ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018

Introducing our new Vision, Mission, and Academic Pillars
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Dear Friends,

When we opened Akilah, our mission was “educating wise leaders to excel.” We’ve stayed true to that objective, and over the past 10 years, we’ve built our reputation around providing exceptional education for women leaders in sub-Saharan Africa.

Initially, we prepared women for careers in hospitality. The tourism and hospitality industry was one of Rwanda’s fastest growing sectors, and our graduates landed coveted positions in human resources, customer service, business development, and more. We’ve since expanded to offer diplomas in technology, business, and entrepreneurship.

Our model proves to be working. A recent alumnae evaluation found that nearly 90% of our graduates secured employment within six months of graduation. They earn incomes that average 12 times Rwanda’s national median income. And nearly 60% of our alumnae have received a promotion and/or raise since graduating.

But as we look to the future, we realize our approach must evolve.

The world is changing—and quickly. Some of the changes are exciting: fields such as solar energy, mobile money, and drone technology are expanding in Africa. But some of the changes will require graduates to solve big problems and address complex global issues.

Our students will inherit a planet that looks very different from the one we live on today. Even though Africa contributes only 4% of global emissions, the continent is the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The effects will be felt across industries, from agriculture to tourism to business and beyond. Climate change is not limited to Africa; it is transforming the global
economy and the jobs that fuel it. Our graduates must be prepared to innovate and adapt to fluctuating food prices, mass migration, extreme weather events, rising seas, and other climate-related impacts.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT AKILAH IS ALREADY DELIVERING ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: WOMEN’S EDUCATION.

Project Drawdown, a broad coalition that researches climate change solutions, ranks girls’ and women’s education as the sixth-most-effective way to reverse global warming. Educated women have more agency, marry later, and have fewer, and healthier, children. They earn higher wages and are better equipped to cope with the shocks of climate change.

But what if we could do more than increase female enrollment? What if we could create an educational experience that explicitly prepares women for careers on our changing planet?

AT AKILAH, WE’VE DEVELOPED A RADICALLY DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE THAT GIVES STUDENTS THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO ADAPT TO A CHANGING WORLD. OUR NEW MODEL COMBINES EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH 21ST-CENTURY SKILLS, PERSONALIZED LEARNING, INNOVATION, AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP.
The world needs an innovative education model that prepares 21st-century professionals for the challenges and careers of the future. UNESCO defines education for sustainable development (ESD) as the transformative learning process that allows students to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Sustainable thinkers make decisions that balance vibrant economies with a healthy environment to create a future of abundance for all.

We’re excited to be at the forefront of sustainability education in sub-Saharan Africa. We’ve long prided ourselves on adopting innovative models that put our graduates ahead.

Our commitment to serving female students has not wavered. From Project Drawdown, we now have further proof that our focus on women not only helps family, communities, and countries, but also the planet.

We are excited to introduce our new mission and vision in the pages that follow as well as our five academic pillars: 21st-century skills, personalized learning, innovation, ethical leadership, and sustainability. These guiding principles will shape our approach to educational design as we launch new Bachelor’s degrees and scale our model to thousands of young women.

Akilah students will gain the intellectual tools to critically analyze complex problems and articulate communicate sustainable solutions. They will lead critical conversations and promote women’s empowerment, climate action, clean energy solutions, smart city innovation, and more. They will drive change in their families, communities, and countries.

Thank you for believing in our vision and dreaming big about the impact Akilah students have had and will have on the African continent. You saw our students as future CEOs and entrepreneurs and politicians before they could envision themselves in those roles. As we look back at the last ten years, we’re proud to have created an environment where women could find their voices and fulfill their potential, in and out of the classroom.

We are continually inspired by their commitment to improving not only their personal lives, but also their communities, countries, and the planet.

With gratitude,
Elizabeth Dearborn Hughes
CEO & Co-founder

Dave Hughes
Co-founder
10 Years of Accomplishments

450 alumnae
1,000 students

78% are first generation college students

75% of students were unemployed prior to enrollment

88% of graduates employed within 6 months

Graduates earn 12x national median income
WE’RE PROUD TO INTRODUCE A BIGGER AND BOLDER VISION & MISSION TO CARRY US THROUGH THE NEXT 10 YEARS & BEYOND.

VISION

We are a global community of lifelong learners creating a more sustainable world. We envision a future where all individuals have the knowledge, skills, and resources to lead productive and purposeful lives on a changing planet.

