



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



Jamarli Banton

NOMINATION CODE: JC-SGMRP-074903

UNIVERSITY: University of the West Indies, Mona

MAJOR: Civil Engineering

ESSAY

Built on Discipline

Prompt: Describe a moment when you demonstrated leadership or discipline under pressure, and explain how that experience has shaped your goals, either academically or as a member of the Schools' Challenge Quiz team.

“Setbacks are not wasted when they are studied, understood, and used to improve.”

In April 2025, my Schools' Challenge Quiz team entered the grand final after months of preparation and left with a loss that was difficult to accept. We had studied, practised, and sacrificed free time, yet when the pressure was highest, our knowledge alone was not enough. We hesitated, second-guessed ourselves, and allowed small mistakes to build on one another. Losing on such a public stage was painful, but it gave me a clearer understanding of what discipline really requires.

After the competition, I did not want our disappointment to become just another story about what might have been. I encouraged my teammates to analyse the match and examine our own decisions. We realized that the difference between two teams could be found in small margins: responding decisively, communicating clearly, and staying calm when the clock makes every choice feel larger. Instead of simply promising to work harder the next year, we began to work more deliberately. We reviewed errors, practised under greater pressure, and held one another accountable for preparation and focus.

That commitment required discipline beyond the quiz room. As a school prefect, I was expected to supervise classes, help maintain order during lunch, and be dependable for younger students. At the same time, I was managing CAPE Unit 2 coursework and a demanding quiz schedule. I learned to use free periods productively, to plan my study time carefully, and to protect my priorities without allowing one responsibility to weaken another. Leadership, I discovered, was not always a speech or a title. Often, it was showing up prepared and setting a standard that others could trust.

The real test came in the 2026 SCQ final against Westwood High. Heading into the last buzzer section, the score was too close for comfort. The moment carried more than the pressure of one question; Jamaica College had not won the title in thirty-nine years, and we knew what the opportunity meant to our school. In that tense moment, I focused on the habits we had built after the previous year's loss. I reminded my teammates to trust their preparation and made sure urgency did not turn into panic. We stayed disciplined, made the necessary decisions, and earned a 30–28 victory.

That experience reshaped how I approach my goal of studying civil engineering at The University of the West Indies, Mona. Engineering demands more than technical knowledge. It demands the ability to examine failures honestly, work within strict constraints, and remain composed when decisions affect real people. Jamaica's infrastructure faces challenges from ageing systems, flooding, and hurricanes; solving them will require careful preparation and persistence rather than easy answers. The quiz final taught me that setbacks are not wasted when they are studied, understood, and used to improve. That is the discipline I will bring to my studies, my future work, and every challenge that tests my ability to lead under pressure.