mastercard foundation

In partnership with

United States International University-Africa

Education to take you places

Scholars Program

MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS GRADUATION BOOKLET 2024

@USIUAfrica @ExperienceUSIU

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

I am sure you have had time to reflect on your journey here at USIU-Africa and have many memories. Memories of laughter, of connections, of challenges, of last minute triumphs, and even catastrophes. But you have made it and you are now officially a member of the graduating class of 2024. This is the year I also joined this great institution and there are two things I have set as my guiding light for what I will do in my leadership—excellence and integrity. It is not coincidental that the theme for this year is "Empowering Excellence." It is meant to be and we are connected by our individual and collective desire for excellence.
Your education at USIU-Africa was the building blocks of your next steps towards excellence. I know you will go out and make a difference because that is what USIU-Africa graduates do. It is in their DNA.

As you chart that path, please pay attention to the following areas that when done well, will empower you to deliver excellence in all you do and become: first, strive to continually improve yourself in order to become the best version of yourself; second, don't just set goals for yourself, do so with purpose and passion, both of which should be grounded in the values we have emphasized here especially integrity and lifelong learning; third, set high standards for yourself and for those around you so that you are constantly challenging yourself and them to reach greater heights. Don't settle for the normal; and fourth, always strive to make a positive impact in your community and the world. If you live your life guided by these four areas, I am confident that you will have an excellent life!

Go out, serve and be the best and keep us informed of your exploits so we can celebrate you.

Congratulations Class of 2024!

Prof. Mwenda Ntarangwi
Vice Chancellor

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, ADVANCEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

To our graduating Mastercard Foundation Scholars,

It is with immense pride and joy that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, the first cohort of 17 Mastercard Foundation Scholars graduating from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa.

This moment marks a significant milestone not just in your lives, but also in our institutional journey. Since July 2020, USIU-Africa has been in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation in this transformative initiative. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program embodies our shared vision of nurturing a network of young leaders who are poised to drive inclusive and equitable socio-economic change across Africa.

Your journey has been one of perseverance, dedication, and outstanding achievement. You have excelled academically, shown remarkable leadership, and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to giving back to your communities. Your accomplishments are a testament to the power of education and the boundless potential within each of you.

Through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, we have been able to offer you a world-class university education and invest in young Africans like you, who possess academic talent, leadership potential, and a deep commitment to community service. We are confident that you will continue to lead and inspire change, contributing to the meaningful transformation of our continent.

As you step into the next phase of your life, remember that you are part of a larger mission to create positive change. You have been given the tools and knowledge to make a difference, and we do not doubt you will rise to the challenge. Your journey has just begun, and we look forward to witnessing the impact you will have as leaders and change-makers in Africa and the world.

Eannes Ongus
Director, Advancement and Partnerships, USIU-Africa.

MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dear Mastercard Foundation Scholars,

Congratulations to our pioneering Cohort 1 of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. I'm delighted to see 17 exceptional Mastercard Foundation Scholars graduate, marking a significant milestone for both you and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. Your journey reflects the growth, learnings, and achievement in our partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, which began in July 2020.

Reflecting on the growth of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program since its inception in July 2020, it is inspiring to see how we have recruited, educated, and prepared youth from diverse backgrounds, including young women, refugee and internally displaced youth, and youth with disabilities. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa has recruited nine cohorts of 1,071 Mastercard Foundation Scholars from 29 African countries, all 47 counties in Kenya, and recruited refugees from 13 host countries. This includes 64% young women, 20% refugee and displaced persons, 6% persons with disabilities, 62% international Mastercard Foundation Scholars, and 38% Kenyans.

Our partnership with the Mastercard Foundation has delivered a transformational educational experience that prepares our Mastercard Foundation Scholars to make a tangible impact in society. As the Mastercard Foundation works towards its mission to support 100,000 young people over the next decade, we look forward to our continued partnership.

To the graduating Mastercard Foundation Scholars, as you step into the future albeit unclear, you carry the responsibility of shaping it. Use the education experience you have acquired here at USIU-Africa to reimagine and contribute positively in every space you find yourself in. Our institution has consistently aspired to be the best and provide the best, and I urge you to pursue excellence, draw lessons from your past challenges, innovate with integrity, and live out the values of transformative leadership.

Warm regards,

Linet Aguko
Program Director,
Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa.

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE FROM THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND CEO, REETA ROY

On behalf of all of us at the Mastercard Foundation: Congratulations on your graduation!

All of your hard work has paid off. You've done it! We could not be prouder of you. We join your families and friends in celebrating this important milestone in your life.

We know this is an exciting time, but it may also feel daunting. Here is what we hope you'll remember: As you look out to the future, it's always looking back to you. It is as bright as your ambition is bold, as innovative as your imagination is wild, as strong as you are hopeful, and as secure as you are resilient. It's not pre-determined, it is pliable. It is yours to shape, and you are ready for that task. You are prepared for that work.

This is what the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has been preparing you for: the work of leading and serving your communities and countries. The work of solving old problems, building new products, and scaling solutions. The work of leaving things better than you found them.

In this next phase of your journey, remember to hold on to the values that define you. Be kind. Honest. Humble. Courageous. Hold fast to the friendships that have carried you to this success—even as you forge new ones. Please stay connected to your fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholarsthrough the Baobab Platform, on Facebook and Instagram. Remember, the path of leadership can't be travelled alone.

We look forward to seeing what you do with your education and how you shape your future. We know you will do something remarkable.

We're rooting for you.

Reeta Roy
President and CEO,
Mastercard Foundation

ABOUT USIU-AFRICA

United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa) founded in 1969, is the oldest, private and secular university in the region with dual accreditation in Kenya by the Commission for University Education (CUE) and the United States of America (USA) by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The dual accreditation gives USIU-Africa graduates worldwide recognition and enhances their opportunities to secure employment, admission and scholarships for further studies anywhere their ambition takes them.

ACCREDITATION

In 1970, the United States International University established its Africa campus in Nairobi following the signing of an agreement with the Government of Kenya.

In 1982, the Africa campus received its accreditation as part of the USIU multi-campus system, from the WASC Senior Colleges and Universities Commission (WSCUC) – the body recognized and authorized by the US Department of Education to accredit universities and senior colleges in the western region of the United States.

In 1999, following legal reforms to the higher education sub-sector, USIU-Africa received its charter from then President H.E. Dr. Daniel T. Arap Moi. In 2003, the Africa campus separated from the rest of the USIU campuses, then sought and subsequently received independent accreditation from WSCUC as USIU-Africa in 2005. Kenyan accreditation is granted by the Commission for University Education (CUE).

MISSION AND VISION

Vision: United States International University-Africa will be a premier institution of academic excellence with a global perspective.

Mission: To promote the discovery and application of knowledge, the acquisition of skills, and the development of intellect and character in a manner that prepares students to contribute effectively and ethically as citizens of a changing and increasingly technological world. This mission is achieved through offering 44 Undergraduate, Graduate and Doctoral programs through the Chandaria School of Business, the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, the School of Science & Technology, the School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, the School of Communication, Cinematic & Creative Arts and the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension, that have the following outcomes:

- **Higher order thinking:** The ability to collect, analyze and evaluate information and formulate conclusions. Students develop and demonstrate the ability to think critically, analytically and creatively.

- **Literacy:** Competence in oral, written, quantitative, and technological skills. Students develop and demonstrate competency in oral and written

communication as well as demonstrate scientific, quantitative and technological literacy.

- **Global understanding and multicultural perspective:** Awareness, knowledge and appreciation of both the diversity and commonality of cultures. Students acquire these perspectives through formal study of languages, history, literature and the arts and through working, studying and living cooperatively in a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse environment. Further, students acquire an understanding of economic, historical, political, geographic and environmental relationships on a global basis.

- **Preparedness for career:** Mastery of a field of knowledge and its multicultural and multinational application. Such mastery is accomplished through both formal study and various experiential forms of learning such as internships and field experiences.

- **Leadership and ethics:** As part of their growth and development, students formulate and articulate the ethical standards and develop the leadership skills which will guide their professional and personal lives. This is accomplished through formal courses in discipline areas and active engagement of students in leadership roles both inside and outside the classroom.

- **Community service and development:** A sense of being part of a community and a desire to be of service to it. Students are given opportunities to participate in community service, citizenship, or social action projects or activities.

