

ASU supports Mastercard Foundation Scholars across Africa

Program continues to empower young leaders by expanding access to graduate education across 10 countries

By Meenah Rincon, ASU News
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What does it mean to create change in the world?

For the students supported by the [Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program](#), it means having the chance to reimagine their future and, in turn, shape the future of their communities.

This fall, 40 Mastercard Foundation Scholars from across 10 African countries — Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda — began graduate programs through [ASU Online](#), advancing their aspiration to drive progress for their countries.

In 2012, Arizona State University partnered with the Mastercard Foundation to expand access to high-quality education for ambitious African students who face social or financial barriers. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program was developed through the partnership, designed to educate and empower the next generation of transformative leaders who will drive social and economic change in Africa.

As part of Phase III, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program leverages a unique partnership with Kepler College. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars are entirely based in Africa, living in Kigali, Rwanda, while completing ASU Online coursework.

This phase builds on the success achieved in Phase II, in which ASU implemented a 4+1 opportunity with a cohort of 10 ASU Online students studying at Ashesi University in Ghana. The success of this model paved the way for its expansion, growing from a cohort of 10 to 180 Mastercard Foundation Scholars over the last four years.

Mastercard Foundation Scholars have several graduate degree programs to choose from: sustainable engineering, information technology, business analytics, learning design and technologies, and global technology and development.

At Kepler College, they receive wraparound support services, technology resources and leadership development opportunities.

It is uniquely located in Kigali, a hub for entrepreneurship, innovation and youth-driven change, making it possible for Mastercard Foundation Scholars to stay rooted in Africa while receiving a globally recognized education, academic support and an ecosystem that values leadership, problem-solving and community engagement.

“These Mastercard Foundation Scholars will graduate with both the academic knowledge and the practical skills needed to address pressing issues in their home countries through innovative technology, sustainable development or entrepreneurship,” said [Mina Ahmad](#), director of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at ASU. “Beyond individual achievement, we hope they will catalyze change by creating jobs, shaping policy, mentoring younger students and building solutions that uplift entire communities. We are excited to support this new cohort as they address challenges in their communities with creative solutions.”

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program officially launched in Kigali over the summer with a five-week orientation, co-designed by ASU and Kepler staff, focused on degree preparation, public speaking, digital skills and navigating program resources.

ASU leaders and program staff welcomed Mastercard Foundation Scholars who traveled to Rwanda for the orientation, helping them transition and build a sense of community.

During orientation, the group also met [Reeta Roy](#), president and CEO of the Mastercard Foundation. Under her leadership, she has elevated the views and agency of young people most often excluded from education and financial services. As a result, the input of young people has shaped the design of many Mastercard Foundation programs.

For many Mastercard Foundation Scholars, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is deeply personal. A few shared what this opportunity means to them and their community.

Onyinye Udeozo was born in Jos, Plateau State, in northern Nigeria. When conflicts broke out, her family was forced to flee as refugees. They eventually rebuilt their lives in the East. Through it all, she credits her father’s strong belief in education as the reason she persevered.

Alongside her studies, Udeozo became the first female chair of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Student Branch and built a four-year career as a full-stack web developer, specializing in software, AI and data-driven solutions.

“What led me to ASU is the desire to bridge my self-taught skills with structured, global education,” she said. “The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program represents that bridge, allowing me to pursue this master’s degree, which was financially beyond my reach.”

Now pursuing a degree in [information technology](#) with a focus on data science, Udeozo sees her degree as the key to tackling housing injustice and supporting agro-businesses in Nigeria.

For **Miriam Mwende Mbuvi**, a Mastercard Foundation Scholar from Kenya, the fight against climate change is personal. While studying at her former university, she invested her savings into an onion farming project, but the harvest failed when the rains never came. That experience revealed how unpredictable the climate had become and how vulnerable communities truly are.

Motivated by these challenges, Mbuvi chose to pursue a master's in [sustainable engineering](#) to design energy systems that are not only low-carbon but also holistic, ethical and circular.

"Sustainability, in my view, must go beyond emissions during usage," she said. "It must account for the environmental and social impact at every stage from resource extraction to product disposal."

Through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Mbuvi is gaining both technical expertise and leadership skills, crediting the program with shaping her into a systems thinker, communicator and changemaker.

Joel Quansah grew up in a rural community in western Ghana, experiencing firsthand the challenges of limited access to education and economic opportunities. Overcoming polio but being left with a physical disability was the root of his resiliency and drive to create change.

"My journey has taught me that limitations are often the foundation for innovation," Quansah said. "This scholarship isn't just an open door for me; it's a tool to help me build better doors for others."

The [business analytics](#) major saw that data, when translated into actionable insights, has the power to solve real-world problems, optimize operations and drive sustainable growth. After graduation, he plans to establish a social enterprise that provides affordable, data-driven consulting services to small and medium-sized businesses in Africa.

"I want to be a catalyst for a new wave of data-informed entrepreneurship," Quansah said.

Clarisse Umurangwa was driven by her interests in education, community empowerment and poverty reduction to pursue a master's degree in [global technology and development](#).

Growing up in a rural village in Rwanda, the first-generation college student didn't have access to technology to gain the skills she'd need to be successful. Through these challenges, she pursued a career in education, envisioning a future where vulnerable children can access quality education.

"I witnessed firsthand the challenges teachers face in integrating digital literacy," Umurangwa said. "Many lack basic technology skills, which limits the opportunities students receive. I don't want my younger ones to face the same barriers."

As to what she's most excited about? It's the opportunity to learn in a diverse and innovative global environment and build cross-cultural connections to create positive change in Rwanda and across Africa.

Yoshita Yajjapurapu at EdPlus contributed to this article.

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Main image



The fall 2025 Mastercard Foundation Scholars cohort. Courtesy photo

Text image(s)



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Miriam Mwende Mbuvi



Joel Quansah



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