MISSION

Educating future leaders to solve the world’s most pressing challenges through a lens of opportunity and sustainability.

PILLARS

21st-Century Skills • Personalized Learning Innovation • Ethical Leadership • Sustainability

OUR NEW PILLARS WILL GUIDE OUR APPROACH TO EDUCATION AS WE PREPARE FOR UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH AND ACCOMPLISHMENT THROUGHOUT OUR NEXT CHAPTER.
Students learn to use software systems and build apps or platforms to solve business problems. Partnerships with leading technology companies like CISCO ensure that students graduate with the practical expertise necessary to land competitive jobs.
21st-Century Skills

We develop lifelong learners who are prepared for the jobs of today and can adapt and succeed in the careers of tomorrow. Our interdisciplinary approach combines subject matter expertise with collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

“I’ve always been passionate about inspiring more women to join technology. My biggest challenge is to change the attitude that has been instilled in a lot of women when it comes to technology. Because information systems is a technical field, they think it’s not for them. I want to show them that is not the case.”

LUCY CHERONO
INFORMATION SYSTEMS INSTRUCTOR
CURRENT PHD CANDIDATE IN BUSINESS IT

AKILAH ALUMNAE BUILD THE BUSINESSES OF TOMORROW

Akilah alumnae have launched their careers at thriving Rwandan startups and innovative businesses. Information Systems alumna Sonia Rugwiro ’17 joined the software engineering team at MeshPower, one of East Africa’s leading solar energy startups.
Personalized Learning

Our adaptive learning model provides individualized pathways to success to ensure each learner achieves her academic goals.

A PIONEER IN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION
Akilah is one of the first African higher education institutions to adopt competency-based education. CBE puts students at the center of learning, explicitly emphasizing demonstration of knowledge for degree progression, rather than the accumulation of course credits through seat time in the classroom. This ensures that students gain a solid and practical grasp of the content and can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways.

Unlike fully online programs that result in isolation and low completion rates, our blended model leverages technology, online modules, and adaptive learning tools with in-person courses, academic support, community service, and presentations.

If a student learns faster, they can accelerate to more advanced concepts. If they are struggling, they receive personalized support, feedback, and additional resources to ensure real, active learning.

Michael Horn is the Chief Strategy Officer for the Entangled Group, an education technology studio, and a senior partner for Entangled Solutions, which offers innovation services to higher education institutions. He is also the co-founder of and a distinguished fellow at the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, a non-profit think tank. As an expert on disruptive innovation, online learning, blended learning, competency-based learning, and how to transform the education system into a student-centered one, Michael has spent the last year leading the design for the Akilah Institute’s innovative blended learning model.

MICHAEL HORN
SENIOR ADVISOR
Akilah students use Canvas, our new learner management system, to navigate coursework. Implementing Canvas is a critical piece of our transition to a competency-based learning model, enabling students to easily access online modules and adaptive learning tools as they master competencies in the classroom.
Germaine Ukwishyaka, right, won two awards at Akilah’s Entrepreneurship Fund competition for her toy company, DG Toys: Best Innovation for Small Businesses and Audience’s Choice for best pitch and idea. “We did market research, and we could see that children in Rwanda need more teaching aids, especially at the nursery-age level. Visual teaching aids can help them learn faster and ensure an effective learning process.”
Innovation

We encourage students to enthusiastically pursue new ideas, challenge the status quo, and develop solutions for unmet needs. We leverage the latest technology and learning methods to craft an unparalleled learning experience.

STUDENTS PITCH THEIR BEST BUSINESS IDEAS
Students display their innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills in our annual Entrepreneurship Fund Pitch Competition. This year, submissions included event drone photography, locally made toothpicks, novel methods of waste collection, upcycled shoes, and toys for early childhood development. The students with the most promising ideas were invited to join the Akilah Business Incubation Center, which has already produced several successful entrepreneurs.

“Akilah’s Business Incubation Center helps us to develop our ideas and add layers of innovation to our business so customers will be attracted to our products. Our market research proved that Rwandan children need more teaching aids, especially when they are in nursery school, to ensure an effective learning process—and that’s what we want our products to support.”

GERMAINE UKWISHAKA
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP ’19
ENTREPRENEURSHIP FUND PITCH COMPETITION WINNER
“Everyone has a mission and goals to fulfill, if we combine all of them to make things happen, we can continue to transform Akilah.”