The university has an illustrious 55-year history of high quality, student-focused teaching and learning, that has ensured each student acquires an international education in a multicultural campus with global exposure that distinguishes them in the marketplace. USIU-Africa has an alumni network of over 25,000 professionals making an impact in their own way nationally, regionally and globally in all sectors of the economy.

ABOUT THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT USIU-AFRICA

In July 2020, USIU-Africa partnered with the Mastercard Foundation and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, with the first cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars enrolled in September of the same year. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa seeks to recruit, educate, prepare, and transition 1,100 youth into dignified work, higher education, or entrepreneurship. The partnership supports students at the Bachelor's level only. The Program recruits youth in the following categories:

- **Young women- 70%;**

- **Refugee youth/internally displaced youth- 25%;**

- **Youth with disability- 10%.**

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa is open to all young people from the African continent who meet the eligibility criteria. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa has since recruited nine cohorts of 1071

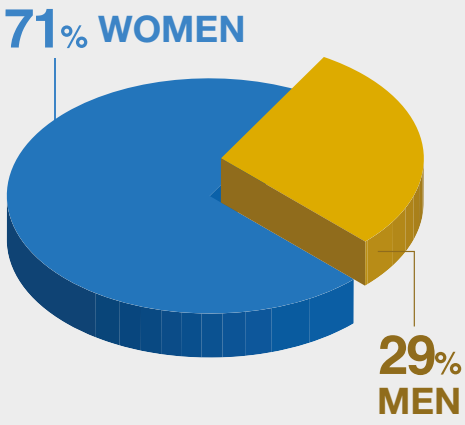
Mastercard Foundation Scholars from 29 African countries, all 47 counties in Kenya, and recruited refugees from 13 host countries, in different categories as indicated below:

Young Women	RDPs	PWD
Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 684	Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 214	Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 68
Percentage: 64%	Percentage: 20%	Percentage: 6%

International Mastercard Foundation Scholars	Kenyan Mastercard Foundation Scholars	Young Men (not RDP/PWD)
Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 663	Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 409	Number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars: 388
Percentage: 62%	Percentage: 38%	Percentage: 36%

The partnership between Mastercard Foundation and USIU-Africa focuses on 13 market-driven academic programs, with 55% of the recruited Mastercard Foundation Scholars enrolled in STEM-based disciplines while the other 45% are enrolled in other business and social sciences-related programs.

GRADUATING CLASS DEMOGRAPHICS



22% Refugee or Displaced Youth

6% Youth with Disabilities

Mastercard Foundation Scholars graduating, with young women making up 71% of the cohort

THE PROGRAM TEAM

Linet Aguko
Program Director
Tel: +254730116527
Email: laguko@usiu.ac.ke

Sellina Mwatua
Program Administrator
Tel: +254730116521
Email: smwutua@usiu.ac.ke

Rahab Wambui Cheche
Program Officer - Recruitment and Selection
Tel: +254730116218
Email: rcheche@usiu.ac.ke

Faith Kendi Mugambi
Program Officer - Recruitment and Selection
Tel: +254730116500
Email: fkendi@usiu.ac.ke

Lilian Makinia
Program Assistant, Careers and Placement
Tel: +254730116536

Vincent Omondi Juma
Program Assistant, Careers and Placement
Tel: +254730116552

Madzo Mwadzoya
Program Coordinator, Transitions
Tel: +254730116581
Email: emwadzoya@usiu.ac.ke

Dolly Mwiti
Assistant Careers and Placement Officer - Transitions
Tel: +254730116658

Aileen Naureen Kaguhya
Program Assistant - Scholar Support
Tel: +254730116567

Margaret Obilo
Scholar Support Officer
Email: mobilo@usiu.ac.ke
Tel: +254730116303

Maureen Njuguna
Program Assistant, Sign Language Interpreter and Scholar Support Officer
Email: mnnjuguna@usiu.ac.ke

Bronwyn Simiyu
Program Officer – Records and Immigration
Tel: +254730116107
Email: bnsimiyu@usiu.ac.ke

Samson Rotich
Disability and Inclusion Officer
Tel: +254730116173
Email: skrotich@usiu.ac.ke

Zina Njoki Nguru
Senior Counsellor
Tel: +254730116797
Email: znguru@usiu.ac.ke

Nancy Njoki
Program Associate, Sign Language Interpreter and Assistant Communication Officer
Email: nanjoki@usiu.ac.ke

Roselyne Mkanjala
Program Accountant
Tel: +254730116148
Email: rmwasi@usiu.ac.ke

THE PROGRAM TEAM

Kevin Otieno Omenya
Program Associate, Finance
Tel: +254730116552

Sylvia N. Murungaru
Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Research Officer
Tel: +254730116301
Email: smurungaru@usiu.ac.ke

Brenda A. Odhiambo
Program Communications Lead
Tel: +254730116502
Email: baodhiambo@usiu.ac.ke

THE SUPPORT TEAM

Lydia Winda
Senior Counsellor
Tel: +254730116750
Email: lwinda@usiu.ac.ke

Dr. George Lumbasi
Chair, Recruitment and Selection Committee
Tel: +254730116563
Email: glumbasi@usiu.ac.ke

Elizabeth Wanjiku
Principal Officer, Disability Inclusion
Tel: +254730116830
Email: ewanjiku@usiu.ac.ke

Racheal Ngumi
Principal Officer, Gender Equity and Protection
Tel: +254730116303
Email: rngumi@usiu.ac.ke

PROGRAM MILESTONES

JULY 2020: MASTERCARD FOUNDATION PARTNERS WITH USIU-AFRICA TO EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

In July 2020, USIU-Africa and the Mastercard Foundation announced a partnership to enable 1,000 high-performing students to receive quality education and leadership development over the next 10 years as part of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. With the partnership, USIU-Africa joined the Mastercard Foundation's expanding global network of partners committed to developing a generation of African leaders who will use their knowledge and skills to lead change in their communities and contribute to meaningful transformation across the continent.

SEPTEMBER 2020: USIU-AFRICA COMMISSIONS THE INAUGURAL COHORT OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS IN THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT USIU-AFRICA

In September 2020, USIU-Africa formally welcomed the inaugural cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars, made up of 24 students drawn from across the country from a pool of 6,077 applications from hopeful Mastercard Foundation Scholars across the country.

MAY 2021: USIU-AFRICA WELCOMES THE SECOND COHORT OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS UNDER THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

USIU-Africa and the Mastercard Foundation formally commissioned the second cohort of 48 Mastercard Foundation Scholars in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, which brought the total number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars recruited to 70. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars were drawn from a pool of 3,500 applicants drawn from various parts of the country, as well as from the African continent.

OCTOBER 2021: THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT USIU-AFRICA WELCOMES ITS FIRST-EVER COHORT OF WOMEN-ONLY MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS.

In October 2021, USIU-Africa and the Mastercard Foundation welcomed the third cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars under the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. A total of 82 female students were recruited into the cohort, which also saw 19 male students join.

JUNE 2022: USIU-AFRICA WELCOMES THE FOURTH COHORT OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS UNDER THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa held the Scholars Award Evening to formally welcome the fourth cohort of 86 Mastercard Foundation Scholars, 6 of drawn from different parts of Kenya. The Award Evening formed part of a series of events organized by Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program partner universities, including USIU-Africa, as part of Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program's 10th-anniversary celebrations across the globe

OCTOBER 2022: THE FIFTH COHORT OF MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS JOIN THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT USIU-AFRICA

In October 2022, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa formally commissioned the fifth cohort of 138 Mastercard Foundation Scholars who joined the university at the beginning of the Fall semester. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars were drawn from 20 African countries, with Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Eswatini and Ethiopia represented for the first time. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program also welcomed cohorts 6 and 7 in April 2023 and August 2023, with each cohort consisting of 203 and 184 Mastercard Foundation Scholars respectively.

SEPTEMBER 2023: THIRTEEN MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS AT USIU-AFRICA SELECTED AS WINNERS OF THE 2023 SOCIAL VENTURE CHALLENGE

Bottom row from L-R: *Titus Ayieko, Lenora Kelen, Lilliane Ashimwe, Virginia Wanjiku, Dorcus Kwagalakwe, Mercy Mulenga, Silas Ooko.*

Top row from L-R: *Samson Kahindi, Oladayo Olatunji, Pride Nyando, Abdur-Rahman Adeniji, Isaac Wandeto.*

Thirteen Mastercard Foundation Scholars at USIU-Africa were selected as winners of the 2023 Social Venture Challenge hosted as part of the annual Baobab Summit, held at the Windsor Hotel in Nairobi from September 16-17, 2023.

