its admission of underrepresented students. Its “Less Endowed School” model provides opportunities for top performing girls and boys from all of the lowest resourced public schools in Ghana. Support through the Scholars Program allowed KNUST to reach deeper into this pool to select and support additional disadvantaged students. The Scholars Program has also enabled African university partners to further internationalize their student body. Support is given to each partner to recruit a share of disadvantaged African students from other countries, something rarely done prior to the Program due to a lack of funds.

As these examples show, African and North American universities have created new processes for recruiting and selecting underrepresented students from Africa. These efforts are substantial, and often require additional resources, networks and staffing. As part of the Program, the Foundation has been able to provide at least partial support for these efforts, yet even with the expansion of admissions to university for disadvantaged youth through the Program, the number of eligible students far exceeds those who are able to attend university.

Reaching Scholars Indirectly: Building Recognition of the Program

The Foundation’s approach to recruiting Scholars through partners has allowed it to focus on areas where it has special expertise and interest, such as defining selection criteria for Scholars and identifying support services and leadership training they need while leaving the selection process to the institutions themselves. While this means that the Foundation does not have as direct a relationship with individual Scholars, it opens up the possibility for catalyzing lasting institutional change in relation to how these institutions reach and educate disadvantaged youth. Nevertheless, building wide recognition for a new Program and a distinctive MasterCard Foundation Scholar identity takes time.

In 2014, two years into the Program, the Foundation conducted a reputational audit. Over 400 stakeholders in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Africa were interviewed, representing partner organizations, multi-lateral agencies, NGOs, research institutions, academia, government and the private sector. Youth were not surveyed. The audit found that nearly three in 10 stakeholders in North America and Europe, and four in 10 in Africa, were familiar with The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, a relatively high proportion given the Program’s newness. Familiarity with the Program among these stakeholders is still quite low however, compared to more established scholarship programs such as the Rhodes Scholarship (74 percent familiarity in North America and Europe, and 57 percent in Africa) and the Ford International Fellowship Program (63 percent familiarity in North America and Europe, and 74 percent in Africa).21

Awareness of the Scholars Program is likely much lower among the Foundation’s target community of disadvantaged African youth, especially in countries not served by the Foundation’s secondary education NGO partners. In countries such as Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda, these NGOs have conducted substantial outreach and awareness campaigns about the Program. In other countries, more could be done to publicize the Program, especially for youth who live in rural areas, lack access to the Internet and do not come into contact with individuals who are aware of the Program. Additionally, research in Africa suggests that knowledge of an available merit-based scholarship can increase effort and attendance among teachers and students, and lead to improved learning outcomes for all students in class, not just those who may be eligible for or receive the scholarship.22 Such opportunities to impact much larger numbers of students raise the bar in terms of designing effective communications efforts that build wider knowledge of the Program among youth and global stakeholders.

Recruitment Results: Is the Foundation Reaching the Right Youth?

The Foundation and its partners have made considerable strides in creating workable definitions for the three selection criteria and putting new processes into practice. How well are these processes working?

Criteria 1: Disadvantage

Secondary School Scholars

Early evidence from baseline surveys of and data on the 2014 cohort of secondary school Scholars from Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia indicate that the Program does seem to be reaching large numbers of disadvantaged youth.23 Secondary school Scholars with households living on less than $2.50 a day24:

• 84 percent of Scholars in Ethiopia
• 82 percent of Scholars in Rwanda
• 71 percent of Scholars in Uganda

Of these, shares of secondary school Scholars in households living on less than $1.25 a day25 (extreme poor):

• 57 percent of Scholars in Rwanda
• 33 percent of Scholars in Ethiopia
• 32 percent of Scholars in Uganda
Secondary school Scholars whose mother did not complete one year of secondary education:\[26:\]
- 89 percent in Ethiopia
- 74 percent in Rwanda
- 64 percent in Uganda

Secondary school Scholars also face other socioeconomic barriers reflective of their country’s context. In Uganda, 30 percent of secondary school Scholars have been displaced by natural disaster or conflict; 42 percent of secondary school Scholars in Rwanda lost at least one parent; and 17 percent of Scholars in Ethiopia are orphans. Clearly, Scholars from these countries entering the Program at the secondary level in 2014 represented a group of youth facing many disadvantages, measured in a variety of ways.

**Undergraduate and Graduate Scholars**

Identifying disadvantage is more complicated at the tertiary level, where students who are qualified to enter university or a graduate program have by definition already overcome major obstacles. Thirty-two percent have completed their secondary or undergraduate education on scholarships.\[27:\] Data from a sampling of Scholars indicate that, as is the case at the secondary level, the Foundation and its partners are selecting tertiary Scholars who face significant challenges to accessing an education. For example, 52 percent of these undergraduate and graduate Scholars came from households whose primary head was a subsistence farmer, and 16 percent from families headed by labourers, street vendors or domestic helpers (Figure 7).\[28:\]

**Criterion 2: Academic Potential**

Are the Foundation and its partners selecting youth with demonstrated academic talent? Early evidence indicates that a large majority of secondary school Scholars are drawn from the top cohort of their country’s academic performers based on national primary school leaving exams (77 percent of Scholars in Uganda; 74 percent of Scholars in Rwanda). In Ethiopia, 49 percent of Scholars ranked in the top 10 percent of their region on the primary school leaving exam.\[29:\]

**Tertiary Scholars**

Tertiary Scholars must all meet the high academic standards required by partner universities for admission prior to being selected as MasterCard Foundation Scholars. Such academic talent is usually measured by SAT/ACT/TOEFL test scores, grade point averages, scores on national secondary school leaving exams and the written university application. Entrance to university partner institutions is highly competitive.

**Criterion 3: Leadership Potential and Commitment to Giving Back**

**Secondary School Scholars**

Based on survey evidence and data from applications, secondary school Scholars also appear highly motivated to contribute to their community and society.

Service: Number of Scholars in Uganda who agree that it is important to:\[30:\]
- Do something good for society – 97 percent
- Look after the environment – 94 percent
- Help people in need – 94 percent
- Make their community a better place to live – 94 percent

Secondary Scholars in Rwanda ranked similar statements equally as high.\[31:\] A lower but still significant share of secondary school Scholars also demonstrated leadership and service experience prior to entering the Program.

Leadership: Share of secondary school Scholars who have:\[32:\]
- “Stood up for what I believe, even when my friends disagreed” – 84 percent in Uganda; 77 percent in Rwanda
- Served as leader of a club/activity in past year – 37 percent in Rwanda, 35 percent in Uganda
- Helped a classmate three or more days a week in past year – 54 percent in Rwanda
- Helped a classmate or neighbour three or more days a week in past year – 82 percent in Uganda

These results suggest that, among secondary school Scholars, Foundation partners have selected individuals with a strong commitment to contributing to their communities and to tackling larger societal problems, and who demonstrate attitudes showing leadership potential. Shares of Scholars with positions of leadership are lower, indicating that it may be too soon in life (upon completion of primary school) to expect to see a record of leadership by all eligible girls and boys. Demonstration of commitment to give back, examples of service and attitudes showing leadership potential may be more useful ways of selecting Scholars at the secondary level.

**Tertiary Scholars**

Tertiary Scholars have also demonstrated a commitment to improving society and their communities, and have a record of volunteerism.

Fields in which tertiary Scholars volunteered prior to entering the Program:\[33:\]
- Education – 29 percent
- Health – 18 percent
- Environment/relief – 15 percent
- Government/rights – 10 percent
- Fields related to children – 8 percent
- Women’s empowerment – 8 percent

Looking forward, the areas in which undergraduate and graduate Scholars hope to see social change closely align with the fields in which they have career aspirations (Figure 8).
While recruiting Scholars at the secondary stage in life, it is important to look for leadership and selection approaches. They are also expanding the numbers of disadvantaged students they recruit from Africa due to participation in the Scholars Program.

In summary, our examination of efforts to recruit youth based on the Program’s three criteria revealed the following:

- The Foundation and its partners are successfully recruiting the right profile of youth who meet the Program’s criteria.
- A broader, multi-faceted definition of disadvantage as a selection criterion that includes aspects such as orphanhood, disability or living in conflict-affected areas is more workable than a narrow definition of economic disadvantage based on income. It also better reflects the range of challenges many African youth face when accessing education.
- Most secondary school Scholars are academic achievers performing within the top national cohort upon entering the Program, as measured by national exams.
- While recruiting Scholars at the secondary school level, it is important to look for leadership potential and examples of service rather than leadership positions due to these Scholars’ early stage in life.

Recruitment of talented, disadvantaged African youth requires non-African universities to reach beyond the top high schools. For this reason, greater resources in time, travel and staffing are required.

