

Scholars Program In Brief:

- The Scholars Program is a highly-selective, 18-month gap year program focused primarily on **peace-building** and **educational access**
- Based in Bujumbura, **Burundi**
- To date has worked with 98 Burundian students
- Current cohort is the Tujenge Scholars Class of 2021
- Member of **HALI Access Network** (www.haliaccess.org) and **International ACAC**
- All courses are **taught in English**
- Within the Burundian context, students come from diverse low-income backgrounds
- Courses are largely seminar-based and emphasize critical thinking and university-level coursework
- Teaching staff hold degrees from Harvard University, **University of Buea**, **University of Southern California**, and **Yale University** (*bold for MA/PhD*)
- More info available at scholars.tujenge.org/unis

Updates for COVID-19 Response:

- Cohort 4 started in January 2020; classes were conducted virtually (via WhatsApp) from March and switched to hybrid model in January 2021
- Key challenges faced by students studying remotely:
 - Lack of reliable data connection
 - Closest power supply to charge electronics may be miles (kms) away
 - Family expectations to help with housework
- Remote learning has presented opportunities to supplement typical coursework with MOOCs and faculty located elsewhere in the world
- Admissions timeline shifted so that students would not apply for universities until fall 2021
- Given COVID constraints (both with test safety concerns and with preparation opportunities), Tujenge Scholars are not taking SAT or TOEFL exams this year, as the TOEFL iBT is unavailable in Burundi
- All Tujenge Scholars are taking Duolingo exams

Tujenge Scholars Cohort 3 Facts:

- 30 scholars selected from an applicant pool of 388
- Scholars are split 50%-50% female-male
- Scholars come from 12 of Burundi's 18 Provinces
- All scholars studied in the Burundian national system
- 53% of scholars are 1st generation college students
- The average score for scholars on the Burundian national exit exam was in the 99.6th percentile
- The median graduating class rank of scholars is 1st
- Scholars started studies in January 2020 and graduated in June 2021
- Class profile: scholars.tujenge.org/admission-aid/class-of-2021-profile/

Foundation Background:

Tujenge Africa Foundation launched in 2015 from the belief that access to quality education—grounded in peace-building, inter-ethnic reconciliation, and civic leadership—could single-handedly change the trajectory of post-conflict states in Africa. Founded by visionaries Wendell Adjetey and Etienne Mashuli, two men who made the improbable journey from civil war, genocide, military dictatorships and abject poverty in sub-Saharan Africa to Ivy League degree programs, Tujenge Africa Foundation is expanding the opportunities for academically gifted and disadvantaged youth.

The Foundation currently operates in Burundi, where a history of civil war, genocide, bloodshed, and international neglect has hindered economic growth, ultimately driving its status as the poorest country in the world.

In addition to its flagship Tujenge Scholars Program, Tujenge initiatives include a primary school assistance fund for the highly-marginalized Batwa group, and still-nascent innovation lab and research institute projects.

University Admission Statistics from Cohorts 1-3:

- 100% have gone on to pursue undergraduate studies
- 27 scholars are studying abroad in 11 countries
- Over \$3.2M in university grants accepted
- 10 Mastercard Foundation Scholars
- Median SAT (Cohort 3): 1280 / 570 EBRW / 700 Math
Median TOEFL (Cohort 3): 23.5 R / 21 L / 21.5 W
Median Duolingo (Cohort 3): 105
(*N=17 for SAT, Duolingo; N=16 for TOEFL*)

University Matriculations (2020 and 2021):

Burundi	Russia
<i>Université du Burundi</i>	<i>Belgorod State University</i>
China (Hong Kong)	United States
<i>City University of Hong Kong</i>	<i>Amherst College</i>
France	<i>Berea College</i>
<i>Sorbonne Université</i>	<i>Carleton College</i>
Ghana	<i>Cornell University</i>
<i>Academic City</i>	<i>Dartmouth College</i>
<i>Ashesi University</i>	<i>Hamilton College</i>
Kenya	<i>Lafayette College</i>
<i>United States International U.</i>	<i>Marist College</i>
Lebanon	<i>Northwestern University</i>
<i>American University of Beirut</i>	<i>Smith College</i>
Mauritius/Rwanda	<i>Swarthmore College</i>
<i>Africa Leadership University</i>	<i>Trinity College</i>
Morocco	<i>Vassar College</i>
<i>Al Akhawayn University</i>	Zimbabwe
	<i>Africa University</i>