The Social Venture Challenge, a collaboration between the Mastercard Foundation and the Resolution Project, is an initiative designed to identify young leaders focused on making a difference in their communities and equip them with the resources to implement their ideas through innovative social entrepreneurship.

Seven projects from the winning pool of 13 Mastercard Foundation Scholars were shortlisted for this year's competition, with six projects eventually emerging as the winners of the Challenge.The six projects received $26,000 to support their initiatives across Inclusion, Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, and Clean Eco-Fuel.

OCTOBER 2023: USIU-AFRICA HOSTS MASTERCARD FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND CEO, REETA ROY

In October 2023, USIU-Africa hosted Mastercard Foundation President and CEO Reeta Roy. The visit was an opportunity for the Foundation and the University to discuss their partnership through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program and share experiences.

Reeta was accompanied by Sewit Ahderom, a member of the Mastercard Foundation Board of Directors; David Bagenda, Country Director for the Mastercard Foundation in Kenya; Ivy Mwai, Head of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Network at the Foundation; and Catherine Ndioo, Program Communications Country Lead for the Mastercard Foundation in Kenya.

During the visit, Reeta engaged with the University's leadership team, the entire Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program body at USIU-Africa, and the Mastercard Foundation Scholar Council leaders on campus. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars had the opportunity to share their experience at USIU-Africa and within the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program network.

NOVEMBER 2023: MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT USIU-AFRICA INCREASES APPLICANT AGE LIMIT TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa increased the age limit for prospective candidates who are refugees, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities from 29 to 32 years. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at usiu-Africa also announced that it would conduct the recruitment of candidates from these specific groups (refugees, internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities) on a rolling basis to support inclusive recruitment.

APRIL 2024: SIXTY-ONE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS JOIN USIU-AFRICA AS COHORT 8

In April 2024, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa welcomed 61 Mastercard Foundation Scholars who joined the university as part of Cohort 8.

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa welcomed the ninth cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars, comprising 245 students for the Fall (September) 2024 intake. The new cohort arrived on campus on August 10, 2024. To date, Cohort 9 marks the largest number of Mastercard Foundation Scholars who have joined the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa.

KEY PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BY THE PROGRAM

PARTNERSHIPS FOR RECRUITMENT

1. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa collaborates with more than 40 partners, including UNHCR offices in various countries, schools, and other organizations supporting youth education access, among others. Our partners support the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program through the following ways:

1. Spreading the word when a new call for applications is put out.

2. Helping students in their networks apply for the scholarship by providing internet, printing, and scanning services.

3. Hosting students during interviews, including organizing interview logistics and providing computers and data.

4. Ensuring that students who may be unreachable receive information about interviews and when they have been awarded.

5. Processing of passports and travel documents.

6. Transport logistics for those who need to travel to process documents and travel to the airport when travelling to Kenya.

7. Organizing information sessions for their beneficiaries to learn more about the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa.

8. Organizing logistics for home visits for the Recruitment team in the respective countries.

9. They receive funds for document processing and ground transport on behalf of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars or support them in processing these documents using their budgets or on a reimbursement basis.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR TRANSITIONS

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa is currently collaborating with over 32 partners in support of transition activities. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is working with current partners of the Foundation, consultants, and organizations to build the capacity of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars as well as the Staff in the Transitions Office. The support from these partners includes:

- Building capacity of Mastercard Foundation Scholars in Entrepreneurship, Transformative Leadership & community engagement, Career Services, and Alumni engagement.
- Offering experiential learning through internship and volunteer opportunities.
- Offering Coaching and mentorship on careers and transitions.
- Provide job placement opportunities.
- Collaboration on community give back.

THE GRADUATING CLASS AT A GLANCE

Virginia Njeri
Bachelor of Science in Information Systems and Technology

Joyce Achieng'
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

Faith Mwikali
Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology

Gloire Koko Buroko
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

Fatha Mohamed
Bachelor of Science in International Business Administration

Amos Onyancha
Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology

Hanna Nyamal
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

Doris Kendi
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Kharis Ilunga
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Catherine Nafula
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

Alice Wanjira Jeremoki
Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology

Silas Ooko Otieno
Bachelor of Arts in Film Production & Directing

Titus Odiero
Bachelor of Science in Finance

Yasmin Kwach Opiyo
Bachelor of Science in Information Systems and Technology

Wangari Maryann Muthoni
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Frida Atieno Yagomba
Bachelor of Science in International Business Administration

Hedwig Macharia Onkundi
Bachelor of Arts in Film Production & Directing

MEET THE GRADUATING MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS

Alice Wanjira Jeremoki
Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology

My journey in technology and leadership has been a thrilling ride filled with growth, challenges, and remarkable achievements.

In January 2023, I began my professional career at Volks Elevator, an elevator company based in Nairobi. I joined as an intern, eager to learn and contribute. Little did I know that my dedication and hard work would quickly catapult me to the position of Head of the Technology and Innovation Department just a few months later, in March. It was a role I held with pride for one and a half years until my departure.

Leading the Technology and Innovation Department was an eye-opening experience. I took charge of team projects, ensuring tasks were efficiently distributed and providing constructive feedback. This approach led to a 20% increase in our project completion efficiency. Analyzing data and resolving coding issues became my forte, and I found innovative solutions that enhanced software performance, boosting system efficiency by 15%. One of my proudest achievements was developing and implementing a web application with a tracking system, allowing clients to monitor the installation process from dispatch to service and maintenance. This innovation improved client satisfaction by 25%.

Recruiting and onboarding top talent was another key responsibility. I built a cohesive team environment that led to a 30% reduction in turnover rates. I also orchestrated cross-functional collaborations to ensure the timely completion of critical projects, which promoted synergy among team members and increased our project success rate by 20%. Adaptability was crucial in my role, as I constantly acquired and applied new technologies and methodologies, ultimately enhancing overall project efficiency by 15%.

Outside the tech world, my passion for sports saw me serve as the captain of the

USIU-Africa badminton team from January 2022 to July 2023. Collaborating with Mr. Bonfas Salano, the Head of the Sports Office at USIU-Africa, and Ms. Halima Bakari, I worked to secure access to the badminton court and enhance sports facilities for our team. My leadership extended beyond the court. I participated in the annual East African Women Competition at Busitema University in Uganda in April 2022, where I focused on promoting women's resilience in sports and empowering female athletes across the region. Through fostering dialogue and advocating for greater support for women in sports, I contributed to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment.

In May 2024, I had the opportunity to participate in a hackathon organized by the Digital Transformation Center Kenya at Windsor Hotel, Nairobi. Leading a team of four developers, we created "Whispers Talk," an AI-integrated language translation web application. Competing against 20 other groups, we proudly secured third place. "Whispers Talk" facilitates seamless language translation using advanced AI algorithms, improving communication across different languages. Although the web app is currently not in use, we have plans to scale it further to enhance its functionality and reach. The hackathon was a great opportunity for me to hone my skills in team management, ensuring effective collaboration, and working well under pressure.

My passion for making a difference extends to community service as well. As the Team Leader of a Community Give Back Project at the Hope Foundation Children's Home in Korogocho, I led a team of 20 Mastercard Foundation Scholars. Together, we installed a 5000-litre water tank and donated foodstuffs to the Hope for Children Foundation. This initiative was aimed at improving the living conditions of around 45 children by addressing their water supply and nutritional needs sustainably. I coordinated our efforts by pooling resources and organizing volunteers to ensure the successful delivery of the donations. The positive outcomes were tangible—significantly enhanced water accessibility, better food security, and a positive impact on the children's health and daily sanitation.

Through these diverse experiences, I have learned the value of leadership, teamwork, and innovation. Each role and project has shaped me into a more resilient and adaptable individual, ready to take on new challenges and make a meaningful impact in any endeavour I pursue.

Amos Ongere
Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology

Before joining the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I was a student at Kisii High School, where I gained diverse experiences in leadership and sportsmanship. These experiences shaped my approach to academics and taught me valuable lessons in hard work, financial literacy, and people management.

