

Lou MacEachern Rotary Bursary Scholarship

Excerpts from successful recipients' applications

Abiola A. Ajibola

My dream to study something health-related was sparked early on. When my little brother was about age 3, he had multiple seizures and was often rushed to the ER. At the time, I could not comprehend what was happening, but the fear in my parent's eyes assured me that it was of grave concern. Seeing how his doctors and nurses interacted with him, the long nights they would spend at his side, and the genuine love they showed, making time to watch movies with him, play with stuffed animals, and bribe him with cherry popsicles was inspiring. From those moments onward, I knew I would also find a way to replace people's anxiety with joy and care for them. Today, my brother is a healthy, happy 13-year-old, and I am passionate about establishing a career in Biomedical Engineering.

I am the second child of two hard-working immigrants and a proud descendant of the Yoruba tribe in Southwestern Nigeria. Today, I identify as a young Black female who knows never to take anything for granted or view the obstacles I may face in society as a limitation. My parents are my heroes. They challenge me to put my best forward while staying true to my cultural background and maintaining values of empathy. Largely, however, they will be unable to support me financially in university.

YMAP has impacted my life by teaching me lessons about leadership. I have learned that leadership is not always about being the loudest voice in the room. It is about speaking on behalf of your peers and collaborating with them to achieve a common goal. I now understand that a true leader uplifts other people and is open to new suggestions. Each of us was born to make difference, and YMAP is empowering the leaders of tomorrow one day at a time.

Efua Omoshuli

Born in 2007, I immigrated to Canada with my family in 2013 at the age of six. My parents dreamt of providing my sister and I with world class education, along with a good quality of life, in a safe country, like we have here in Canada. Today, I am 17 years old, a Canadian Citizen, a High School Graduate of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program of Bishop O'Byrne High School, Calgary and now entering first year Engineering Student of the University of Alberta, Edmonton. While I am grateful for the sacrifices my parents continue to make to provide for my sister and myself, I have dreams of my own - dreams to positively impact the world by contributing to innovation and improvement in the world's environment, healthcare, treatment and medicine overall.

If granted this Scholarship, I will be immensely grateful and will be strongly motivated to contribute to innovative chemical engineering, impacting positively on our environment; supporting medicine that will enhance healthcare, pharmacy and patient treatment overall. Also, this scholarship will help reduce the amount of time spent focusing on my finances, thus giving me more time and concentration on my studies to achieve my dream of being a Chemical Engineer. Thirdly, if awarded this scholarship, it will help to pay down a certain amount of my student loan.

The YMAP program really helped me on a personal level, with all the participation in games and various activities including volunteering. These have assisted me with the expansion of my social connections and in

developing skills which will be handy to me now and in the future. The YMAP program also enlightened me through workshops such as the interview with the Connect First employee to simulate and prepare me for interviews in the future, which will come handy for internships interviews during university and for future jobs. To summarize all of this, YMAP has positively influenced me in my high school years and empowered me for success in further years.

Aysia Li

The university I will be going to is Alberta University of the Arts where I can keep pursuing my passion for fine arts and design. I have already decided on a major which is visual communication and design. I would earn a Bachelor of Design after completing this course. The reason why I chose this course as my major is because of my passion for illustration, it's how I want to dedicate my time during my experience in university. I have also been experimenting with animation because I got inspired by various animators and their works on social media. Due to this reason, I wanted to have the animation course as my minor so I can learn and improve my animation skills!

This scholarship will greatly aid in achieving my educational and career goals because it will allow me to focus more on my studies than worrying about my financial status. I would not have to work as many hours outside of my studies because it would help lower my university expenses such as supplies and tuition. It would also lower the stress on me and my parents because of our financial status as we are a low-income family. My parents would not have to worry as much about me not being able to pursue my university due to financial stress.

Another big influence on me aside from my family was the YMAP program and the coordinators! They have honestly helped me so much from improving my social skills along with helping me judge and decide my life choices. One of which is what to do for university before and when I get there! They have always encouraged me in pursuing the arts and gave me advice for anything I had to look out for. Without YMAP, my high school life would be a lot blander and more different than what it turned out to be. I first took the YMAP program in Grade 10 which was during the COVID lock down period. At that point, I was already socially isolated having to move from Toronto to Calgary. YMAP was what I needed to get out of that environment and encouraged meeting new people which led to making new friends. It really helped with my social anxiety and being able to have normal interactions with other people without being as awkward. Not only did it help with my social skills, but the program also taught a lot of useful and important information that will otherwise be useful in life later on!

