Dear Alumni and Professional Associates,

Qatar is becoming one of the world’s most dynamic and fastest growing economies, almost tripling in size from 2005. It is the wealthiest nation per capita GDP, and plans to rapidly develop the country’s economy and infrastructure. Following the successful bid for the 2022 World Cup, Qatar has implemented a National Vision, aimed at strengthening its position as a world leading economy by 2030.

As further underscored in the QNV 2030, Qatar is at a crossroads. The country’s abundant wealth creates previously undreamt of opportunities and formidable challenges. Among the challenges, the preservation of cultural traditions takes center stage. This is a condition that confronts many societies in a rapidly globalizing and increasingly interconnected world. Then, the biggest question for us, in academia in general, and in the interior design department specifically, is what are the strategies and methodologies to be adopted to ensure such balanced growth—connecting and balancing the old and the new.
While there is no prompt answer to the present question, the interior design program is taking small strides to facilitate the preparation of future designers to address the present challenges. Our first strategy was to successfully establish an advisory board that includes 12 representatives, including architecture and interior architecture design firms, art institutions, governmental organizations, and alumni. The purpose of the advisory board is to bridge the gap between industry and academic practices, but above all it is to acquaint faculty and students with local cultural influences. Our second strategy is to ensure that our students are getting appropriate pedagogic tools to address today's needs and tomorrow's emerging trends. For this objective, as we are the sole CIDA accredited program outside the U.S, we derive our strategy from the Council for Interior Design Accreditation guidelines and overall literature.

In its recent study, Environmental Scan Study, 2015, CIDA identified areas of skill and knowledge that designers will need in the future to successfully practice the profession of interior design. The study findings underscored the following themes that will be a driving force for the future of the interior design disciplines: smart buildings, sustainable construction, integrated project delivery (IPD) and BIM, 3D modeling and printing, integration of nature—biophilic environments, privacy and security, inclusive design—special needs, megatall buildings, and changing environments.

Building on the recently established advisory board council and the CIDA environmental study scan findings, relative to the future of the discipline, I am delighted about our ambitious and expanding prospects and I look forward to partner with you for a future full of success and excellence.

Best regards,
Dr. Amor
**Senior Showcase 2015**

The Interior Design Senior Showcase is the exhibition of our students’ four years design innovation and excellence. The event took place the first week of May and attracted the attention of HBKU institutions, local community, media, and Virginia Commonwealth University dignitaries. The event was held in conjunction with the VCUQatar BFA & MFA Exhibition, a celebration of the creative achievements of VCU-Q graduating students in the fields of graphic, fashion & interior design, painting & printmaking, and design studies.

Work by graduating senior Najd Al-Mesned
Establishment of the IDES Advisory Board

We are so delighted for the establishment the IDES program Advisory Board! The establishment of the board is so critical for the accomplishment of many of the IDES activities. The purpose of the advisory board is to support the program pedagogically and to support outreach activities. For instance, this board is already providing hands-on projects, serving as guest critiques, guest lectures (expertize on local codes and emerging industry trends), and facilitating outreach needs. The board will meet three times a year with the department chair and ID faculty. The board is constituted of 4 international design firms, 4 local design firms (mostly IDES alumni) and 4 local institutions that are dealing with art, design, and architecture, including but not limited to Ashghal-Public Work Authority, QF-Capital Projects, etc. The board operates under well-established by-laws. In our first meeting that was held January 29, 2015 the board elected our first advisory board officers to include Mr. Yusif Albaker—Chair, Mayes Al-Thani—Vice Chair, and Modesty St. John-Scribe; thank you all for assuming these responsibilities.

Zwara Event - Open House

On an annual basis, Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar opens its doors to the community, including but not limited to prospective students, industry representatives, art/design associates, and other stakeholders. This year’s event, titled Zwara, was held Saturday, November 1st and attracted a large number of visitors. Zwara is designed to expose the community to diverse art and design activities, exhibitions, workshops, presentations and tours. The Interior Design department display highlighted creativity, technology, and innovation. The student-led exhibition was a great success. The sophomore students hosted the ‘Ideate’ experience: an interactive ‘What if Wall’, The junior students hosted the ‘Create’ experience: ‘Design craft’, a real life version of Minecraft. Finally, the senior students represented a ‘Communicate’ experience with a Show-and-tell of their work.
Tasmeem 2015: It is 3ajeeb!

