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NU-Q dean, faculty participate in AmCham event

Doha, Qatar – January 29, 2017 – Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) participated in its third American Chamber of Commerce in Qatar (AmCham Qatar) panel on the US presidential elections. With previous panels analyzing the presidential primaries and pre-election polls in key states, the final installment offered insights into the lessons learned from the election season, the rise of fake news, and the responsibility of the media.

The discussion titled “Post Election Predications and the Unknowable Future,” which was moderated by Everette E. Dennis, dean and CEO of NU-Q, featured returning panelist Jocelyn S. Mitchell, assistant professor in residence; as well as new panelists Craig LaMay, associate professor in residence; and Ali Mustafa, visiting faculty member and digital journalist at TRT World.

In opening comments to the session, Dennis noted that it has been a “very tumultuous ride from the election forward. With a very unusual post-election period, there have been many questions regarding the future and whom it might affect.”

Starting with the scrutiny pollsters have come under, after numerous sources such as the BBC, *The New York Times*, and polling aggregation website FiveThirtyEight predicted a clear victory for Hillary Clinton, the panel discussed lessons from the election.

“There’s a difference between raw data and the interpretation of that data,” Mitchell said. “The lesson I’m taking away from this election is to ask how I can expand my own interpretations of the data.”

LaMay, who has worked with the Commission on Presidential Debates, said that journalists should no longer moderate discussions between nominees. “The debates are the only place in the campaign where the candidates talk to each other so I’d rather see experts in their fields ask candidates about specific policies,” he added. He pointed to Northwestern University President Morton O. Schapiro as an example of someone who could moderate a debate on education.

Addressing the role of fake news in the US presidential elections, digital journalist Mustafa said that traditional sources of news no longer play a central role in informing the public. “Thanks to the smartphone, there’s been a lot more liberalization on the coverage of elections, eliminating any need for the journalist’s function of disseminating news,” Mustafa said.

President Trump’s unconventional reliance on social media has also proved challenging for the media. The panelists were unanimous in recommending a revolutionized approach in how the public should be informed of policies affecting them. “Traditional stories do find their way to the public’s attention, but journalists need to flip the script and change the way they think about reporting on the White House,” LaMay said.

Robert Hager, president of AmCham Qatar also noted that Qatar is well positioned for the Trump administration. This administration knows Doha very well. US President Donald Trump himself visited Doha and toured The Pearl-Qatar a few years ago. His National Security Adviser Lieutenant General Michael Flynn and many of the generals and members of the Trump cabinet have been in Qatar.”

-ENDS-

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](#).