University partnerships for joint recruitment spread costs and knowledge among partner institutions. Relationships between NGOs supporting secondary school scholarships and universities can create a pipeline for candidates to reach university.

Best practices identified by partners include beginning the recruitment process as early as possible, increasing collaboration with local partners, and ensuring current and alumni Scholars understand the recruitment process and become advocates for the Program.

Elite universities are adopting new recruitment and selection approaches. They are also expanding the numbers of disadvantaged students they recruit from Africa due to participation in the Scholars Program.

Learning from the Recruit Stage

In summary, our examination of efforts to recruit disadvantaged African youth revealed the following:

- The Foundation and its partners are successfully recruiting the right profile of youth who meet the Program’s criteria.
- A broader, multi-faceted definition of disadvantage as a selection criterion that includes aspects such as orphanhood, disability or living in conflict-affected areas is more workable than a narrow definition of economic disadvantage based on income. It also better reflects the range of challenges many African youth face when accessing education.
- Most secondary school Scholars are academic achievers performing within the top national cohort upon entering the Program, as measured by national exams.
- While recruiting Scholars at the secondary school level, it is important to look for leadership potential and examples of service rather than leadership positions due to these Scholars’ early stage in life.

Recruitment of talented, disadvantaged African youth requires non-African universities to reach beyond the top high schools. For this reason, greater resources in time, travel and staffing are required.

University partnerships for joint recruitment spread costs and knowledge among partner institutions. Relationships between NGOs supporting secondary school scholarships and universities can create a pipeline for candidates to reach university.

Best practices identified by partners include beginning the recruitment process as early as possible, increasing collaboration with local partners, and ensuring current and alumni Scholars understand the recruitment process and become advocates for the Program.

Elite universities are adopting new recruitment and selection approaches. They are also expanding the numbers of disadvantaged students they recruit from Africa due to participation in the Scholars Program.

Considerations: Recruiting Scholars and Expanding Access to Education

The Foundation, working with its partners and Scholars, is taking the following considerations into account when refining processes to recruit Scholars to the Program:

Demand for secondary and higher education among disadvantaged African youth still far exceeds supply, with the main barrier being cost. Continued support for educational attainment through the Scholars Program is warranted. Some African partners have suggested reducing the funding package per student to accommodate more students. Nonetheless, even more could be done by universities, governments, funders, NGOs, and the private sector in Africa and globally to expand access to secondary school and university. The Foundation could be a convener for such efforts.

Low cost and flexible forms of education financing, including student loans and work-study programs, should be developed to serve this population. The Foundation could play a catalyzing role in this area.

By the end of 2025, some 5,500 female MasterCard Foundation Scholars with Camfed in Ghana will have enrolled in 29 of the top-rated secondary schools located in 18 school districts, based on the government’s system of categorization. Some 5,000 Scholars will have accessed quality secondary education in Uganda by 2020 through BRAC’s efforts to place them in more than 100 high-quality public and private secondary schools across the country. Similarly, Equity Group Foundation will have placed Scholars in more than 600 quality secondary schools throughout Kenya in its Wings to Fly program. FAWE will have placed 1,200 Scholars at 17 top schools in Rwanda, and 800 Scholars at eight top schools in Ethiopia.

B. EDUCATE

After being selected, MasterCard Foundation Scholars embark on a journey of learning at secondary school or university, among a new set of peers. They are often some distance from home, whether in their country of birth or abroad. This stage in the Program is designed to empower Scholars to prepare themselves for successful contributions to their economies and societies.

Academic Preparation

Secondary School Scholars

Scholars enroll in a variety of high-quality public and private secondary schools, both boarding and day schools, selected by the Foundation’s partner organizations. Upon entrance to the Program, secondary education NGO partners provide orientation programs and materials to Scholars to prepare them for the transition to secondary school (with the exception of Camfed, which selects Scholars on a rolling basis). Tutoring services are provided to Scholars by all secondary partners. These schools offer rigorous academic training based on national curriculum standards so that students are well positioned to take national university entrance exams.

Tafesse, a secondary school Scholar at Forum for African Women Educationalists, Ethiopia. Photo Credit: Jennifer Husca
Undergraduate and Graduate Scholars

Tertiary Scholars accepted into the Program study at highly competitive educational institutions. Upon arrival, Scholars receive a range of orientation services, often in the form of one- to two-week “boot camps” during the end of summer and ongoing counselling during their first year. Scholar-specific orientation and support needs identified and addressed by partners include: cultural sensitization, introduction to unfamiliar pedagogical and learning practices, personal wellness, health counselling and services, and financial literacy training. Scholars are frequently matched with a more senior Scholar, and this peer support is highly valued according to Scholar surveys. 

Partners, especially those with large cohorts of Scholars, such as Makerere University, Ashesi, Michigan State University and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology have increased staffing and support service offerings, many of which are now also available to a range of international, disadvantaged, and other students needing assistance.

Undergraduate Scholars in the Program have chosen a broad range of fields of study. The most popular fields are (Figure 9): 
- Agriculture, natural resources and conservation
- Architecture and engineering
- Business, management and public administration
- Mathematics, computer and information sciences
- Social and behavioural sciences and law
- Architecture, engineering, and related technologies
- Physical and life sciences and technologies
- Health, parks, recreation and fitness
- Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies
- Undecided
- Other

Among the 237 Scholars studying at the graduate level for a master’s degree, the most popular areas of study are mathematics and computer science (40 percent); agriculture and natural resources (15 percent); architecture and engineering (12 percent); social sciences and law (10 percent); business, management, and public administration (8 percent); and physical and life sciences (7 percent).

Undergraduate and Graduate Scholars’ Academic Performance

Given the highly competitive environments in which they are studying, and the barriers they overcame to get there, how are Scholars performing academically? Early data from partners, and drawn from undergraduate and graduate Scholars enrolled in the 2014–15 academic year, show that three-quarters of these Scholars had GPAs ranging from 3.0 to 4.0 (Figure 10). A large majority of Scholars seem to have overcome hardships to perform at or above the average level of their peers at these highly competitive and rigorous academic institutions.

Yet, while the majority of Scholars seem to be performing very well academically, data on GPAs also suggest that, as is common in any university setting, some students need additional academic assistance. Partners are exploring with the Foundation a variety of ways to accommodate and support these Scholars, including, the creation of a common set of principles to address their needs; intervening early; providing extra academic and other counselling; reducing course loads; and possibly allowing extra time to graduate.

Source: The MasterCard Foundation Management Information System (as of June 2016).
Scholar Retention
Given the intense academic environment and major adjustments required of Scholars embarking on higher education, often at some distance from home, do most Scholars complete their programs of study? Attrition rates so far are very low, with less than one percent of tertiary Scholars leaving the Program prior to completion of their studies. These data, however, are based on the small number of Scholars in the first two cohorts; in coming years it will be possible to examine whether retention rates remain high as Scholar cohort sizes increase significantly. Thoughtful selection criteria, processes and the suite of academic and psychosocial support services available to Scholars may help explain the high retention to date. As described above, the Foundation is working with partners to ensure Scholars receive the support they need (academic, psychosocial, etc.) to remain in the Program.

Understanding Transformative Leadership
In addition to academic preparation, Scholars also prepare themselves for leadership. Since the outset of the Program, the Foundation has worked closely with its partners and Scholars to develop a shared understanding of transformative leadership and how best to strengthen these qualities and skills in Scholars. In 2014, the Foundation created the Transformative Leadership Working Group with its institutional partners and convened the Transformative Leadership Advisory Group, composed of experts in the area of leadership and education. Informed by Scholar input and 18 months of collaboration, these groups developed a common Transformative Leadership Framework (Figure 11).

Transformative Leadership: A Definition
Transformative leadership is a relatively recent concept in the field of leadership studies. The Scholars Program defines transformative leadership as the act of engaging others, in an ethical manner, to generate positive and lasting change. Transformative leadership relies on teamwork, relationships, networks and peer support. Transformative leaders are creative visionaries who exhibit courage, empathy, resilience and a desire to give back.

The Transformative Leadership Framework is intended to guide the Foundation and its partners as they develop programming on transformative leadership for Scholars. It defines transformative leadership and lays out core competencies of a transformative leader, including key skills (such as adaptability, critical thinking and self-awareness) and mindsets (such as courage, empathy and vision). The Framework also identifies three essential modalities for developing transformative leadership: instruction, model and practice. It emphasizes that the opportunity for reflection across each of these modalities should be included within the Scholar experience. Instruction includes efforts in and out of the classroom to teach and share leadership skills and mindsets. Model refers to the opportunity to expose Scholars to role models and transformative leaders, both personally and indirectly by learning about famous and lesser known leaders in Africa and globally. Practice is the process of Scholars actively engaging in activities that require and enable them to exercise their leadership skills and mindsets.