Growing up in the global south, I witnessed the digital divide, which revealed a lack of technical and financial ability to access modern technology. This inspired my interest in technology and my commitment to bridging this gap. I am passionate about transforming Africa digitally, particularly by empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities through community projects that offer technical training, knowledge transfer, and access to resources.

As a young and ambitious student, my dream was always to pursue my academic interests at a global institution that fosters excellence and innovation. Coming from a humble background, I faced numerous challenges, including limited access to resources and infrastructure. Despite these obstacles, I was determined to seek out scholarships and funding opportunities. Leveraging my leadership skills, I applied to the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa in 2020, which has turned into a life-changing opportunity for growth and development.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been a dynamic experience, full of engagements with like-minded peers in project development, teamwork, and participation in tech challenges such as hackathons. These experiences have significantly propelled my academic career to new heights. I am graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Computer Technology with a concentration in Software Engineering. Growing up in a global south country like Kenya and witnessing the digital divide motivated me to pursue this program to help bridge the gap and encourage my community to leverage technological advancements for economic growth. I am passionate about investing in systems rather than individuals, which drives my interest in automation.

As a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, my most significant academic achievement has been consistently maintaining top performance, which earned me a place on the Dean's List throughout my time at USIU-Africa. Balancing leadership roles and academics was challenging. From my freshman year to my final year, I served in various leadership positions, including serving as the President of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Council, Electoral College member, and Student Council member. Another memorable experience for me was being appointed to the Transitions and Planning Committee by the Interim Vice Chancellor. In this role, I reviewed existing systems and processes, prepared an orientation model and handbook, and drafted an onboarding schedule for the

new Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ntarangwi. This experience allowed me to contribute to institutional processes and reinforced my leadership and organizational skills. These roles required sacrifice, commitment, and effective time management. There were times when meetings clashed with classes, and I had to prioritize catching up on missed lessons, labs, and projects.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has shaped my personal development by providing opportunities for continuous learning, relearning, and unlearning through various interactions and trainings. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa has offered me Entrepreneurship and Transformative Leadership Training and opportunities to implement community projects. These experiences have equipped me with valuable skills and insights that enable me to contribute effectively to the tech space.

Beyond the classroom, I have successfully implemented four community projects. The first was supporting Shadow Mountain's Children's Home with accommodation and refurbishment. The second involved providing educational materials, including printers, to Jacaranda Home to support pupils with exams and schoolwork. The third project provided 147 desks to Kavilinguni Primary School to improve the learning experience. Finally, I implemented a Community Action Project at Ikonge, which provided a PA system to the community members, which they then rented out for events at a nominal fee, enhancing sustainability and youth empowerment.

Through these projects, I have seen the empowerment of youth to take control of their economic futures. These initiatives have inspired entrepreneurship and fostered community cooperation. On a personal level, these experiences have deepened my understanding of the power of community-driven initiatives and strengthened my commitment to using my skills for social good. They have taught me valuable lessons in leadership, project management, empathy, and resilience.

After graduation, I hope to pursue further studies in a tech-business-related field, which will enrich my experience and help me manage tech startups and propel projects to a global scale. I am also open to furthering my career to broaden my industry reach and experience. Currently, I am interning at Encapsulated East Africa Ltd., gaining valuable experience in power solutions, data center services, and electrical installations.

The Foundation's emphasis on leadership and community service has instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility to use my technical knowledge for the greater good. I plan to launch or contribute to tech startups that align with my values of inclusivity, sustainability, and social impact. Additionally, I intend to mentor and support others in my community, sharing my knowledge and experiences to empower the next generation of leaders and innovators.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been a transformative experience. It has allowed me to develop my leadership skills, participate in impactful projects, and connect with industry experts. To the current and future Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice to you will be to seize every opportunity presented to you and strive for success.

Catherine Nafula

Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

Before joining the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I was a student at St. Anne's Lioki Girls Secondary School, where I earned my Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). My interest in international relations and community development motivated me to pursue higher education in this field. The desire to make a positive impact in my community and access quality education led me to apply for the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. The Program's focus on leadership, community service, and academic excellence aligned perfectly with my personal goals and aspirations.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa, has been both challenging and worthwhile. I chose this program because of my passion for understanding global issues and contributing to solutions that promote peace, security, and development. The diverse and inclusive environment at USIU-Africa has significantly enriched my learning experience. One of my most significant academic achievements has been maintaining a strong GPA while balancing extracurricular activities and community service projects. I successfully completed an internship at the Anti-FGM Board and served as a Community Project Coordinator funded by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. Time management was one of the key challenges I faced while balancing my academic responsibilities and personal commitments. However, I overcame these challenges by developing strong organizational skills and seeking support from mentors and peers.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has profoundly shaped my personal development. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa has enhanced my leadership skills, boosted my confidence, and instilled in me a strong sense of social responsibility. It has provided numerous opportunities to engage in community projects and develop practical skills essential for my future career. One memorable experience that stands out was leading a group of other Mastercard Foundation Scholars in organizing a community giveback event at Shadow Mountain Children's Home. This experience taught me the importance of empathy, teamwork, and effective communication. Seeing the positive impact of our efforts on the children's lives was incredibly fulfilling and reinforced my commitment to community service.

I have been actively involved in several community projects and initiatives, including organizing Mastercard Foundation Scholar Connect events for community giveback at Shadow Mountain Children's Home, serving as the secretary for the Winnie Mandela Family, and participating in various activities as a member of the Red Cross Club. I also worked at Total Rehab Center in Nairobi, where I contributed to rehabilitation efforts for individuals recovering from substance abuse. These projects have significantly

impacted the community by addressing critical issues such as child welfare, health, and education. They have also contributed to my personal growth by enhancing my leadership, project management, and interpersonal skills. Engaging with diverse groups of people has broadened my perspective and deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by different communities.

Looking ahead, I aspire to work in international development and diplomacy, focusing on policies and programs that promote social justice, human rights, and sustainable development. I am particularly interested in working with organizations that address issues such as gender equality, education, and health, and I hope to pursue a Masters degree in International Law. I plan to utilize the skills and knowledge gained from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa by applying them to real-world challenges in my professional career. The leadership, analytical, and communication skills I have developed will be instrumental in designing and implementing effective programs and policies. Additionally, the network of peers and mentors I have built will provide valuable support and collaboration opportunities.

The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been the opportunity to make a tangible difference in my community while pursuing my academic and career goals. The support and resources provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa have enabled me to grow both personally and professionally, and the sense of belonging to a global network of like-minded individuals has been incredibly inspiring.

My advice to future Mastercard Foundation Scholars is to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. Engage actively in community service, seek out leadership roles, and build meaningful relationships with your peers and mentors. Stay true to your passion and purpose, and always strive to make a positive impact in your community.

Doris Kendi

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

I grew up in Meru, where education was highly valued, but opportunities for higher education were often out of reach due to financial constraints. When I discovered the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, it felt like a dream come true. Being accepted into the Program was a significant milestone for me and an opportunity I had always hoped for.

I was motivated to join the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa because of its holistic approach. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program's focus on personal growth, leadership, and community service resonated with me, as these aspects aligned with my values. I saw this as a chance not only to advance academically but also to give back to my community in meaningful ways.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been both enlightening and rewarding. I pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology because I have always been fascinated by understanding why people think and behave the way they do. I wanted to gain the knowledge and skills needed to help those who struggle with life's challenges and guide them toward better approaches and improved well-being. The Psychology program provided me with a strong foundation in psychological theories and practical skills that I can now use to positively impact others' lives.

One of my proudest achievements was making the Dean's List several times, which reflected my hard work and dedication. Another highlight was collaborating with a classmate on a project for our counselling class, where we composed a song about HIV prevention and fighting stigma. Using art to enhance our message was a fantastic way to connect creativity with our studies. However, balancing academic demands with community service projects was challenging. I managed it by creating a schedule to prioritize tasks and by communicating with my professors and project leaders for support.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been transformative. The personal development training sessions throughout my four years at USIU-Africa, along with the leadership training programs, have helped me step up and lead with confidence, whether in group projects or community initiatives. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has also taught me resilience, helping me stay motivated and tackle challenges head-on, even when things get tough. One of the most impactful experiences for me was the entrepreneurship training provided by United Social Ventures, which opened my eyes to the world of social entrepreneurship and gave me the skills to start my project. Another highlight was the annual Scholar Connect events, where it was always incredible to meet and interact with Mastercard Foundation Scholars from different countries, exchange ideas, and build lasting friendships. These experiences not only broadened my perspective but also inspired me to continue striving for positive change in my community and beyond.

