

Manulife Life Lessons Scholarship Program – Salma’s Story

Transcript

Hi, my name is Salma Gohary. I'm a grade 12 student and I plan to become an engineer. I applied to multiple engineering programs at different universities and got early acceptance into all of them, including systems design engineering at the University of Waterloo, which is my dream program to attend. I lost my father when I was 14 in the summer right before high school.

It was a very hard time for my family since my dad was only 49 at the time and it was such a sudden death, so it hit the whole family very hard. The day of my father's death, I was the only one home with him because my mom was at work and my brother wasn't home. My dad collapsed right in front of my eyes coming down the stairs and I was the one who had to run to attend to him.

Realizing that he was unconscious, I was the one who had to call the ambulance and to tell my mom about the entire situation. Unfortunately, the situation really affected my mental health. I had to do grieving sessions after my dad's death and it still affects me to this day, but I have learned to accept my dad's loss over the years and to dedicate all of my hard work to him.

Currently, my mom is the sole provider of the family and she's unable to afford my post-secondary education as I not only have to pay for the tuition, but also the residency because I live in Mississauga and the commute to Waterloo is too far. Residency adds an extra 13,000 to my yearly tuition, so at this point, the amount of scholarships I win will determine which offer I'll accept, even though I really dream of attending Waterloo University.

Following my father's death, I tried to apply to a lot of part time jobs, but I was unsuccessful because I was very young and inexperienced. So, I made it a priority during high school to take co-op to get some experience on my resume, which led me to be successful in landing a part time job with the same company that I did my placement at.

This job helps me to at least pay for my expenses to take that load off of my mother. However, it's not enough to afford my education. I've worked so hard throughout my high school years and achieved a 95 plus average throughout. So, I hope that my unfortunate financial situation does not get in the way of my dreams.

I've not given up on my dream to attend the University of Waterloo for engineering, and so I've been trying to work extra hours and seek out as many scholarships as I can just to try and save up some money. As I mentioned earlier, my dad's death was very sudden, so he didn't have any life insurance, and because he was also self-employed, we didn't receive any pension or further financial support from anyone, so my mom was left to carry the whole burden on her own and to support us and work hard just to make ends meet, which is why I'm applying to the scholarship.

Of course, if my dad had life insurance, our situation would be much different than it is right now. I feel like if we did, we would feel more financially stable as a family and my mom would have definitely been able to afford to pay for my university tuition. I also wouldn't have been in the stressful situation I'm in right now.

So, winning the scholarship would be such a relief for myself and for my family. Thank you so much for your time and for considering me for the scholarship.