



ELEVATING ALUMNI VOICES: INSIGHTS FROM 2014 AND 2015 GRADUATES OF THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

MAY 2016



The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is a global partnership of some of the world's leading universities and secondary education organizations to educate the next generation of African leaders. This initiative, led by The MasterCard Foundation, is currently being implemented in partnership with 24 organizations serving Scholars who are pursuing secondary and tertiary education. As the learning partner for the Scholars Program, Mathematica Policy Research aims to foster learning that will assist the partnership's efforts to achieve Program goals.

Over 130 alumni from the first two cohorts of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program shared with Mathematica their insights, experiences and opinions about their time in the Program and since their graduation.

Findings from all alumni

- Alumni credit the Scholars Program not only with enabling them to continue their education and to succeed in employment, but also for giving them the skills and motivation to give back to their home communities and home countries.
- Alumni greatly value the Scholars network and recommend building upon it.

Findings from secondary education alumni

- Over 85% of secondary education alumni are currently pursuing higher education.
- Alumni faced a range of barriers in pursuing a university education, including gaining entrance to university, obtaining scholarships or other financial support and managing their academic workload.
- Alumni need training in soft or transferable skills as well as help transitioning to university studies, including information on entrance requirements and scholarship opportunities.

Findings from tertiary education alumni

- Nearly all alumni are either employed or pursuing graduate studies.
- About half of alumni who studied abroad have returned to their home countries, and 80% of those still abroad intend to return in the next five years.
- Alumni experienced difficulties in obtaining jobs; lacking familiarity with the local job market was a recurring theme in alumni remarks.
- Alumni recommend that the Program or their schools provide more preparation for, and support during, the transition from school to work and improved career services and networks.

On the following page, we present findings from our analysis and share insights from secondary education and tertiary education alumni. Each group provided recommendations to the Scholars Program to adapt activities to meet the needs of current and future Scholars.

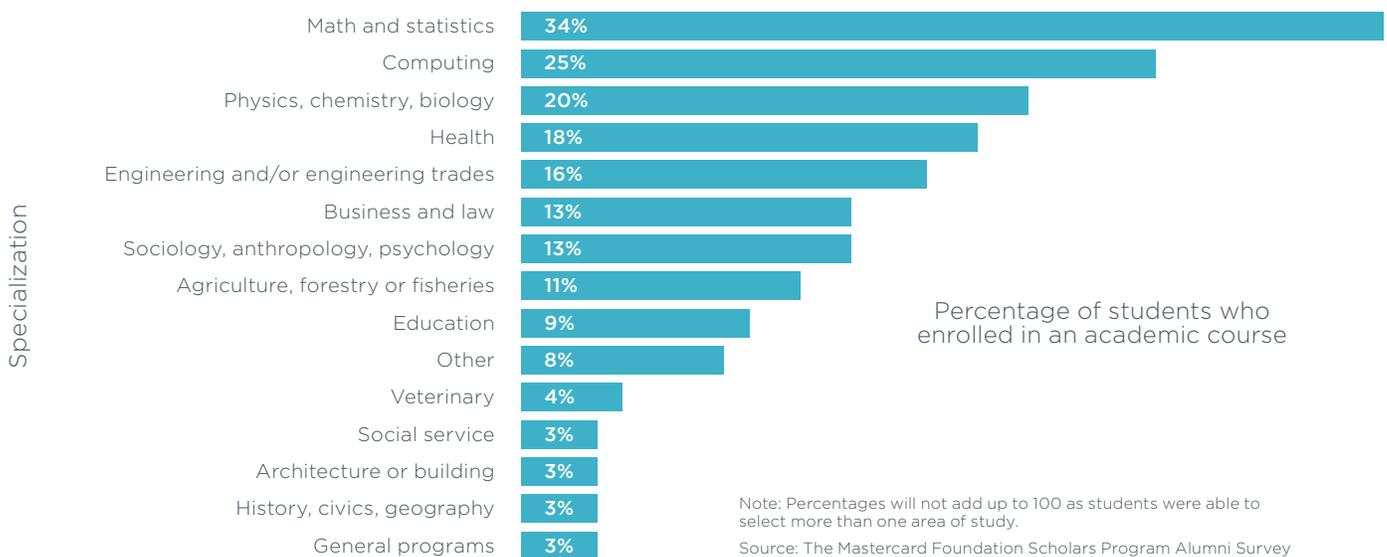
SECONDARY EDUCATION ALUMNI

The secondary education alumni who shared their experiences through the survey were all Scholars supported by BRAC, a partner of The MasterCard Foundation in Uganda. These alumni graduated from upper secondary school in December 2014, and participated in the survey approximately 12 months after graduation. Survey respondents numbered 29 women and 66 men; their average age was 21. All but six of those who responded were living in Uganda and those living abroad were studying in Bangladesh (4) and Ghana (2).

