

The Lab Became My Home,

Have you ever taken a moment to truly reflect on what “home” means to you? For me, home isn't defined by a location or walls it's where I feel most alive. And that place has always been wherever I have access to my phone, a computer, and a strong internet connection. It's where I spend hours coding, designing websites, and exploring new tech skills. That place, whether it's my small bedroom or a borrowed computer lab, is the place I call home.

You might wonder how a boy from a poor Rwandan family whose parents are vegetable farmers working on less than one hectare of swampy land and earning under \$700 per season could fall in love with something like coding, a world that seems so distant from his own. But it's true. I'm the second-born of seven children. My parents never went to secondary school, but they've always understood the value of education. They work tirelessly often borrowing from neighbors or village cooperatives just so we can attend school.

My educational journey has never been easy. I struggled with school fees, lacked access to basic materials, and often worried about how my parents survived when we went to school with empty lunchboxes. At one point, my health became another barrier. I suffered from a chronic illness that kept me home for long periods. With no money for hospital visits, my mother treated me with natural homemade remedies. But I didn't let those moments go to waste. I used the time to teach myself how to code using a basic BGH POSITIVO computer my mother had managed to buy for me. I watched YouTube tutorials late into the night, learning web development, design, and cybersecurity. That's when I discovered my second home not a physical place, but a world of endless learning.

My dream of entering the tech world started when I watched a Korean movie about a young man who built a tech company from nothing after his parents rejected his ambitions. The story moved me. It showed me that technology could be a bridge between struggle and opportunity. I started to believe that I, too, could one day use tech to improve the lives of people in my community starting with my younger brothers and sisters.

Yet, my journey was still full of obstacles. Despite being one of the top students in my school, I was often sent home for not paying fees or denied the

chance to sit for exams. So, I found another way. I began volunteering to clean the school's computer lab and built a friendship with the lab attendant. Eventually, I was entrusted with managing the space, which gave me regular access to computers. That space became my sanctuary. Every free moment, I taught myself HTML, CSS, PHP, JavaScript, and Python. I even worked on real projects like a school alarm system, our school's website, and platforms I named Moveival, Skymedia, and my personal portfolio.

My passion and self-taught skills often surprise people especially considering I had no formal training and barely any resources. I believe that with access to even the most basic tools, and especially a quality education, I could unlock the full potential of what I've already started. My dream is not only to thrive in tech, but to invite others like me into this world and build solutions that make our lives and our communities better.

This is why I'm excited about your university. I believe your institution can transform my humble beginnings into something extraordinary. Your academic mission aligns with mine: to grow, to lead, and to innovate. I'm drawn to your vibrant community of high-achieving, curious minds, and I look forward to learning from them and contributing with everything I have. I've built a habit of tackling difficult challenges and working with others because I believe that if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far and create real change, you go together.