Money has always been tight for my family throughout the majority of my life. Looking back on the situation now, I realize that even though all of the oversized clothes invited bullying, all of the hunger induced headaches slowed down my ability to do my schoolwork, the potential health issues resulting from years of living off of fast food; these struggles have developed my character to persevere in the face of difficulty and a desire to pay forward all of the assistance given to me by everyone who has supported me in my life, by caring for the health of others; something that I can understand from first hand experience. As a child, I rarely owned my own clothing. Usually shirts and pants were triple hand me downs from my uncles or cousins, to my brother, and finally to me. If it wasn't a hand me down, then it was bought a few sizes larger to increase the time that I could wear the clothes. For my family, proper size was not an exact number it was a range of numbers. Furthermore, I was home alone while my mother worked two jobs. During the school week, I ate meals from school, but for dinner I would always have to eat fast food because my mother did not have time to cook when she got home from her second job late at night. This was life during my pre-college years and it took a toll on my health. As the years passed, our financial situation slowly improved, but when it came time for me to apply to universities, I was limited to where I could afford tuition. Initially, when I looked at the price tag for tuition at private universities such as Rice I was dismayed. I could never afford to pay that amount of money and the rest of my family was similarly convinced. However, I learned that there was need-based aid offered by Rice and other institutions so I was free to apply to these top rated universities. If it weren't for the philanthropic donors to Rice I would not be able to attend and I am very conscious of this fact.

Now that I was at Rice, I wanted to take the next step and go to the LHC. My professor was generous to pay for the airfare and while it relieved a considerable amount of the financial burden, there was still a lot of money to be accounted for. It was a struggle to come up with the money and it took time away from my studies but I was able to do it. I had saved up some money that was given to me by my relatives as a tradition during Chinese New Years. To make some money, I would tutor mathematics to a family friend’s children. I also asked my relatives if they would help finance my trip. The largest source of funding, however, came from the Shell Foundation Summer Fellowship award that I applied for. I was one of four students from the Physics and Astronomy department to be selected. Through these experiences, I have come to understand just how much I owe to the people around me, family and philanthropic community, who have given me one amazing opportunity after another. It is my desire to give back to the society that enabled me to achieve so much.