Most alumni of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program at BRAC Uganda are continuing their studies after graduation. Of the graduates who responded to the survey, 85% said they are pursuing further education.¹ These results align with Scholars' goals upon entry into the Program. Baseline data from Scholars at BRAC Uganda

scheduled to graduate in 2016 show that nearly all of them aspire to complete university education (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015a). Among the 2014 graduates, the majority are choosing higher education in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) (Figure 1), including mathematics and statistics (34%), computing (25%) and natural and physical sciences (physics, chemistry, biology) (20%). Similar proportions of women and men are enrolled in these subject areas, with one exception: a slightly higher proportion of women study mathematics and statistics (39% of female alumni) compared to male alumni (30%). Among the secondary level alumni who have not enrolled in a course since graduation (about 15% of those interviewed), half are employed and the rest are either seeking education and not working, or are focused on health or family care issues.

FIGURE 1 SECONDARY EDUCATION ALUMNI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION



Secondary education alumni found jobs fairly quickly after graduation, but most were short term. Among the 75 alumni who have had at least one job since graduation, most (76%) actively looked for work for two months or less. Many of their jobs were temporary, however, taking place between their graduations in December 2014 and the beginning of the university school term in September 2015. All 12 alumni who were not enrolled in school at the time of the survey found their first jobs in less than six months.

Alumni credit The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program for helping them prepare for postsecondary education and employment. Almost all (98%) secondary education alumni said the Program has helped them reach their educational goals and 96% noted that the Program helped them be competent in their jobs. Alumni specifically identified workshops and internships as influential and valuable components of the Program, as noted on the next page.

1. This survey was administered only to Scholars who had graduated from the Scholars Program. At least four of the nineteen alumni who did not respond to the survey are known to be enrolled in universities, so at least 75% of the 114 secondary education Scholars alumni were enrolled in at least one class in the fall of 2015. We do not know the enrolment or employment status of 15 secondary alumni who were contacted but did not respond to the survey.

SECONDARY EDUCATION ALUMNI REFLECTIONS ON THE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

On financial support:

“As a MasterCard [Foundation] Scholar, I never worried about being chased away from school due to school fees. The MasterCard [Foundation] staff [at BRAC Uganda] were so caring and provided parental care that we needed.”

On workshops:

“The alumni workshop... helped me to get access to different universities and the scholarships available... this helped me to achieve a scholarship at Makerere University to make my dream of being a great statistician in the world.”

On internships:

“Through the BRAC organization internship period, I [learned] a lot on how one should behave during his job time [and] that’s how best you can succeed.”

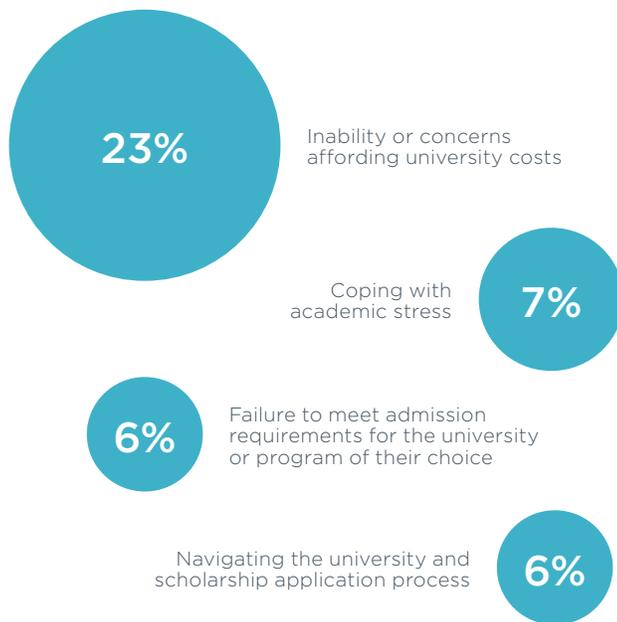
“The internship period and employment experience greatly influenced the course [I] am doing now at university.”

Despite feeling prepared for post-secondary education and employment endeavours, alumni said they have faced challenges since graduation. These have included difficulties gaining admission or financing tertiary education, and adjusting to academic workload (42%). Other alumni identified more general financial challenges (38%), personal challenges (24%) and employment challenges (13%) since graduation.

The 42% of secondary education alumni who described challenges in the transition to university had problems that ranged from navigating the application process to not being able to study their field of choice, coping with academic stress and affording university costs (Figure 2). All of these issues came to light when alumni were asked to describe, in their own words, recent challenges and influential events since graduation.

