I am a first-year PhD student in Statistics at Rice University. I have to support myself financially by doing teaching assistance. In the last semester, I was TA for the course STAT 413: Introduction to Statistical Machine Learning, and I will be TA again in the spring semester. The stipend is paid to me bimonthly and is only enough to cover my rent ($800/month) and other living expenses (approximately $20/day). My family is not wealthy and my mum is suffering from Lupus, an auto-immune disease to which there is currently no cure. Most of my family's income is spent on her treatment in Singapore. I have taken a few courses on Coursera, including "What is Data Science?", "Open Source tools for Data Science" and "Python for Data Science and AI", but I eventually had to drop out because I could no longer afford the expensive month subscription ($39/month). Therefore, financial aid from Coursera will be extremely valuable to me.

At Rice University, I am currently working on probabilistic models with application to genomic data. Upon graduation, I want to become a data scientist in industry. I have already had lots of experience with R and Matlab, and I am learning Python because it is a very fast-growing language in the past few years within the data science community. As a matter of fact, it is currently the most commonly used programming language in data science. SQL is also a very popular skill because it allows data scientists to conveniently create and manipulate databases. I have contacted my professors at Rice University for on-campus opportunities to learn Python and SQL. Rice University does offer such courses, but they are only available to undergraduate students. Therefore, I am willing to spend time on acquiring the skills myself. The IBM professional certificate in Data Science is a great way to learn and showcase my skills.