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United Student Achievers Program (USAP)

Rebecca Zeigler Mano founded USAP in 1999, while working at the US embassy in Harare, in response to a strong belief that there are many determined and talented, economically-disadvantaged students who only lack financial resources and access to information to better their educational futures. More than 15 years later, over 350 Zimbabwean USAP students have excelled as students at America’s top colleges and universities, and many have returned home to make an impact, are continuing graduate studies or are working all over the globe. The program was replicated to EducationUSA offices internationally as far as Nigeria to Brazil, Ecuador to Latvia, Malawi to Mongolia. In January 2016, the United Student Achievers Program migrated to Education Matters, a non-profit college access organization in Zimbabwe and currently has helped to launch thriving new cohorts in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia in addition to continuing to support long-standing USAP Mongolia.

The USAP Model

USAP works closely with students during their final year of high school and before college through a year-long program of bootcamps and workshops designed to empower and assist them through the application and orientation process. USAP builds students’ confidence and facilitates bonding as a supportive family who share similar backgrounds and will be facing parallel challenges while studying abroad. The current USAP class consists of 42 incredible students selected from a pool of over 900 applicants from Zimbabwe as well as our first cohort of 15 Zambian students.

USAP students are selected for embodying all of the following qualities:

- Academic excellence
- Demonstrated leadership potential
- Ethos of giving to the community
- Economic disadvantage



Lifelong Engagement

USAP students continue their engagement with the “USAP family” during college and after graduation. A voluntary committee of USAPers convenes an annual USAP Forum, where generations of USAPers gather to tackle topical issues and establish and strengthen cross-generational bonds. This year’s forum was held in Zimbabwe under the theme “Coming Home”; USAPers travelled from as far as the United States, South Africa, Malawi and Uganda to attend. USAP students return to their home countries after either their sophomore or junior year of college to be part of a two month internship Career Connect program and build their professional networks. USAP students have active social media groups, fundraise to support application and preparation costs for future USAP students and provide intensive support for one another.

For Colleges and Universities

USAP provides pre-screened, well-rounded applicants, focused, committed and involved students. USAP students continue to excel in impressive measure, earning prestigious scholarship and fellowships, including two Rhodes Scholars named in 2017, MD and PhD degrees earned and successful entrepreneurial initiatives started in their home countries. At Education Matters, we strongly believe that USAP students hold the keys to the future development of their countries and communities and have the potential to make impressive positive impacts in their chosen careers.

The 2016 USAP cohort earned US \$5.8 in scholarships and are currently studying at:

- Canada - University of British Columbia and University of Toronto
- Ghana - Ashesi University (2)
- Rwanda - African Leadership University (3)
- United States - Brown, Bryn Mawr, Cottey, Davidson, Harvard, Kalamazoo, Lafayette, Lander, Lehigh, Pomona, Reed, Sewanee, Smith, University of Pennsylvania (3), University of Southern Indiana, Wellesley, Whitworth University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Zimbabwe - University of Zimbabwe School of Medicine (3)



USAP Zambia and Zimbabwe students discuss their role in possible solutions to problems they identify in their home communities at the 2017 USAP bootcamp. USAP envisions students leveraging their international education to create positive impact in their home communities and countries.