I have been actively involved in community projects, including an individual community action project at Limoro Primary School in my hometown of Meru, Kenya. With the support of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I organized the donation of books to help improve the school's reading culture. During our Scholar Day of Service, I also served as the secretary for a team that renovated dormitories at Shadow Mountain Children's Home in Baba Dogo, Nairobi, coordinating the project to ensure everything ran smoothly. These projects had a significant impact on the community by enhancing educational resources and improving living conditions for children. On a personal level, they helped me develop important skills like leadership and organization. Working closely with community members and my fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars also deepened my sense of responsibility and commitment to making a positive difference.

After graduation, I plan to venture into social entrepreneurship with a focus on improving the mental wellness of young people. Mental health is a critical issue, especially among the youth, and I believe that creating accessible resources and support systems can make a significant difference. Additionally, I intend to pursue a Masters degree in counselling psychology to deepen my understanding and skills in this field. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa has been instrumental in shaping these aspirations by providing me with leadership training, access to a network of like-minded individuals, and exposure to various initiatives that address social challenges. I plan to use my skills and knowledge to start a project aimed at improving mental wellness for young people. My leadership skills will guide me in running the project smoothly, while the community service experiences will help me design effective programs. The connections I've made are great for support and collaboration, and my problem-solving skills will help me tackle any challenges that come my way.

The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been the opportunity to grow academically and personally, surrounded by a supportive and motivating community. The Mastercard

Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa didn't just make my education possible; it also gave me a platform to make a difference in my community and develop my leadership skills. The friendships I've formed and the lessons I've learned will stay with me and guide me throughout my career and life. My advice to other Mastercard Foundation Scholars is to build strong connections with the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa team, mentors, and fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars, and not hesitate to seek help when needed. This is a unique opportunity for growth, leadership, and making a meaningful impact, so embrace it fully.

Hanna Nyamal Yohanis
Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

In 2020, amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was awarded a scholarship through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. This opportunity marked a turning point in my life. Before joining the Program, I was deeply involved in refugee youth advocacy in Nairobi, and although I completed high school in 2017, I spent three years unable to pursue higher education. During this time, I dedicated myself to community volunteer work, which kept my hopes alive until I discovered the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program through a community WhatsApp group.

It wasn't an easy journey—I recall the struggle to obtain recommendation letters on time and submitting my application just thirty minutes before the deadline. But my determination to change my life and the lives of others propelled me forward. The motivation to become a Mastercard Foundation Scholar stemmed from a desire to alter my life's narrative and make a meaningful impact on my community. Having experienced displacement and the numerous challenges that come with it, I felt a deep sense of responsibility to not only improve my circumstances but also to uplift those around me.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been a smooth and fulfilling experience. I pursued a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations with a concentration in Diplomacy and a minor in Development Studies. The course resonated with me on a personal level, as it aligned closely with my passion for advocating for vulnerable populations. Having studied in Kenya from primary through high school was an added advantage, allowing me to navigate my university education with relative ease. One of my most significant academic achievements was earning a spot on the Dean's List for three consecutive semesters—a testament to my dedication and hard work.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has profoundly shaped my personal development. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa significantly increased my community engagement, providing me with valuable training in entrepreneurship and transformative leadership. One of the highlights of my journey was leading a group project focused on transformative initiatives at Mukuru Kwa Njenga and Thika School for the Blind. This experience not only enhanced my leadership abilities but also deepened my commitment to creating positive change in my community. A particularly memorable moment occurred at Thika School for the Blind, where I met a young girl who, despite her visual impairment, expressed her dream of becoming a lawyer to advocate for the rights of others with disabilities. Her determination was incredibly inspiring and reinforced my dedication to inclusivity and creating opportunities for all, regardless of their circumstances.

Through my organization, Community Hope Revival, I have led initiatives supporting vulnerable youth from displaced backgrounds in urban centers. These projects have not only impacted the communities we served but have also contributed significantly to my personal growth. They have deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized groups and strengthened my commitment to social justice. Leading these efforts has developed my leadership skills, especially in mobilizing resources, collaborating effectively, and making a tangible difference.

As the co-founder and chairperson of Community Hope Revival since 2023, I have focused on improving the welfare of South Sudanese refugee youth from displaced backgrounds in Kenya. Our organization, with 15 active members, aims to enhance education, healthcare, and economic opportunities within the refugee community. We have successfully guided three candidates through the scholarship application process, and they are now awaiting final interviews.

Our latest project, “Reviving Lives through Sustainable Water & Hygiene for Urban Refugees,” received funding from EU Youth Empowerment in partnership with Global Youth Mobilization and is set to launch on October 11, 2024. Additionally, my participation in the UNITAR Training on Leadership and Food Security in South Sudan in 2023 expanded my perspectives. As one of 15 top performers selected from 185 participants, I represented South Sudanese participants in Tokyo and Hiroshima, Japan. This training offered valuable insights into leadership and food security, enabling me to address critical issues in South Sudan while broadening my global outlook.

Looking ahead, my career goals and aspirations are centered on becoming a humanitarian social worker, where I can continue to advocate for vulnerable populations and address pressing social issues. My ultimate goal is to become a global diplomat, using my experience and expertise to influence international policy and foster cooperation among nations to tackle global challenges like poverty, inequality, and conflict. I aspire to be a voice for the unheard and contribute to creating a more just and equitable world.

The skills and knowledge I’ve gained through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa will be invaluable in my future endeavours. The training I received in entrepreneurship and transformative leadership will be crucial as I work to empower communities and develop sustainable solutions to social challenges. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has equipped me with the ability to think critically, engage effectively with diverse stakeholders, and navigate complex global issues. My experience in leading community initiatives has also strengthened my communication and collaboration skills, which I plan to leverage in diplomatic roles to advocate for policies that support vulnerable populations and promote global peace and development.

To future Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is to fully engage in community projects and leadership opportunities, build strong connections with peers and mentors, and use the skills gained to make a meaningful impact. Stay focused on your

goals and remain committed to creating positive change. The journey may not always be easy, but the rewards are truly transformative.

Hedwig Macharia Onkundi

Bachelor of Arts in Film Production and Directing

My motivation to become a Mastercard Foundation Scholar was my unwavering thirst for education and a firm belief in continual learning. Most importantly, I wanted to become an instrument of change to positively impact my community.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been incredibly fulfilling. Engaging with coursework that blends both theory and practice, alongside the support of fellow students and professors, has enriched my experience. I am graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production and Directing, which has nurtured my creativity and deepened my appreciation for the power of film to influence, inspire, and drive change. I have also learned valuable lessons and found a community of like-minded friends who have greatly contributed to my academic and personal growth.

One of my most significant academic achievements was producing a short film that was recognized by my peers, showcasing the skills and knowledge I had gained. Balancing academic demands with practical projects was challenging, but I overcame this by developing strong time management skills, setting realistic deadlines, prioritizing tasks, and relying on the support of my professors and colleagues.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has shaped my personal development by making me more responsible and driven to give back to my community. The leadership training provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has taught me the benefits of leading with integrity and seeking first to understand people. Additionally, the entrepreneurship training has helped me trust the process and equipped me with essential team-building skills. A particularly memorable experience was participating in a community outreach program where we provided desks, chairs, computers, and more to a school. Witnessing the positive reactions from the school's community and realizing the impact of our work was incredibly fulfilling.

I have been involved in several community projects, such as teaching and mentoring Grade 4 and 5 pupils in the Dagoretti Corner Child Care Program. I have also used documentary films to highlight and address issues like unemployment and urban poverty. These projects have helped the community express itself more openly and become more aware of the challenges it faces. On a personal level, I have developed my leadership and communication skills

and gained a deeper empathy for the issues affecting my community.

Looking ahead, I plan to utilize the skills and knowledge gained from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa to create high-quality films that highlight important social issues. My career goal is to merge my filmmaking expertise with my passion for social change. The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been the opportunity to interact with people from all walks of life who share a common vision to make a difference in their communities.

