



معهد قطر لبحوث الحوسبة
Qatar Computing Research Institute
عضو مؤسسة قطر Member of Qatar Foundation

Press Release

QATAR COMPUTING RESEARCH INSTITUTE INSPIRES LOCAL YOUTH ABOUT RELEVANCE OF COMPUTING

'Coding Is Cool' Aimed At Encouraging Secondary School Students To Explore The Field Of Computer Science And Potential Careers

Doha, Qatar, 5 April 2015: Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), organised a 'Coding is Cool' workshop for 98 students from eight independent and private schools in Qatar to encourage interest in the field of computer science.

The event, held at the Qatar National Convention Centre and on the side-lines of QCRI's annual meeting with the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (CSAIL), was part of a secondary-school student outreach initiative.

Aimed at inspiring students to explore computer science as potential careers and develop their interest in real-world applications, the event supported Qatar Foundation's mission to build capacity in science and research in Qatar from a young age as part of a commitment towards realising the Qatar National Vision 2030.

To explain the programme, Dr Eman Fituri, Director of Educational Initiatives at QCRI, said: "By organising our first 'Coding is Cool' workshop, we hope to inspire and educate young people about the importance of being able to code by demonstrating some of the technologies that are being developed at QCRI, and also by giving them hands-on experience with the power of code that works at the back end of those demonstrations."

Professor Daniela Rus, Director of CSAIL, a great proponent of introducing programming as part of the school system, was the keynote speaker. The event featured two inspiring presentations by Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar Alumni Hanan Alshikhabobakr – a 2013 Google scholarship recipient and founder of Qatar Robotics Institute for Development; and Ahmad Al-Salama, who works at GE, leading efforts to rollout enterprise resource planning systems across different sites in the Middle East North Africa region.

Highlights of the event included demonstration sessions, where students were given the opportunity to meet and interact with researchers, ask questions, and gather first-hand knowledge of the latest technological innovations made possible by programming.

The demos showcased current research underway at QCRI, including a Braille keyboard – an application for smartphones that helps the visually impaired to type quickly and efficiently; a Kinect-based programme for exercise for the elderly based on fitness level; a state-of-the-art automated transcription system for Modern Standard Arabic (QCRI Advanced Transcription System – QATS); and the MicroMappers platform for rapidly assessing humanitarian disaster damage and the resulting needs, and advanced 3D video applications. Students were also able to see a live demonstration of cube robots and printable robots developed at CSAIL.

One of the students commented: “I liked the little robot squares that could hook onto each other. I think that this simple robot can actually be used in many ways to help out with everyday tasks. I enjoyed seeing how that worked and I would like to learn how to use and make it myself.”

The eight schools that participated were: Tarek bin Ziad Independent Secondary School for Boys, Jassim bin Hamad Independent Secondary School for Boys, Rawda bint Mohamed Independent Secondary School for Girls, Omar bin Al-Khattab Independent School for Boys, Qatar Canadian School, Debakey High School, Qatar Academy Academic Bridge Program, and ACS International School.

The event was part of a number of youth outreach programmes organised by QCRI. It recently held a student-focused hands-on workshop in machine learning and data analytics in coordination with the Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.

QCRI’s 2015 summer internship programme, now accepting applications, offers local university students the opportunity to develop their innovation and technical skills in a hands-on environment, working on real world problems. More information can be found on the QCRI website www.qcri.qa/join-us.

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About QCRI

Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) is a national research institute established by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar's transformation from a hydrocarbon-based economy to knowledge-based economy.

As a principal constituent of Qatar Foundation Research and Development, QCRI supports Qatar Foundation's mission to build Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by focusing on large-scale computing challenges that address national priorities for growth and development.

In doing this, QCRI conducts world-class multidisciplinary computing research that is relevant to the needs of Qatar, the wider Arab region, and the world. It performs cutting-edge research in such areas as Arabic language technologies, social computing, data analytics, and cloud computing.

The research conducted at QCRI is aligned with the Qatar National Research Strategy and supports the strategic priorities outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030. For more information, please visit www.qcri.qa.

About CSAIL

The Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory – known as CSAIL – is the largest research laboratory at MIT and one of the world's most important centers of information technology research.

CSAIL and its members have played a key role in the computer revolution. The Lab's researchers have been key movers in developments like time-sharing, massively parallel computers, public key encryption, the mass commercialization of robots, and much of the technology underlying the ARPANet, Internet and the World Wide Web.

CSAIL members (former and current) have launched more than 100 companies, including 3Com, Lotus Development Corporation, RSA Data Security, Akamai, iRobot, Meraki, ITA Software, and Vertica. The Lab is home to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), directed by Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the Web and a CSAIL member.

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation 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. Qatar Foundation was co-founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.