The Foundation and its partners have supported several research projects on transformative leadership, including a report on women’s transformative leadership in Africa, and a research project to better understand the views of young African women on transformative leadership.

Transformative Leadership Programming: Instruction, Model, Practice
A review of partners’ programming to help foster transformative leadership among Scholars found that a variety of modalities are employed to instruct, model and practice these skills and mindsets. This programming varies significantly between the secondary and tertiary levels, due to differences in these two cohorts in terms of past leadership experience, age, accumulated knowledge and the heterogeneity of partners. A common feature to both levels, however, is Scholars’ strong sense of identity as transformative leaders. The values and concepts underlying transformative leadership infuse the Program at all stages, from recruitment, academic education and leadership training to preparing and transitioning to further education, employment or entrepreneurship. Being an authentic, transformative leader able to inspire and take action in order to improve the lives of others is thus a foundational value and expectation of the Program, and one that is reflected in how the Scholars see themselves as individuals.
Transformative Leadership: Instruction
Secondary School Leadership Training
All partners at the secondary school level offer some form of training in transformative leadership to Scholars. They face challenges, however, in providing personalized leadership training due to large cohort sizes (up to several thousand Scholars), dispersion of Scholars across hundreds of schools, limited resources for such training and the need for Scholars to go through normal schooling with their classmates. To address these challenges, Camfed, for example, provides a nine-day leadership training camp during the summer to girls participating in the Program, in which Scholars discuss leadership skills including self-awareness, understanding personal strengths and goal-setting. They also identify problems in their communities and develop an action plan to address them.

Tertiary-Level Leadership Training
At the tertiary level, leadership programming may span one or several weeks, and is often woven into orientation programs at the start of a Scholar’s undergraduate or graduate career. Additionally, many tertiary partners offer regular programming on leadership throughout the year (e.g., through monthly workshops, speakers, or programming on leadership throughout the year). Because each partner offers different programming throughout the year, there is no one-size-fits-all model for leadership training at the tertiary level. Partners generally offer many opportunities for instruction on transformative leadership, Scholars have fewer opportunities to model and practice these skills and mindsets (Figure 12). Also, while all partners’ leadership programming is informed by the African context (e.g., by learning from examples of African leaders, drawing on African case studies and scholars), few partners offer gender-specific leadership programming, either at the secondary or tertiary level. Girls and women in Africa face particular barriers to accessing education and taking leadership positions – from cultural, social, economic and sometimes legal standpoints. Gender-specific leadership training would help Scholars to recognize and better understand these obstacles. It would also provide Scholars with strategies to address them, while contributing to Scholars’ sense of personal empowerment and self-efficacy.

Training modules in transformative leadership are being developed for all Scholars and will be available via the Program’s digital platform, Baobab. Scholars have contributed to the design and roll-out of the platform as well as other programming on transformative leadership (e.g., participating in surveys, helping to design the Transformative Leadership Framework and testing the design of these training modules).

Early evidence indicates that training in leadership is making a difference for Scholars. In a survey of tertiary Scholar alumni, 83 percent say that The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program helped them “to become leaders and take on leadership roles in their community.”

Yet the review of secondary and tertiary leadership programming found that while partners generally offer many opportunities for instruction on transformative leadership, Scholars have fewer opportunities to model and practice these skills and mindsets (Figure 12). Also, while all partners’ leadership programming is informed by the African context (e.g., by learning from examples of African leaders, drawing on African case studies and scholars), few partners offer gender-specific leadership programming, either at the secondary or tertiary level. Girls and women in Africa face particular barriers to accessing education and taking leadership positions – from cultural, social, economic and sometimes legal standpoints. Gender-specific leadership training would help Scholars to recognize and better understand these obstacles. It would also provide Scholars with strategies to address them, while contributing to Scholars’ sense of personal empowerment and self-efficacy.

Gender and Leadership Training
Based on a survey of secondary school Scholars in Uganda, opportunities exist to broaden gender and leadership perspectives among some Scholars. For example, 42 percent of male secondary school Scholars in Uganda said that men make better political leaders than women, and over a third stated that men should have more rights to a job than women when jobs are scarce.

Female secondary and tertiary Scholars surveyed in Ghana identified and acknowledged traditional gender norms and expectations as a challenge to transformative leadership for young women in Africa. Children and adolescents are not recognized or expected to take part in decision-making, as they are considered too young to participate in an adult domain. Additionally, structural inequalities in African societies often disadvantage women, creating a double set of barriers for young women aspiring to be leaders. Nevertheless, young women Scholars in Ghana reported that they are actively challenging discriminatory gender norms through their leadership and community efforts.

Gender may also impact rates of return of Scholars to Africa. In a profile of African alumni of six major U.S. and Canadian universities who graduated prior to the creation of the Scholars Program, researchers at UC Berkeley and Michigan State University found that African women alumni were more likely than their male counterparts (57 percent compared to 49 percent) to live and work outside of Africa. According to the report, this “may be in part due to gender norms and hierarchies in Africa that pose obstacles to fulfilling career aspirations.”

These data suggest that additional support for women’s transformative leadership, and access to internships and jobs, could help young women overcome these barriers and possibly support higher rates of return.

The young girls in my community, they have a notion that the universities are meant for the boys. So I will encourage them that when they do well and get to the secondary level, they might be picked [as a MasterCard Foundation Scholar] and through that they will gain leadership skills and through that the cycle will go on again.

I came here and realized that leadership is not all about occupying positions; leadership is all about being a servant leader, serving the people that you’re leading.

I see leadership not as something you necessarily do and a specific set of actions and results, but as a method for influencing people and society – a method for influencing social change.

University partner in Africa

FIGURE 12

Opportunities for Instructing, Modelling and Practising Transformative Leadership
(The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program Partners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of partners who offer an activity/support</th>
<th>1 Instructing</th>
<th>2 Modelling</th>
<th>3 Practising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-African</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence on leadership programming for girls and young women supports the creation of gender specific leadership training. Research has shown that creating girl-only safe spaces for mentoring and exploring leadership can be empowering and could help to develop leadership skills and attributes among secondary school Scholars. “Overall, safe spaces, whether formal or informal, offer an environment where girls and young women can meet frequently, interact with their peers, mentors, and positive role models, strengthen their social networks and enjoy freedom of expression and movement. The spaces can also double as a forum in which leadership training, life-skills, vocational training and financial education can be provided.”

Transformative Leadership: Model

Behaviour modelling activities and support offer Scholars a chance to observe, interact with, and learn from leaders in action, as well as from historic examples. This exposure to different models can inspire Scholars and help them develop their own authentic form of leadership, based on their own story and values.

Modelling is not limited to leadership alone. The Foundation and partners have learned that multiple forms of mentorship are needed to allow Scholars to model the different behaviours and skills required to be successful students and transformative leaders. These include mentoring on academics, social skills, career-building and leadership. Less than two-thirds of partners, however, offer Scholars mentorship programs, job-shadowing opportunities, or access to role models.

Programs that do offer mentoring often link more senior Scholars with those in junior cohorts, a practice that has been welcomed by Scholars. Providing the large numbers of Scholars in the Program with mentors at an individual level, and across these different skills, is highly challenging, and calls for innovative programs and modalities. During 2013 and 2014, most Scholars reported receiving mentoring from peers, and the vast majority were highly satisfied with their mentor experience.

Professors and teachers also serve as important role models and mentors. All secondary education partners select and train teacher mentors from among the teaching staff at host secondary schools. Common training modules include child protection, guidance and counselling, academic support, and mentorship. BRAC, for example, has developed a teacher mentor handbook that helps promote consistency in the support that teacher-mentors provide to Scholars across a large number of schools. Many universities pair Scholars with faculty advisors, who serve as mentors to Scholars.

Transformative Leadership: Practice

The opportunity to practise leadership is crucial – as learning by doing is often the most effective and lasting way to acquire skills and mindsets. Many Scholars are able to take advantage of a variety of on- and off-campus opportunities for practising transformative leadership. On-campus, partners encourage Scholars to join student council, clubs or other formal interest groups, to serve as prefects, or to create their own clubs in order to practise leadership. Off-campus, partners facilitate Scholars’ involvement in service learning projects, community outreach, volunteer efforts and internships. All Scholars at FAWE, for example, are expected to join school-based Tuseme (Swahili for ‘let’s speak out’) Youth Empowerment clubs, where they receive training in life-skills and are supported to plan and implement give-back projects at their schools. At Wellesley College, Scholars take turns planning monthly Scholars meetings by choosing and researching a topic, preparing a presentation and facilitating the discussion. At AUB, Scholars participate in group community service activities, such as designing and launching health awareness campaigns at local public schools.