FIGURE 2 CHALLENGES IN PURSUING A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

42% of Alumni from BRAC reported they experienced challenges pursuing a university education



Source: The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni Survey

“I didn’t apply to Makerere, yet it’s the only university which has the sponsorship for The Mastercard Foundation, so I missed out on the chance of being sponsored for my degree.” — Applying to university

“My course is so fixed and detailed so I have too much reading to do.” — Experiencing academic stress

“I chose to work because I need to raise money to finance my education after failure to get a university scholarship. I also need to help my six siblings to get their basic education.” — Affording university tuition

“...the place where I stay is very remote and I couldn’t get information and updates about the scholarships. This made me miss out on the chance of the scholarship.” — Applying for scholarship

“[The greatest challenge since graduation was] when I applied at Makerere University and I failed to qualify for a bachelors course in medicine.” — Meeting admission requirements

“[My greatest challenge since graduation has been] lack of enough money to meet some basic educational needs, for example: books, pens, buying handouts at the university, clothing, among others, while I was joining the university, since [I] am not part of The [Mastercard Foundation Scholars] Program now at the university.” — Affording university materials

As shown in Figure 2, of the 95 secondary alumni who responded to the survey, 23 graduates reported that they were unable to attend university due to lack of funds (12) and other graduates reported they were able to go to post-secondary school but had difficulties affording tuition and school materials (11). Some of those concerns were alleviated when these alumni learned they had been awarded a tertiary education scholarship.

“I am from a disadvantaged family whereby we have to first toil to get money. That’s the main reason as to why I repeated senior six because if we had money, I would have joined a university.”

“When I wasn’t admitted at Makerere, I had to look for an alternative school, I [began] late with incomplete school fees. I was even chased back home for school fees which made me miss out on some classes. Generally money is my biggest challenge.”

“During vacation, I was worried about whether I would receive a government scholarship or a MasterCard [Foundation] scholarship. I wanted a MasterCard [Foundation] scholarship but since I had already got one on government, I missed out.

Among graduates who reported more general financial challenges (38%), were three who said they had difficulty meeting basic needs such as affording food, medicine and paying bills while others simply reported having inadequate funds or income. Three alumni have lacked capital to start businesses or projects.

“[My greatest challenge since graduation has been] the means to get [an] income. It has become a problem getting money, because before graduation, [The] MasterCard [Foundation Scholars Program] would facilitate [it for] us but now life is so hard.”

“I wanted to start up a small business but didn’t have enough money; that was my greatest challenge.”

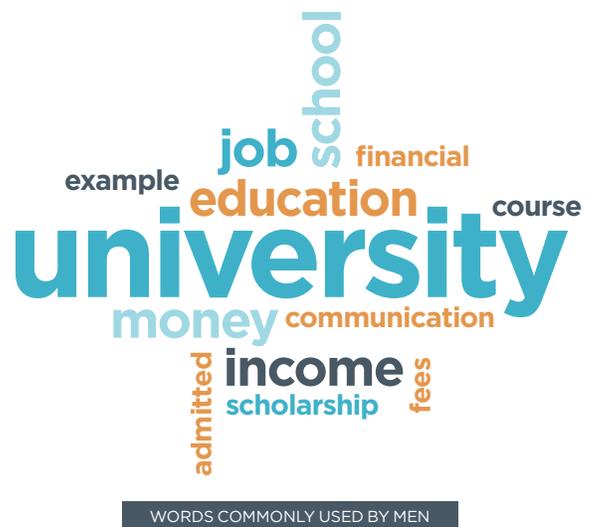
Personal challenges described by 24% of the secondary education graduates included health problems and difficulties in navigating their social networks and their adulthood relationships with family members. Harford and colleagues (2016) also found that, “graduates face significant pressures from home and family to maximize income, become self-sufficient and help support extended family.” In the words of a 2014 Scholar alumna describing his greatest challenge:

“...[my] ability to cope with the huge expectations from my parents and people who know me...some just think about exploiting me.”

While graduates of both genders are equally likely to cite academic challenges following graduation, women are more likely to cite personal challenges whereas men are more likely to note financial challenges. Personal challenges cited by 38% of female alumni (compared to only 18% of male alumni) included stressed relationships with family members and domestic responsibilities. Financial challenges identified by 42% of male graduates (and 28% of female graduates) included the need to find a job, earn an income, or get financing for their community endeavours. (See Figure 3 for a graphic illustration of the key words most often cited by alumni when discussing challenges they faced upon graduation from secondary school.)

FIGURE 3

SECONDARY EDUCATION ALUMNI REFLECTIONS REGARDING CHALLENGES UPON GRADUATION, BY GENDER



The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is creating leaders who are committed to giving back to their communities. Of the 95 secondary education alumni who responded, 99% have spent time on volunteer work since graduation. Most have volunteered in the areas of community service (for example, by fixing roads or caring for the environment; 71%), education (such as by tutoring, mentoring, or helping out at school; 49%) and health (by

“[The Program] shaped my leadership morals. It has also empowered me to engage in activities that can [fundamentally] change my community.”

supporting a community vaccination campaign; 21%). Virtually all (99%) secondary education alumni credit The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program with increasing their commitment to giving back to their communities and preparing them to become effective leaders. For many alumni, the concepts of effective leadership and giving back go hand-in-hand. When telling their stories of experiences and events that influenced and shaped them, more than three-quarters of the alumni (76%) spontaneously mentioned the central role that giving back and improving the lives of others and their communities has played in their current and future plans. These results parallel findings from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program impact evaluation baseline study, which shows that nearly all Scholars at BRAC Uganda who joined the Program in 2014 believe in the importance of service to others (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015a). Click [here](#) to hear Judith, an alumna from BRAC, talk about mentoring youth, one of the many ways she is becoming a leader and giving back to her community.

