



TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

SEPTEMBER 2015

The ultimate goal of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is to create the next generation of leaders who will guide the economic and social transformation of Africa. Core to the Program is the development of transformative leadership skills within each of the Scholars.

In 2012, The MasterCard Foundation launched this Program with a 10-year horizon and a \$500 million commitment to educate and develop the leadership capabilities of at least 15,000 young people, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Through a global network of some of the world's leading universities and secondary education organizations, the Program serves students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, show academic promise, are committed to making a difference in the lives of others and demonstrate leadership potential.¹ As participants in the Program, Scholars receive comprehensive scholarships, support services, enrichment opportunities, career services, networking opportunities and leadership development training. These services are provided by Program partners.

At the 2014 Global Partners' Convening in Pretoria, South Africa, partners created the transformative leadership working group. This group is helping to develop a common framework to anchor partners' leadership development efforts and to foster common elements in programming across organizations collaborating in the Program.

Based on telephone interviews with all 23 Program partners,² this brief presents partners' views on transformative leadership and their efforts to develop Scholars' leadership skills.³ First, we present partners' definitions of transformative leadership and perspectives on the core competencies of such leaders. Next, we summarize partners' leadership programming, discuss current gaps and note key opportunities for development.

1. The Program serves Scholars largely from Sub-Saharan Africa (with a small number of Scholars coming from Latin America, the Caribbean and Lebanon/Palestine). These Scholars complete their education in Africa (Cameroon, Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda); North America (Canada and the U.S.); Central America (Costa Rica); and the Middle East (Lebanon). Partners include Arizona State University, Duke University, McGill University, Michigan State University, Stanford University, University of British Columbia, University of California, Berkeley, University of Toronto and Wellesley College (post-secondary partners in North America); African Institute of Mathematical Sciences, American University of Beirut, Ashesi University College, EARTH University, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Makerere University, University of Cape Town and University of Pretoria (post-secondary partners in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America); BRAC, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Camfed, and Equity Group Foundation (secondary education partners); and African Leadership Academy (which collaborates with a network of universities to help place Scholars for university studies).

2. One partner, FAWE, is treated as two partners in this analysis, given its distinct programs in Ethiopia and Rwanda.

3. In most instances, we spoke with one individual from each partner institution who was most involved in, or aware of, programming as part of the Scholars Program; these individuals' perspectives on transformative leadership may not necessarily reflect those of their institutions.

HOW DO THE PARTNERS DEFINE TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP?

Partners define transformative leadership in many ways, but their perspectives can be synthesized into the following definition:

Transformative leadership is the act of engaging others in an ethical manner to generate positive and lasting change.

The themes embedded in this definition are as follows:

- **Positive change.** Eleven of the 23 partners said that a true transformative leader must be focused on positive change. Positive change was defined as change that increases the welfare of a leader's community—as opposed to his or her own personal welfare—or change that redresses long-standing social inequalities.
- **Lasting change.** To be considered truly transformative, a leader needs to have an impact that lasts beyond their time as a leader, according to 10 of the partners interviewed. They said that transformative leaders are able to influence society and transform communities.
- **Ethical action.** Six partners said that transformative leadership has an ethical or moral component: transformative leaders behave with honesty, integrity and transparency in all dealings.

Partners' thoughts on leadership revealed differences across regions and educational levels. Non-African partners were more likely to highlight the individualistic aspects of transformative leadership, such as the self-reflection required to behave ethically. African partners were more likely to highlight its collective aspects, including the importance of inspiring, encouraging and involving others. For example, eight of 12 African partners anchored their definition of transformative leadership in the concept of community change, compared to four of 11 non-African partners. Secondary education partners tended to emphasize the theme of lasting change, whereas tertiary partners were more likely to highlight all three themes listed above: positive change, lasting change and ethical action.

PARTNERS' DEFINITIONS OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

"Transformative leadership is a process of addressing a community, improving their life, influencing positive change so the lives of others are better and improved."

Secondary education partner in Africa

"I see leadership not as something you necessarily do and a specific set of actions and results, but as a method of influencing people and society—a method for influencing social change."