Scholars throughout the Program also exercise, practise and manifest their transformative leadership through their ‘give-back’ projects and activities, which are required at all levels. Interviews with female secondary and tertiary Scholars in Ghana found that giving back and contributing to their communities and society was the most important driver of these young women’s leadership. Importantly, the desire to give back was the main reason and inspiration these young women cited for developing their leadership skills.

Evidence indicates that creating more opportunities for working in groups could strengthen secondary school Scholars’ leadership skills and sense of self-efficacy. A survey conducted by researchers at Mathematica of secondary school Scholars — before they began the Program — attending both BRAC in Uganda and FAWE in Rwanda found that nearly one-third of these students agreed with the statement that the problems facing their communities (or schools) were so complex that they could not realistically make a difference. Additionally, nearly one in four Scholars in Uganda believe upon entering the Program that it is easier to solve difficult issues alone rather than by working with others.

Pressures of Aspiring to Transformative Leadership

Support for transformative leadership can help empower Scholars, lending self-efficacy to young secondary-level students and bolstering the commitment of undergraduate and graduate Scholars to give back. Yet partners, Foundation staff and Scholars themselves report that expectations to create change in their communities and in Africa as a whole can place an undue burden on Scholars. The Foundation and partners must walk the line between providing opportunities for strengthening leadership skills and mindsets, and expecting young people to lead change within what may be entrenched systems and forces beyond their control. In an effort to respond to this concern, the Foundation and its partners have sought to emphasize that transformative leadership takes many forms, and can be exercised through small acts as well as large, from family to community to society as a whole. They have also emphasized, importantly, that being a transformative leader is a journey, not a destination.

Program Satisfaction

Like secondary alumni, tertiary MasterCard Foundation Scholar alumni report a high degree of satisfaction with the Program. According to Mathematica, “[a]lumni report feeling empowered by their participation in The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program and they are using skills and knowledge acquired in school to solve urgent problems in their home countries.” Nearly all say that the Program prepared them to reach their educational (94 percent) and professional (89 percent) goals, and a further 84 percent say it helped them to become effective leaders and to take on leadership roles in their communities.
Learning from the Educate Stage
Our review of efforts to educate Scholars both academically and as leaders reveals the following findings:

Academic Preparation
- Three-quarters of tertiary Scholars are performing very well academically, at or above the 3.0 to 4.0 grade point level.
- A small number of Scholars however, are struggling academically, for a range of reasons, including difficulty in adjusting to a new culture and academic environment; health issues; and poor fit with their chosen major. Partners are helping Scholars address these challenges through early identification, academic bridging programs prior to university, tutoring, summer school, and in limited cases, a change of majors or additional time to complete degrees.
- Tertiary Scholars often need a range of support, including cultural sensitization (particularly for those studying abroad); introduction to unfamiliar pedagogical and learning practices; personal wellness and health counselling and services; and financial literacy training.
- Universities have strengthened and expanded these academic and support services, suggesting that institutions are making changes that can also benefit students outside the Program.

Preparation for Transformative Leadership
- Retention in and satisfaction with the Scholars Program is very high so far, suggesting that selection processes and wraparound services are working well for most Scholars.
- Collaborative efforts with partners and Scholars to define transformative leadership and develop consent on skills and mindsets are resulting in new programming in modelling and practising leadership, and new ways of thinking at partner institutions.
- Most Scholars have opportunities for instruction in transformative leadership, but access to programming is fragmented. There are even fewer opportunities for Scholars to model (through mentoring) and practise such leadership.
- Scholars require multiple forms of mentoring – academic, psychosocial, professional and leadership – yet personal mentoring is resource intensive and difficult to provide to all Scholars.
- All partners incorporate African contexts into their leadership training, but most leadership offerings lack a gender focus, according to a review of partners’ leadership programming.
- Expectations regarding what it means to be a transformative leader can place a heavy burden on some Scholars. Clarifying that transformative leadership does not require position or status, and can be exercised at multiple levels, can alleviate this burden.

Considerations: Educating Scholars Academically and as Transformative Leaders
The Foundation, working with its partners, is taking the following considerations into account in terms of educating Scholars both academically and as leaders of positive change:

- Additional support services should be made available to the small number of Scholars who are struggling academically.
- To build transformative leadership, more opportunities need to be created for Scholars to model and practise these skills and mindsets. Given the growing number of Scholars who will be participating in the Program in future years, alternative, scalable models for mentoring should be explored. All Scholars should be encouraged to seize opportunities to practise transformative leadership while studying.
- Safe spaces for girls should be incorporated as part of leadership training at the secondary level and an explicit gender orientation should be included in all leadership programming for Scholars. Secondary Scholars could also benefit from more opportunities to strengthen their employability and life skills.
- The Foundation and its partners should clarify expectations regarding leadership development, emphasizing that transformative leadership is a lifelong journey that can take many forms and can occur at multiple levels, from family to community to society at large.
- Given the variation in Scholars’ access to transformative leadership training, the Foundation should develop additional leadership programming and ensure it is accessible to a wider group of Scholars.

C. PREPARE

As Scholars educate themselves both academically and as leaders, they must also begin to prepare for their eventual transition out of the Scholars Program, whether to further education, employment or entrepreneurship. The Foundation and its partners offer a variety of services and experiences for Scholars to help them do so. Additionally, the Foundation hopes that by building a strong reputation for the Scholars Program, graduates will have greater access to opportunities and choices as they progress throughout their careers.

Internships and Career Counselling

Secondary School Scholars
Partners offer secondary Scholars exposure to different career paths and counselling on course selection. Given that recent surveys show that nearly all secondary school Scholars hope to attend higher education, they may need additional assistance such as formal university counselling, information on scholarships and support to complete university applications.

Internships in general are unusual at the secondary level, particularly in Africa. Equity Group Foundation (EGF) in Africa, is exploring additional Kenya-based opportunities to provide specialized employment training to Scholars. BRAC is another organization that offers secondary Scholars internships upon graduation, utilizing their extensive network in Uganda.

Tertiary Scholars
At the tertiary level, all Scholars are required and supported to complete at least one internship or research project in their home country, usually during the summer months. Internships are critical to helping Scholars better understand themselves and make education and career choices, develop professional skills, stay connected to their home countries and create valuable networks that will help them secure employment. Partners work diligently to obtain internships for Scholars, but this remains a challenge, as internships are not part of the organizational culture for many organizations and companies in Africa. Tertiary partners in North America often rely on faculty research projects or other in-country connections to help Scholars secure internship opportunities on the continent.

Africa Careers Network
To complement partners’ efforts to foster internship and career opportunities for Scholars in Africa, particularly for those who are studying abroad, the Foundation partnered with African Leadership Academy (ALA), a leading private college preparatory academy in South Africa, to create a pilot known as the Africa Careers Network (ACN). ACN is an innovative job placement service that uses individualized counselling and an online job-matching portal to connect students to a wide variety of internship and job opportunities in Africa. Through ACN, ALA has committed to placing 1,000 students – both those from ALA as well as MasterCard Foundation Scholars from partner organizations – into internships...
and jobs over seven years. Though this target is ambitious, it was clear from the outset that this would be an exploratory effort to assist a minority of Scholars, given the large numbers in the Program. These services have been designed specifically for tertiary Scholars studying abroad, given the difficulty of finding and applying for work opportunities in Africa from afar.

ACN offers internships across a variety of industries and fields, including both the public and private sectors. ACN has over 200 employer partners in 44 countries, ranging from large corporations with pan-African reach, such as Google, IBM, Dalberg and Colgate-Palmolive, to medium-sized companies, non-profit organizations and small businesses. Scholars access the portal each year in the fall, where they receive tips and examples for preparing their CVs and cover letters, as well as listings of internship and job opportunities. ACN creates a career book with the bios and CVs of each job seeker. With assistance from ACN counsellors, Scholars submit online applications via the portal on a rolling basis. ACN reviews applications and creates a shortlist for its partner employers. Employers then select and notify successful candidates directly.

In its first two years (2014 to 2015), ACN placed students in over 350 internships. Thirty-five percent of these went to MasterCard Foundation Scholars. ACN has filled a gap by creating a pan-African platform for information on internships, jobs and research fellowship opportunities on the continent. Importantly, both ACN and the Scholars Program more broadly have helped to develop a culture of internships in Africa. Yet the hands-on, time intensive approach and personal assistance provided by ACN may not be scalable, suggesting that alternative methods for helping Scholars secure internships and employment in Africa will be needed.

Experience from the first years with ACN has also shown that many Scholars could benefit from additional, tailored support in a number of ways: strategizing around their return home; narrowing their job search; counselling on options, including graduate school; accessing research on fellowships and employment opportunities; and building an Africa-focused academic and professional network, including connecting with alumni and faculty. ACN and university staff emphasize that Scholars should start their internship and job searches as early as possible, as identifying and applying for opportunities can take many months or more. Scholars with specialized interests should work with faculty and mentors to identify and secure internship positions.

