

VCUQatar Welcomes 73 Incoming MFA, BA and BFA students

Doha, Qatar - Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar welcomed 73 new full time Master of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Arts students to the Education City campus.

This fall semester, VCUQatar welcomes the second group of students into the new BA program in art history. This is the first non-studio degree offered by the branch campus and is intended to support the development of the cultural infrastructure in Qatar. The incoming BFA and BA classes of 2017 represent a truly diverse student body with 41 Qatari students and 28 students from Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Greece, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Russia, Turkey and the United States. Fifty nine percent of the incoming freshmen are Qatari.

Admission to VCUQatar is competitive with applications being blind reviewed by a committee comprised of members of the faculty and staff. Decisions are based on a comprehensive assessment of the applicant's academic achievements to date, their artistic talent, creativity and originality as evidenced by the work they present in their individual portfolios (BFA and MFA), letters of recommendation, writing skills and English language proficiency. The incoming class of 2017 represents highly qualified students who are poised to succeed in the fields of art and design.

VCUQatar Dean Allyson welcomed the incoming class during their orientation. "Being accepted to this prestigious university is the first step in your academic journey," began Dean Vanstone in her welcome address to the students. "The expansion in Qatar's cultural and professional infrastructures makes this a significant time to enter the fields of art and design. Artists and designers help society innovate and generate sustainable solutions. You are this region's next generation of artists and designers. Welcome to VCUQatar!"

The welcome address marked the conclusion of an exciting week of orientation activities, which included an introduction to all aspects of the university, college transition programs, intercultural activities to help prepare students to the diverse cultural experiences that will be part of their education, ice breakers and community building activities to help build positive learning/living environments and a trip to sea line. Students also participated in additional HBKU sponsored events.

VCUQatar also welcomed the fifth class of the MFA in design studies, the first graduate program in design in the gulf region. "This international group of students comes from different creative backgrounds with varied research interests", said Pornprapha Phatanateacha, associate director of the MFA program. "They were selected to form a strong interdisciplinary team who can share their expertise in their respective fields with each other. We look forward to fostering and mentoring them in their research development so they go on to make significant contributions in design practice, management, and higher education in Qatar in the coming decade."

The Incoming Class brings the student population at VCUQatar to 279: 265 undergraduate (Foundation, Fashion, Graphic and Interior Design, Painting & Printmaking and Art History) and 14 graduate (Design Studies) students – representing 42 nationalities. VCUQatar also has

two junior Interior Design students in Richmond on an exchange program and four students from VCUarts in Richmond (two Art History, one Painting & Printmaking and one Fashion Design) studying at the VCUQatar campus for the semester.

VCUQatar also welcomed all new and returning faculty and staff to an all-day retreat. An awards ceremony, recognizing individuals who distinguished themselves over a period of years in service to the school and community was held in the afternoon. Faculty Distinguished Achievements Awards were also awarded to Assistant Professor of English Jesse Ulmer who was honored with the Distinguished Achievement in Teaching Award; Assistant Professor of English Patty Paine received the Distinguished Achievement in Service Award and Assistant Professor and Media Technology Coordinator Diane Derr received the Distinguished Achievement in Research Award.

As VCUQatar enters its 16th year, the university hopes to continue to strengthen its leadership position in art and design education, expand community and service learning programs, and develop research initiatives with local, regional and international collaborators. The university's 409 alumni will be leading the future of Qatar's cultural and creative professions, as well as participating in the global challenges identified as key to the region's future. The VCUQatar community continues to be engaged in reflecting on its past and planning its next five years with a focus on actively supporting the development of Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Note to Editors:

About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:

VCUQatar is the Qatar campus of the prestigious Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia. Established in 1998 through a partnership with Qatar Foundation, VCUQatar offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in fashion design, graphic design, interior design and painting & printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design studies.

Through all its programs, research projects and community activities, VCUQatar continues toward its vision of a Qatari society that innovates through art and design. In addition to a comprehensive annual public events program that includes a wide range of exhibitions, lectures and fashion events, the University hosts the biennial international design conference Tasmeeem and the biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Islamic Art Symposium, attracting globally recognized designers, academics and thinkers while fostering sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of Qatar. For more information please visit 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.

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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.

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