

Fostering a Culture of Ethical Leadership at Ashesi University



Leadership takes courage — especially when doing the right thing means charting an entirely new course as an individual or organization. Ashesi University was founded to address Africa’s biggest roadblock to progress: the need for ethical leaders with the ability to solve problems in a way that serves the greater good. Our curriculum is unique on the continent, guiding students through coursework, hands-on projects, and extra-curricular opportunities aimed at instilling in students the courage to be ethical leaders. The success of our graduates as innovators tackling the continent’s toughest problems is proof that a university can effectively model, foster, and instill a culture of ethics and leadership. Here is how we do it:



Providing a Platform for Ethical Behavior: The Examination Honor Code

In 2008, Ashesi students enacted the first honor system in West Africa, pledging to not tolerate unethical behavior on campus. After committing to the Code, Ashesi students take all examinations without proctors. The Code is a step towards sustaining our high-trust community and puts students in charge of their own ethical posture.

Signing the Code signifies “choosing to sign onto a new way of life; a life of honor and responsibility,” says Sabelo Dube ‘20. “It is empowering to allow yourself to be held accountable and to hold other people equally accountable. I feel proud to join an honorable society, which serves as the model society we all hope to live in. I hope that our honorable acts will ripple through the societies we find ourselves in and enact the change we want to see in Africa.”

Connecting Our Actions to Each Other: The Social Honor Code

Supported by 91% of voters in a 2018 referendum, the Social Honor Code challenges all members of the Ashesi community, including students, staff, and faculty, to hold one another responsible for doing the right thing on and off campus.

“I was the first person to vote,” says staff member Anani Assiongnon. “Being part of the security team and having been in this industry for long, I have seen the value of a good community like Ashesi. I voted to show my commitment to the mission of doing what is right.”

“If Ashesi is to raise leaders to transform Africa, then I believe this code, if imbibed and practiced, could be the moral foundation on which Africa will be transformed,” shared Christopher Zanu ‘19.



Preparing Students to Lead: The Leadership Seminar Series

The Leadership Seminar Series provides exposure to the real challenges students will face and provides tools to explore ethics in practice and leadership as service. In *Giving Voice to Values*, freshmen simulate real-world value conflicts. “By listening to how alumni and staff have dealt with compromising situations, it is easier to relate,” says Dzifa Hodey ’20. “When confronted with similar situations, I can also look at different perspectives and hopefully make a good judgement.” In subsequent series, students explore such questions as:

- What is a good society?
- What are the most fundamental rights of humanity?
- How do we best achieve a balance of liberty, efficiency, and equality?

Demonstrating the Power of Service

Alongside Ashesi’s core curriculum, students learn how to engage the local community to assess and address local challenges. Many students begin their own social initiatives as part of the *Leadership as Service Seminar*, addressing issues including:

- Environmental stewardship and agriculture
- Education in technology, science, music, literacy, and health
- Girls’ and women’s empowerment
- Early childhood development
- Youth and entrepreneur mentorship

“It’s service learning, not just service,” says Dr. Esi Ansah, lecturer of the *Leadership as Service Seminar*. “So when students go out into communities, they are expected to position themselves as learners and return with a wealth of experiences, knowledge and new perspectives in terms of how they see people. Leaders lead by example, not just show the way, but also join everyone else on the journey as they lead.” These tangible leadership experiences analyzing problems and testing solutions build confidence and awareness that students carry forward into their lives and work. As a result, Ashesi graduates are always looking for opportunities to solve problems and improve the world around them.

Join Us

To learn more about ethics and leadership at Ashesi and how you can partner with us, contact us at 206.545.6988 or foundation@ashesi.org.

Ashesi University in Ghana · Ethical Leadership and Innovative Thinking for a New Africa

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