

WISE Prize for Education 2017 presented to Patrick Awuah, Founder of Ashesi University College, Ghana

Doha, Qatar – November 15, 2017. The prestigious WISE Prize for Education has been presented to Mr Patrick Awuah, founder and president of Ashesi University College, a private, not-for-profit institution that has become one of Ghana's premier universities in little over a decade.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, presented the Prize to Mr Patrick Awuah at the Opening Plenary session of the eighth World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha, Qatar, before an audience of 2,000 participants from 100 countries.

Stavros N. Yiannouka, the CEO of WISE said: *"I am pleased to welcome Patrick Awuah as the sixth WISE Prize for Education Laureate. He joins a distinguished group of individuals who share a passion for empowerment through education. The WISE Prize Laureates have recognized needs that challenged them to action. Each has blazed a path in engaging and enrolling others in a vision. Patrick Awuah's story is unique in his awakening to the role of renewed ethical leadership in social transformation, particularly in Africa. Ashesi University College, under his guidance, builds varied contemporary curricula on the pillars of liberal arts. He recognized that the tools for acquiring and interpreting knowledge are at least as important as the knowledge itself. In placing leadership at the core of his commitment, Patrick Awuah stands as a model for all of us who are dedicated to empowerment through education."*

The WISE Prize for Education is the first distinction of its kind to recognize an individual or a team of up to six people for an outstanding, world-class contribution to education. The Laureate receives the WISE Prize for Education gold medal, and \$500,000.

Patrick Awuah is well-known for his dedication to supporting education in Ghana and across Africa. Every Ashesi University College graduate has found quality employment, and almost all have remained in Africa, where many have started much-needed businesses. Patrick Awuah's innovation in higher education is not only empowering students; it also has the potential to transform Ghana and other African nations by developing a new generation of leaders and entrepreneurs.

Patrick Awuah left Ghana in 1985 with \$50 in his pocket and a full scholarship to Swarthmore College, in Pennsylvania, the United States. Over the next four years, its liberal arts education showed him the power of critical thinking, a stark contrast to his prior schooling.

After graduating, Patrick Awuah had a very successful career at Microsoft where he spearheaded design for dial-up Internet access. Keen to make a difference in his own country, he returned to Ghana, intending to start a software company.

Arriving back in Ghana, Patrick Awuah quickly understood that fostering ethical leadership would be key to building a generation that is able to bring positive change in Africa. He decided to go back to study, this time to the University of California, Berkeley, to understand what it takes to start a university that would foster leadership and integrity.

Patrick Awuah said: *“I decided to create a new university in Ghana not because of a lack of universities in my country, but a lack of universities teaching 21st century skills. There was too much emphasis on rote learning and memorization, much less on critical or independent thinking, ethics or collaboration. I decided to open a university that would offer young Ghanaians and Africans the opportunity to excel and become problem solvers – the next leaders of Africa.”*

In 2002, Ashesi University College ("beginning" in Akan) University College opened its doors in a rented house with a first class of 30 students.

Today, Ashesi University College has a world class campus of 100 acres, overlooking Accra, with nearly 900 students. Ashesi University College offers four-year bachelor degrees in engineering, business administration, computer science and management information systems. The degree is based upon an interdisciplinary curriculum with a continual emphasis on leadership, ethics and entrepreneurship. Before graduating, all students engage in community service.

Ashesi University College places an emphasis on cultural, economic, and gender diversity with 50 percent of the students on full or partial scholarships. Half of students are women and over 20 countries are represented on the campus. Additionally, in 2008, Ashesi University College students established an honor code, holding themselves responsible for ethical behavior, the first of its kind in African universities.