ESTHER MBABAZI
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP ’19
STUDENT GUILD PRESIDENT

Ethical Leadership

We educate and inspire ethical leaders who recognize the dignity and rights of others and the natural world. We foster values that promote gender equity, civic responsibility, and environmental stewardship.

SOCIAL CHANGE
Students contribute to their communities through their Social Change Project, where they identify an issue in the surrounding community and implement a solution. This year, students addressed issues of malnutrition by planting neighborhood gardens, worked with women’s groups to implement income generating activities, and conducted workshops with youth to stress the importance of staying in school. Esther Mbabazi, current Student Guild President, also wants to reinforce that spirit on campus. “It’s really important that we encourage giving a hand to someone else,” she explains.
Babra Mulinda, IS ’18 talks with students from a local school about the value and importance of staying in school during her Social Change Project. “When I see these students, I feel like they can reach even further than me if they get the chance. It reminds me that I have a lot to achieve, and I need to keep working hard to inspire them.”
A UNDP-sponsored Design-a-thon challenged students from across East Africa to develop an app for collecting climate data in remote areas. The app would need to convert soil and temperature data into actionable insights for farmers. IS student Evra Grace led a team of fellow students from Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda to research, develop, and present an app before a panel of judges. Her team placed within the top six at the competition finals. “I was able to use the leadership and application development skills that I got from Akilah,” Evra Grace says.
Sustainability

We deliver a transformative learning experience that equips students with the knowledge and tools to balance vibrant economies with a healthy environment to create a future of abundance for all.

INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY
How do we tackle some of the world’s most pressing issues through innovation and sustainability? That’s a question Akilah students sought to answer through the Hult Prize Competition, a global initiative that inspires university students to create sustainable change through entrepreneurship.

This year’s theme, Harnessing the Power of Energy, challenged students from around the world to develop innovative business ideas that address local, regional, and global energy challenges.

Students must work their way through a series of campus-wide, national, and regional competitions for a chance to enter the global competition and compete for $1 million in funding. In March, three teams from Akilah made it to the national Hult Prize Competition in Rwanda. One team advanced to the regionals in Nairobi, where they came in seventh out of 32 teams, and another was invited to compete internationally in London.

Beat Plastic Pollution
Over the past decade, the world has produced more plastic than over the whole of the last century. Plastic pollution is one of the great environmental challenges of our time. Akilah adopted a campus-wide ban on single-use plastic bottles and straws. The policy marks the first step in a long-term strategy to promote environmental awareness and stewardship.

“...In Rwanda, we don’t have enough land to grow vegetables, but with this system, we don’t need much space. It also doesn’t require much water compared with traditional farming. Normally we are reliant on irrigation in the dry season, but this system works all year long. The system is very easy to set up. It only requires ingredients that you can buy at the market—everyone can afford it. We want this idea to have a positive impact on society and on the environment.”

Delphine Ihirwe and her team of fellow Akilah students developed an idea for an affordable hydroponic gardening system. Their business proposal won them a spot at the London Hult Prize competition.
A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Our work would be impossible without the support of the following donors, and many others, for whose contribution we are sincerely grateful.

$500,000+
Anonymous

$100,000+
Align Impact
Jade Water Group, LTD
Lebworth Foundation
Uechtritz Family Foundation

$50,000+
Amanda Arch & Adam Pisoni
Bryan Baldwin
Segal Family Foundation
The Micah 6:8 Foundation

$25,000+
AL Mailman Foundation
Chris and Portia Durbin
Corbett Family Foundation
Grant Me the Wisdom Foundation
Hapke Family Foundation
i=Change
Imago Dei Fund
Robert Zoellick
The Lester Fund

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Anne Moretti
The Beth Holton and Cody Davis Charitable Fund
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Kim King
Lauren Lovelace
Marriott International
Renee Wailes
Seattle International Foundation
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The Holton Family Foundation
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Anne DiGiovanni
Bob Shuck
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Mark and Dreama Waldrop
Sean Kleier
Sharon Davis
Sharon Yoh
Stephen Abelman
Susan Freeman
The Barrington Foundation
The Maget-Rice Fund
The 1830 Foundation
Toni Thompson