“Ever since I joined the program I feel so attached to my community, my country and also feel like it’s my role to make a difference in not only my community but my country as well.”

“The likely impact of my actions has influenced the choices I take. For me, every little charitable action I do is important, even when it benefits just one person. Also, the ability to stand accountable for all my actions has influenced the choices I take, for every good leader must be accountable for his actions.”

“When we were MasterCard [Foundation] Scholars at BRAC, they organized for us a community service [conference], and in that they taught us how to give back... I had always wanted to give back but I didn’t know the specific way to do it. It’s like I lacked ideas of how to give back to the people; I didn’t even think that just giving a little coin to someone [or] just sharing something with someone was giving back. So in that ceremony, I came to learn that just by doing charity and feeling empathy to others, I am giving back. I’ve helped fellow students in need, if someone comes to me with a need which I can provide, I am ready to help them.”

When asked to describe influential experiences and positive takeaways from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, 33% of alumni mentioned leadership in some capacity. Whether it was developing their leadership skills through workshops, being inspired by conference speakers or seizing leadership opportunities in their communities, alumni placed a high value on becoming effective leaders.

“As a Scholar under The MasterCard Foundation [Scholars] Program, I for one got an opportunity to attend different conferences and congresses prepared by the Program under BRAC. These included awarding ceremonies and [a] leadership congress. I managed to receive guidance from different personnel who shared with us their life experiences, their leadership skills and academic achievements, [and] inspirations among [other things]. This inspired me to work hard academically and also participate in different co-curricular activities. For example, after being inspired at the leadership congress... I applied the leader skills; through this I have managed to become a scripture union chairman... This has opened for me many opportunities, as I have been called to do training with... a hardware shop, as a stock manager.”

“It has helped me become a good leader; for example, [I] am currently a [Muslim] leader in my hall of residence inside Makerere University.”

TERTIARY EDUCATION ALUMNI

Tertiary education alumni who shared their experiences through our survey were women (17) and men (19) in their late 20s and from across the continent of Africa, with a few from the Middle East. A handful (4) had attended university in their home countries and the remainder studied in Canada, Ghana, the United States or South Africa. Eleven earned undergraduate degrees and 24 earned master’s degrees (the degree level of one alumni is unknown) through the Scholars Program. These alumni had graduated from their universities in 2014 and 2015 and participated in this survey between 6 and 18 months post-graduation.

About half of the 36 tertiary education alumni who responded to this survey are living in their home countries, and nearly all those living abroad plan to return home. Nearly half (47%) of the tertiary education alumni who responded to the survey currently live permanently in their home countries, and an additional 8% live there part time. Most alumni (56%) who are not living in their home countries plan to return within the next five years (Figure 4). These findings are consistent with the Africa Careers Network’s (ACN) observation in its report on early users of its employment and networking platform that Scholars

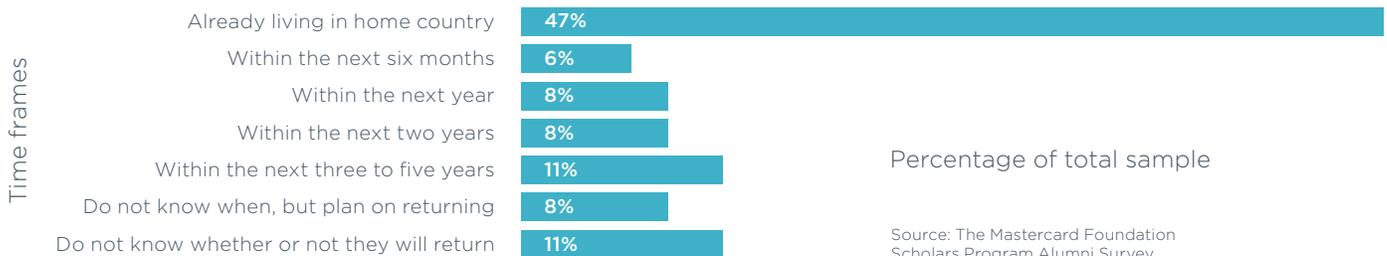
think more in terms of “when” rather than “if” they will return to the continent (Harford *et al.*, 2016).² One graduate described her motivation to return home as wanting to contribute to better policies to aid her community:

“I have always believed in sharing, mentoring, and development. My decision to come back to [my home country] was the need I felt to influence the policy space in my home country, so as to contribute to effective policies. Before schooling, I worked with an impact-based organization in the area of community development. This made me realize that it was not enough to give people set skills if there are no working policies to open opportunities for them to explore the benefits of their new set skills.”

Three-quarters of the tertiary education alumni who have not yet returned home are pursuing further education abroad. The remaining quarter who are not living in their home country are currently employed.