University partner in Africa

"Transformative leadership is about a person who can first work on him or herself to develop the skills and then have enough courage to work for the betterment of their own society."

University partner in North America

WHAT ARE THE COMPETENCIES OF A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER?

According to the partners, transformative leaders share many core competencies—abilities and skills they naturally possess or develop with practice—that enable them to achieve the positive and lasting changes they seek in their communities.

Partners cited these as the top five competencies: **effective communication, empathy, introspection, clear vision** and **integrity** (see the box below for a full description of each competency).

These five competencies reflect the partners' definition of transformative leadership—effective communication and clear vision are necessary ingredients for generating lasting change, and empathy, introspection and integrity are critical to ethical action.⁴

FIVE CORE COMPETENCIES OF A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

Effective communication—The ability to communicate with people from a wide variety of cultures, perspectives and backgrounds. This includes effective public communication and interpersonal communication.

Empathy—The ability to understand the members of the community they wish to influence, show compassion regarding their struggles, and represent their interests in decision making.

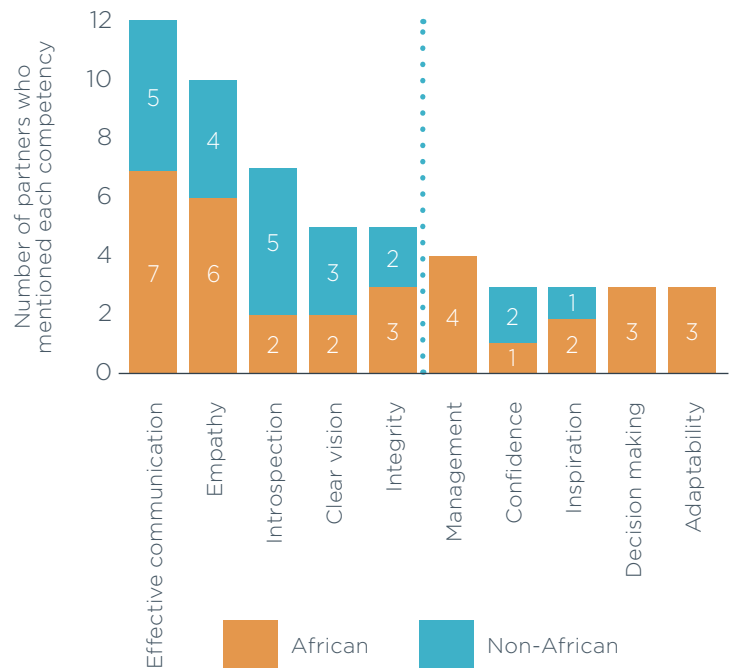
Introspection—The capacity to reflect on one's values and decisions, as well as strengths and weaknesses, in an effort to grow as a person and a leader.

Clear vision—A clear sense of goals and a plan to accomplish them. A leader should be able to analyze constituents' needs and set concrete goals and objectives to meet those needs.

Integrity—The possession of strong values, moral principles and an authentic character. These values and principles guide a leader's decision making and interactions with others.

Partners' perspectives on core competencies varied somewhat by region and level of education offered. Non-African partners were more likely to mention introspection as a key competency; African partners were more apt to mention the additional competencies of management, decision making and adaptability as key to a transformative leader (Figure 1). Secondary education partners were more likely to cite management and communication as competencies of transformative leadership, whereas university partners mentioned introspection and integrity more often.

Figure 1. Competencies of a transformative leader, by region



Note: The five most-cited competencies are to the left of the dotted line.

Source: Telephone interviews conducted from November 2014 to February 2015 with 12 African and 11 non-African partners.

4. Some existing transformative leadership models highlight concepts of global awareness and a commitment to social justice as core competencies or traits of transformative leaders. Although these did not emerge as highly cited competencies in conversations with partners, some partners mentioned related traits, such as focusing on the greater good and taking action (each mentioned by two partners).

HOW DO PARTNERS SELECT LEADERS FOR THE PROGRAM?

Partners aim to select Scholars who already possess the core competencies of a transformative leader, or the potential to develop these competencies. Although partners focus on academic excellence and financial need in the selection process, they also assess applicants' potential and demonstrated leadership through the use of a qualitative assessment of leadership.