North American and African universities have worked to supplement ACN’s support by strengthening their own career services. North American universities such as Michigan State University (MSU) and University of British Columbia (UBC) found that they needed to expand resources devoted to identifying and securing internships and other positions. EARTH University reports that given the specialized disciplines such as agriculture and conservation that its Scholars are pursuing, it has relied on its faculty and networks (such as the organization RUFORUM, a consortium of 60 African universities supporting graduate training in agriculture) to identify appropriate internships for Scholars. Increasingly, Scholars are generating their own internship opportunities, through networking, outreach and social media.

With Foundation support, some African universities like Makerere University have increased staffing and opened career services offices to support Scholars and other students in finding internships and employment. Many African universities are covering new ground in this respect, as career services have not typically been offered at these institutions. KNUST has established a new approach to offering internships at scale: it places up to 30 Scholars with a single large employer at a time.

Networkig

Networking is critical to helping Scholars position themselves for transitions of their choice. Among tertiary Scholar alumni graduating in 2014 and 2015, over half spontaneously mentioned the importance of the personal and professional networks and community they developed as Scholars. Thirty-nine percent said that these networks were the most valuable aspect of the Program. Secondary school Scholars interviewed also cited networking as one of the important benefits of being a Scholar. This finding was corroborated by African alumni of U.S. and Canadian universities who graduated from international universities prior to the start of the Scholars Program.

Baobab Digital Platform

Online networking is available to tertiary Scholars and secondary Scholars graduates through the Baobab platform, an online platform created through a partnership between the Foundation and Arizona State University. Developed through intensive collaboration with partners and Scholars, the Baobab platform enriches the Scholar experience at key junctures, from acceptance into the Program, through academic and leadership preparation, graduation, and transition to work and lifelong learning. Scholars themselves have taken an active role shaping the platform’s design and many of its features, via interactive sessions as well and pre-launch testing.

The Baobab platform also offers interactive community dialogue, leadership training modules and career building services. The level of investment in the platform, participation by Scholars in its design and its degree of customization are unusual for an alumni network. If successful, it could be a model for other community platforms and scholarship programs.

Fields in which ACN users found internships and full-time positions (2015):

- Consulting (27 percent)
- Education (19 percent)
- Engineering/Energy/Manufacturing (14 percent)
- Health (10 percent)
- Finance (8 percent)

State University. Photo Credit: Wayne Price

Rachel Nanteza from Uganda, a MasterCard Foundation Scholar at Michigan State University. Photo Credit: Wayne Price
Learning from the Prepare Stage
An examination of efforts to help Scholars prepare themselves for the future, including the ability to give back, reveals that:

- Secondary school Scholars need additional assistance such as college counselling, information on university scholarships and support to complete applications for higher education.
- ACN has placed hundreds of Scholars and ALA graduates into jobs and internships since 2012. Though it has helped develop a culture of internships in Africa, its high-touch approach will need modifications to be scalable.
- North American and African partner universities have expanded resources devoted to helping students find internships and jobs on the continent as a result of the Program. However, Scholars require additional country-specific information about the job market, including growth sectors and information about small, medium and large enterprises and organizations. Many Scholars could benefit from additional help in applying for positions through expanded, personalized, Africa-focused career counselling and mentoring.

- Networking with faculty, other Scholars, alumni and outside professionals is key for preparing Scholars for internships and employment, and for fostering opportunities for volunteering, career advancement and lifelong learning. All Scholars require more intentional opportunities to interact with role models and mentors in their prospective fields, and to practise career networking.
- Partner and Scholar conferences are important opportunities for networking, sharing best practices and building community among Scholars, partners and the Foundation. So far, however, only a small minority of all Scholars are able to attend these events.
- The digital Baobab platform could be a model for other networking and lifelong learning platforms if successful. Active participation by Scholars in the design and its degree of customization are noteworthy.

Advice to Scholars from African alumni of international universities:
Network, network, network ...

Considerations: Helping Scholars Prepare Themselves to Succeed in Work and Life
The following considerations are being taken into account as the Program develops for future years:

- The Foundation and its partners should expand their repository of internship and career opportunities for Scholars, focusing on online systems scalable for thousands of Scholars, and supplemented by the Program’s network of industry and employer partners.
- Scholars, particularly girls and young women, should be supported to develop strong peer and professional networks.
- Comprehensive career guidance services at the secondary level should be strengthened. The Foundation could play a role in improving awareness of the multiple pathways available to youth in secondary school, including vocational education and training (TVET), entrepreneurship and employment.
- Scholars interested in seeking jobs and internships in Africa should start early and seek support from university career services, faculty and personal networks as this process can take many months and is highly competitive. The Foundation could play a facilitation role by partnering with employer and professional networks to create internships and career opportunities for graduating Scholars.
- The Program could benefit from strategic communications efforts that build a wider recognition of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program among both youth and relevant institutions and employers globally. This type of investment could pay off for Scholars as they move through their careers, and could help the Foundation and its partners recruit talented youth to the Program.

D. Transition
Transitions to Further Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship

After a period of intensive academic education, leadership training and career preparation, Scholars are ideally ready to transition to the next step in their life journey. For most secondary Scholars, this means higher education, work or entrepreneurship. For tertiary Scholars this transition may entail graduate study, employment, or launching a social venture or business.

Given all of these options and the range of financial assistance and support services available to ease transitions, what do we know about the paths that recent Scholar alumni have taken? A number of questions come to mind:

- Do most Scholars succeed in completing the full course of their studies?
- Are they satisfied with the Scholars Program?
- Do Scholars studying abroad choose to return to Africa?
- What fields do Scholars choose for further education and careers?
- What sorts of opportunities and support can Scholars access as entrepreneurs?
- Do Scholars show a commitment to give back to their communities and society?
- In the short time since graduation, have Scholars made an impact in their communities?

How do these findings compare with evidence on alumni of other scholarship programs?

Data on the first two cohorts of secondary and tertiary Scholars graduating from 2014 and 2015 offer some early clues. These data, though limited, are instructive as the Foundation examines the Program’s progress against its goals. It is too soon to predict long-term trends of return to Africa and career choice for Scholars, much less the ultimate impact Scholars will have on their communities and society.
Accessing and Financing Further Education: Secondary School Scholars

Nearly all (99 percent) of secondary Scholars surveyed share aspirations of attending university – a path not available to the vast majority of secondary students in Africa. While secondary school Scholars may apply for another MasterCard Foundation scholarship to continue their education, the majority will most likely have to find alternative sources of support to attend university (only a small number of tertiary scholarships are available). Many secondary school Scholars receive high scores on national college entrance exams, and receive public scholarships. College counselling services offered by secondary partners assist Scholars with their college search, entrance exams, and receive public scholarships.

A survey by researchers at Mathematica completed by 95 Scholars who graduated from secondary school in Uganda in 2014 indicates that a large majority – 85 percent – are currently pursuing higher education, a remarkable number given that nationally, only 35 percent of Ugandan students attend university (only a small number of tertiary scholarships are available). Many secondary school Scholars may apply for another MasterCard Foundation scholarship to continue their education, the majority will most likely have to find alternative sources of support to attend university (only a small number of tertiary scholarships are available). Many secondary school Scholars receive high scores on national college entrance exams, and receive public scholarships. College counselling services offered by secondary partners assist Scholars with their college search, but need to be expanded, as described above under Transitions.

The nearly universal ambition among secondary school Scholars to attend university highlights the need for creative forms of education financing for African students, including low-cost loans, employer co-financing or sponsorships. Finally, the Foundation and other actors, including governments and NGO partners could provide technical and vocational education or entrepreneurship support to Scholars who are not accepted to or are unable to finance university. A survey by researchers at Mathematica completed by 95 Scholars who graduated from secondary school in Uganda in 2014 indicates that a large majority – 85 percent – are currently pursuing higher education, a remarkable number given that nationally, only 35 percent of Ugandan students attend university (only a small number of tertiary scholarships are available). Many secondary school Scholars may apply for another MasterCard Foundation scholarship to continue their education, the majority will most likely have to find alternative sources of support to attend university (only a small number of tertiary scholarships are available). Many secondary school Scholars receive high scores on national college entrance exams, and receive public scholarships. College counselling services offered by secondary partners assist Scholars with their college search, but need to be expanded, as described above under Transitions.

The concentration of secondary Scholar graduates in STEM fields, and the nearly equal proportions of male and female Scholars pursuing each of these fields, are striking. Further, more female alumni (39 percent) are pursuing math and statistics than are male alumni (30 percent). Our analysis of these data suggests that the Foundation has provided a pathway to higher education for secondary Scholars, and that it has helped many female Scholars to overcome traditional barriers to accessing education in STEM fields.