On receiving the WISE Prize, Patrick Awuah said: *“I am honored to receive the WISE Prize for Education. This is a crucial moment for Africa – today, one out of six people on earth live in Africa, and this is set to rise to one in four by 2050. We urgently need to boost the education system in Africa to ensure we can tap into this shift to strengthen the continent. Winning the WISE Prize will support the work we are already doing at Ashesi University College to inspire and educate, and build a community of people who can navigate the complexities of Africa’s growth and set an example for the rest of the world.”*

Ends

International media contact:

Adeline Deliau/ Marina Bradbury, media@wise-qatar.org

Further information about Patrick Awuah

Find out more about the 2017 WISE Prize Laureate at: <http://www.wise-qatar.org/2017-wise-prize-education>

Access photographs: <http://www.wise-qatar.org/press-room-global-image-bank>

About Ashesi University College

Ashesi University College is a private, not-for-profit institution in Ghana, whose goal is to educate ethical, entrepreneurial leaders in Africa. By raising the bar for higher education, Ashesi University College aims to make a significant contribution towards a renaissance on the continent. Over the past 15 years, the University has quickly gained a reputation for innovation and quality education. Ashesi University College is the first university in Ghana to adopt and blend the Liberal Arts method of education with majors in Computer Science, Management Information Systems, Business Administration and Engineering. In 2008, it also became the first university to adopt a student-run Honor Code System, where students take exams without proctors and hold themselves accountable to high standards of academic integrity.

The University maintains a commitment to socio-economic, gender and cultural diversity, and has nearly 900 students, and over 1,000 alumni from all over Africa and beyond. Nationalities represented include Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Approximately 50% of students are women; and half of the student population also receives scholarships, supported by generous organizations and individuals around the world. Ashesi University College is most respected for its continued success in preparing students for strong careers, and nearly all the University's graduates start businesses, or receive job and graduate school placements within 6 months of graduation. Ashesi University College alumni work in wide ranging industries, and with varying organizations in Africa and around the world, impacting millions of people through their work.

Find out more: <http://www.ashesi.edu.gh/>

About the WISE Prize for Education

Established in 2011 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the WISE Prize for Education is the first distinction of its kind to recognize an individual or a team of up to six people for an outstanding, world-class contribution to education. The WISE Prize for Education raises the status of education by giving it similar prestige enjoyed in other areas for which international recognition exists --such as literature, peace, and economics. The WISE Prize for Education Laureate is usually announced at the Opening Plenary Session of the global biennial summit, and receives the gold WISE Prize for Education medal and \$500,000 (US).

The WISE Prize for Education Laureates are inspiring role models for all those dedicated to building the future of education as the foundation for a more secure, prosperous, and sustainable world.

The former WISE Prize laureates:

- 2015 - Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, Afghanistan
- 2014 – Ms. Ann Cotton, The United Kingdom
- 2013 - Ms. Vicky Colbert, Colombia
- 2012 – Dr. Madhav Chavan, India
- 2011 – Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, Bangladesh

Find out more: <https://www.wise-qatar.org/wise-prize-for-education>

About the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)

The World Innovation Summit for Education was established by Qatar Foundation in 2009 under the leadership of its Chairperson, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. WISE is an international, multi-sectoral platform for creative, evidence-based thinking, debate, and purposeful action in education. Through the biennial summit, collaborative research and a range of on-going programs, WISE is a global reference in new approaches to education. WISE 2017 takes place in Doha November 14-16 under the theme: “Co-Exist, Co-Create: Learning to Live and Work Together”.

Please note, certain sessions of WISE 2017 will be **streamed live online** on the WISE website:

15 November: [opening ceremony](#); [afternoon plenary](#)

16 November: [morning plenary session](#); [closing ceremony](#)

These sessions will also be streamed live on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wiseqatar/>

For further information about WISE, visit www.wise-qatar.org

Join the conversation using the hash tag #WISE17

Twitter #WISE17 twitter.com/WISE_Tweets

Instagram [instagram.com/wiseqatar/](https://www.instagram.com/wiseqatar/)

Facebook [facebook.com/wiseqatar/](https://www.facebook.com/wiseqatar/)

LinkedIn [linkedin.com/groups/1982051/profile](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1982051/profile)