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NU-Q media use and mobile innovation research draws US\$1.5 million plus in funding

Growing research program gets strong support from the Qatar National Research Fund

Doha, Qatar, 2 June 2014 –Northwestern University in Qatar recently won two significant National Priorities Research Program grants through the Qatar National Research Program. The winning projects—entitled *Media Use in the Arab Gulf: A Longitudinal Study* and *Content Innovation Strategies for Mobile Media in Qatar*—were among 162 awards selected from nearly 800 proposals submitted.

The grants—totalling more than US\$1.5 million—come as NU-Q continues to develop its institutional research program, based on university-wide projects and collaborations with other research institutions.

“Northwestern University in Qatar’s growing research programs represent our commitment to creating knowledge about media in a region which has traditionally been studied by outsiders looking in,” said Everette E. Dennis, Dean and CEO of NU-Q. “These grants emphasize the value of systematic research in solving practical problems—both of our awarded studies help us understand media audiences and messages better. The mobile content study could be quite important in terms of technology advances.”

The first grant of nearly US\$850,000 will support the continuation of NU-Q’s two-year running survey on media use in the Middle East (reports and interactive data available at mideastmedia.org). For the three-year grant period, an NU-Q research team—involving Dennis, lead principal investigator, and co-principal investigators Justin Martin, NU-Q assistant professor in residence and Robb Wood, NU-Q’s media and external development strategist—will continue research across Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as representatives of the Arab Gulf region. In addition, the university aims to continue surveying countries outside the Gulf, such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia, which were included in this year's study.

“By continuing this as an annual study, we will be able to provide a consistent source of reliable information and insight that can be used by scholars, industry professionals, policymakers, or anyone with an interest in media use in the region,” said Robb Wood.

The second grant, which exceeds US\$700,000, was awarded to a project that will probe innovation strategies around mobile media—folding in computer science methodology around big data analysis and media studies to create a model for the innovation of mobile

media content. Currently leading the study is John Pavlik (lead principal investigator), an expert on the impact of journalism, media and society based at Rutgers University, who will join co-principal investigators Everette E. Dennis and Rachel Davis Mersey, associate professor at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism.

Findings will be based on data from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) collected through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as surveys and interviews to fully grasp users' interaction with mobile and social media.

The project paves ways to public education and engagement via mobile media, promoting advances in entrepreneurial and business innovation to support economic growth in media, and setting a research baseline in mobile media content development and diffusion.

"We are proud of this study because Qatar will benefit greatly from it," said Klaus Schoenbach, NU-Q's associate dean for research. "Moreover, the study investigates the possibilities of mobile communication, which is particularly widespread in the region. The results serve useful goals in society. In addition, because of its pioneering character, the project is extremely interesting globally."

"Through investing in projects that are aligned with the pillars of the Qatar National Research Strategy, QNRF supports researchers in Qatar and builds the nation's capacity in research," said Dr. Abdul Sattar Al-Taie, QNRF Executive Director. "Social sciences, arts and humanities constitute one of the pillars of the Qatar National Research Strategy, and funding research in these fields is an important component to achieving a knowledge based economy in Qatar."

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About Northwestern University in Qatar

Northwestern University in Qatar draws from its parent organization, Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), a distinguished history, famous programs and an exceptional faculty. Founded in partnership with Qatar Foundation, NU-Q provides a framework through which students explore the world and, ultimately, shape its future through its distinguished schools of communication, journalism, and liberal arts.