Specifically, almost three-quarters of partners—three of five secondary education partners and 14 of 15 tertiary partners—assess applicants' demonstrated leadership in their communities, including their involvement in school clubs, groups and community engagement projects. In addition, seven partners—including three at the secondary level—assess applicants' leadership potential and leadership qualities with application questions on students' community awareness, problem-solving skills and personal integrity. Interestingly, five partners noted that highly disadvantaged students may not have the opportunity to start clubs or hold prominent leadership posts. These partners attempt to identify applicants' leadership in other capacities such as earning income to support their families or demonstrating perseverance in difficult circumstances.

WHAT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTS ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO SCHOLARS?

Although Scholars may already demonstrate leadership potential upon their selection, partners recognize that leadership competencies must be nurtured over time through ongoing programming. Across the Program, partners offer Scholars a wide array of activities and supports. These can be grouped into the following three fundamental categories: (1) instruction (2) modelling, and (3) practising.

1. INSTRUCTION: Instruction activities expose Scholars to basic concepts of transformative leadership, including its definition and core competencies. Below we summarize two basic types of instruction activities that partners currently offer Scholars.

- **Orientation and training.** Twelve of 23 partners offer Scholars exposure to leadership models and competencies through basic leadership programs or modules. These typically span one to four weeks immediately preceding the academic year, often forming part of Scholar orientation activities. Topics covered include self-awareness, identifying personal strengths, setting long-term goals and entrepreneurship. Partners serving a small number of Scholars, including most North American university partners, often fold these programs into existing orientation programming—for example, orientation for international students. Partners serving a large number of Scholars—such as African secondary education partners—often create new leadership programming tailored to Scholars' needs.
- **Regular meetings and events.** Fourteen partners reinforce leadership models and competencies through meetings, workshops, and special events during the school year. Generally held on a weekly or monthly basis, regular Scholar meetings and workshops feature presentations and discussions on active listening, self-reflection and identifying personal strengths, among other relevant leadership concepts. Partners also reinforce these concepts through one-time events, including seminars on community-building and change leadership. Although most of these meetings and events are offered only to Scholars, some are also open to the larger campus community.

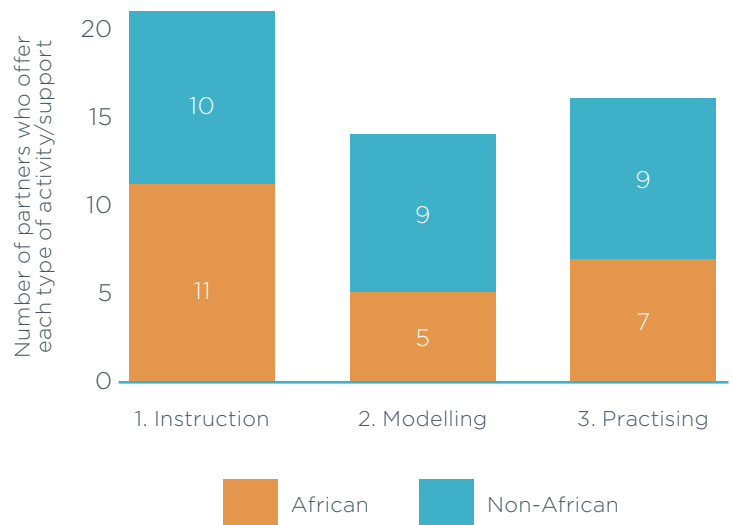
2. MODELLING: Behaviour modelling activities and supports offer Scholars a chance to observe, interact with, and learn from leaders in action. Fourteen partners provide Scholars with mentorship programs, job-shadowing opportunities, or access to role models as means of nurturing their leadership skills through behaviour modelling. One common form of mentorship was described as peer mentorship or a “buddy system”, wherein older Scholars serve as role models and advocates for younger ones. In some cases, partners pair Scholars with local, national and international leaders outside their institutions, who provide them with examples of successful leadership upon which they can base their own professional development. In addition, at least one partner offers a job-shadowing program, which provides Scholars with an opportunity to learn from successful role models in a professional setting.

