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Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) Celebrates its 15th Commencement Ceremony for the Class of 2016

Doha, Qatar – Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) held its 2016 Commencement Ceremony on May 2 at the HBKU Student Center, conferring 55 Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees in fashion, graphic, interior design, painting and printmaking, and art history, and seven Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in design. This brought the total number of VCUQatar alumni to 566.

The 15th Commencement Ceremony brought together families, friends, faculty and staff to celebrate the accomplishments of VCUQatar's graduates.

Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa, Chairperson of Qatar Museums who guides the vision for future museums and cultural projects in Qatar , honored the students with her presence at the ceremony.

Dr. Gail Hackett, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, in her address to the graduates said: “Through you, the world will come to know this region for its profound advances in art and culture and innovation.”

Dr. Hackett advised the graduates that failure should be expected as they joined the world of work, because they would have to take risks if they wanted to succeed. “Make failure your springboard and keep going,” she insisted, “because failure is just another word for experience.”

The keynote speaker was Arnold Wasserman, the chairman of the Idea Factory, an innovation consultancy based in Singapore and San Francisco. He began his keynote speech by asking the graduates to consider the concept of future.

“Is the future simply whatever happens to us next? Or is it something we deliberately create?” he said. “The future you are graduating into is an exponential future.”

“What that means is that everything is happening faster and at an accelerating rate. For example, human knowledge is doubling every 12 months. And that curve is accelerating. An IBM researcher foresees that within a few years, knowledge will be doubling every 12 hours as we build out the Internet of things globally.”

This, Wasserman explained, means innovation and design will have to grow accordingly.

“Design gives the tangible form to valuable ideas,” he said, and he encouraged the graduates to design solutions for global peace, food, water and natural resource security, universal health and well-being, justice, equity, life-long learning, creative opportunity and sustainable prosperity.

Mark Bermejo, the Class of 2016 Valedictorian and Wurood Azzam, Salutatorian addressed the audience. “Today we graduate as designers and join the artists that made the world more beautiful, lovelier and more meaningful to live in. Let us create and innovate new designs and not just cut and paste, unless we cut out the limitations and paste our designs that improve current issues,” Bermejo stated.

Bermejo has a long VCUQatar family history. His brother studied graphic design and his sister studied fashion design at VCUQatar.

Following the speeches, Provost Hackett presented the graduates of the MFA degree with their diplomas. VCUQatar Dean Akel I. Kahera then presented the graduates of the BFA and BA degrees with their diplomas. Dean of the VCU Honors College, Dr. Barry Falk honored the nine students who completed the vigorous program to graduate from VCU Honors College.

The ceremony marked the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance on the part of the BFA, BA, and MFA graduates. At the same time it celebrated the beginning of their venture into the highly complex and exponentially growing professional world of art and design.

About Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar:

VCUQatar is the Qatar campus of the prestigious Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia. 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 & printmaking, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design.

In addition to a comprehensive annual public events program that includes a wide range of exhibitions, lectures and fashion events, the University hosts the biennial international

design conference Tasmeem and the biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Islamic Art Symposium, attracting globally recognized designers, academics and thinkers while fostering sustainable, university-community partnerships that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of Qatar. For more information please visit www.qatar.vcu.edu

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>