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## **Texas A&M at Qatar PREP Program Drives Marked Improvement In Incoming Students' Math Skills**

*Pathways for Retention in Engineering Programs (PREP) helps freshmen succeed in their first semester of university*

Qatari engineering students enrolling at Texas A&M University at Qatar posted significant improvements in their mathematics knowledge and skills through Pathways for Retention in Engineering Programs (PREP), according to examination scores at the conclusion of the program.

Overall, the students improved their exam scores by an average of more than 40 percent from the beginning to the end of the program, reflecting the success of the initiative.

The PREP course, which ran 31 July through 11 Aug., was taught by Dr. Sandra Nite of Aggie STEM and the Department of Mathematics at Texas A&M's main campus in College Station, Texas, USA.

PREP is part of the Dhia: Engineering Leaders initiative, a partnership between Texas A&M at Qatar and longtime collaborator, Maersk Oil Qatar, that aims to help young Qataris to choose and succeed in educational pathways in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which are critical to the success of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

PREP was designed for incoming freshmen who sought to improve their math skills before starting university engineering studies. The program comprised intense instruction in math topics such as functions, trigonometry, linear systems and mechanics.

However, as Nite explained, "It's more than just getting them through that placement exam. We want to really give them the foundation they need to be successful throughout the engineering mathematics sequence."

Nite also commented on the progress that the students have made, noting, "They are very engaged and have been improving. They are getting a better idea of the underlying concepts of the work that they were doing."

In addition to the math course, the students took academic success seminars designed to enhance their study skills and habits, while also introducing them to the numerous on-campus academic resources they will have at their disposal.

Alreem Al-Hajri, an incoming student in chemical engineering, shared the same sentiment. "This program will not only improve our math scores but also give us an easier time adapting to the university atmosphere," Al-Hajri said.

Al-Hajri said she appreciated the opportunity to adjust to an English-speaking school at the university level.

Al-Hajri said, "At first, I was terrified of going to university, but now after the program, I feel much more relaxed and prepared. I know that when I begin classes with other professors, I will know what they are talking about and understand the way they speak."

Nite said she was happy to have experienced teaching students in Qatar. "I enjoyed seeing them be able to talk about and describe things they have learned," she said. "It's always fun to be able to see students pick up on something or see a gap that gets filled."

Al-Hajri said it was important for them participate in this program, adding that PREP helped her remember many important math concepts. She also said they enjoyed Nite as instructor, saying that she helped them think outside of the box and was always available to answer questions or give extra help when needed.

"I think every freshman who has the opportunity to take this course should take it," Al-Hajri said.

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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 735 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](http://www.qatar.tamu.edu).