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February 27, 2025

The ALCHE Scholarship Review Team,
African Leadership College of Higher Education,
Powder Mill Rd, Pamplémousses, 21001 Mauritius.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**REFERENCE LETTER FOR THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP
AT AFRICAN LEADERSHIP COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION(ACHE)**

It is with utmost delight that I write a reference letter for our Girl Advocate for Gender Equality, Miss Deborah Ehi Russell-Abia as a candidate for the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship at ALCHE for the 3 years Software Engineering Undergraduate Program.

As the Executive Director at Stand with a Girl Initiative, I have known her for over four years now. Miss Deborah is a young lady of exceptional quality and vast knowledge in advocacy, leadership and effective communication skills. Since our engagement with her in 2021 when she was selected as a Girl Advocate for Gender Equality (GAGE) project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; She has shown herself worthy of the responsibilities accorded to her.

I would also like to briefly state that Stand With A Girl SWAG Initiative is a registered youth led organization dedicated to ensuring that every girl in Nigeria no matter where she is born or found is empowered to fulfill her maximum potential. Its goal is to promote a safe and supportive environment for the social, economic, academic, and healthy development of girls in Nigeria. Miss. Deborah, is one of our beneficiaries and has shown good qualities both morally and disciplinary skills that I believe makes her a suitable and eligible candidate for this program.

She got an all-expense paid trip and accommodation to Abuja for the GAGE project inception meeting and capacity building. The aim of this gathering was to create more awareness and equip girls with skills and resources in thematic areas in STEM, Financial Literacy, and Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Self Esteem. After the session, she opted for the female inclusion in STEM component of the project as this aligns with her course of choice.

Upon return home, based on instructions, she actively facilitated two advocacy sessions with 10 girls each in her home and a school for public secondary school students with supervision; where she stepped down weeks of training to adolescent Girls in her community. Also, to leave an impact in her community, she was asked to identify a need, based on her input, she donated chairs to an underdeveloped church in her community.

Her resilience and passion also led to her selection as one of the adolescents from Nigeria to have been offered a fully funded opportunity to attend the Society for Adolescent and Young People's Health in Nigeria (SAYPHIN) conference 2023.

Miss. Deborah's most recent engagement with us was in October 2024 when she was invited to participate in a community outreach at Igbe community, Ikorodu in Lagos where she interacted with girls in the community, shared her advocacy journey, what she's currently up to and how SWAG has influenced her positively. During her speech, she mentioned her personal mission and problem statement which she discovered during one of her milestones in the ALX Professional Foundations course. She also mentioned how her zeal to spread information to more people led her to teaching 70+ people Digital Marketing for free after a short course on it in 2022. Her story inspired not only us but the girls and guests present.

Miss. Deborah envisions creating learning and job opportunities for more girls in few years. I have no doubt how exceptional this young applicant is, and I believe that this opportunity will create another step closer to her achievements in the future as well as ensure that she's able to fulfill her maximum potential.

I am confident that your institution will be impressed with Miss. Deborah as I am with her. Kindly feel free to contact me if any additional information is needed to support the application of this deserving student. You can reach me via email at swaginitiative@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Margaret Bolaji-Adegbola
Executive Director, SWAG Initiative

