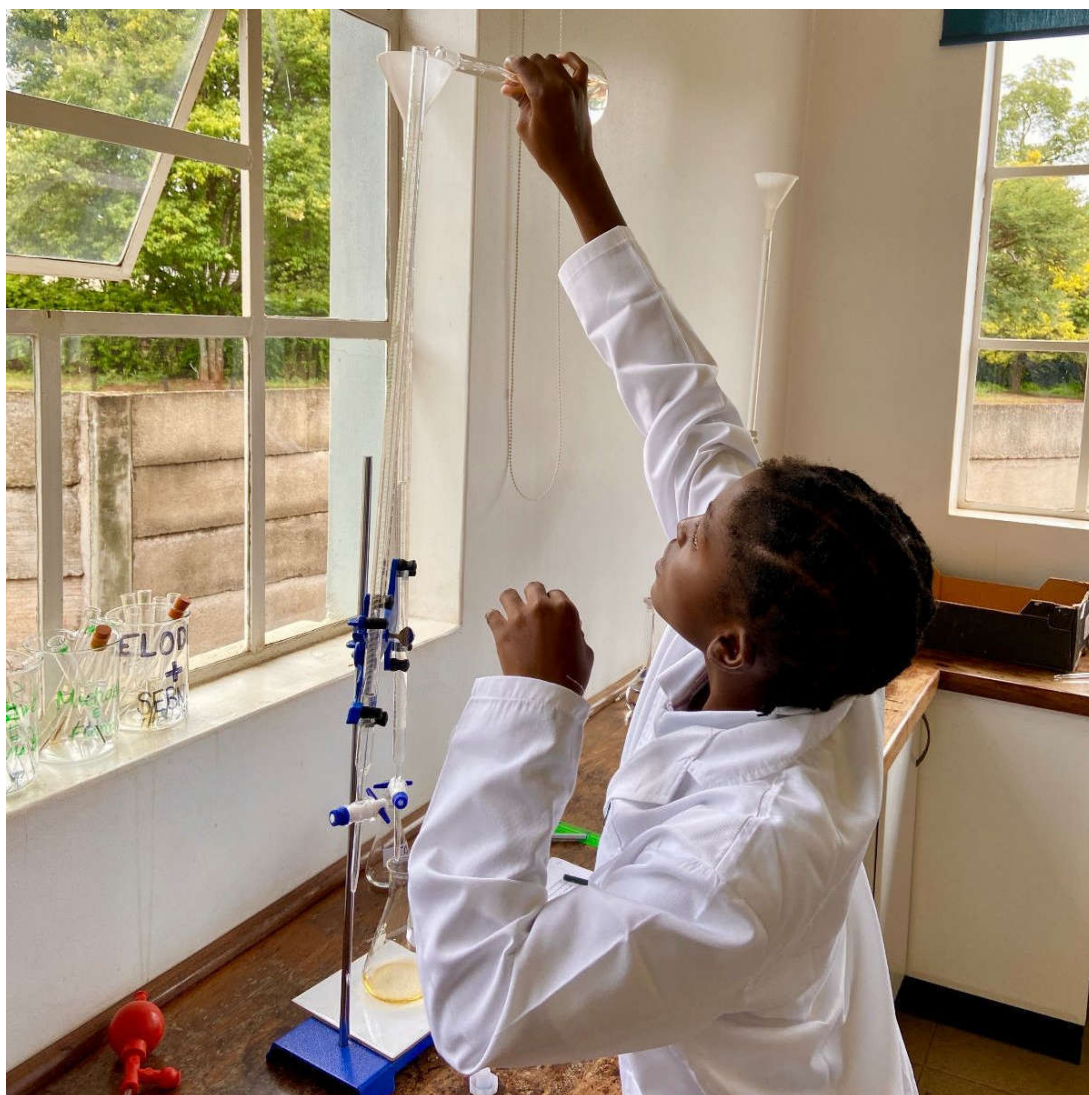




Welcome to the USAP Community School newsletter.

As we open a new school to educate the future leaders of Zimbabwe, we are excited to share this journey with you. Thank you for joining us, and we look forward to updating you on all that happens in our community.



Daisy Tsenesa (Class of 2021) works on a titration practical in chemistry class.

USAP Community School finishes its first term

It is hard to believe that we have already finished our first term at USAP Community School. So much has happened on campus since January – and so much has changed in the world, especially with the onset of the Coronavirus. We'll get to all of that below, but let's first take a step back and remember how we got here.

The beginning

Twenty years ago, Rebecca Zeigler Mano founded the United Students Achievers Program, or USAP. Originally working out of the US Embassy, Rebecca began to identify high-achieving, low-income students across Zimbabwe and helped them use their gap year to apply to top universities in the United States. Over the next fifteen years, the success snowballed. Over 400 students earned scholarships to top universities across the world, including going on to earn MDs, MBAs, PhDs, Rhodes and Gates-Cambridge Scholarships, and then used their education to start successful businesses and organizations. USAP's success inspired branches in other countries, and chapters developed in Mongolia, Brazil, Zambia, and Uganda, among others. And USAP Zimbabwe also developed, adding a Student Athlete Cohort for aspiring Zimbabwean student athletes, and Zimbabwe Career Connect, to help Zimbabwean students in university return during the summer and explore their career path through internships.

In 2016, the program migrated to a non-profit named Education Matters, where Rebecca began to plan the school. Particularly involved in shaping the vision and making it a reality were co-founders Collence Nyazenga, a USAP alum and staff member at Education Matters, and James Linville, then head of Abaarso School in Somaliland. Together, Rebecca, Collence and James – with the support of countless others in the form of conversations, donations, expertise and simple hard work – launched the school in January 2020.