FIGURE 4

WHEN TERTIARY ALUMNI INTEND TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES

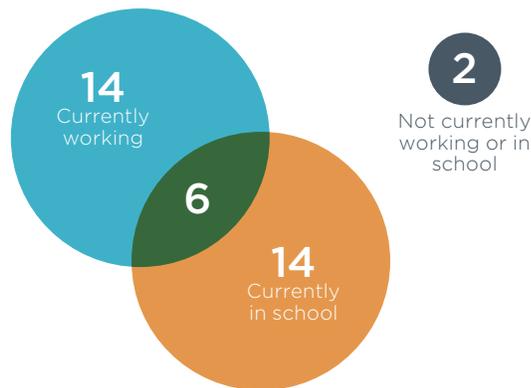


Source: The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni Survey

2. ACN works with African students (among them Scholars) to help them start careers in Africa.

Many tertiary education alumni have continued their education and few are unemployed. Over half of tertiary education alumni reported continuing their education after participating in The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program (56%). More than half (56%) are working, including one in an unpaid internship (Figure 5). Six alumni are both working and going to school. The two tertiary education alumni who are not currently working or in school are actively seeking employment or opportunities to further their education (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION STATUS OF TERTIARY ALUMNI



Source: The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni Survey

Alumni who are employed found work relatively quickly after graduation, and about half are satisfied with their current jobs. About 81% of currently employed alumni actively looked for work for two months or less. A little more than half of the employed alumni said they would not like to change their current jobs. Those who do want to change their jobs are seeking better career growth, higher pay or a chance to use or develop their skills. Two alumni chose to continue their education due to challenges finding employment and two alumni reported difficulties in finding support for launching their entrepreneurial ventures. Of all of the graduates who reported being employed in at least one job since graduation, 11 jobs were in private business, nine were with an NGO and four were with a government.

“[My biggest challenge was] looking for a job relevant to my program of study.”

“[My greatest challenges after graduation were] transitioning into life in my home country [and my] unfamiliarity with the local job market.”

“My choice has been influenced by the economic circumstances in my country. After facing challenges securing employment, I am now considering [pursuing] a Ph.D.”

“After graduating [with] my honours studies and [finding a] scarcity of employment in the mining industry, I decided to continue with my master’s studies and be a researcher.”

“[My greatest challenges after graduation were] lack of support to make my non-profit grow and expand its impact to more youth in Kenya.”

“[My greatest challenges after graduation were] identifying people who execute to work with on entrepreneurial ventures.”

Alumni report feeling empowered by their participation in The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program and they are using skills and knowledge acquired in school to solve urgent problems in their home countries. Three alumni described how they are identifying problems and critical gaps in services, and using their knowledge to implement solutions in their home countries.

“[Education and involvement in the Scholars Program has] empowered me with more tools and tips to overcome life’s challenges.”

“[The Scholars Program] equipped me to assist my rural community with knowledge on cheap dietary [supplements] to eradicate protein malnutrition.”

“I have always been interested in building technology platforms that work without an internet connection, given the state of the internet in Liberia. In 2013, whilst a [MasterCard Foundation] Scholar at Ashesi, I led a student team to pilot an educational software in Liberia that did not require an internet connection. This software was hosted on a mini server and served educational content from sources like Khan Academy and Wikipedia to students and faculty within the WiFi range in the pilot school. Today, my colleagues and I are working on another iteration of the platform for Liberia’s only public nursing college as part of our post-Ebola support to the health system in Liberia. We are also working on a potential national rollout of the platform to prepare students for external exams as well as enhancing the teaching and learning experiences in schools in Liberia.”

Alumni feel their experience as MasterCard Foundation Scholars prepared them to reach their educational and professional goals. They see a direct connection between the Program’s goals and their skills and efforts in the early post-graduation period. In particular, 75% of tertiary education alumni said the Program had prepared them to be competent in their jobs, 89% said that it had prepared them to reach their professional goals, and 94% said that it had prepared them to reach their educational goals.

- “Education gave me more tools and [the] ability to contribute to the work I do.”
- “I am able to make effective decisions.”
- “[I am] able to analyze situations from different lenses.”

Tertiary education alumni feel prepared to be leaders and are taking steps to assume leadership roles in their communities. Most tertiary education alumni (83%) said The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program helped them prepare to become effective leaders. Several alumni specifically described The MasterCard Foundation Scholars workshops and training as particularly useful for learning about leadership.

- “Situational leadership training which was hosted by The MasterCard Foundation, taught me to fully apply myself to different challenges and see opportunities to always help others.”
- “My problem solving skills, leadership and social skills [have] improved significantly.”
- “My education has shaped my skills... and [the] leadership program has given me the edge to be an initiator.”

Women highlight the connections and experiences they gained as Scholars, whereas men highlight their leadership development. When asked to describe the most positive aspect of their experience as a Scholar, female alumni generally mentioned new friendships and personal networks, a sense of community with other Scholars and students and memorable events and internships that broadened their worldview in addition to their education. Male alumni often cited these positive aspects as well – particularly the Scholars alumni network – but were more likely than female alumni to highlight the value of completing the Program’s leadership training. (See Figure 6 for a graphic illustration of the key words most often cited by alumni with respect to their experience in the Program.)