While 85 percent of secondary Scholars surveyed are pursuing higher education, alumni report a range of barriers in attending university, including gaining entrance, securing admission to their preferred program, obtaining scholarships and other financial support, and managing their academic workload. Additionally, alumni indicate that they would have benefited from additional training in transferable skills and help during the transition to university studies, including information on entrance requirements and scholarship opportunities.

Transitions to Work: Secondary School Scholars

Among the 15 percent of alumni in Uganda who are not pursuing higher education, half are employed, and the remainder are either not working, seeking further education, or are focused on health or family care. All of those alumni who sought employment upon completion of the Program found jobs within six months. Satisfaction with the Program is very high. Nearly all (98 percent) said that the Scholars Program has enabled them to reach their educational goals, and 96 percent reported that the Program provided them with the skills they needed to feel competent in their jobs. Additional survey data should be gathered to examine paths of future cohorts.

### Secondary School Alumni Postsecondary School Specialization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialization</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math and statistics</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics, chemistry, biology</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and/or engineering trades</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and law</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology, anthropology, psychology</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry or fisheries</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture or building</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, civics, geography</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General programs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of students who enrolled in an academic course

Source: The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni Survey.

*Percentages will not add up to 100 as students were able to select more than one area of study.

Tertiary Scholar Alumni Pathways: Transitions to Further Education and Work

Tertiary Scholars wishing to continue their studies at the graduate level may also apply for financial support, including an additional MasterCard Foundation scholarship or other fellowship. Scholar alumni wishing to work in specialized fields can apply for MasterCard Foundation scholarships for master’s programs at institutions such as University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria or the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences. Additionally, through a new partnership with University of Edinburgh, select qualifying Scholars across the Program network will be offered the opportunity to complete an online master’s degree, which will be equivalent to on-campus degree programs.
A survey of tertiary alumni from 2014 and 2015 provides an early indication of the pathways of Scholars upon completion of the Program. These cohort sizes, however, are small. Further data on alumni will be analyzed as part of the Foundation’s learning agenda as larger cohorts graduate in the coming years. The sample included 17 women and 19 men in their late 20s. A handful had attended universities in their home countries and the remainder studied in Canada, Ghana, the U.S. and South Africa. Eleven earned undergraduate degrees and 24 earned master’s degrees. According to the survey, 56 percent of tertiary alumni are continuing their education, and 56 percent are working, indicating that a small share is doing both. The two tertiary alumni who are not currently working or in school are actively seeking employment or opportunities to further their education (Figure 15).

Those seeking employment found positions relatively quickly after graduation: 81 percent found work within two months or less. Just over half of these graduates are satisfied with their current jobs. Those who want to change their positions are seeking jobs with better career growth opportunities, higher pay, or a chance to use or develop their skills. The sample of tertiary Scholar graduates who were interviewed worked primarily in the private sector, followed by NGOs and government (Figure 16). The relatively small share of Scholars working in government could be due to a variety of factors, including low remuneration in the public sector, perceptions of corruption and speed of career advancement. The low share of Scholars pursuing a career in public service may suggest a role for the Foundation and its partners in cooperating with governments to create established career pathways or designated career programs for Scholars in the public sector (akin to the White House Fellows and Presidential Management Fellows programs in the U.S.).

Despite impressive rates of employment and entrance into graduate programs of study, like secondary alumni, tertiary Scholar graduates also experience challenges with their transitions. Some report having faced difficulty navigating the local labour market and finding employment in their field after graduation. Others face challenges finding funds to support their entrepreneurial ventures, and colleagues with whom they can collaborate.

Tertiary Scholars Studying Abroad: Return to Africa

Supporting Scholars to contribute to social and economic transformation on the continent is a key goal of the Program. For the small share of Scholars studying internationally, the Foundation and its partners have grappled with how central “return” to Africa should be, and what place, if any, a requirement for return should have for this group of Scholars in the Program. While early on the Foundation emphasized a strong preference for these Scholars to “go back and give back,” over time this position has become more nuanced. The Foundation focuses on motivating and inspiring Scholars to return through widening and guiding their career paths, maintaining and strengthening their connections to Africa, and nurturing their desire and commitment to give back. This evolution recognizes that most Scholars want to return to the continent to live and work. It also reflects the substantial contributions to the continent of Africans living abroad, both professionally and in a personal capacity. Research on African alumni has further shown that many are transnational, moving back and forth between Africa and other regions, suggesting that a binary concept of returning or staying abroad no longer applies in today’s globalized world.

ACN reports that a number of factors influence students’ choices regarding when or if to return home. Graduates face family pressures to become self-sufficient, maximize income and support the extended family – issues that can accelerate or delay return. Additionally, lifestyles, personal relationships, the political situation in home countries and issues such as access to medical care may also impact the decision.

Data on Scholar choices indicate that the Program’s flexible approach to return seems to be working. Of the alumni interviewed, nearly half had returned home upon graduating. Of those remaining abroad, 56 percent plan to return within five years.

My education and the Scholars Program have reinforced my commitment [to] supporting other people to help themselves.

Tertiary MasterCard Foundation Scholar

Joan Kwamboka from Kenya, a MasterCard Foundation Scholar at Arizona State University. Photo Credit: Don Erhardt Photography
Of those Scholars who remain abroad after graduating from university, three-quarters are pursuing further education; the remainder is employed. All in all, these data indicate that in general, for most tertiary Scholar alumni, return home is a question of “when, not if.” However, trends on return should be re-examined in the future as more Scholars graduate.

### Other Studies of Pathways of International Alumni from Developing Countries

The African Alumni Project, a study of hundreds of African alumni from leading international universities who graduated between the 1960s and 2014, can be instructive on the question of return. This study, supported by the Foundation, found that “higher rates of return are associated with recipients of graduate degrees; about one-third for undergraduates versus fifty percent for MA and PhD degrees.” This finding could have significant implications for the Scholars Program. Specifically, it may make the case for supporting additional Scholars at the graduate level for studies abroad where they can access specialized training in areas unavailable on the continent, while still prioritizing academic training for undergraduates in Africa.

The African Alumni Project also found that an alumnus’ field of study is related to return — those with degrees in agriculture, engineering and other sciences showed higher return rates compared to graduates with degrees in law, business, and the arts and humanities. If this finding holds true for MasterCard Foundation Scholars, return rates could be relatively high given the concentrations of Scholars studying in fields such as agriculture and STEM. Finally, the African Alumni Project found that having a foundation scholarship was associated with higher levels of return to Africa. Specifically, 79 percent of those with a foundation scholarship returned compared to 27 percent who financed their higher education abroad with their own resources.

### Kpetermeni Siakor, Social Entrepreneur

**Tertiary Scholar alumna, Michigan State University**

Kpetermeni Siakor is a MasterCard Foundation Scholar alumnus of Ashesi University in Ghana. He is Liberian, although he lived in Ghana for much of his primary and secondary school years, and returned to Liberia when the wars ended. After high school, while working and attending mathematics classes at the University of Liberia, Kpetermeni helped establish the technology hub, iLab Liberia. In a country where less than 10 percent of the population has access to the Internet, Kpetermeni wanted to create a central space with reliable Internet and electricity, as well as trained local IT staff. He wanted a space where collaboration and support could occur and youth could access IT courses for free. In 2012, Kpetermeni transitioned to Ashesi, where he earned his degree in computer science as a MasterCard Foundation Scholar.

His skills came to great use when the Ebola outbreak hit Liberia. Using Ushahidi — a mobile crowdsourcing tool — Kpetermeni and his colleagues found a way to get real time information to health centres, doctors, nurses and field workers during the health crisis.

Additionally, a tracking study completed by the Ford Foundation on alumni from its International Fellowships Program (IFP) is illuminating. From 2001-2013, Ford’s IFP supported over 4,300 Fellows from 22 developing countries to complete their graduate education. With an investment of $430 million it was the largest program ever implemented by the Ford Foundation. The International Fellows Program (IFP) focused on enabling talented individuals from disadvantaged communities to contribute to social justice and positive change. Their alumni tracking study reported that 96 percent of Fellows completed their post-graduate degree, and 84 percent of them have returned to live in their home country, with 52 percent living in their home community. All of these Fellows were supported to pursue graduate degrees (master’s or PhDs), perhaps one factor contributing to the high rates of return.

The report also found that individual-level support for future leaders can be a successful strategy for bringing about societal-level change, an important goal of the Scholars Program. The report concluded that the IFP “helped develop a global core of social justice leaders: 79 percent of the alumni respondents hold senior leadership roles, such as founders of grassroots organizations and strategic leaders in national governments and international organizations. New programs and organizations created by IFP alumni have impacted an estimated 9.5 million adults and children in IFP countries, and almost one million additional individuals worldwide.” These findings appear to echo those cited by African alumni of international universities who participated in the African Alumni Project: 86 percent reported working in leadership positions in their fields, indicating that support for education for individuals with demonstrated leadership potential and a commitment to service can lead to societal change.

