LETTER OF THE DAY

Dear Mr President, I made it...

My name is Paul Oduya from Mbale District, and I am writing to you today with immense happiness and profound gratitude, on the cusp of a significant milestone. I am set to graduate from Makerere University with a Bachelor of Science in Water and Irrigation Engineering on February 24, 2026.

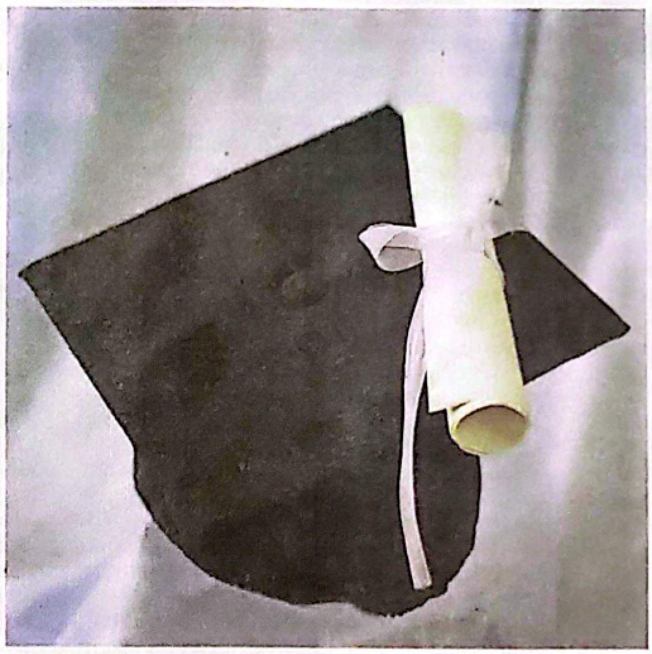
My entire academic journey, from primary to university, has been a direct result of the invaluable support of government schools and scholarships.

This journey has not only transformed my life but also stands as a living testament to Uganda's potential, making me a passionate advocate for countless others whose dreams still hang in the balance across our country.

I was a child in Primary Two when I lost my mother, who was the sole breadwinner for our family. It was through the unwavering care of my aunties, Cissy and Nakintu, that I found the support needed to navigate those early, difficult years. Yet, through resilience and the opportunities provided, I persevered.

I wish to express my profound gratitude for the invaluable educational opportunities I have received throughout my academic journey. From Universal Primary Education (UPE) at Maluku Primary School and Universal Secondary Education (USE) at Mbale Secondary School – both government schools that offer a vital lifeline of hope for orphans and the poor in our society – to my university studies at Makerere, which were made possible through a district quota scholarship, I have been a direct beneficiary of government-supported education.

While UPE was a crucial initiative, I recall the reality of school fees, around Shs10,400, along



with other essential contributions like brooms and toilet paper. These expenses, though seemingly small, presented significant hurdles at times. Despite these challenges, we never had to spend a term at home, a testament to the enduring hope for education. These opportunities, irrespective of the perceived prestige of the institutions, have enabled me to compete and succeed on par with peers who attended more expensive schools or studied abroad.

My primary motivation for this letter is to advocate for many others who, like me, are eager for educational opportunities but do not receive the chance. I was incredibly fortunate to be one of just eight beneficiaries from Mbale District to receive a district quota scholarship.

While national merit scholarships are commendable for recognising top academic talent, they often benefit students from expensive private schools who may already have significant financial resources.

This means they sometimes go to individuals who can afford the university tuition regardless, whereas the district quota system specifically targets and supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds who genuinely need financial assistance to access higher education.

Imagine the exponential growth we could foster if these district quota slots were expanded. If the average were to increase from seven to a minimum of 30 students per district, we would not merely be adding numbers; we would be multiplying hope, talent, and future contributions to our nation.

Each additional slot represents another Oduya Paul, another bright mind ready to solve challenges and innovate for Uganda. These empowered individuals, molded by our public education system, possess an inherent resilience and resourcefulness that will undoubtedly serve our country well, regardless of the immediate employment landscape.

My own experience at Makerere further solidifies this; I was honoured to serve as a guild leader on the Students' Parliament (90th guild house), elected by students from diverse backgrounds. This role unequivocally demonstrated how access to quality education, particularly at university, fosters equality and empowers individuals from all walks of life to rise to leadership.

Furthermore, I urge your government to consider enhancing the financial facilitation provided to university students on government scholarships. The current allowance of Shs500,000 for a four-month period is inadequate. This translates to a daily expenditure of approximately Shs4,000 which is often barely sufficient for a single meal. This leaves students struggling to cover basic needs, scholastic materials, and essential healthcare. Such financial strain can regrettably lead to serious health issues, such as ulcers, and tragically compel some students to pursue alternative means of income, which can jeopardise their academic completion.

I am confident that a thoughtful increase in this facilitation could significantly alleviate these burdens and ensure more students successfully complete their courses.

Thank you for your valuable time and consideration of these critical matters that shape the future of our nation's youth.

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