3. PRACTISING: Scholars need an opportunity to practise the leadership skills they learn about in training and observe through behaviour modelling activities. Partners currently offer Scholars a range of on-campus and off-campus opportunities to practise leadership, which are summarized below.

- **On-campus practise.** Twelve partners actively encourage Scholars to take on leadership roles in school-sponsored clubs and organizations. Scholars are elected as student representatives or club presidents, trained as resident advisors or orientation leaders, and in many cases, responsible for creating their own clubs and organizations. Some partners described opportunities for leadership within the Program itself. One university partner in North America created leadership positions to provide Scholars with more direct involvement in Program coordination and decision making. Another North American university partner requires Scholars to lead monthly Scholar meetings by their second year, to exercise their management and communication skills.
- **Off-campus practise.** Scholars also gain leadership skills through community service, volunteer activities and internships outside of school. Nine partners require or encourage Scholars to perform community service or volunteer at local organizations. For example, one secondary education partner in Africa requires that Scholars work collectively to identify a social problem in their community and develop and execute a plan of action aimed at alleviating that problem. Partners see these community-oriented activities as a great opportunity for Scholars to employ newly acquired leadership skills in real-world situations.

The majority of partners offer instruction, modelling and practising opportunities, although less than half of African partners offer modelling supports (Figure 2). This is also true of secondary education partners, as only two of five partners offer modelling opportunities. On average, each partner offers activities and supports in two of the categories listed above, and 10 of the 23 partners cover all three categories. Table 1 at the end of this brief provides more detail on these activities and supports.

Figure 2. Leadership activities and supports available to Scholars, by region



Note: A similar distribution holds for secondary versus university partners. Among the five secondary education partners, all offer instruction activities, two offer modelling and three offer practising. Among the 18 university partners, 16 offer instruction activities, 12 offer modelling and 13 offer practising.

Source: Telephone interviews conducted from November 2014 to February 2015 with 12 African and 11 non-African partners.

HOW ARE PARTNERS IMPLEMENTING LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTS?

Half of partners offer Scholars a tailored set of leadership activities and supports. Eleven partners partially or fully tailor leadership activities and supports to Scholars, including orientations, meetings and training sessions. In contrast, 12 partner institutions offer Scholars a series of leadership activities and supports that are available to Scholars and non-Scholars alike. At both the secondary and university levels, partners that tailor activities and supports to Scholars serve a larger number of Scholars per year, on average, than partners that do not offer unique programming to Scholars.

Leadership activities are intentionally sequenced. At least 10 partners sequence leadership activities to build on one another either throughout the year or during Scholars' tenure at the institution. For example, one North American university partner introduces leadership topics to first-year Scholars during a special summer orientation and then pairs them with a second-year mentor. In their second year, Scholars practise their leadership skills by designing and leading first-year orientation activities and Scholar group meetings, and serving as mentors for incoming Scholars. This sequencing introduces a logical progression to leadership programming; students are first exposed to leadership topics and observe older students in action, and then have the opportunity to practise their own leadership skills.

Leadership offerings generally lack a gender focus. Although most partners infuse their leadership programming and supports with gender themes, only a minority offer leadership activities with an explicit gender focus. Three African and three non-African partners offer leadership activities with an explicit focus on female leadership or women's issues.⁵ Partners mentioned self-esteem, participation in science and engineering and societal pressures to marry and have children as key topics discussed during these activities.

African partners emphasize national and local linkages in leadership programming. Ten of 12 African partners invite prominent African leaders to speak with Scholars, discuss current events in Africa during regular Scholar meetings and pair them with African professors and community and business leaders. In general, these activities emphasize leadership in a local or national context. For example, one African partner pairs Scholars with mentors from their home districts in an effort to cultivate Scholars' local leadership opportunities. Another African partner holds a three-day leadership congress in which prominent national leaders are invited to speak to Scholars on leadership topics.

Non-African partners also make efforts to incorporate African topics into leadership programming. Several non-African partners are intentional about developing leaders within the African context. One North American university partner facilitates an Africa Awareness group among Scholars, which discusses current events and salient social issues in African countries. Another university partner encourages Scholars to take part in a series of seminars on African development, which cover African history, economy, culture, displacement, human rights issues, philanthropy and other relevant topics. These activities often cover topics that span the entire African continent, thus encouraging Scholars to learn about other countries besides their own.

