1. **Reflecting on your life so far, tell us how you meet the key selection criteria for the Scholars Program. You should include information on your academic achievements and barriers to education you have faced.**

Thinking about my childhood and my Primary Education, I know I definitely did not get a quality Primary Education due to financial constraints, but that was something I never focused on or I ever thought would limit me. I knew I would get the best education at a higher level.  
  
My beliefs were re-enforced when I got the highest score in JAMB (The Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board) score in my secondary school. I got admission to Michael Okpara University of Agriculture to study Computer engineering. In my first year, I got a commendation letter from the school board due to my exceptional performance.  
  
My second year, turned out to be the greatest low of my life because my parents were in debt because they had to collect loans to pay my first-year tuition fees and accommodation fees. For a while, I almost lost faith and thought I would drop out. But I got to apply for a scholarship in my second year in the university and I was awarded the scholarship, and thanks to that, I was able to complete my university program. Though the scholarship only covered my tuition fees, accommodation and getting study materials was still a challenge, so I had to move to a less expensive apartment with a roommate and relied on online resources for school materials I could not afford to buy. At the end of my undergraduate program, I was able to graduate with an Upper-class degree in Computer Engineering.

***I have performed much better academically in college than I ever did in high school. That’s because there is no routine to the experience. Every week, I have new projects to complete, tests to study for, and activities to try. I have been involved with the campus Crime Stoppers organization all three years of college, and I was elected president for the upcoming term. This lets me work closely with law enforcement to supplement my college education and further my career.***

1. **We are particularly welcoming applications from those who identify as women, refugees (or displaced), and/ or those with disabilities as we understand that these groups face barriers to education. If you identify with any of these characteristics, please reflect this in your answer, with as much detail as you are comfortable sharing.**
2. **We want to learn about your track record as a transformative leader. Tell us about one current idea or project you are working on, which clearly demonstrates this.**

*I previously served as one of four co-presidents for my high school’s Amnesty International club. In this role, I organize and supervise the organization of all meetings and events that we attend to raise awareness about social justice topics such as refugees or endangered species. This experience has taught me how to effectively manage a team and meet multiple deadlines in an organized manner.*

*I am applying for this scholarship because I believe my work ethic and determination make me an excellent candidate. Last year, I helped organize the high school student council’s first blood drive in our county, which was a big success with 100% participation rate. After that experience, our Student Council Vice President encouraged me to run for the position of Secretary; while I did not win the election, I can still point to this experience as a great example of my leadership skills.*

1. **We aim to award Mastercard Foundation scholarships to individuals who will benefit most from the opportunity. How would being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar support your development (personally and professionally)?**
2. **We would like to find out more about your interest in further academic study.  Please explain how the degree programme you have chosen to study here relates to your future goals.  What specifically about this course will be useful for you? If choosing an online degree programme, please reflect on how you will manage your part-time study with other commitments.**

The highest performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality. They give all children opportunities for a good quality education. This report presents policy recommendations for education systems to help all children succeed in their schooling. It looks into system level and school level policies to promote equity and quality. It also provides evidence on how to support disadvantaged students and schools, as improving opportunities for them benefits education systems and societies as a whole.

The evidence shows that equity can go hand-in-hand with quality; and that reducing school failure strengthens individuals’ and societies’ capacities to respond to recession and contribute to economic growth and social wellbeing. This means that investing in high quality schooling and equal opportunities for all from the early years to at least the end of upper secondary is the most profitable educational policy. Students who have enriching school experiences will be more likely to stay in education and successfully transfer to the labour market. Those who struggle at early stages but receive adequate, timely support and guidance have higher probabilities of finishing, despite any difficulties in their family or social background.

The current economic recession adds urgency to the task, with greater unemployment and increasing demand for higher level skills. Yet, while most education ministries highlight the reduction of school failure as a priority, OECD countries show little consistency in their policies and practices to support low performing disadvantaged schools and students. Challenges remain as to what types of policies and practices work best, and how to implement them.

1. **The Mastercard Foundation is a growing network of diverse scholars. One of the key attributes of this network is a commitment to inclusion.  What experience do you have promoting social inclusion? What have you learnt?**

Typically, community engagement is incorporated into a course or series of courses by way of a project that has both learning and community action goals.  This project is designed via collaboration between faculty and community partners, such as non-governmental organizations or government agencies.  The project asks students to apply course content to community-based activities.  This gives students experiential opportunities to learn in real world contexts and develop skills of community engagement, while affording community partners opportunities to address significant needs. Vanderbilt University’s Sharon Shields has argued that service learning is “one of the most significant teaching methodologies gaining momentum on many campuses.” Indeed, when done well, teaching through community engagement benefits students, faculty, communities, and institutions of higher education. Below are some of the benefits that education researchers and practitioners have associated with community engaged teaching.

Student Benefits of Community Engagement

LEARNING OUTCOMES

* Positive impact on students’ academic learning
* Improves students’ ability to apply what they have learned in “the real world”
* Positive impact on academic outcomes such as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, problem-solving, critical thinking, and cognitive development
* Improved ability to understand complexity and ambiguity

PERSONAL OUTCOMES

* Greater sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development
* Greater interpersonal development, particularly the ability to work well with others, and build leadership and communication skills

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

* Reduced stereotypes and greater inter-cultural understanding
* Improved social responsibility and citizenship skills
* Greater involvement in community service after graduation

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

* Connections with professionals and community members for learning and career opportunities
* Greater academic learning, leadership skills, and personal efficacy can lead to greater opportunity

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INSTITUTION

* Stronger relationships with faculty
* Greater satisfaction with college
* Improved graduation rates

Faculty Benefits of Community Engagement

* Satisfaction with the quality of student learning
* New avenues for research and publication via new relationships between faculty and community
* Providing networking opportunities with engaged faculty in other disciplines or institutions
* A stronger commitment to one’s research

College and University Benefits of Community Engagement

* Improved institutional commitment to the curriculum
* Improved student retention
* Enhanced community relations

Community Benefits of Community Engagement

* Satisfaction with student participation
* Valuable human resources needed to achieve community goals
* New energy, enthusiasm and perspectives applied to community work
* Enhanced community-university relations

Models of Community Engagement Teaching

What does community engaged teaching look like in practice?  There are many variations and each have their usefulness for different applications.  According to Kerissa Heffernan, there are six general models. Click on the tabs to explore each model.