This year’s Tasmeem Doha Biennial international conference focused on the theme of “playfulness” as expressed by the Arabizi word 3ajeeb! (ahh-jhee-b) meaning “strange in a strange way, cool in a cool way, and slightly weird in a slightly weird way”.

Besides a plethora of art and design activities, the Tasmeem event included workshops and Tasmeem in the classroom activities. The event featured 25 workshops led by multidisciplinary artists, designers, architects, performers, and musicians. The Tasmeem in the classroom event brought together students and faculty at VCU, Richmond and Doha, to explore the theme of 3ajeeb! creating a variety of art/design compositions that innovatively addressed the conference theme.

The Interior Design program was involved in the workshops as well as the Tasmeem in the classroom through projects such as “3ajeeb! as a Retail Concept” and “Gamification of Pedagogy in Art and Design”. The first project 3ajeeb! as a Retail Concept was a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach, bringing together Interior Design and Graphic Design disciplines, aimed to better reflect the atmosphere and team dynamics commonly found in contemporary design studios and to foster a better understanding and appreciation of related design disciplines. The second project, The Gamification of Pedagogy, aimed at blending gamification pedagogy with industry partnership to enhance competitiveness and innovation. For more details and illustration of these activities, see http://www.tasmeemdoha.com/intheclassroom

One of the workshops called “Tokyo Maker” was a collaboration with designers in Japan. Design compositions were made in one country and 3D printed in the other country.

In another workshop students were building a bamboo-bike
Partnership with Interiors Qatar Exhibition: Student Design Competition

Interiors Qatar Exhibition in partnership with the IDES program developed a student design competition that attracted the lighting and color class and the furniture class. This competition stipulated that the recipients of the awards will have their design products—light fixtures and outdoor sitting—prototyped by well-established manufacturers. The competition guidelines underscored the necessity to address 1) appropriateness and context, 2) creativity and innovation, and 3) aesthetics and presentation. The judging required a two-step evaluation process; the first step included VCU-Q program chairs/associates to rank the best three design compositions, and the second step included IQ exhibition designers/associates to finalize the ranking. Our award winning students included Mark Bermejo, Theekshani Perera, and Asma Alnaimi for the Light Fixture Design; and Sara Khider, Dhika Khaira, and Yasmeen Khan for the Bench Design. The IQ Exhibition organizers are in the process to assign manufacturers to prototype the winning student designs.

Light Middle East Conference

Twelve of our Interior Design Junior students attended the 2014 Light Middle East Exhibition/Conference that was held in Dubai, November 4-6. Light Middle East 2014 featured 325 exhibitors showcasing a huge range of international brands. The three-day event offered a comprehensive interactive platform for manufacturers, architects, designers, consultants, engineers, construction companies, hospitality industry professionals, government officials and more. Students expanded their knowledge of emerging trends in lighting design. Other benefits included seeing the latest products in light fixtures, illumination sources, security systems, and communication electronics. Students were able to speak with exhibitors & lighting experts which provided networking opportunities for future professional endeavors. The exhibition was well visited by students, educators, industry representatives, and other stakeholders.
HBKU President Award: Noha Fahmy Awardee!

The President’s Award is created to recognize the achievement and excellence of graduating Education City students. Beyond recognizing the academic achievements of students, the award aims to acknowledge students who worked to make a difference on campus and those who made a deep commitment to improve their surroundings. The award is given to students who combined academic excellence with other achievements in areas like, but not limited to, student leadership, community service, arts, career achievements, and research.

Among 19 distinguished seniors from HBKU/Education City institutions, Noha Fahmy, IDES Senior, was one of the recipients of the award. Since the establishment of VCU-Q, this is the second time the college is awarded the HBKU President Award. This is a wonderful indicator of VCU-Q academic excellence! Congratulations to Noha for the present exceptional distinction!

