



First of all, I'd like to tell you how incredibly honoured I am to write to you today. It's not often that students like me have the chance to talk directly to people like you and I hope that by sharing my story with you today you will be inspired to change someone's life, the same way my life has been changed.

Today I am studying to become a social worker but growing up I never even entertained the thought of going to university. You see, I had a really rough upbringing and when I say rough, it's probably the worst thing you can imagine. I was left without even a trace of self-worth.

Eight years ago I was diagnosed with cancer. Thankfully I survived, but then not long afterwards I was involved in a serious car accident and as a result I lost my right arm. I'm sure you can understand why I found myself in a dark place. But, when I climbed out of it I realised that all I wanted to do was to help others.

I met an incredible amputee specialist and as he learned about my life, he saw something in me. He encouraged me to explore becoming a social worker so that I could help other amputees overcome their own challenges. For the first time, someone actually believed in me and it changed my world.

When I decided to enrol at UniSA as a mature student, fortunately, my two children were very supportive. However, financially getting through university was another hurdle so I took a chance and applied for a scholarship. I cannot express to you how grateful I was to find out that my scholarship application was successful. I felt that I was going to struggle academically and that my disability would mean I took longer to complete assignments, so this scholarship meant I could dedicate more time to studying. Not only this, but I saw it as a sign that a generous person believed in me and I was determined not to let them down.

It feels silly admitting this to you now, but I was so convinced that I would fail that for two years I never even looked at my grades. All of my life I'd believed that I was

worthless so can you imagine how I felt when one day after class my lecturer asked me to review my assignment with them? They handed me back my marked essay with the words 'High Distinction' jumping off the page! The next day the lecturer announced to the class that they had just awarded their first High Distinction for the year and I was beaming; I had never felt so proud.

I mentioned to you earlier that I had enrolled in social work with the goal of helping other amputees during a challenging time in their lives, but my focus has since shifted to a greater aim. Only hours before my mum passed away, she told me that I am Aboriginal. I am left with hundreds of questions about my history and identity that will never be answered, but this revelation now drives me to inspire young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to reach their potential.

I know that the hardships I have faced and overcome will enable me to encourage others who may be experiencing their own struggles in life. If I can beat my circumstances, others can too through hard-work, support and education.

I'll be direct with you - I'm hoping you will read my story and think it might be a good idea to help other students like me. There are many students at the University of South Australia, each with so much to offer, who need a little extra help to achieve their goals. You and I both know what a difference education makes, so I'm hoping you will choose to believe in a student the same way others believed in me by donating to UniSA's scholarship fund. I promise you that every single dollar has the potential to transform a life.

I'm sure you will be pleased to hear that my future is looking up - I have even been approached by a couple of organisations with some job possibilities for when I graduate. I can only accept one position so my first role will be as a social worker, supporting young Aboriginal children in the outer-northern areas of Adelaide. I know that if I can help one, I can help many.

Please wish me well on the next chapter of my life which I just know is going to be so much brighter than I ever imagined.

Best wishes,

Michelle

Bachelor of Social Work student  
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