To future Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is to fully immerse yourself in the opportunities provided by the Program. Engage actively in all aspects of the scholarship, seek out mentorship, and always remember the importance of giving back to your community. Your journey may be challenging, but it is incredibly rewarding and transformative.

Joyce Achieng' Otieno

Bachelor of Arts in International Relations

I come from Kisumu County, Kenya, although I spent most of my life growing up in Kibera, Nairobi. Before joining the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, my life was deeply intertwined with the community in Kibera. I had just graduated from high school and found myself drawn to volunteer work, particularly with NGOs operating within Kibera. Organizations like Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) and Generation Kenya offered various training programs, and I took part in them. These experiences fueled my passion for community work and deepened my resolve to make a difference.

What motivated me to become a Mastercard Foundation Scholar was the desire to further my education and gain the skills necessary to effect real change in my community. I saw the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa as an opportunity to turn this desire into reality. Joining the Program was a lifeline that could bridge the gap between where I was and where I wanted to be.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been nothing short of incredible. I'm graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, a field I chose because I aspired to contribute to the development sector, both locally and internationally. However, the road was not always smooth. In the beginning, I struggled with virtual classes and the online platform used for studies, Blackboard. The diversity on campus and the language barriers were also challenging. But as time passed, I adapted, found my footing, and eventually excelled.

One of my most significant academic achievements was completing various research projects in my field of study and actively participating in academic

conferences. These accomplishments, however, came with their own set of challenges. Balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities and personal commitments required strong time management skills. There were moments when the rigorous academic environment felt overwhelming, but I learned to persevere and push through.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has shaped my personal development by pushing me to step out of my comfort zone, take on leadership roles, and engage in self-reflection. It wasn't just about academic growth; it was about becoming a better version of myself—someone who is capable of leading and making a positive impact.

Throughout my time at USIU-Africa, I've been actively involved in various community projects. One of the most impactful initiatives was my work with the Kenya Anti-FGM Board, where I served as a Programs Intern. I also volunteered with SHOFCO and the EAAL Foundation, focusing on mentorship and empowerment programs for young people. These projects were not only about giving back to the community but also about growing as an individual. Addressing issues such as gender-based violence and youth unemployment reinforced my commitment to social justice and community empowerment.

As I look to the future, my career goals are centered around international development, particularly in policy advocacy and program implementation in areas such as gender equality, education, and youth empowerment. I plan to use the skills and knowledge I've gained from my studies to work with organizations that share my vision of creating a more equitable and just world. Ultimately, I aspire to take on leadership roles within international organizations, where I can influence policy decisions and drive impactful change.

The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been the opportunity to be part of a community that is passionate about transforming Africa. The connections I've made, the leadership training I've received, and the experiences I've had have all played a crucial role in shaping me into a leader and change-maker. To future Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is simple: fully embrace the opportunities provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. Engage actively with the community, take on challenges head-on, and never stop striving to make a difference.

Wangari Maryann Muthoni

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Education and personal growth have always been my passions, but financial constraints posed significant barriers to accessing higher education. The dream of making a difference in my community was a driving force for me, and when I learned about the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I saw it as a life-changing opportunity to pursue my goals and create a better future for myself and others.

My motivation to become a Mastercard Foundation Scholar stemmed from a deep desire to pursue higher education and make a meaningful impact on my community. I knew that education was the key to unlocking opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty that many in my community face. I was particularly drawn to the Program's emphasis on leadership, community service, and the opportunity to be part of a network of like-minded individuals who are passionate about making a difference in Africa.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been both transformative and enriching. I am graduating with a B.A. in Psychology, a program that I chose because of my passion for understanding human behaviour and my desire to help people improve their mental health and well-being. Throughout my studies, I have gained deep insights into various psychological theories, research methods, and practical applications that have equipped me with the skills and knowledge I need to make a meaningful impact in the field.

One of my most significant academic achievements was my involvement in research projects that explored mental health issues among young people in Kenya. These projects not only honed my research skills but also allowed me to contribute to discussions on improving mental health services within our communities.

However, the journey was not without its challenges. Balancing academics with extracurricular activities and leadership roles required careful time management and discipline. There were moments when the workload felt overwhelming, but I overcame these challenges by staying organized, seeking support from mentors, and maintaining a growth mindset. These experiences taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of self-care.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has significantly shaped my personal development by pushing me to grow in ways I never imagined. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa not only helped me fulfill my dream of accessing higher education, but has also offered a community that encourages leadership, resilience, and a commitment to giving back. I've developed skills in problem-solving, collaboration, and leadership through various initiatives and training sessions designed for

Mastercard Foundation Scholars.

I've been actively involved in several community projects during my time as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar. One of the key initiatives was leading a group of fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars in a project that renovated a classroom for children with disabilities at Toi Primary School in Kibera. We raised funds, organized a book drive, and provided educational resources tailored to the needs of these children. Another significant project was supporting a rescue home for girls, where I led a book donation drive and coordinated efforts to address their academic needs.

These projects not only impacted the communities we served by improving access to quality education and creating a better learning environment, but they also fostered personal growth in me. Working on these initiatives enhanced my leadership, communication, and organizational skills. I learned the value of teamwork, resourcefulness, and the power of collective action in driving meaningful change. Most importantly, these experiences deepened my sense of purpose and reinforced my commitment to using my skills and education for the betterment of others.

My career goals post-graduation involve working in the field of mental health and community development. I aspire to become a licensed psychologist with a focus on youth and community mental health. I am passionate about helping people, especially young individuals, develop resilience, overcome challenges, and achieve personal growth. Eventually, I aim to establish a community-based mental health organization that provides accessible resources and support to underserved populations.

The skills and knowledge I've gained through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, combined with my degree in Psychology, have given me a strong foundation to pursue these goals. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has instilled in me a commitment to leadership, community service, and excellence, all of which I plan to carry into my future work. Additionally, the practical experiences in project management, research, and collaboration that I've had during my time at USIU-Africa will be invaluable as I step into my career. I'm confident that these experiences will enable me to make a positive impact and contribute to advancing mental health and well-being in my community and beyond.

To future Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is to fully embrace every opportunity the Program offers. Don't just focus on academics—get involved in community initiatives, seek out mentorship, and build meaningful relationships with your peers. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is designed to equip you with more than just academic knowledge; it's about nurturing your potential as a leader and change-maker. Be proactive, stay curious, and remember that your journey is not just about personal success, but also about how you can uplift others. Use this opportunity to not only achieve your goals but also to contribute to the collective vision of transforming your community and the world.

Virginia Njeri Wanjiku

BSc. Information Systems and Technology

Being the youngest of five siblings raised by my uncle, I grew up with a deep sense of responsibility and a desire to make a difference. After completing my secondary education at Wanjohi Girls Secondary School with a B- in my KCSE exams, I faced significant uncertainty about my future. Despite my academic achievement, the financial challenges I encountered made the prospect of higher education seem like a distant dream.

The opportunity to join the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa felt like a lifeline—a chance not only to pursue my university education but also to transform my family's and community's lives. As someone deeply rooted in my community, I was motivated by a strong desire to give back and bring about positive change. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa provided the perfect platform for me to achieve this goal.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been nothing short of life-changing. Enrolling in a Bachelor's degree in Information Systems and Technology, with a concentration in Applications, opened up a world of possibilities for me. The quality of education and the resources available at USIU-Africa have played a crucial role in my success. Interacting with knowledgeable lecturers and students from diverse backgrounds has enriched my learning experience, broadening my perspective and deepening my appreciation for global cultures and ideas.

I've had the privilege of achieving significant milestones during my time at USIU-Africa. I've been on the Dean's List five times, honed my software development skills, and built essential soft skills like critical thinking and teamwork. Participating in various student-led initiatives has enhanced my leadership abilities, while successfully presenting and defending research projects in Information Systems and Technology has boosted my confidence in my chosen field.

My journey was not without challenges, particularly when I started my studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to online learning was difficult, especially since I did not have a background in Information Technology like many of my peers. However, by developing effective time management skills, seeking support from mentors and peers, and dedicating extra time to mastering IT concepts, I was able to overcome these obstacles and build a strong foundation in my field.

As a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, I've also experienced tremendous personal growth. One of the most impactful experiences was participating in the Transformative Leadership Training, where I learned about the qualities that define effective leadership—vision, empathy, and resilience. This training gave me invaluable insights into what it takes to inspire and lead others effectively.