5. In general, a large proportion of these partners' Scholars are female.

WHAT ARE THE GAPS IN CURRENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP?

Partners offer a wide array of leadership programs. However, an analysis of their offerings revealed some obstacles standing in the way of a comprehensive leadership framework across partners.

Lack of agreement on a definition and competencies.

Although there are strong commonalities in partners' definitions and core competencies of transformative leadership, partners do not currently have a shared definition or list of competencies on which to base their leadership programming. Six partners identified this lack of agreement as a gap in leadership programming across the partnership.

Scholars' exposure to leadership programming is uneven.

Among secondary and university partners, there is wide variation regarding the content, duration, intensity and type of leadership activities and supports provided to Scholars. Some partners have well-established leadership programming and supports tailored to Scholars, whereas others offer more general leadership activities and opportunities. As a result, Scholars receive substantially different services depending on their host partner institution.

Not all Scholars have the opportunity to gain instruction, model and practise leadership.

Though all partners offer multiple activities and supports to Scholars, fewer than half offer all three of the components mentioned above: instruction, modelling and practising. The absence of any single component may be detrimental to Scholars' development. For example, requiring that Scholars design and execute a community service project without first providing them with leadership training or mentoring support could actually place them at a disadvantage if they don't have the skills or supports they need to succeed.

On the next page, we highlight two partners to illustrate the definitions of transformative leadership, core leadership competencies and leadership activities offered across the partnership.

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (UBC) University partner in North America

Definition: Transformative leadership is “based on ethics and integrity. Rather than focusing on transforming one’s own life, a transformative leader focuses on transforming the lives of others and making a positive change.”

Competencies:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Analysis and problem solving
- Global and intercultural awareness
- Initiative and motivation
- Adaptability
- Ethics and integrity

Leadership activities and supports:

Peer mentorship. During the summer, UBC staff pairs each graduate Scholar with a senior African student who is already on campus. These students connect with the Scholars, first via email over the summer to answer any questions about the pre-arrival process, and then throughout the course of the school year. Mentors help graduate Scholars adjust to their new university environment and make connections both on and off campus.

Ubuntu dialogue sessions. Bimonthly, a graduate Scholar works with a team of undergraduate Scholars to host an event focused on innovations on the African continent. Two to three Scholars work together to choose a topic of interest to them; topics featured in the past year included entrepreneurship and food security. Each group works with the Program director to structure a workshop in which the UBC community can learn more about positive opportunities within Africa.

Leadership meetings. Once a month, Scholars gather to discuss leadership topics that align with their interests. In one meeting, Scholars shared and discussed their own definitions of transformative leadership. Other meetings last year have included sessions on communication skills and identifying personal strengths.

CAMFED Secondary education partner in Africa

Definition: “Transformative leadership is a process of addressing a community, improving their life [and] influencing positive change so the lives of others are better and improved.”

Competencies:

- Vision
- Passion
- Attentiveness
- Communication

Leadership activities and supports:

Leadership camp. A 9–10 day program for Scholars, modelled on previous Camfed scholarship programs. During the camp, Scholars discuss personal leadership which focuses on self-awareness, personal strengths and goal setting, among other topics. There is also a community leadership discussion in which Scholars identify problems in their communities and develop an action plan for addressing them. The camp also has a role modelling component: Scholars interact with prominent African leaders who have achieved some level of academic or professional success.

Training modules and psychosocial supports. During weekly meetings, teacher-mentors help students (including Scholars and non-Scholars alike) develop communication skills, build self-esteem and adopt goal-setting habits that will help them academically and socially.

Girls clubs. All Camfed-supported students are expected to form clubs—debate clubs, sanitation clubs, etc.—and elect leaders. Teacher-mentors play a vital role in initiating clubs, but the students generally plan activities and meetings on their own. At the end of every year, the elected leaders come together to share best practices.

WHAT ARE KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING?