Hue Sang Dang

I always thought that I had it the worst out of all my family members because as the eldest of an Asian family, I was committed to all my assignments and continuously revised my tests until late at night. As the eldest of an Asian family, I must prioritize education throughout my childhood and high school years, which includes achieving the highest possible grade and admission to a top university. It was not until recently that I realized the truth in this. Growing up hearing these stories of great injustices and misfortunes has truly influenced my long-term goals. I will go far because there is no excuse for not doing my best, given all I have been blessed with. When I had trouble learning English and felt like giving up on it, I remembered my mother and how

when she moved from China to Vietnam, no school welcomed a foreigner, so she had to buy newspaper and watch TV every single day to catch up with the language. When I felt like not wanting to continue my part-time job, I thought about my father, when at 14, he had to drop out of school and work as a full-time waiter because no one could afford his education. And when I wanted to quit badminton because I was tired, I remembered my grandfather and how no matter the above-the-knee amputation, if he stopped working, he risked not having enough food to feed his family. Choosing to study pharmacy is my way of honoring my family's sacrifices while pursuing a path that aligns with my values of care and empathy. They have spent most of their lives—and continue to spend them—protecting and supporting me to reach my goals. Now, pursuing a career in pharmacy allows me to protect them in return, not physically, but by helping to preserve their health and well-being, to be a guard for their health. I want to honor the sacrifices they have made by dedicating myself to a field that embodies care, empathy, and service.

Receiving this scholarship will make a significant difference in my pursuit of post-secondary education by reducing the financial burden on my parents. For me, the amount of the scholarship is equivalent to the weight on my parents' shoulders, so being offered this support means I have taken some of that weight off them.

Individuals who move to another country, where they're not familiar, either with the culture, the language, or the weather, would feel a sense of "lost," – the loss of family, relationships, and even the loss of their own identity. And for me, as an international student, I'd experienced the same process of loss when I first came to Canada, until I joined YMAP. Reflecting on my two years with YMAP, I realize how transformative this experience has been. YMAP wasn't just a place to spend time; it became a second home. As a student, I wasn't expecting to build any relationships other than those in my country. Yet, YMAP expanded my world. I made friends from all around the globe, including Europe, which I never travelled to but had the opportunity to learn so much from their diverse perspectives. Volunteering with YMAP has been particularly impactful. I had a chance to contribute to a program that aimed at ending homelessness, an issue that I've always cared about.

Do Ngoc Minh Nguyen

From my learning experience in high school, I realized I have a specific passion for subjects in science and especially math. I am now in my first year at the University of Toronto, planning to take a major in Statistics and Actuarial Science. This feels like the right decision for me as I can improve my math skills and practical applications in the world. My interest in mathematics was also influenced by my uncle, whom I admire for his genuine understanding of science subjects. Whenever I encounter a hard practice problem, he would be the one I reach out to for help. He was a former professor at a national university back in our country, his explanations helped me to have a comprehensive understanding and made me feel curious to tackle more complicated problem sets, which also contributed to my decision to study in a mathematical program.

Transitioning to university, moving out and living independently for the first time has been a significant learning experience. Financial management, in particular, has been a challenge that I need to overcome as I am responsible for budgeting and meeting my own needs. Although I have been fortunate to receive an

admission scholarship which has reduced some tuition costs, the remaining fee is still significant, not to mention the cost of rent.

In addition to my academic experience, my high school years were lightened up by participating in YMAP. It was more than a place for extracurriculars for me it was a place where I found a sense of belonging and community. As an international student, adapting to a new environment is not always easy, but YMAP provided a safe space along with other international students, where I not only reflect on my tradition but also learn about the diverse cultures around the world. YMAP was where I made new friends and learned about different cultures in the world. The weekly YMAP meetings were not only fun but also educational. We were given volunteer opportunities and worked on projects that allowed us to give back to the community. Through those experiences, I developed vital skills such as teamwork, leadership and communication.

Suhayb Sherif

I choose to study Data Science at the post-secondary school because the things that interest me include understanding data to come up with hidden patterns and insights. Data science is a field wherein my interests in mathematics, statistics, and computer science converge toward the capability to solve real-world problems. Fascinatingly, I see how data can be used to make informed decisions, predict future trends, and innovate solutions for societal benefit. The study of Data Science equips me with the technical skills and critical thinking ability to analyze complex data sets towards data-driven decision-making within the healthcare, finance, and technology sectors. The reason I want to pursue a career in Data Science is greatly influenced by my brother-in-law, Anas, who works in IT. He has been more of a mentor during my years at high school. Anas used to share his experiences and in-depth knowledge about the tech industry. The passion he showed in the field of technology and the capacity to use data-driven solutions in solving complex problems further motivated my interest in studying Data Science. Anas shared his strong base in theory and practice which inspired me to acquire skills in programming, statistics, and data analysis.

The Rotary Scholarship would make a great deal of difference in my ability to pursue post-secondary education in Data Science. Financially, the scholarship would cover the tuition fees and other study-related expenses, therefore allowing me to focus more on my studies rather than financial constraints. It would also provide me with the means to attend advanced workshops, internships, and research projects integral to my academic and professional growth.

My involvement with YMAP has been one of the most invaluable experiences that have helped me in my personal growth and well-being since high school. YMAP provided a support system in which I was able to be myself, share challenges encountered, and be around others who have experienced similar events. The sense of community was really important in helping me out during periods of time which I was stressed, especially the balance between academic pressures and my personal life. The mentorship and peer support within the program taught me effective ways to cope with such situations while at the same time equipping me with close friends and mentors who could always guide and advise. Also, YMAP put much emphasis on teamwork and collaboration-skills that have been life-changing to me. Through the experience of several group projects and activities, I learned how to effectively communicate, listen to others, and appreciate diversity.