Beyond leadership training, I have been actively involved in community give-back

projects, which have significantly honed my project management skills. For instance, in 2022, I led an initiative to provide full school uniforms to 40 underprivileged primary school pupils at Rutumo Primary School in Nyandarua County. This project was a profound experience, allowing me to give back to the community that shaped me and see the direct impact of our efforts.

I've also had the opportunity to explore entrepreneurship through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. Participating in the Social Venture Challenge, I was part of a team that pitched a project called Africa Potato Giants. We aimed to provide certified potato seeds to farmers in Nyandarua County, and our project won the challenge. This experience was instrumental in developing my entrepreneurial and project management skills, preparing me to navigate the challenges of starting and running a business. Looking ahead, my goal is to work in a technology company where I can further develop my skills and contribute to sustainable development within my community and beyond. I'm also committed to continuing my education, with aspirations to pursue a master's degree in data analytics. Additionally, I'm excited about exploring entrepreneurial ventures and applying my insights to create innovative projects that address critical issues and improve the quality of life for individuals in my community.

The skills, leadership qualities, and entrepreneurial mindset I've gained from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa will be instrumental in my future endeavours. Whether starting and managing my business ventures or collaborating with organizations that align with my vision for social impact, I'm committed to driving positive change and making a meaningful difference in the world.

Silas Ooko

Bachelor of Arts in Film Production and Directing

I come from a humble family of six siblings, raised by our parents, who are farmers. My upbringing was marked by uncertainty, as our family's income could barely sustain us, let alone cover school fees and essential supplies. Despite these challenges, I was able to attend government schools, which allowed me to continue my education. However, even getting basic educational materials was difficult, and it was often disheartening to see other children with everything they needed while I went without. Walking barefoot to school and not knowing when the next meal would come was the norm. Yet, I managed to finish primary school as one of the top students.

After primary school, I faced a significant hurdle—continuing to secondary school seemed impossible due to financial

constraints. Fortunately, a neighbour extended a helping hand, covering my first-year fees. Despite this, the cost of books, uniforms, and other essentials remained a burden. To help my parents and support my education, I started kale farming during school holidays. By this time, I was already responsible for helping my siblings, as I knew my parents couldn't provide for all of us. Every evening after school, I would work on the farm, and during holidays, I would assist a local large-scale farmer. This work allowed me to earn money to pay for my educational needs, part of my school fees, and support my siblings. Through these efforts, I emerged as the third-best student in my class in the national exams.

My greatest challenge came after finishing secondary school. I felt my journey had reached a dead end, as university seemed entirely out of reach. I focused on supporting my family through my farming venture. Then, a friend told me about the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa. I applied and was called for an interview. A week later, I received a life-changing call from Dr. Lumbasi, the Chair of the Recruitment and Selection Committee, informing me that I had been awarded a scholarship to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Film Production and Directing at USIU-Africa. This opportunity has been a turning point in my life.

My childhood dream has always been to pursue quality education, not just for myself, but to uplift my community by breaking the cycle of poverty. Becoming a Mastercard Foundation Scholar was a pivotal step in realizing this dream. It has provided me with the resources and support to turn my vision into reality, opening doors that were previously out of reach and allowing me to make a meaningful impact on society.

My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been transformative, filled with both challenges and growth. Starting during the COVID-19 pandemic made adapting to online studies particularly tough, especially in a hands-on field like Film Production and Directing. However, this experience taught me resilience and adaptability. Returning to physical classes after two years of virtual learning was another hurdle, but it ultimately helped me grow more confident. Despite these obstacles, I have achieved significant milestones, including consistently making the Dean's List and receiving the Best Scholar Award with a cumulative GPA of 3.56. These achievements were made possible by developing strong time management skills, seeking guidance, and staying focused on my goals.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been impactful on my personal development. Studying at such a prestigious institution has allowed me to grow both academically and personally. I've gained leadership skills and confidence that I never imagined I would have, empowering me to take initiative and inspire others. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility to my community and taught me the importance of giving back. I've developed an entrepreneurial mindset, learning to turn challenges into opportunities for positive change. The network of supportive peers and mentors has been invaluable, providing encouragement and inspiration throughout my journey.

One of the most memorable experiences was my project, Eco-Clean Fuel, winning the 2023 Social Venture Challenge. This recognition was not just a personal achievement but a testament to the potential impact of our work in providing clean and affordable energy solutions to combat the harmful effects of traditional fuels. Being a Resolution Fellow has opened doors to numerous opportunities, including access to a global network of change-makers and mentors. The Fellowship has provided essential training in entrepreneurship, leadership, and social impact, significantly influencing my approach to community service and entrepreneurship.

During my time at USIU-Africa, I have also been involved in several community projects. One notable initiative was the Facelift Project, where we successfully acquired durable lockers for students at Kavilinguni High School in Machakos County, Kenya. As a Project Coordinator at Garissa Road Primary School in Thika, we provided desks, chairs, tables, and a mini-computer lab, improving the learning environment for both students and teachers. As President of the

Rotaract Club at USIU-Africa, I led various initiatives such as environmental clean-ups and food relief efforts, addressing immediate needs and fostering a sense of community responsibility. As an Education Mentor under the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Mentorship Program, I've engaged with over 5,000 students across Kenya, supporting and guiding them on their educational journeys.

Reflecting on these experiences, I see how much they have impacted both the communities we served and my personal growth. For the communities, our initiatives have enhanced learning environments, addressed immediate needs, and fostered a sense of solidarity. For me, leading these projects has strengthened my leadership abilities, enhanced my capacity to work with diverse teams, and deepened my empathy and commitment to making a positive impact.

Post-graduation, I aim to establish Empower Studios, a film production company dedicated to creating content that addresses social issues and inspires change. I also plan to expand our social venture, Eco-Clean Fuel, to provide clean energy solutions in Kisumu and Siaya counties. Additionally, I aspire to pursue further studies in International Development Studies to design impactful development programs that address the real needs of communities.

The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been learning the art of giving back and understanding the true needs of the community. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has empowered me to realize my potential and act on it, showing me that we all have unique potential to contribute meaningfully to our communities. To fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is to embrace every opportunity, seek guidance, take on leadership roles, and always stay true to your values.

Titus Ayieko Odero

Bachelor of Science in Finance

Before joining the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I faced significant challenges in my pursuit of higher education. I was involved in small-scale farming to fund my university education, and the financial struggles, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, made it increasingly difficult to continue my studies. During this period, I discovered the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, which turned out to be a transformative opportunity for me.

My determination to continue my education, despite financial hardships, was a significant driving force. Learning about the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa was a golden opportunity not only to pursue my academic goals but also to acquire leadership and entrepreneurship skills to

make a meaningful impact in my community. The support and training provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa was instrumental in my success, equipping me with the skills that will aid my future career. My academic journey at USIU-Africa has been both challenging and rewarding, culminating in my graduation with a degree in Finance—a field I chose because of my passion for numbers and my desire to contribute to economic development.

One of my proudest achievements was serving as the Electoral College Academic Representative for the Chandaria School of Business. This role allowed me to develop my leadership and communication skills while advocating for student academic concerns and organizing academic trips and initiatives. Although I faced difficulties, especially when the pandemic forced a shift to online learning, I overcame these challenges with determination and the support of the scholarship program, ultimately improving my grades.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has profoundly shaped my personal development. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has provided not just academic support but also an opportunity to acquire transformative leadership skills and an entrepreneurial mindset. These experiences have helped me become more empathetic, patient, and organized, better preparing me to face challenges and contribute positively to society. One of the most impactful experiences was leading the Angira Community Water Project in my village, which provided clean water to residents. Seeing the positive impact on the community reinforced my commitment to community service and taught me the importance of empathy and understanding in community engagement. It highlighted that true community development comes from within rather than from external impositions.

In addition to the Angira Community Project, I have participated in various community initiatives around Nairobi and beyond, including educational programs and local development projects. These efforts have significantly impacted the community by addressing critical needs and improving living conditions. The feedback from elders in neighboring areas, who expressed a desire for similar projects, has further motivated me to continue my community engagement. As a Rotaract Club Organizer and Advisor, I collaborated on campaigns focused on environmental sustainability and quality education, visiting schools, providing learning materials, and planting over 9,500 trees—positively impacting more than 20 communities.

