

## **VCUQatar Celebrates its 2013 Commencement Ceremony** **HE Sheikha Al Mayassa Delivers Commencement Address and Receives Honorary Degree**

Doha, Qatar – Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar held its 2013 Commencement Ceremony on 6 May at the Education City Student Center, conferring 39 Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in fashion, graphic, interior design and painting and printmaking and five Master of Fine Arts degrees in Design Studies. The 12<sup>th</sup> Commencement brings the number of VCUQatar alumni to 409.

“There is much that you can do to contribute to the Qatar National Vision 2030,” said VCUQatar Dean Allyson Vanstone in her message to the graduating students. “You are prepared to succeed in a global society increasingly defined by communication and design. You are empowered to make a difference in your community, culture, and economy. You are the pioneers of a future that can influence change on any scale. You will make the world a better place, more capable, efficient, generous and inclusive,” she added.

Virginia Commonwealth University President Dr. Michael Rao addressed the graduating students during the ceremony. “At VCU, we ask our graduates to be leaders in their disciplines and in their communities, to be job creators and not simply job takers. We ask every alumnus and alumna, whether they studied art or engineering, whether they are from the Mid-Atlantic or the Middle East, to use their education not simply to forge ahead but to forge a path for others. In other words, your education will help you get a job, help diversify your nation’s economy, and help you create opportunities for others. That’s a powerful thing. And that’s because you are part of a research university where innovation means empowering the human capacity,” said President Rao.

Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, delivered the commencement address to the 44 graduates during the afternoon ceremonies. “I am honored to be with you today, standing in a place that dedicates itself to innovation and excellence. A place where learning is cherished and creativity nurtured. A place where beautiful minds have come to meet, and where the future is reinvented every day. And looking at your faces, dear Class of 2013, that future has never looked brighter.”

“As a civil servant, I have been honored to continue the work of our ancestors in connecting the past with the present, while building new cultural bridges between East and West. Today, it brings me great pleasure to celebrate an important milestone in that journey, a milestone I think of as ‘Made in Qatar’ – a celebration of 44 Doha-educated graduates in the Fine Arts!”

“Made in VCUQatar confirms that our community is driving our nation to new cultural frontiers. We are not only translating ideas, but also making them right here, right now. That difference promise innovation, a unique voice and a vibrant brand. Locals, residents, from near and far, together, we make up a creative community, a community that will continue to grow to new heights, and one in which you can share and lead. As you leave here tonight, always have the courage to face difficult challenges but do not succumb to negative attitudes that are infectious, but ultimately counter-productive. With your gifts comes great responsibility, but don’t lose sight. There is light at the end of each tunnel. Accept that

solutions are not always straightforward. Create your brands, and leave a mark in this world for people to remember you, long after you're gone."

The ceremony marks the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance on the part of the BFA and MFA graduates. They have spent their time at VCUQatar fulfilling an intensive and rigorous curriculum, one designed to foster not just first-rate artists and designers but well-rounded individuals prepared for the challenges and responsibilities of a highly complex professional world. Students, their families, friends, faculty and staff came together to celebrate VCUQatar graduates' accomplishments and rejoice in their venture into the professional field as they take their expertise and creative capacities to every area of design.

During the ceremony Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was invited to the podium by the President Rao to confer upon her the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, VCU's highest form of recognition. President Rao was joined by Dr. Beverly Warren, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at VCU in the presentation while Rector Dr. John C. Doswell II and VCUQatar Dean Allyson Vanstone performed the hooding ceremony.

Graphic Design graduate and Valedictorian Leila Natsheh in her address to the graduates narrated their various experiences on their journey as the class of 2013. She thanked her parents, and the class, and concluded asking for them to stay in touch with each other and share their achievements.

The other luminaries present for the ceremony included Dr. David Prior, executive vice president and provost, Hamad bin Khalifa University; guests from VCU Richmond – Joseph Seipel, dean of the School of the Arts, Dr. Douglas Boudinot, dean of the Graduate School Susan Roth, senior associate dean of the School of the Arts, Dr. Timothy Hulsey, dean of the Honors College; Board of Visitors – Stuart Siegel; and Joint Advisory Board Member - Dr. Jelena Trkulja, director of education, Qatar Museums Authority, among others.

The 44 new VCUQatar graduates will join the band of 365 alumni who have gone on to successfully establish their own businesses or take up jobs in various positions in Education City, the semi-government and private sectors and ministries in Qatar.

#### **Note to Editors:**

##### **About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:**

Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) is the Qatar campus of the prestigious Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia, USA and is a fully accredited highly ranked art and design program in the Middle East. Established in 1998 through a partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University and the Qatar Foundation, VCUQatar offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in fashion, graphic, interior design and painting & printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design studies. VCUQatar is a center of excellence for education and research in art and design. Through its programs, the university develops individual capacity to lead innovations in the creative and cultural

professions in Qatar and the region. Throughout the year, VCUQatar organizes and hosts exhibitions, a lecture series, conferences and an annual fashion show. For more information please visit [www.qatar.vcu.edu](http://www.qatar.vcu.edu)

### **Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential**

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world.

Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF carries out its mission through three strategic pillars: education, science and research, and community development. QF's education pillar brings world-class universities to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. Meanwhile, its science and research pillar builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. Finally, its community development pillar helps foster a progressive society while also enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

### **Press Contacts:**

Meike Kaan | Executive Director of Communications  
Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar  
PO Box 8095, Al Luqta Street, Doha, Qatar  
T: +974 4402 0558 | M: +974 30133446  
[mckaan@qatar.vcu.edu](mailto:mckaan@qatar.vcu.edu)

Priya D'Souza | Media Officer  
Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar  
PO Box 8095, Al Luqta Street, Doha, Qatar  
T: +974 4402 0721 | M: +974 30133466  
[plddsouza@qatar.vcu.edu](mailto:plddsouza@qatar.vcu.edu)