### Giving Back: Scholar Contributions

#### Secondary Scholars

Nearly all (99 percent) of the secondary alumni surveyed have spent time volunteering since graduation. Most have volunteered in community service (71 percent); others in education, including tutoring, mentoring or assisting in schools (49 percent); and in health, by supporting a community vaccination campaign (21 percent). Nearly all (99 percent) of secondary alumni credit The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program with increasing their commitment to giving back to their communities and with preparing them to become effective leaders. According to the survey, “seventy-six percent spontaneously mentioned the central role that giving back and improving the lives of others and their communities has played in their current and future plans.”

### Tertiary Scholars

Surveys of Scholar alumni at the tertiary level indicate a very strong commitment to giving back to their communities and to Africa more broadly. Nearly all tertiary alumni said that the Program helped prepare them to bring positive change to their communities. Since their graduation from the Scholars Program, about three-quarters of tertiary alumni have spent time volunteering outside their households, in activities such as education (77 percent); community service (35 percent); advocacy (23 percent); health (15 percent); and other areas. Alumni also said they deepened their commitment to service during their time as Scholars, and plan to continue that commitment throughout their careers and volunteer efforts.

In 2014, the Scholars Council, an elected body of tertiary Scholars, created the annual International Scholar Day of Service, whereby university Scholars across the Program give back to the community near the university they are attending. Scholars at the American University of Beirut’s Faculty of Health Sciences set up a blood drive for the local hospital, while Scholars at EARTH University committed to planting 300 trees in Silencio, a local community near the campus.
Entrepreneur: Blooming Soyinka
Africa Blooms Companies

Blooming Soyinka is a MasterCard Foundation Scholar alumna of the University of British Columbia in Canada, where she earned her M.B.A. Blooming grew up in Ifo, a small village in southwestern Nigeria, with her mother and five siblings. She lost her father when she was 14. After that time, the family struggled financially. Eating chicken and cooking on a kerosene stove were luxuries they enjoyed just once a year on her mother’s birthday.

Blooming’s passion to paint a new, positive picture of her continent propelled her to start Africa Blooms Companies, an online retail merchandiser of high quality products and goods proudly made in Africa, creating jobs for people and helping them showcase their creativity. With every purchase, together we are building communities and transforming lives. We celebrate the strength and intellectual prowess of the African continent,” she says. Blooming hopes to open a chain of Africa Blooms retail stores across all 36 states of Nigeria. Africa Blooms Co. is not about fashion.... It’s about giving people the tools and the resources to work their way out of poverty, says Blooming. I am not alone. I am part of a generation of Africans who are taking on a leadership role and making change.

Blooming earned an undergraduate degree in economics and accounting from Illinois Wesleyan University in the United States and is the founder and CEO of Africa Blooms. She is a 2015 laureate of the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneur: Blooming Soyinka
Africa Blooms Companies

Blooming Soyinka is a MasterCard Foundation Scholar alumna of the University of British Columbia in Canada, where she earned her M.B.A. Blooming grew up in Ifo, a small village in southwestern Nigeria, with her mother and five siblings. She lost her father when she was 14. After that time, the family struggled financially. Eating chicken and cooking on a kerosene stove were luxuries they enjoyed just once a year on her mother’s birthday.

Blooming’s passion to paint a new, positive picture of her continent propelled her to start Africa Blooms Companies, an online retail merchandiser of high quality products and goods proudly made in Africa, creating jobs for people and helping them showcase their creativity. With every purchase, together we are building communities and transforming lives. We celebrate the strength and intellectual prowess of the African continent,” she says. Blooming hopes to open a chain of Africa Blooms retail stores across all 36 states of Nigeria. Africa Blooms Co. is not about fashion.... It’s about giving people the tools and the resources to work their way out of poverty, says Blooming. I am not alone. I am part of a generation of Africans who are taking on a leadership role and making change.

Blooming earned an undergraduate degree in economics and accounting from Illinois Wesleyan University in the United States and is the founder and CEO of Africa Blooms. She is a 2015 laureate of the Tony Elumelu

Entrepreneurship

According to the African Development Bank, the informal sector in Africa accounts for approximately 80 percent of GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa and 50 percent of the labour force. Regular, salaried jobs are difficult to come by, even for educated youth. Many jobs are created by entrepreneurs who launch small businesses or social ventures. Given these realities, the Scholars Program from its outset recognized that many Scholars would need to create their own jobs. Cambridge, for example, provides Scholars with training in financial literacy, entrepreneurship and business skills. Many secondary education partners take advantage of their annual leadership camps to invite young local entrepreneurs to speak to Scholars, thereby exposing them to the idea that entrepreneurship can be a viable pathway after graduation.

Any tertiary Scholars who have an interest in entrepreneurship can access a growing set of support services and courses at their universities. At Ashesi University, ethical entrepreneurship is a key focus. A variety of courses on entrepreneurship are offered as part of the liberal arts program, including a course entitled “Foundations for Design and Entrepreneurship.” Scholars at Duke organized a student conference entitled, “Africa Untold: Stories of Young Entrepreneurs,” bringing together African Students studying in the U.S. who are involved in entrepreneurial projects in Africa. Participants discussed themes such as how to design and initiate projects, financing social ventures and giving back as a student.

North American university partners also offer a wide range of entrepreneurship training and incubation hubs for start-ups. At McGill University, the McGill Dobson Entrepreneurship Centre offers courses in entrepreneurship and an incubation centre for student ventures. Stanford University, in the heart of Silicon Valley, has a wide range of undergraduate courses on entrepreneurship and opportunities for Scholars to join student groups such as the Business Association of Stanford Entrepreneurial Students. The Foundation has recently piloted a mechanism to support Scholars’ social enterprises. The Foundation’s collaboration with The Resolution Project awarded funding to undergraduate Scholars through its Social Venture Challenge, held in June 2016. Winners received seed capital as well as hands-on mentoring and global advisory services through a dedicated team of volunteers and entrepreneurship guides.

Ngoni Mugwisi, Tertiary Scholar, Arizona State University
Solar Water Solutions

Ngoni is a MasterCard Foundation Scholar at Arizona State University, pursuing a BSE in Electrical Engineering with a minor in Engineering Management. He is also a Resolution Fellow with a passion for social innovation and is founder of the non-profit venture Solar Water Solutions.

Ngoni grew up in a rural subsistence farming community in Zimbabwe. Attending school in America, he was exposed to raised bed technologies for increasing crop yields. Spotting his first bunkbed, he wondered if a tiered bed system could work and personally designed a tiered gardening system with three platforms, enabling water conservation, multiple crop production on a single plot, and an easy to understand agriculture initiative for farming families. Ngoni plans to enable marginalized Zimbabweans living in areas that lack sufficient water and fertile soil to sustainably grow vegetables, simultaneously improving food availability and financial security. In only six to nine months, families will make enough extra money to endow a new bed and initial seed package for the next family, making this a sustainably scalable project.

MasterCard Foundation Scholars were also among the winners of the Resolution Social Venture Challenge offered at Clinton Global Initiative University from 2014 to 2016. One such venture was Solar Water Solutions launched by MasterCard Foundation Scholar Ngoni Mugwisi, of Arizona State University.

Other Scholar alumni at the tertiary level are making contributions in tangible ways as entrepreneurs. Some are launching social ventures. Moses Surumen and Fanice Nyatigo, MasterCard Foundation Scholars at University of California, Berkeley, are developing M-Soma, a learning platform for Kenyan high school graduates that teaches basic computer skills through a four-week summer boot camp. Lincoln Mtemeri and Clive Matsika, Scholars at Arizona State University, created Waste to Energy, which will install biogas digesters to produce combustible gases for household and farming use (e.g., heating, lighting and crop irrigation) in Sanyati Community, Zimbabwe.

I undoubtedly believe that the investment made in my education is meant to improve not just my life but the lives of the people in my family, my community and everyone I come into contact with.