Last year, I, along with fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars Silas Ooko and Pride Nyando, won the Social Venture Challenge for our Eco-Clean Fuel project. This initiative aims to revolutionize energy consumption in Kisumu and Siaya counties by providing clean, cost-effective, and eco-friendly fuel solutions made from sugarcane waste, agricultural residue, and municipal waste. Our goal is to encourage a community-wide shift towards more sustainable energy practices, reduce deforestation, and improve both human health and environmental well-being. As Resolution Fellows, we have gained access to a prestigious network, pro bono services, seed funding, and mentorship. We have developed a prototype of the fuel stones and are working on a minimum viable product. Our plan includes producing 50 kilograms of fuel stones, with some sent for lab analysis and others distributed for feedback. The venture is expected to create jobs for over 15 people and benefit more than 5,000 users in Kisumu and Siaya, including rural households, schools, hospitals, children's homes, and restaurants.

Reflecting on my time as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, the most rewarding aspect has been the ability to pursue my education while taking part in comprehensive training in leadership and entrepreneurship. The program has empowered me to achieve my academic and professional goals while making a meaningful impact on my community. My advice to future Mastercard Foundation Scholars is to fully embrace the opportunities provided by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, view challenges as growth opportunities, build strong relationships with peers and mentors, and stay true to your passions. Remember, this is a platform for creating a lasting impact both personally and

professionally.

Looking ahead, my goal is to become a finance analyst, using my skills to contribute to the economic development of my community and country. I also plan to remain involved in social work and community development, applying my expertise to drive positive change. The journey as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been transformative, teaching me invaluable lessons in leadership, empathy, and community development, and I am committed to continuing this journey of growth and impact.

projects has strengthened my leadership abilities, enhanced my capacity to work with diverse teams, and deepened my empathy and commitment to making a positive impact.

Post-graduation, I aim to establish Empower Studios, a film production company dedicated to creating content that addresses social issues and inspires change. I also plan to expand our social venture, Eco-Clean Fuel, to provide clean energy solutions in Kisumu and Siaya counties. Additionally, I aspire to pursue further studies in International Development Studies to design impactful development programs that address the real needs of communities.

The most rewarding part of being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been learning the art of giving back and understanding the true needs of the community. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program has empowered me to realize my potential and act on it, showing me that we all have unique potential to contribute meaningfully to our communities. To fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars, my advice is to embrace every opportunity, seek guidance, take on leadership roles, and always stay true to your values.

Yasmin Opiyo Kwach

Bachelor of Science in Information Systems & Technology

From a young age, I desired access to quality education, but financial constraints made it seem like an unattainable dream. When I learned about the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa, I knew it was the opportunity I had been waiting for. The chance to study at a prestigious university, to grow, learn, and network with others who shared my passion for making a difference, was too valuable to pass up. Becoming a Mastercard Foundation Scholar was the first step in what has become a transformative journey.

Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Information Systems and Technology at USIU-Africa was a dream come true for me. I have always been fascinated by IT and its potential to solve real-world problems. The four years I spent at USIU-Africa were both exciting and enriching. Though

I initially faced challenges like struggling with time management, the demands of my coursework and the guidance of my professors helped me develop crucial skills in organization, critical thinking, and problem-solving. I am proud to have maintained a GPA of 3.0 and above throughout my studies, and I actively participated in various school activities, which further enriched my academic experience.

Being a Mastercard Foundation Scholar has been a life-changing experience. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program's focus on leadership development pushed me out of my comfort zone, giving me the confidence to take on significant roles, such as serving as the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Council Treasurer for a year. Leading the Mastercard Foundation Scholar Day of Service community project was particularly memorable, as it deepened my sense of service and helped me develop strong teamwork and leadership skills. The opportunity to interact with other Mastercard Foundation Scholars from diverse backgrounds has been invaluable, allowing me to form meaningful connections and broaden my cultural understanding. The workshops and mentorship opportunities offered by the program have played a crucial role in my personal growth, and I am incredibly grateful for the support I have received.

Community service has always been a passion of mine, and as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, I had the privilege of leading several impactful projects. One of the most significant was the renovation of a children's home kitchen during the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Scholar Day of Service. Despite budget constraints, our team successfully improved the space, enhancing the living conditions for the children. Additionally, I led the renovation of a school in my hometown, where we painted classrooms, cemented floors, and repaired broken windows.

During my tenure as the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Council Treasurer from 2020 to 2021, I had the honour of leading several key initiatives that made a tangible difference in the lives of my fellow Mastercard Foundation Scholars. One of my proudest achievements was the introduction of meal cards for Mastercard Foundation Scholars, ensuring that my peers received essential support. I also played a crucial role in supporting prospective applicants during their interviews, providing them with guidance and encouragement as they navigated the selection process.

Leading the renovation project at the Blessed Children's Home in Zimmerman, Nairobi, was another highlight of my time as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar. This project, which ran from May to June 2022, was a collaborative effort that involved installing a new roof and gutter system, cementing the floor, and creating additional storage space in the kitchen. The renovation greatly improved the children's living conditions, providing them with a safer and more hygienic space.

These experiences have not only left a lasting impact on the community but have also shaped me into a more compassionate and effective leader. I am deeply grateful for the opportunities I have had as a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, and I am committed to continuing my work in service of others, using the skills and knowledge I have gained to create positive change in the world.

As I graduate, my vision remains clear—I want to empower my community through IT education. My immediate goal is to secure a position at a reputable organization where I can apply the knowledge and skills I have gained. I also plan to pursue a Masters in Data Science to specialize further in my field. With the advanced knowledge I gain, I aspire to become an entrepreneur, using technology to address real-world problems in my community. The skills I have developed through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa—leadership, resilience, and communication—will be instrumental in achieving these goals. I am excited about the future and am committed to using my education to make a positive impact.

My advice to other Mastercard Foundation Scholars is to never take this opportunity for granted. It is a privilege that comes with high expectations. Embrace challenges, seek support when needed, and remain open-minded. The Mastercard Foundation

Scholars Program offers more than just an education—it opens doors to a world of opportunities. Be proactive and seize them.

THE ALUMNI NETWORK

As we graduate the first cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars, we celebrate not only their achievements but also the beginnings of a vibrant and enduring Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni community. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa is committed to building lifelong relationships with our Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni, who are poised to become leaders and change-makers in their respective fields.

Our vision is to create an inclusive and supportive Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni network that continues to drive positive change and innovation. We believe that our Mastercard Foundation Scholars' journeys do not end with graduation but evolve into powerful avenues for collaboration, mentorship, and impact.

KEY AREAS OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

1.**Membership in the USIU-Africa Alumni Association.** We will ensure that all graduates join the official USIU-Africa alumni network as well as the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Alumni Network to enjoy the full benefits of both organizations.

2. Community and Network Building: We aim to cultivate a strong, connected Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni community that provides opportunities for networking, collaboration, and professional growth. Through events, both virtual and in-person, Alumni can stay engaged, share their experiences, and contribute to the collective knowledge and success of the network.

3. Mentorship and Professional Development: Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni are invited to volunteer in mentorship programs where they can offer guidance to current scholars and recent graduates. This reciprocal relationship enriches both mentors and mentees, fostering professional development and personal growth.

4. Continued Support and Resources: Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni will have access to resources and support through our Careers and Placement Office, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Office, as well as the Community and Alumni Engagement Office of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa.

5. Impactful Initiatives and Giving Back: Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni are encouraged to lead and participate in community give-back projects, leveraging their expertise and experiences to make a tangible difference. Our Community & Alumni Engagement Office will support these initiatives, ensuring that Mastercard Foundation Scholars Alumni continue to contribute to the mission of transformative change.

6. Celebrating Success: The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at USIU-Africa is looking forward to recognizing and celebrating the achievements of our Mastercard Foundation Scholars Alumni. Through awards, features in our publications, and special events, we will highlight their successes and contributions to their fields and communities.

Stay Connected

As you transition into your roles as Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni, we invite you to remain actively engaged with the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program and USIU-Africa. By staying connected, you can continue to be a part of a supportive and impactful network that values your contributions and celebrates your successes.

For further information contact
Lilian Makinia
lmakinia@usiu.ac.ke
or +254730116536.