

LEWERMARK MAKE YOUR MARK 2021 SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

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Scholarship Question: "How will living through a pandemic while gaining an international education help me make a difference in the world"

Mankind has never faced a pandemic as severe and damaging as COVID-19 for the past a hundred years. Excluding the undesirable wars and terrorist attacks, the only healthcare crisis to even be at a comparable level with COVID-19 in the last century was the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, which caused tens of millions of deaths worldwide. You, the readers of this essay, and I, and everyone who survives 2020, we are living through history.

In early March 2020, when the disease began to deteriorate on the global scale, hardly anyone knew what to do and what to avoid doing. The anxiety and confusion spread at a speedier pace than the virus, as world leaders and global health organizations did not have any prepared guidelines for such a contagious virus. At the local and domestic level, we did not know when to wear masks, whether we should go to work or religious sessions, and whether we should visit our loved ones. The domino effect of anxiety and the failure of governments to prepare for a fight against a tiny virus should ring an urgent alarm about the current global health system. We have to get ready now for even deadlier pandemics and other dangerous diseases in the future.

However, getting ready does not translate into being anxious, but rather taking actions to deal with potential medical threats. Everyone should do their part to fight our common enemies, not only respiratory viruses, but also cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases. As a Chemical Engineering student, I am taking my time to gain as much knowledge as possible from my math, science and engineering classes, as well as communication skills from social-behavioral and humanities courses to become a professional engineer. My career goal is to work in the pharmaceutical industry and develop better treatments for current diseases, especially cancer. Through a career in pharmaceuticals, I can get my hands on the process of manufacturing drugs and treatments and can help patients and their families directly. I will also try to reduce the

product cost and eventually lower the retail price, so that lower-income people can have access to the necessary medicines.

Having an opportunity to study in the United States is a privilege that so many college students take for granted. But as an international student, I am truly grateful to be in America and benefit from a world-class education. We have chemical engineering programs all around the world, but none of those is as good as their American counterparts. I acknowledge that the quality of education depends significantly on the effort of the student, but American colleges and universities unequivocally provide students with so many resources, a fair grading system, and most importantly freedom to express their ideas. Studying in America right now amidst the COVID-19 pandemic reminds me how lucky I am compared to other college students back home and in other countries. This is the place where people come and make global impacts, and for me, it is the impact on how to treat and prevent diseases.

I am making a difference to the future of our healthcare system by concentrating on my engineering and science studies, helping other students at my college, and participating in academic organizations. I believe that should such a pandemic occur again in the future, we must and we can do better than what we are doing now. I will also raise more awareness among our communities about deadly diseases such as cancer, AIDS, etc. People do know that they exist, but few of them know how negatively it affects the patients and their families. Consequently, pharmaceutical companies do not focus on improving their process of drug production and lowering the price. Societal awareness will make them do their best to find better treatments and vaccines, and take the initiative to conduct research on deadly contagious diseases such as COVID-19.

Living through this pandemic, I have learned a lot of life lessons, skills, and knowledge. I appreciate the opportunity to study in the United States, and thanks to this quality education, I know I will make a difference in the engineering and healthcare fields.