FIGURE 6 TERTIARY EDUCATION ALUMNI REFLECTIONS REGARDING THEIR SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE, BY GENDER³



WORDS COMMONLY USED BY WOMEN



WORDS COMMONLY USED BY MEN

Tertiary education alumni are making ‘giving back’ a high priority. Nearly all tertiary education alumni said The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program helped prepare them to bring positive change to their communities. Alumni said they deepened their commitment to service during their time as Scholars, and they plan to continue carrying out that commitment through their future endeavours, including in their careers and through volunteer work. In their description of how The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program has influenced their choices, 14 of the 36 tertiary alumni spontaneously mentioned their desire to positively impact their communities and help others. From their perspective, positive change does not need to be achieved by grand gestures; in fact, one alumna sees small steps as being among the most important and effective ways to bring about change in their communities:

3. LAAD: Leadership Academy for African Development, based at Michigan State University, provides a leadership-focused curriculum and training to tertiary-level MasterCard Foundation Scholars.

“I’ve always thought that a good ‘change’ doesn’t have to be Nobel Prize-worthy; the little things that we can do to positively impact someone’s life do count.”

“The [MasterCard Foundation Scholars] Program ‘Give Back’ motto has generally encouraged me to seriously consider ways through which I can mentor youths in my community, especially those still in school, so they can learn of and know how to access different opportunities that are out there. I’m currently exploring these ways, together with a few friends, and hope to develop some sort of space/program that can allow us [to] guide the young ones.”

“My education and the Scholars Program have reinforced my commitment to supporting other people [to] help themselves.”

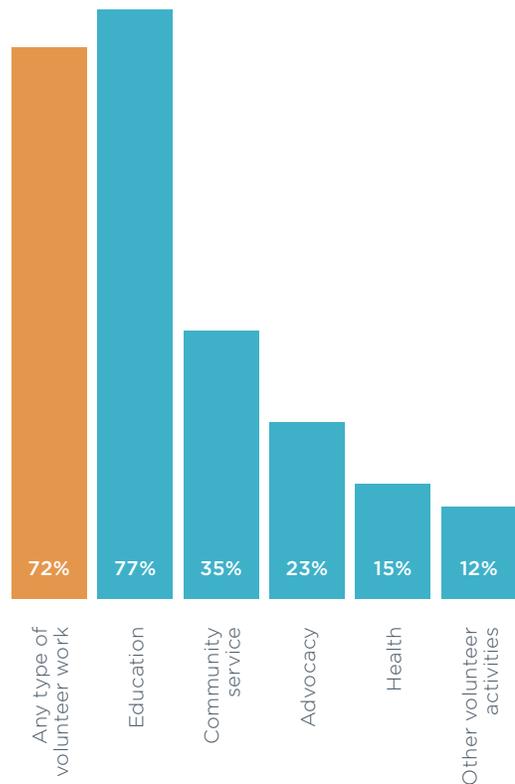
“The sense of responsibility inculcated in me through my university education has always played a major role in the decisions and choices I make. I undoubtedly believe that the investment made in my education is meant to improve not just my life but the lives of the people in my family, my community, and everyone I come into contact with. Thus, I always seek to make the choices that yield greater benefits for all surrounding me and not just me!!!!”

Since their graduation from the Scholars Program, about three-quarters of tertiary education alumni have spent time volunteering for others outside their households (Figure 7). Most have volunteered in education (for example by tutoring, mentoring or helping out at school), community service (such as by fixing roads or caring for the environment), advocacy (by petitioning elected officials, campaigning for women’s rights or organizing community members) and health (supporting a community vaccination campaign):

“My mindset on what constitutes success has changed. I now view success as impacting as many lives [as possible] and reaching out to the less privilege[d]!”

“Now, as a MasterCard [Foundation] Scholar and an Ashesi graduate, I am eager and ever-ready to help with the little I have now. I now understand that we do not necessarily have to give in money and material things all the time, but rather our time, skills and knowledge are huge contributions we can give out. Hence, I do quite a number of voluntary works which involve mentoring young girls and educating them on their rights and how to speak up for what is right.”

FIGURE 7 TERTIARY ALUMNI VOLUNTEER FIELDS



Note: Participation rates in blue are among Scholars who participated in any volunteer work. Alumni were able to select more than one volunteer field.
Source: The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni Survey

Alumni aspire to careers that allow them to serve and improve their communities. Ten alumni spontaneously described their intended career hopes. Four alumni mentioned wanting to improve the health care sector; one graduate mentioned wanting to improve the education sector; one wanted to focus on the mining industry; another wanted to focus on the finance sector; and two wanted to use the role of entrepreneur to give back to society. One felt pursuing graduate-level studies would help him to continue expanding his skill set and become even more valuable to his community.

“I joined [an enterprise incubator] because of the nature of their work. [It] empowers entrepreneurs to be effective and visionary leaders in their respective industries and economies. I chose this path because of my future aspirations to be an entrepreneur and to give back to the society.”