Admission Process for Scholars Program:

- Selection is holistic. Criteria: academic excellence, leadership and community engagement, innovation, creativity, vision, tenacity, grit, English proficiency.
- Scholars are selected to create a diverse microcosm of Burundian society in the classroom.
- Initial written application includes biographical info, high school transcripts, national exam results, 3 essays in English, and a letter of recommendation.
- 50 finalists are selected for a 3-day event that includes 15-minute interviews with a faculty panel, an English and math exam, and a dinner event.

Academic Program:

The Scholars Program curriculum is designed to balance five different academic objectives (in order of priority):

- Peacebuilding through dialogue
- Redefining ethical leadership
- Establishing English proficiency
- University preparation and critical thinking skills
- University access

The 18-month curriculum is split into four terms:

Term 1: Foundation (16 weeks)

English literacy with a focus on reading skills
Math fundamentals (Algebra through pre-Calculus)
Computer literacy and typing skills
Seminar: Introduction to African Literature

Term 2: Exploration (10 weeks)

English literacy with a focus on writing skills
Fundamentals of Scientific Inquiry: Human Evolutionary History
Seminar: Burundi in the World
†Seminar: Introduction to the Liberal Arts
†Seminar: Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region

Term 3: Investigation (16 weeks)

English literacy
Lab-based inquiry: Climate, Environment, and Human Societies
Seminar: Activism and Moral Action

Term 4: Preparation (16 weeks)

English literacy: Reading and Writing for College
Calculus I: Differential Calculus
Seminar: Burundi in the World
State of the Art: Survey of Modern Scientific Inquiry
University transition coaching

†Class taught by visiting university instructor



Country and School Context:

- **Primary & secondary school is conducted in French.**
- Primary: 6 yrs; lower secondary: 4 yrs; upper secondary: 3 yrs
- English is taught as a foreign language in secondary school by largely unqualified teachers.
- Primary school completion rate is 60% of population; secondary completion is 30%; just **5% start university.**
- “Official” exchange rates for Burundi’s currency significantly over-represent purchasing power. As of Oct. 2021, the “real” rate was apx. BIF 3,500 to \$1.00.

Grades and Test Results in Burundi:

School Grades

- Students are graded on a year-by-year percentage-based system; no multi-year GPA is calculated.
- Equivalent grades in Burundi are much lower than in the US; the 2018 median grade was **approx. 56%**.
- Middle 50% in 2018 was approx. 52%-61%.
- Anything less than 55% is considered failing and requires repetition of an exam or the entire grade; typical class repetition rates are between 5% and 10%.
- Scores higher than 70% are considered stellar.
- Scores between different specialization tracks should be considered equivalent.

Class Rank

- Class rank is assigned within each specialization track, with somewhere between 10 and 50 students per track per school.
- A select number of schools in Burundi (both public and private) function as “elite institutions” with admission based on test results. In these cases, class rank may not be a useful metric.

National Exam

- A state-administered exam, tailored to each specialization track, is taken by all graduating students following completion of their final year of secondary school.
- Scores higher than 50% are considered “passing” and qualify a student to study at national universities.

2019 Combined National Exam/Secondary Results:

EXAM SCORE	PERCENTILE				
	BCST	Economics	Languages	MPT	SSH
50%	72.5 th	58.0 th	60.6 th	45.2 nd	68.5 th
55%	83.7 th	74.8 th	77.6 th	62.1 st	86.3 rd
60%	91.2 nd	85.8 th	88.5 th	75.0 th	94.7 th
65%	95.6 th	93.5 th	95.2 nd	84.1 st	98.5 th
70%	98.3 rd	97.5 th	98.4 th	91.2 nd	99.7 th
75%	99.3 rd	99.5 th	99.5 th	96.4 th	99.9 th
80%	99.8 th	99.9 th	99.9 th	98.5 th	
85%	99.9 th			99.5 th	
90%	99.99 th				

More in-depth information about the Burundian school system and educational context can be found in the HALI Access Network Country Profile for Burundi (haliaccess.org/country-profiles/).