Tertiary Scholar alumna, Ashesi University

Additionally, through a Foundation partnership with the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI-U), over 50 Scholars since 2014 have made commitments to action within CGI-U’s five focus areas – education, public health, the environment and climate change, peace and human rights, and poverty alleviation. Participating Scholars attend a leadership workshop and receive year-long mentoring from a CGI-U commitment-maker alumnum.
Learning from the Transition Stage

Our examination of how Scholars transition from the Program revealed the following:

- A majority of tertiary Scholars have, or intend to, return to Africa. Nearly 50 percent of tertiary Scholars from the first two cohorts studying abroad returned home after graduation, and the majority of those remaining abroad expect to return to Africa within five years.
- The Foundation’s flexible definition and timeline for return to Africa, its focus on Scholar choice, and support to Scholars applying for internships and jobs on the continent seem to be facilitating return and ‘give-back’ among early cohorts of tertiary Scholars studying abroad.
- Research on career paths of African alumni of international universities over the past five decades shows that rates of return to the continent are higher for alumni who studied for advanced degrees compared to those who studied at the undergraduate level.
- Fifty-six percent of tertiary alumni are employed and 56 percent are continuing their education (this includes a small percentage that are both working and studying). Eighty-one percent found employment within two months or less. Just over half of these alumni are satisfied with their current jobs. Most tertiary graduates found employment in the private sector, followed by NGOs and the public sector.
- Data from the first cohort of secondary Scholars show that 85 percent of alumni surveyed were able to transition to higher education after the Program. This is significantly higher than the seven percent transition rate from secondary school to university in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Most secondary alumni are pursuing further studies in STEM fields, and at equal rates by men and women, suggesting that the Foundation is helping young women overcome barriers to study in the sciences, mathematics and computing fields.
- Some secondary school alumni would like additional help to develop transferable skills, and some secondary and tertiary level alumni request greater support for the transition from school to work, including additional career advisory services.
- Both secondary and tertiary Scholars are highly motivated to give back to their communities, and a large majority of alumni Scholars volunteer.
- Some Scholar alumni are already making a difference in their countries of origin through social ventures, but accessing financing for these ventures remains a significant challenge.

Considerations: Transitions to Further Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship

The Foundation, working with its partners, is taking into account the following as it advances programming to support Scholars’ transitions:

- As research shows that there are higher rates of return for African alumni studying at the graduate level, the Foundation should place greater emphasis on supporting Scholars for graduate study abroad at institutions offering specialized programs not widely available on the continent. At the same time, the Program should continue to support secondary and undergraduate Scholars at institutions in Africa, where access is still limited by cost and other constraints.
- As larger numbers of Scholars graduate with each passing year, the need to support Scholars’ career transitions increases, as does the need for greater investment and innovations to assist them.
- To improve success during the job search, tertiary alumni recommend that Scholars obtain work experience while still in school as a way to overcome strong competition for employment.
- Due to the shortage of formal sector jobs in Africa, many Scholars may choose the path of entrepreneurship. The Foundation should consider skill-building in entrepreneurship and enterprise development, connecting Scholars with funding sources, and facilitating access to advisory services and innovation hubs.
- The low share of Scholars pursuing a career in the public service may suggest a role for the Foundation, its partners and governments to create established career pathways or fellowship programs for Scholars in the public sector.
- It is still early days for the Scholars Program. While initial data from the first two very small cohorts of tertiary students studying abroad show that just over half of alumni are returning to the continent upon graduation, continued research and tracking will be needed to monitor trends over time.
- In order to effectively judge the long-term impact of the Scholars Program, continued investment in a longitudinal study of Scholars could greatly inform this and other scholarship programs for disadvantaged youth.
IV. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Five years on, it is too soon to draw definitive conclusions regarding the Scholars Program’s ultimate impact. During the first years, focus has been on building the foundation for the Program: creating appropriate criteria and processes for recruiting and selecting Scholars and partners; strengthening the partner network; and establishing a suite of support services for Scholars who are making extraordinary transitions at academic, social, cultural, and professional levels.

Program development efforts will now take on new challenges. The Foundation will expand its programming on transformative leadership and prepare Scholars for successful transitions. Together with partners and Scholars, the Foundation is also working to build a stronger Scholars Community, including both alumni and current students. The Foundation, its partners and Scholars have already started to work on this effort. Additionally, a number of new developments are being considered. Some of the new efforts and potential pathways are outlined below.

New Developments in the Scholars Program

Recruit – To strengthen the partner network in Africa and offer more opportunities for Scholars to study at quality institutions on the continent, the Foundation will develop more partnerships with leading African universities, supporting more Scholars to study at the undergraduate level in Africa. The Foundation and its partners will work to recruit more Scholars from groups that are still not represented in large numbers in the Program, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented countries (including those in francophone West Africa).

Educate – The Foundation will develop additional transformative leadership content, resources and curricula. Additional leadership courses will be developed on the digital Baobab platform, with an explicit gender focus. Scholars will be provided with more opportunities to model transformative leadership (through group mentoring via the Baobab platform and teacher mentors at secondary schools), and additional possibilities for practising transformative leadership through service learning projects, leadership positions in school activities and other efforts. The Foundation will scale up and multiply its existing tertiary Scholar convening efforts, eventually reaching all tertiary Scholars.

Prepare – To do more to help Scholars position themselves for success after the Program, the Foundation will continue to work with partners and Scholars to expand and enhance the Scholars Community, including the Baobab platform. The Program will move toward regional conferences and other events that will reach all Scholars, and will work to expand internships for Scholars in Africa.

Transition – To further support the large numbers of Scholars who will be graduating in the coming years, the Foundation will focus on assisting secondary school Scholars in their pursuit of university and/or vocational studies, and will provide short-term post-graduation bridge programming, focused on soft skills development, digital literacy and entrepreneurship training. For university Scholars, the Foundation will create career exposure events in countries with high concentrations of Scholars and will develop an industry mentorship program. The Foundation will also explore opportunities to support education finance.

Partners – In addition to recruiting additional African partners, the Program will support the expansion of partnerships between North American, European and African institutions through faculty and Scholar exchanges, joint programming, additional online courses and conferences. Going forward, undergraduate Scholars will increasingly study in Africa. The Program’s international partnerships will also provide technical support to strengthen institutional capacity at African universities.

Future Learning – The Foundation will continue to invest in research and evaluation in order to learn from and improve the Program, and track its impact. Increasingly, these efforts will help engage Scholars and partners as active participants in all stages of the learning cycle.


24. Ibid. The likelihood of living in poverty is based on the Progress out of Poverty Index for Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda using an income threshold of $2.50 (U.S.) per person per day and of $1.25 per household per day for the likelihood of living in extreme poverty.

25. Ibid.


27. The MasterCard Foundation Management Information System.

28. Ibid.

29. Mathematica, “Early Learning from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars at BRAC Uganda,” September 2015; “Early Learning from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars at FAWE Rwanda,” February 2016; and “Early Learning from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars at FAWE Ethiopia,” (data on file). Additionally, a majority of Scholars in Ethiopia are in the top third of their class.


34. These are Category A and B Schools located in the districts where Camfed operates.


36. The MasterCard Foundation Management Information System.

37. Scholar attraction rates are based on data reported from partners on all undergraduate and graduate Scholars through May 2016.

38. The Transformative Leadership Working Group is composed of representatives of the Foundation and its partner institutions.


44. Marsh, et al., 2016, p. 35.


49. Interviews with Foundation staff, May 2016.


51. Some of these lessons and recommendations are drawn from Mathematica, “Transformative Leadership,” September 2015.


55. Ibid.


60. Interview with staff, June 2016.


62. Rodway, 2016, p. 27.


64. This section on secondary and tertiary alumni outcomes draws extensively on findings from interviews and surveys with the 130 Scholar alumni from both the secondary and tertiary levels who graduated in 2014 and 2015 and participated in a survey between six and 18 months after graduation. All secondary school scholars participating in the survey studied with BRAC in Uganda. A handful of these tertiary Scholars went to university in their home countries, and the remainder studied abroad at university partners in Canada, Ghana, the United States and South Africa, see Mathematica, “Elevating Alumni Voices,” 2016.

65. Evidence on Scholar pathways post-graduation is based on interviews and surveys with the 130 Scholar alumni from both the secondary and tertiary levels who graduated in 2014 and 2015 and participated in a survey between six and 18 months after graduation. All secondary school scholars participating in the survey studied with BRAC in Uganda. A handful of these tertiary Scholars went to university in their home countries, and the remainder studied abroad at university partners in Canada, Ghana, the United States and South Africa, see Mathematica, “Elevating Alumni Voices,” 2016.


69. Ibid.


71. Ibid., p. 30.

72. Under a separate program, the Foundation is supporting scholars for graduate study in public administration in Canada for Africans wishing to serve in government on the continent, in honour of Nelson Mandela and in cooperation with Global Affairs Canada.


75. Ibid.


77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., pp. 40–41.


85. This section draws extensively on findings from Mathematica, “Elevating Alumni Voices,” 2016.

86. These findings are based on a survey of all secondary scholars studying with BRAC in Uganda and of tertiary alumni from the 2014 and 2015 graduating cohorts. Further research will be needed to better understand the support for transitions required by all secondary and tertiary Scholars.