Press Release 19 August 2020

Berkeley’s Center for African Studies renews Mastercard Foundation grant to support over 100 African students in degree programs

The Center for African Studies is pleased to announce a new phase of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of California, Berkeley. The Mastercard Foundation has confirmed a ten-year $26 million grant to support 108 master’s degree students from Sub-Saharan African countries who are academically talented and committed to transformative change on the continent. The Program will recruit widely across Sub-Saharan Africa and will encourage applications particularly from women, people with disabilities, and those who are refugees or displaced.

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is an initiative to develop Africa’s next generation of leaders by giving students, whose talent and promise exceed their financial resources, an opportunity to complete their education. Through the MCF Program, Scholars receive holistic student support, including comprehensive scholarships, leadership development, and access to internships and industry-driven career services. The Scholars Program is a growing commitment, and, to date, the Program has committed over USD $1.2 billion to supporting the education and leadership development of more than 40,000 young people. Since 2012, the MCF Scholars Program has supported over 120 students from Sub-Saharan African countries to pursue bachelor’s and master’s degrees at UC Berkeley.

The MCF Scholars Program is aligned with the Foundation’s Young Africa Works strategy and with Berkeley’s commitment to excellence for positive global contributions. In this new phase of our partnership, we will enhance connections between innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystems at Berkeley and those on the African continent. In addition to receiving high-quality education, Scholars will receive specialized training in leadership and entrepreneurship, and participate in program connecting them to the innovative ecosystems of the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley.

Collaboration with African universities is an important aspect of the Scholars Program. We anticipate working with at least three different African partners over the course of the grant to create opportunities to share Berkeley’s core competencies of innovation, entrepreneurship and research with partner institutions in the Scholars Program network.

Through the grant, the Center for African Studies will offer catalytic seed grants to Berkeley faculty to encourage research collaborations with scholars at African institutions on projects that tackle critical needs and issues relevant to the Young Africa Works strategy. These funded projects will also offer MCF Scholars with career-enhancing research opportunities. The initiative will include a local Advisory Board to assist with creating and enhancing links between the Bay Area and African innovation hubs. Another element is an Alumni Impact Fund that will leverage the creativity within our own MCF Scholars community.

For more information, visit our website https://mcfscholarsprogram.berkeley.edu/ or contact the UC Berkeley Mastercard Foundation Scholar Program staff at mcfs.programinfo@berkeley.edu.