“My career interests in improving [the] health care and education sectors in Tanzania/Sub-Saharan Africa [have influenced my choices since graduation].”

“[The most positive aspect of my experience as a Scholar was] meeting other Scholars from Africa with similar visions, aspirations, dreams and hope for the growth of the continent in many sectors.”

The personal and professional networks many alumni built as Scholars are among the most valuable assets they gained from the Program. The important role their networks have played during their transition from Scholars to alumni was spontaneously mentioned by 19 of the 36 (53%) alumni. Many of them (14) felt that the personal and professional connections they made were the most positive aspect of their Scholar experience. Some alumni credited their networks for helping to shape them into the people they are today and others felt the network helped to influence what they are doing post-graduation. Alumni used their networks for knowledge sharing and as a venue to offer personal and professional support, especially during this transitional period.

“I know I’m part of a great community therefore I don’t need to go through the worst alone and that has made my life less stressful.”

“Connections from The MasterCard Foundation [have influenced the choices made since graduation].”

“[The most positive aspect of my experience as a MasterCard Foundation Scholar was] giving people an opportunity to build their dream and creating a community of people who want to change and impact their countries.”

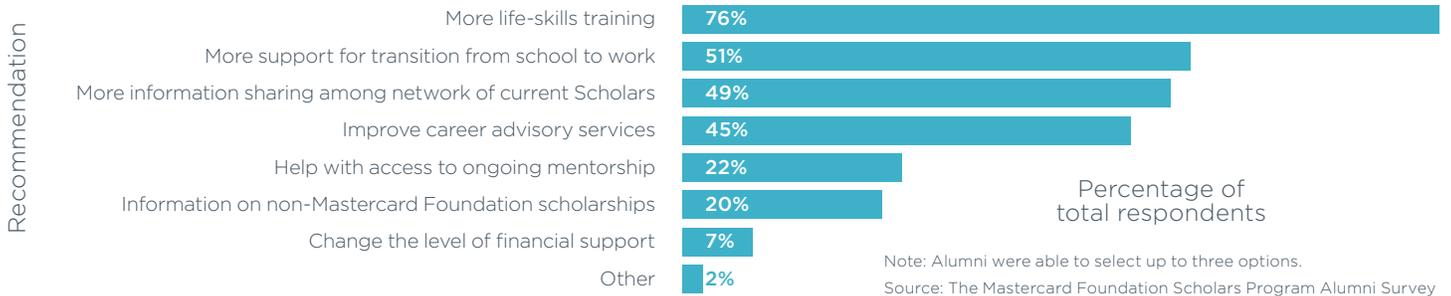
ALUMNI RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FOUNDATION

Secondary education alumni want more help with transferable skills. Most secondary education alumni (76%) recommend more life-skills training during the scholarship years (such as computer skills, social interaction skills and professional ethics). This finding aligns with baseline data from The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program evaluation that shows about 24% of Scholars at BRAC Uganda who joined the Program in 2014 feel it is easier to work on complex problems, “by myself than to work with others.” (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015a) Working collaboratively towards common goals is a key skill, particularly for employment and to effect transformative change. Potential employers want to hire youth with transferable skills, such as communication, teamwork and leadership, which are as important to employers as cognitive and technical skills and are particularly important in the informal economy where many youth begin their

employment trajectories (Results for Development, 2015; Garcia and Fares, 2008). Further, some life skills such as communication, are key competencies of transformative leaders (Mathematica Policy Research, 2015b).

Around half of the secondary education alumni recommend more support for the transition from school to work and enhanced information-sharing among the network of current Scholars (Figure 8). Notably, men are more likely than women (55% versus 41%) to recommend additional support for the transition to work; this is consistent with greater focus among men on finding employment following graduation, discussed above. Similarly, alumni recommend improving career advisory services (45%), helping with access to ongoing mentorship (22%) and providing information on non-MasterCard Foundation scholarships (20%).

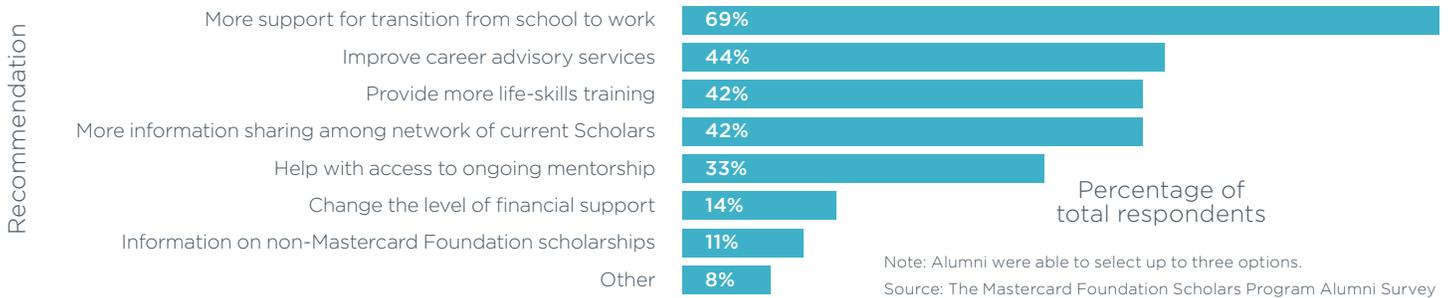
FIGURE 8 SECONDARY EDUCATION ALUMNI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AND THEIR SCHOOLS



