



## EMPOWERING AFRICAN WOMEN THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

Education plays a major role in the advancement of women – it is a consistent determinant of progress for nearly every development outcome. Better educated women tend to be healthier, earn higher incomes, and invest 90% of their income back into their families.<sup>1</sup> At the societal level, more educated women lead to an increase in economic growth and female leadership in government, business, and civil society. Unfortunately, women in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly underserved when it comes to tertiary education. Today, there are only 75 women for every 100 men enrolled in higher education institutions.<sup>2</sup> And only 3% of women aged 18-22 years are enrolled in higher education.<sup>3</sup>

For the past eighteen years, Ashesi University has built a strong reputation around empowering African women as university graduates. We also understand the essential role men play in advocating for and achieving gender equality. Therefore, Ashesi is proud to maintain gender balance in our faculty, staff, and student body.

The Ashesi team works to increase female enrollment through scholarships, curriculum development, mentorship, and recruitment events across Africa. Ashesi offers university planning for women in secondary school to ensure that female students know that they can succeed in business and STEM. We have found that scholarships often incentivize parents to allow their daughters to attend university and that on-campus housing makes parents feel assured that their daughters will have a safe living arrangement.

Together, these efforts have helped increase female enrollment from 27% in 2002 to 48% today. Once enrolled, female students are mentored and supported by faculty, administrators, and alumna. And the curriculum is designed to include the perspectives of women. Finally, women in leadership are seen throughout campus: Ashesi women have held many student leadership positions, and women have top leadership positions within the Ashesi administration. In fact, Ashesi elected Africa's first woman student government leader.

### WOMEN AT ASHESI REPRESENT

**60%**

of senior university leadership

**55%**

of the university's Board of Directors

**45%**

of staff and faculty

**48%**

of students

**50%**

of scholarship recipients

**40%**

of engineering students



Ashesi University Foundation raises support for the following programs and initiatives advancing gender equality:

### **Bringing Women's Perspectives to Africa's Engineering Solutions**

Globally, women are underrepresented in the field of engineering. In the United States, for example, women receive just 21% of bachelor's degrees awarded across engineering disciplines. In Africa, this underrepresentation is even more marked. At Ashesi, gender parity is a central focus of our engineering program. "Our goal is about inclusion, but perhaps more importantly, it is about ensuring that the perspectives of African women guide the engineering solutions to some of Africa's greatest challenges," says President Patrick Awuah. "Achieving gender balance in engineering education would be exceptional and would represent leadership not only in Africa, but also globally." We are proud that women currently represent 40% of our engineering students. To reach the same gender parity in engineering that Ashesi has met overall, Ashesi has:

- Designed a curriculum aimed at including the perspectives of women
- Implemented summer high school programs that inspire girls to pursue careers in STEM
- Funded more scholarships for women
- Provided mentorship to help women succeed in college and in their careers

### **The Ashesi Venture Incubator (AVI)**

The AVI is a one-year incubation experience for Ashesi alumni, run in collaboration with MIT D-Lab, and funded by USAID. This values-driven incubator trains emerging entrepreneurs with business models focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Five of the twelve inaugural AVI entrepreneurs are women. Many entrepreneurs are focusing on gender equity directly. Grace Amponsah '16 is the Founder and Executive Director of the Boney Initiative, which aims to help Ghanaian girls realize their dreams and become agents of change in their communities through mentorship, entrepreneurship training, and leadership development.

### **The Ashesi Innovation Experience (AIX)**

AIX is a transformative two-week enrichment program developed by Ashesi faculty for high school students across Africa. AIX equips students with concrete skills for innovation: robotics, engineering, design thinking, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Ashesi provides need-based scholarships for many girls to attend AIX. Families often discourage their daughters from pursuing STEM majors in university. Through Ashesi's AIX scholarships, families learn about the power of a STEM education, making it more likely for their girls to pursue a degree and career in STEM.

## **JOIN US**

To learn more about Ashesi's work to empower women and help achieve gender equality, please contact us at 206.545.6988 or [foundation@ashesi.org](mailto:foundation@ashesi.org).

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

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