

I have two fundamental questions I need to answer. First, after Caltech will I go to medical school or graduate school for mechanical engineering? Secondly, will I work in the third world or stay in the United States after my education is completed? This summer I plan to answer both questions. Specifically, I would use the Studenski Award to decide if I am suited to work in the third world.

This summer I will be volunteering for Project Peanut Butter in Blantyre, Malawi. Project Peanut Butter is an NGO run by Dr. Mark Manary, father of a current Caltech student. Dr. Manary is a world expert in child malnutrition. He has developed a home-therapy and better foods that treat malnutrition. His treatment is sustainable and widely available. His therapy has increased the rate of recovery from severe acute malnutrition from approximately 30% to 95%. I will be volunteering with him, travelling throughout the country to various clinics distributing food to the children and monitoring their progress. In exchange for my work, Dr. Manary will provide room and board, and transportation to and from the airport. The cost to me, then, is the cost of airfare to Malawi. I propose that the Studenski Award cover the cost of my airfare.

I feel compelled to help raise quality of life in the third world, but thus far my compassion and desire to help have been ideas and are not grounded in experience. I am both excited and apprehensive to live and work in the third world this summer. I am hugely excited to finally get out of the United States, as I've been wanting to travel to Africa since middle school when my friends and I raised money to build and staff a school in Masai Mara, Kenya. It's been important to me since then to live with the underserved in Africa, but I am also apprehensive about the working and living conditions I will find there. Malawi is among of poorest of African nations, with few resources and an agriculture-based economy. There are significant drawbacks to living in Malawi, but I feel that the ability to serve so practically would outweigh those.

However, I fear that I will not be as suited to the work in the third world as I hope I am. My fear stems from a recent time when I thought I wanted to do something and found that I am better suited to related, but different work. Allow me to explain, I arrived at Caltech and almost immediately began working a Skid Row Ministry through my church. Initially, I was very excited to be there downtown, making and keeping friends, providing food, clothing, and love to dear people that are often ignored or abused. But after about nine months it became clear to me that the work I was originally enthusiastic about doing was not for me. Around the time I questioned why I was helping on Skid Row I realized that I had initially wanted to work for Elizabeth House, a home in Pasadena for homeless, pregnant women. So I started working for Elizabeth House instead. The work at Elizabeth House fits my style much better because I work with the same women and staff, unlike unpredictable Skid Row. Also, I have very specific tasks assigned to me at Elizabeth House, where as street ministry is far more nebulous. For reasons like these it became clear to me that I am better suited for work in at Elizabeth House than on Skid Row.

I desire to travel to Malawi for work this summer so that I can experience life there. Being there in person will allow me to test out the waters in the same way I did with Skid Row ministry versus Elizabeth House. I think I am suited to work in the third world. What I have researched from friends and associates that have lived and worked in various poverty stricken countries is that work is seven days a week, the waking hours are shifted back to about 5 am to 7 pm, the culture and food are vastly different, there is a language barrier, there is little opportunity to come back to the U.S., and the pay is most often meager. I need to know if these are conditions I can happily accept. I assume that I can keep up the work pace, given that Caltech is often a seven-day workweek. I have never lived outside of the United States, so I have never experienced a language barrier. I think being away from my family

would be bearable as I live in California and my family is all on the East coast, but I realize the distance will feel different in Africa than in Pasadena. I could try to guess how I will react to the differences in life between the third world and here, but I cannot really gauge my reaction to without physically going through the motions.

Living in Malawi will also shed some light on whether I want to go to medical school or graduate school. I will be travelling everyday with Project Peanut Butter, providing me with a wide cross-section of life in Malawi. I will have the opportunity to ask around and evaluate for myself if an engineering degree or an M.D. would better suit the people there.

Additionally, I'd get the opportunity to see how aid organizations function on the ground. I will have at least some opportunity to see if doctors in Malawi are with groups like Doctors without borders or partners in health, in hospitals, clinics, as missionaries, etc. Whether there are building projects that bring in engineers from the U.S., what kind of work an engineer would be doing in Malawi. Beginning to understand the dynamic of these professions within life in Malawi will help me ground my decision making process in reality rather than what I imagine working conditions are like in the third world.

The Studenski Award is integral to my ability to decide whether or not I am suited to work in the third world after college, and also influential on my decision between medical school and graduate school for mechanical engineering.

## Budget

**Room, Board and transportation to and from Blantyre Airport:** \$0  
Project Peanut Butter will cover these costs entirely.

### Roundtrip airfare to Blantyre, Malawi:

The following pages show quotes from three travel sites showing the average price for a flight from Los Angeles to Blantyre. Prices on airfare will tend to increase, thus I expect these 'average' prices quoted here to become the lower bound of airfare prices in the coming weeks.

Dates of travel: August 2, 2010 - September 25, 2010

Round trip airfare: ~ \$4,000

### Two nights at a hotel:

The distance is such that travel will be over the course of two days, so most flight schedules will have me spending a night both on the way to and from Blantyre. I will either be staying over in New York or Johannesburg. As the city is not yet determined I simply averaged prices from both cities.

Hotel: (~ \$130 per night) ~ \$260

Food: ~ \$30

Transportation (if a taxi is required): ~ \$60

Total: ~ \$350

**Total Cost: ~ \$4,350**

As the cost of the trip exceeds the cost of the Award, I am asking for the full \$4,000 of funding.

Current airfare costs from several online vendors:

Vayama.com:

<b>Airline:</b>	<b>Cities:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
United Airlines	Los Angeles to New York	August 2
South African Airways	New York to Johannesburg	August 3- 4
South African Airways	Johannesburg to Blantyre	August 4
Air Malawi	Blantyre to Johannesburg	September 24
South African Airways	Johannesburg to Washington	September 25
United Airways	Washington to Los Angeles	September 25

**Round trip fare: \$3,947.58**

Through Airfare.com:

Emirates	Los Angeles to Dubai	August 2-3
Emirates	Dubai to Dar Es Salaam	August 4
Air Malawi	Dar Es Salaam to Blantyre	August 5
Air Malawi	Blantyre to Johannesburg	September 24
Emirates	Johannesburg to Dubai	September 24-25
Emirates	Dubai to Los Angeles	September 25

**Round trip fare: \$ 3,814.70**

Through onetravel.com:

United Airlines	Los Angeles to New York	August 2-3
South African Airways	New York to Johannesburg	August 3-4
South African Airways	Johannesburg to Blantyre	August 4
Air Malawi	Blantyre to Johannesburg	September 24
Delta Air Lines	Johannesburg to Atlanta	September 24-25
Delta Air Lines	Atlanta to Los Angeles	September 25

**Round Trip fare: \$4,784.11**