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Qatari students invent solutions and design apps during workshops to encourage innovation

More than 35 Qatari school students unleashed their inner inventors and entrepreneurs recently as part of two weeklong academic enrichment workshops organized by Texas A&M University at Qatar and sponsored by Maersk Oil Qatar.

Qatar Invents, an intensive engineering invention and design experience, engaged students in hands-on projects that pushed their innovation, creativity and communication skills. Students developed novel solutions to energy and health care challenges, and then they built prototypes to demonstrate their inventions. The program was designed to motivate students in science and engineering while teaching skills essential to becoming leaders in engineering and innovation.

Participant Rowan Darwish Alshebani said her experience with the STEM programs was a worthwhile way to spend her school break, and her work on an engineering notebook taught her to organize her thoughts. “A lot of people tell me I’m hard-headed, but I’ve learned from this program that you have to respect other people’s opinions and take them into consideration,” she said. “My favorite thing about this program was the engineering notebook — just being able to write your notes and design this whole thing and build it, it’s pretty awesome.”

In App Camp, students worked in teams to design and develop an iOS app. They learned how to code, prototype, test and refine their ideas along the way. Apps developed by the students included a fitness app; a digital personal trainer linked into Qatar’s fitness sector, including gyms and nutrition specialists; a fashion design app featuring a digital tailor that helps create clothing that not available in stores; a trivia game about Qatar and its traditions; and a cultural app with information for tourists about Qatar’s culture and attractions, language and more.

Qatar Invents and App Camp are part of the *Dhia: Engineering Leaders* initiative, a partnership between Texas A&M at Qatar and Maersk Oil Qatar. Dhia delivers

strategic educational outreach programs to motivate young Qataris to choose educational pathways for careers in fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and supports both teachers and students through a broad portfolio of programs and workshops.

Dr. César O. Malavé, dean of Texas A&M at Qatar, said these outreach programs helped young students understand the importance of engineering in Qatar.

“From energy to health care, engineering is everywhere. Engineers have helped propel Qatar to be a world leader in energy, and engineers and inventors are needed in Qatar to meet the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030,” he said. “Each of these students has the potential to be a future innovation leader in Qatar. They have seen how engineering can help us solve problems people face every day, and I hope they have learned a lot and enjoyed their time with us.”

Jassim Al Khor, deputy head of subsurface at Maersk Oil Qatar, said the company’s support of STEM educational initiatives such as Qatar Invents and App Camp were crucial in giving the youth of Qatar an insight into the exciting opportunities offered in science and inspire them in pursuing STEM disciplines.

“Maersk Oil Qatar is proud to be Texas A&M University Qatar’s strongest partner in education and outreach, and to support the Dhia program,” Al Khor said. “We believe passionately that science and engineering skills are extremely important for any successful society and economy and we are dedicated to promote and develop young people STEM subjects and to leave a long-term legacy for the benefit of the Qatar.”

Mohammed Sultan Al-Muhannadi, father of Qatar Invents participant Sultan Muhannadi, thanked Texas A&M at Qatar for opening its doors to students and letting them learn from their own knowledge and scientific capabilities.

“It’s good that they’re having these programs while these students are still young so they can decide what fields they want to go into when they graduate. It gives them clarity on what they want to do,” he said. “They will help the country in achieving the 2030 National Vision goals that Qatar has set forth that will help move forward the wheels of industry and business going into the future.”

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About Texas A&M University at Qatar

Texas A&M University, recognized as having one of the premier engineering programs in the world, has offered undergraduate degrees in chemical engineering, electrical and computer engineering, mechanical engineering and petroleum engineering at Qatar Foundation’s Education City campus since 2003, and graduate degrees in chemical engineering since fall 2011. Texas A&M at Qatar has awarded more than 750 degrees since 2007. In addition to engineering courses, Texas A&M at Qatar provides classes in science, mathematics, liberal arts and the humanities. All four of the engineering programs offered at Texas A&M at Qatar are accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET. The curricula offered at

Texas A&M at Qatar are materially the same as those offered at the main campus in College Station, Texas, and the courses in Doha are taught in English in a co-educational setting. The reputation for excellence is the same, as is the commitment to equip engineers to lead the next generation of engineering advancement. Faculty from around the world are attracted to Texas A&M at Qatar to provide this educational experience and to participate in research activities now valued at more than \$236.4 million, and that address issues important to the State of Qatar. Visit www.qatar.tamu.edu.