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VCUQatar's Graduates Step Into the Future at 2017 Commencement

VCUQatar held its 2017 Commencement Ceremony on May 1 at the HBKU Student Center, and it was by all accounts a resounding success.

It was made memorable by inspiring and touching speeches that were given by faculty, graduates, and the keynote speaker at the event that brought together families, friends, faculty and staff to celebrate the accomplishments of VCUQatar's graduates.

Dr. Michael Rao, the President of Virginia Commonwealth University told the students: "I congratulate our Class of 2017. You offer fervent hope that the world can be whatever we imagine. I encourage you to think about how you can make the world more beautiful in ways big and small."

The university conferred 50 Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees in fashion design, graphic design, interior design, painting and printmaking, and art history, and four Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in design. The 16th Commencement brings the number of VCUQatar alumni to 620.

Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, the Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), was the keynote speaker at the ceremony.

"VCU-Q has established a homegrown ecosystem right here in Doha - an ecosystem that promotes, develops and rewards innovation in art and design. The success of this mission is embodied in each member of the Class of 2017." Her Excellency said.

Each year at Commencement, special recognition is given to individuals whose careers and values have done much to enhance the quality of life of communities around the world. This year, VCUQatar presented the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to Dana Shell Smith, United States Ambassador to the State of Qatar, for her ongoing commitment and support to Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, and for her overall dedication to being an advocate for Arts and Humanities.

"On behalf of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, it is my pleasure to congratulate the class of 2017. Their hard work has driven them to the finish line of their studies at VCUQatar, and will push them towards the commencement of their professional careers, and the path to an endless array of possibilities. It is also a great honor to bestow upon U.S. Ambassador Dana Shell

Smith, Virginia Commonwealth University's highest form of recognition, the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. She has been a steadfast supporter of the arts and humanities, and remained dedicated to encouraging Qatar's youth to read, write and think critically about important topics in society, while improving their English literacy skills through the Young Writers Program," said Dr. Akel I. Kahera, the Dean of VCUQatar.

The Class of 2017 Valedictorian Alisha Rehan Saiyed, and Salutatorian Radheya A. Visperas gave a well-received and speech in which they thanked their families, fellow graduates, friends, faculty and staff.

"Remember that this is not the end, just the beginning. And if you work really hard and are lucky, you might find success. If you're really lucky, you'll find purpose. And when you have a purpose to pursue, your failures and successes no longer define you and they no longer hold you back," Alisha told her fellow graduates.

About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:

VCUQatar is the international branch campus of Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts, a top-ranked art and design program in the U.S. Established in 1998 through a partnership with Qatar Foundation, VCUQatar offers students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in fashion design, graphic design, interior design and painting and printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design.

A vibrant community with global reach, VCUarts promises students a lifelong passion for and conversation about the arts. As the foremost example of its commitment to global outreach and education, VCUQatar presents valuable opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and connects VCUarts to the influential art and design world of the Middle East. The campus attracts renowned contributors to contemporary visual culture for speaking and teaching engagements, and hosts two major international events--the design conference Tasmeeem Doha and the Hamad bin Khalifa Islamic Art Symposium.

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization 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. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, QF is chaired by 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 commercializing 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.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>