

# VCUarts Qatar grads step into the future at commencement ceremony

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) recently held its 18th annual Commencement ceremony at the HBKU Student Center in Education City.

The ceremony 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 VCUarts Qatar's graduates, according to a press statement. By all accounts, the ceremony was "a resounding success", the statement noted.

Dr Michael Rao, president of Virginia Commonwealth University, told the students: "You are creative scholars who embody the very best of our university and illuminate the very meaning of our humanity. I know you will use your vast talents to benefit humankind."

The Commencement's keynote speaker, Qatari contemporary composer, songwriter and symphonic artiste Dana Alfardan, said: "Today, you are stepping onto a new platform; a global marketplace where your talents and skill represent your international currency, and art the international language."

Class of 2019 co-valedictorians Hind Ghanim al-Saad and Yeon Geong Hwang, both graphic design graduates, gave a well-received speech in which they thanked their families, fellow graduates, friends and faculty, and looked forward to what comes next.

"All of you make up our community, and because we were surrounded by you, we grew as people, developed ways of seeing, thinking and reflecting, which completely shifted our perspectives of the world, we started to notice all the small details and see all the con-



VCUarts Qatar graduates with officials at the ceremony.

nections. It was a creative community of like-minded people, and that was our creative fuel, which made us grow and develop further as creatives, by allowing new perspectives to come in," Hind said.

"We deeply appreciate that we had such an amazing batch as classmates and friends for the last four years. This batch had inspiring energy - that never sought to give up - and it brought us here today. It would've been a very different experience without every single one of you. We also want to thank the often hidden and often less noticed staff of our

university. And last but certainly not least, we thank our amazing faculty. Sometimes I think our faculty suffers a bit more than us, and for that, we are very thankful," Yeon added.

The university conferred 68 Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees in fashion design, graphic design, interior design, painting and printmaking, and art history, and eight Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in design. Nearly 60% of the graduating students are Qatari.

One can find out more about VCUarts Qatar at [qatar.vcu.edu](http://qatar.vcu.edu)



Dana Alfardan was the keynote speaker.



Dr Michael Rao addressing the gathering.

## Local businesses 'improved' despite blockade on Qatar

Business establishments in Qatar are generally optimistic about the future in terms of the general working conditions in the country, as local markets have "improved dramatically" after being able to reach new markets and suppliers, the findings of a new study on the impact of the blockade reveal.

Qatar University (QU), represented by the Social and Economic Research Institute (Sesri) and the College of Business and Economics (CBE), in collaboration with the Qatar Finance and Business Academy (QFBA), conducted the study, titled 'Blockade on Business: A Survey of Qatar's Financial and Industrial Firms'.

The study focused on the industrial and financial sectors, using the highest scientific research methodology, to identify the initial and ongoing effects of the blockade on the functioning of the companies as well as their outlook for the future.

### QU announces results of study, 'Blockade on Business: A Survey of Qatar's Financial and Industrial Firms'

"Qatar's economy has performed remarkably well despite the challenges of the blockade. However, more information is needed to view how the embargo has affected Qatar's business community, how firms have navigated these challenges, and what policymakers can do to help firms to succeed," QU said in a statement yesterday.

The goal of the study is to obtain firm-level assessments of Qatar's business environment, employment and labour markets, trade and logistics, and finance and investment conditions. The results will facilitate economic analysis that will inform key decision makers as they develop policies to support Qatar's industrial and financial sectors.

This study will provide a baseline data for what could, in the future, become a regular survey to track firms' views over time, the statement noted.

The Sesri event where QU representatives announced the results of the study was attended by Qatar University president Dr Hassan al-Derham and QFBA CEO Dr Khalid al-Horr.

Sesri director Dr Hassan Abdulrahim al-Sayed spoke at the event and emphasised the importance of the study in forming a comprehensive picture about the effects of the blockade on the economic sector.

Manager of the Policy Department



The event was attended by QU president Dr Hassan al-Derham and QFBA CEO Dr Khalid al-Horr.



Dr Hassan Abdulrahim al-Sayed



Dr Majed Mohamed al-Ansari

at Sesri, Dr Majed Mohamed al-Ansari, gave a presentation, which included a set of recommendations for decision makers.

Al-Ansari said the results showed that in terms of general working conditions in Qatar, companies are generally positive and optimistic about the future, as local markets have "improved dramatically" and been able to reach new markets and suppliers. However, some companies have lost business due to the blockade, it was observed.

The opinion of financial companies was more positive about the impact of the blockade than industrial companies, with 69% of financial companies stating that the impact of the blockade on business revenues was "neutral" and, conversely, only 22% of industrial companies said their revenues remained the same as before the blockade, the study showed.

In addition, 46% of companies in the industrial sector reported an increase in demand for their products, with the

exception of the construction sector, where demand remained low.

Looking at the supply chains and the import and export capacity of Qatar, companies experienced some difficulties; however, 63% of companies reported being able to find alternative countries in a very short period of time (less than five months).

In addition, al-Ansari said policymakers should look at success stories as well as challenges, building on the strengths and creativity of Qatar's business community. They should continue to look for ways to enhance business flexibility to access import sources and export destinations.

The government should also encourage an effective response to future dialogue between the business community, it is suggested.

Finally, it is recommended to investigate the reasons why industrial companies and financial companies differ in their perception of the financial circumstances in the country.

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