OPENING OF CODY FOWLER DAVIS LIBRARY

The Akilah Institute would not exist without the enthusiastic support of Cody Davis. Cody and his wife, Beth, provided the first financial support when their daughter, Elizabeth Hughes, developed the idea in 2008, and he continued to be an energetic donor, ambassador, and fundraiser until his sudden death in 2017. As the father of four girls, Cody was deeply passionate about creating opportunities for young women in East Africa. From the first time he heard about the Akilah vision, he wholeheartedly threw his support behind it, organizing regular fundraisers in his hometown of Tampa and providing free office space for the development team. Despite some formidable challenges in the early days of Akilah’s creation, Cody’s commitment never wavered. We are honoring Cody’s legacy by naming the library at our new campus after him. He was incredibly proud of the students and the team who work so hard to create an inspiring and nurturing environment for young women.
# FINANCIALS

## PROJECT AKILAH, INC. D/B/A AKILAH FOUNDATION

### STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

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### STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES (UNRESTRICTED)*

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<td>Contributions &amp; Grants</td>
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<td>Investments &amp; Other Revenue</td>
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<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$3,463,508</td>
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<td>Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets from Operations</td>
<td>$503,187</td>
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*The August 31, 2018 financial statements have not yet been audited and are subject to change. Audited financial statements will be tentatively available in February 2019. The Statement of Activities represents changes in unrestricted net assets only.

### SOURCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS

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<td>Individuals</td>
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Carmen Nibigira  
Akilah Institute Board Member

Carmen Nibigira is a seasoned tourism policy analyst with over 18 years’ experience in the hotel and tourism industry in Africa and Europe. She is the former regional Coordinator of the East Africa Tourism Platform and a former Director General of the Burundi National Tourism Office.

She has been one of the leading voices in the development and re-launch of the tourism industry in post-conflict Burundi and has played an active role in marketing Burundi as a tourism destination at international travel and tourism fairs in London and Berlin. Carmen has also published articles and papers on the development of the tourism sector in Burundi, and has run tour operations in Burundi, Rwanda, and Kenya.

“Governments, academic institutions, and the private sector must actively work together to remove barriers facing women so they can attain positions of leadership. Akilah offers an important success story in this regard.”

- Dr. Joyce Banda  
Former President of Malawi  
Akilah Institute Honorary Chancellor

Dr. Banda brings her decades of experience in government, advocacy, business, and philanthropy to Akilah’s executive team. She plays a strategic role in the Akilah Institute’s growth plans and provides advisory support as the institute identifies new campus locations, diploma programs, and education products to better serve women across Africa.
We just welcomed 500 new students to campus - our largest intake to date. Now we’re preparing for another decade of growth, accomplishment, and serving thousands of Africa’s future leaders. In addition to our two-year diplomas, we’ll offer a Bachelor’s degree, open a new campus in East Africa, and develop new education programs to educate and empower young women. All of these plans are only made possible with the support of our global community.

To make a contribution, please visit www.akilahinstitute.org/donate. Your support creates a lasting impact in the lives of our students and their community.
Akilah Institute President Karen Sherman @sherman875 welcomes nearly 500 new students to the @AkilahInstitute family. We kicked off the New Student Orientation festivities at the Kigali Marriott, just down the street from our new campus. Students met their future faculty and mentors and took the Akilah Institute Community Pledge.

Nicole Umuziranenge ‘18 @umuziranenge_nicole won this year’s Akilah Entrepreneurship Fund Competition and walked away with Rwf 2 million to finance her hospitality company.

Teta Isibo of Inzuki Designs @inzukidesigns speaks to students on International Women’s Day about her journey as a female entrepreneur.
Kigali Moms & Dads @kigalimomsanddads stopped by our new bookstore to check out custom Akilah products from tote bags to t-shirts, plus other products like traditional Rwandan baskets and Illume Studio’s new coffee table book, *This is Rwanda*.

Divine Uwase @divine_wa_se and Mireille Umulinga @mireille_milcah celebrate Welcome Week, the first week of school for our incoming first-year students.

Akilah Institute CEO & Co-Founder Elizabeth Dearborn Hughes @edearbornhughes shares a photo of the Community Pledge, signed by our 500 new students of the Class of 2020 during their first week of school.
Thank you for supporting the Akilah Foundation and Africa’s future female leaders. Stay in touch, connect with us on:

Akilah Institute
akilahinstitute
www.akilahinstitute.org