Embedding values of integrity, equality, service and curiosity

Though USAP had been successful at creating community and helping students earn scholarships to continue their education abroad, we are now building a program with an even greater emphasis on applying one's education to solving challenges at home, where top students can find their voice, grow, and learn together, in an academic environment that is more rigorous, creative, and student-centered than the schools they are used to in Zimbabwe. Embedded in Quaker values of integrity, equality, service and stewardship, our boarding school hosts 45 students chosen from across the country. They are chosen to meet the USAP criteria of academic excellence, demonstrated leadership potential, an ethos of giving, and economic disadvantage.

Building a holistic learning environment

Our students spent the first term adjusting to the difficult Cambridge A-levels curriculum. Each student takes three A-level science classes: Math, Chemistry,

and one of either Biology or Physics. In addition, a Humanities class grounds them in themes like justice and power, while sharpening their reading, writing and speaking skills. The students also take a Reasoning class to build their critical thinking, along with a Research Methods class and an introductory computers course.

We are committed to a well-rounded education, so building our extracurriculars was also an important focus of Term 1. Clubs and sports such as debate, chess, acapella, media, archery and cross country help the students develop talent outside of their academic work. A campus work program ensures that all students and faculty care for the community together by washing the dishes, sweeping the floors, taking out the trash, cleaning the classrooms, and filling water stations each day. Most students found it quite a shock to be doing dishes alongside their teachers each night! But the only way that this school is possible is with each person giving what they can - we firmly believe that.

Our journey together

On that note, as we close a successful first term, we thank everyone who has made the opening of this school possible. Whether you gave us an idea, made a donation, hosted a USAP alum while they were abroad, came to speak to our students, or admitted a USAP student into your university - we are so grateful for your support, and appreciate it more than ever in these difficult times.

Much work lies ahead of us. We have opened at a temporary leased location this year, while we build our permanent campus, for which we continue to fundraise. More immediately, we face the challenge - as do so many others around the world - of continuing to educate our students despite disruptions caused by the spread of the Coronavirus. Please keep reading below for updates on this, as well as a spotlight on our Junior Faculty and the exciting college acceptances that they just received.

We appreciate your support now, more than ever. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Sincerely,
The USAP Community School team





From left: Thembalami Dube, Einstein Nhara, Brandon Mukadziwashe, Isabel Masawi and Shyline Bajaba

Spotlight: Junior Faculty members accepted to top universities

Central to the USAP Community School are our dynamic Junior Faculty members. Having finished their high school, they are working with us in their gap year before they attend university.

This year, we have five Junior Faculty members. Thembalami Dube, Isabel Masawi, Einstein Nhara and Brandon Mukadziwashe are all USAP alums. Our fifth, Shyline Bajaba, worked with Education Matters as an alum of the Yale Young African Scholars Program (YYAS) and the Makomborero Trust.

Each junior faculty member works as a teaching assistant for one of our classes, and also as a resident assistant in the dorms. Outside of class, they coach sports, supervise clubs, hold office hours and review sessions, and help out in all of the many ways that make our school community possible. They are also all taking an online, college-level seminar class through Pioneer Academics.

They have also been working on preparing for college. Now that admissions season is finishing, each of them has settled on a university destination for next year. We are excited to report that they will be attending the following schools:

Brandon - Tufts University, USA

Einstein - Davidson College, USA

Isabel - Agnes Scott College, USA

Shyline - Jacobs University, Germany

Thembalami - Swarthmore College, USA

Congratulations to these five impressive young men and women. We look forward to working with them for the next few months, and then following their continued success as they transition to the college chapter of their lives.



The USAP Community School Class of 2021 during orientation.

Our response to the global Coronavirus crisis

Like nearly everyone else across the world, we have been deeply affected by the spread of COVID-19. Last week, following a Presidential order to close schools across Zimbabwe, we ended our first term a week early. Our students now return home to the challenge of staying on track with their Cambridge A-levels education, despite uncertainty about when schools will reopen and no access to internet.

Distance learning...without internet

As many schools make commendable efforts to shift education online using video conferencing technology such as Zoom, this is not an option for us because of lack of connectivity for our students. Instead, we armed our students with several library books as well as Amazon Fire tablets, loaded with several months' worth of material in each of their subjects and pdfs of their textbooks. We are using WhatsApp chat groups to maintain a semblance of our unique school community, and to monitor their academic progress and hold virtual 'office hours', giving those who live far from any source of electricity solar lamps and chargers. Though the obstacles are high, we feel optimistic that the strength of our community and the dedication of our teachers and students can see us through these difficult times.

Students supporting their communities in a COVID-19 world

As part of their Research Methods class, our students are all engaged in service learning projects, doing what they can to be part of the solution while at home. Two of them joined with USAP alum who are public health graduate students and practitioners to initiate WhatsApp groups, which are approaching 750 members across the country, to spread awareness about the Coronavirus in local Zimbabwean languages Shona and Ndebele. Three students undertook an

extensive COVID19 awareness camp in Tongogara Refugee Camp. Others are working on projects to bring clean water to their village, or train those around them in how to use worm compost for growing plants. The list goes on. It is heartening to see them so determined to contribute to improving the lives of those around them, especially in these difficult times.



Help us build the USAP Community School

We are continuing to push toward our goal of raising \$2.5M required to build our full campus and fund the first two years of operating costs. If you are interested in partnering with us to invest in the future leaders of Zimbabwe, please click below to donate, or contact Rebecca Zeigler Mano at rebecca@edmattersafrica.org.

[Donate](#)



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