Creative Achievement and Potential Award: Arab Engineering Bureau

This is the second year since this award has been initiated. This year’s recipient of the Arab Engineering Bureau Award for Creative Achievement and Potential is junior student Mark Bermejo. The AEB award aims to help junior students recognize their true potential, create leadership and encourage them to continue developing their skills through their senior year.

Congratulations to Noha and Mark for your wonderful accomplishments. At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge our sincere salutations and appreciations to CEO and Chief Architect Ibrahim M. Jaidah for his continuous and generous support for the interior design program.
Excellence in Interior Design Award: Arab Engineering Bureau

Noha Olivia Fahmy is the IDES recipient of the AEB Award for Design Excellence. This award was instituted nine years ago by AEB’s CEO and Chief Architect, Mr. Ibrahim M. Jaidah. The Arab Engineering Bureau Award for Excellence in Interior Design is awarded to graduating seniors who have exhibited consistent achievement in: professionalism, leadership, the ability to exert a positive influence on students, work ethic, conceptual ability, realization, innovation and presentation. This distinction takes a huge commitment, love, and admiration of the art and design as well as a sustained pattern of excellence, Noha deserves it, Kudos!

Class Marshal: Congratulations Farah Zamri

Farah Zamri is the interior design program 2014-2015 class marshal. The Class Marshal leads his/her classmates in the commencement ceremony and wears a special sash. This is an opportunity to honor a student who has provided outstanding service to the department. Farah was well-esteemed by her professors and student colleagues likewise, congratulations Farah!

Early Researcher Award: Congratulations to Jessica Hammam

I am pleased to share that IDES sophomore Jessica Hammam was the recipient of the Early Researcher Award at the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) conference along with Mohana Rajakumar—author, and Tanya Kane—co-author. The paper “Great Expectations: Women, Education and Marriage in Qatar” outlined how the current generation of Qatari females, many of whom are attending university and preparing for professional fields, are still expected to fulfill traditional gender roles as wives and mothers, and within the same timeframe as their own mothers or grandmothers.
VCU Richmond: Tasmeem in the classroom

Students in IDES 201, taught by Associate Professor Rab McClure, successfully competed in the Tasmeem in the Classroom competition. Their full size prototype, titled Wall Coverall, will be exhibited in the VCUarts Depot Gallery in Richmond, and a stop action film of their project will be simultaneously exhibited in Doha. Students developed proposals for transforming a banal everyday wall into something more dynamic, colorful, engaging, and 3ajeeb! Building on exercises from earlier in the semester that began with potato stamp patterns and evolved into three dimensional scale models of modular building components, students explored ways in which simply conceived, thoughtfully executed modular panels could serve as a new, 3-D alternative to wallpaper. Students began by developing individual proposals, and then formed two- or three-person teams based on complementary or compatible interests. From there students worked alongside the instructor to fabricate a full size prototype of one selected scheme. The full size prototype invites users to play: removing, repositioning, reorienting, reorganizing, and reconfiguring individual panels to form a constantly changing and dynamic wall surface. A stop action film documents the finished result, and the prototype itself provides a playfully cool, strange, slightly weird exhibit.

2015 Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities

Katie Larose, a Senior Interior Design major, was one of two students selected to represent VCUarts at the 2015 Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) Emerging Creatives Student Summit. The summit, titled PULSE, brought together students and researchers from across the country for creative and transdisciplinary collaboration to shape the city of the future.
Open Nite

Free and open to the public, Open Nite is an annual collaborative event involving VCUarts Fashion, Graphic Design, and Interior Design. Visitors are invited to tour design studios, mingle with students and faculty, look at student work, visit the new Green Roof, and this past year, listen to live music by The Low Branches.

VCU ID Alumni Spotlight

Organized by Interim Chair and Associate Professor Christiana Lafazani, the Department of Interior Design offered a series of lectures and presentations last fall, showcasing the many exciting things VCUarts Interior Design alumni are doing professionally. Presenters included Andy Lehman, Liz Reineberg, Therese Lange, and Erin Richardson of BCWH Architects; plus Michelle Mikita, and Melinda Harvey of SMBW Architects.