Adopt a common leadership framework. In summer 2015, The MasterCard Foundation and the working group could work together to adopt a definition of transformative leadership and core competencies that Scholars across the partnership should acquire. In the interest of establishing a coherent and unifying leadership framework, the definition and core competencies should be standardized across regions and academic levels. Partners can use these competencies to guide leadership programming and monitor Scholars' progress in acquiring and using leadership skills.⁶

Develop a toolkit of leadership activities and best practices. Although they indicated strong interest in a standard definition and set of competencies, the partners said that the Program's varied cultural contexts and academic levels would make it difficult to implement a uniform set of transformative leadership activities and supports at the various institutions. As an alternative, the working group could produce an inventory of activities, supports and tools to develop and reinforce the core competencies identified in the framework. The toolkit could contain a summary of best practices for peer mentorship programs, personality and strengths finder assessments, sample leadership training activities and other documents. Partners could select tools and activities from the toolkit that best suit their resources and their Scholars' needs. The toolkit could be organized into the three categories discussed above (instruction, modelling and practising).

Create a foundational leadership training course for Scholars across the partnership. Once they have agreed upon the Program's leadership framework, the working group could create a leadership training course or identify an existing program that suits the Program's needs. At a minimum, this training course would introduce Scholars to the concept of transformative leadership and its core competencies. The course could also feature modelling activities, including pairing Scholars with professional mentors and offering webinars with respected leaders. The course could be offered to all Scholars or to all who might not receive such training at their host institutions, and could be provided by a third party to ensure that all Scholars receive the same training content and intensity.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE WORKING GROUP?

In the short term, the transformative leadership working group will collaborate with The MasterCard Foundation, the learning partner (Mathematica Policy Research), and partner institutions to adopt a common definition of transformative leadership and core leadership competencies for the Program. In the medium term, the working group could begin designing a leadership framework around these competencies and start work on a measurement framework to track leadership programming across the partnership.

HOW THE WORKING GROUP COLLABORATED TO PRODUCE THIS BRIEF

The transformative leadership working group was formed during the Global Partners' Convening held in Pretoria in October 2014. At that time, members of the working group expressed an interest in collaborating to develop a common framework on transformative leadership. The working group decided to begin by conducting a mapping exercise of existing leadership offerings across the partnership. To do so, working group members developed a standard set of questions to be administered to all partners and, starting in late-November 2014, held one-hour telephone interviews with those individuals identified as the most qualified to speak about their organization's leadership programming and supports for Scholars. By February 2015, working group members had completed interviews with all 23 partners (12 based in Africa, nine based in North America and two based in other regions). In consultation with the working group and The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program manager, Mathematica staff analyzed the data and prepared this brief.

6. After adopting a common leadership framework, the working group could develop a measurement framework to track Scholars' access to, and use of, leadership activities and supports.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

Table 1. Leadership activities and supports available to Scholars

Type	Examples	General Timing	Participants
1. Instruction			
Orientation and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership camp focusing on self-awareness, identifying strengths and making long-term goals • Leadership conferences, in which high-profile speakers discuss topics such as values-based leadership • Scholar orientation with a strong leadership component, featuring units in entrepreneurship, mentoring, community engagement and problem solving 	Summer and school breaks	Generally Scholars only, but some partners also include non-Scholars
Regular meetings and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars and workshops related to leadership; common topics include active listening, self-awareness and effective communication • Weekly/monthly Scholars meetings in which relevant topics are discussed, including Scholars' definitions and examples of transformative leadership 	School year	Generally Scholars only, but some partners also include non-Scholars
2. Modelling			
Behaviour modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer mentor assignments, in which older Scholars guide younger Scholars • Faculty mentor assignments, in which Scholars are paired with a professor who has a professional connection to Africa • Job shadowing, in which Scholars observe professionals in their desired field at work and have access to them as professional resources 	School year	Generally Scholars only, but some partners also include non-Scholars
3. Practising			
On-campus leadership practise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholar participation in academic clubs, sports clubs as well as clubs oriented toward African political and social issues • Scholars assume leadership positions and lead orientation sessions and regular meetings 	Summer and school breaks	All students
Off-campus leadership practise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service at orphanages, food banks and other local organizations • Community engagement activities, including performing plays, songs and poetry at local primary schools 	School year	All students