Tertiary alumni strongly recommend support for the transition to the next phase of their education or work life. Most mentioned specifically support for the transition from school to work (69%), while others mentioned other services related to transitions more broadly (44% mentioned improving career advisory services and 42% networking). This latter finding aligns with The MasterCard Foundation decision to create a Scholars Community digital platform to facilitate

exchanges and support among all Scholars. Many graduates identified a need for better preparation in soft or transferable skills (42% recommend more life-skills training; Figure 9). Smaller proportions recommend that the Program help with access to ongoing mentorships (33%), change the level of financial support (14%) and provide more information on non-MasterCard Foundation scholarships (11%).

FIGURE 9 TERTIARY ALUMNI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AND THEIR SCHOOLS



ALUMNI RECOMMENDATIONS TO CURRENT SCHOLARS

Implicit in their stories and explicit in some of their concrete remarks, alumni encourage current Scholars to take advantage of all the opportunities provided by the Scholars Program, from the practical (strengthening their resumes to seek internships and jobs) to the ambitious (developing the skills needed to achieve their career goals). As a suggestion to current tertiary Scholars, one tertiary alumna advised obtaining work experience while still in school, a recommendation that aligns with the midterm evaluation proposal that partners assist Scholars to obtain F-1 visas, which would permit them to work while studying (Ladd et al., 2015).

“I urge all the students planning to do [an] internship in [the] USA to try and work while at school, even if it’s just 1 hour a day because employers want experience. They will be competing with American graduates who have more than five years working experience since they start working as early as high school, which is not the case in Africa.”

The exchange of advice through the network of Scholars and alumni and the digital platform will help current Scholars address challenges during the Program and prepare for challenges that may arise as they transition to future education, employment, entrepreneurship, and other opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The MasterCard Foundation Alumni Voices data collection included a mixed-mode survey (web and face-to-face) as well as written, spoken and videotaped personal narratives from Scholar alumni. 36 of the 47 tertiary education alumni (77%) and 95 of 114 secondary education alumni completed the survey (83%).

Data collection took place from November 2015 to January 2016. Secondary education alumni, all of whom were graduates from the Scholars Program at BRAC Uganda, provided information in either face-to-face interviews in Uganda or, when the alumnus was located abroad, via a web-based instrument. Tertiary education alumni, who were from across the African continent and the Middle East, provided information via a web-based instrument. In addition to closed-end questions on education, employment, volunteer activities and opinions, the survey asked respondents to complete five open-ended questions, as a means to share their thoughts in their own words. These qualitative responses from the 131 tertiary education graduates and graduates of the Scholars

Program at BRAC Uganda were analyzed using NVivo software. A total of 89 secondary education graduates also allowed themselves to be filmed when answering one of the qualitative questions. These videos can be shared among Scholars and alumni as part of networking activities, information sharing or Scholar-led qualitative research.

A note on the survey coverage or response rate: 11 of 47 of MasterCard Foundation tertiary education alumni (of which eight were women) did not respond to the survey despite repeated email and phone contact and efforts by the partners to encourage participation. It is not clear that all tertiary education alumni received and opened emails or voicemails inviting them to participate. Of the secondary education alumni, 20 were not reachable in Uganda, despite efforts to contact them through family, friends, email, and on Facebook. Of these, we learned that 10 were studying abroad at the tertiary level. Six of these alumni responded to our invitation to complete the survey. This leaves 14 of the 114 secondary education alumni without responses to the survey (of which eight were women).

LIMITATIONS TO THE ANALYSIS

It is important to note that because we surveyed graduates from early cohorts of the Program, secondary education alumni from the Scholars Program at BRAC Uganda had participated in the Program for only two years, while later cohorts of Scholars at BRAC Uganda will participate for more than two years. In addition, because Scholar experiences can vary between the secondary partners, it is possible that the opinions expressed by secondary education Scholars in this brief are unique to Scholars at BRAC Uganda and cannot be generalized across the secondary partners. Furthermore, our small sample limited our ability to analyze responses for subgroups of students. Finally, the report covers only alumni who responded to the survey. Alumni who did not respond may differ from those who participated in substantive ways.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief was written by Sarah Hughes, Caroline Lauver and Isabel Krakoff of Mathematica Policy Research. The MasterCard Foundation and Mathematica Policy Research express their sincere appreciation to BRAC Uganda and all the alumni Scholars across the Program who participated in this study. Cover photo – Scholars' graduation day at BRAC Uganda, December 2014 – ©Ted Kenya for The MasterCard Foundation.