



The Community College of Qatar New Initiative to Meet Emergent National Educational and Labor Market Goals



A community college can successfully prepare students well for entry-level professional positions in their fields, while also equipping them to pursue higher studies if they choose to do so. Above all, The Community College of Qatar will help us continue towards our goal of developing a modern, world-class education system that is purely Qatari both in principle and in practice.

To meet the current and emergent educational and labor market needs, our nation is embarking on an exciting initiative to create The Community College of Qatar. Community colleges provide students with both a solid educational foundation and critical job training, so they may pursue either further study at a university or a career in a growing industry upon graduation.

Developed on the basis of a study conducted in early 2008, the Executive Board of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) has created a **Community College Steering Committee** to guide the development of the institution primarily on the US Community College model. The “two-year college” concept that acts as a midway home for students transitioning from secondary school to college/university also has roots in other countries under differing names; the committee will also examine and may adopt key innovations that will suit the

educational ethos of this country. Since 1995, the State of Qatar has undertaken significant changes in all sectors of its educational system. Soon after becoming Emir that year, HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani set out to rapidly bring the country into the international mainstream while still preserving the cultural heritage of the people. The use of the nation’s enormous wealth generated from the use of its oil and gas reserves to benefit the populace is by all measures definitely a worthwhile social goal. However, government realized that in order to effectively

achieve this goal, the nation’s education system needed to be poised to provide well-prepared human resource to ensure the economic well being of the nation in the decades ahead.

To meet this goal, new educational developments were initiated with the help of international organizations, side by side with reforms and innovations in existing institutions. Qatar Foundation, which was created in 1995, now hosts six prestigious universities, as well as other educational and social organizations. The Supreme

Education Council (SEC) was initiated in 2002 to bring changes in school education -- to bring about reforms, to encourage innovations within the existing education system, and to create the new Independent schools. The vision for these extraordinary changes came from the leadership. Similarly, the newest initiative under discussion in this article is part of the vision of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned. This new project has the goal of creating **The Community College of Qatar**, which is expected to begin delivery of instruction and training programs by early 2010.

Why is it necessary to create a community college in Qatar?

Reform of education system has encouraged many bright and meritorious students. However, in order to ensure Qatar continues to meet the needs of all students from kindergarten through post secondary education, another institution has to be created. This new institution helps meet the needs of college-bound students by providing encouragement and a supportive homely environment in order to succeed in a career or to move on to a 4-year college. **The Community College of Qatar** will provide the same collegiate environment that has created success stories in the lives and careers of countless of individuals in other countries. Many of these colleges became known for producing well-trained, mid-level professionals for the economic, social and other sectors. Additionally, the US community college has been a "mid-way" station where students gain college credits while getting ready to move (if they choose) to university to obtain

Bachelor's degree programs. **The Community College of Qatar** will be planned to provide the same type of environment and similar services while at the same time, adhering to the culture and heritage of the country.

What are the types of programs that will be offered by this new college?

The focus of the project is to begin offering classes by January 2010. At this time the mission of the college is envisioned to be three-fold:

- **General Education/Liberal Studies (Arts and Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences) programs** leading to one-year certificates and two-year degrees that are accredited and that facilitate the transfer of college credits to universities, applicable towards Bachelor's degrees.
- **Specialized Programs** - in fields such as Engineering Technologies, Medical Studies/Health Sciences, Information Technology and Business/Finance -- These programs will meet the needs of employers as well as be transferable to quality universities to enable students (if they so desire) to obtain Bachelor's degrees.
- **Developmental Studies** -- that will strengthen the knowledge and skills of students to perform well in basic college-level work, while enabling them to acquire transferable credits towards degree programs of their choice.

To ensure rapid development, the Steering Committee will report to the SEC Secretary-General, HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education. Chairing the committee is the former President of Qatar University (QU). Committee members are drawn from the

educational leadership of different sectors of Qatar as well as from business and financial sectors. Meetings have been held and contacts have been established with several leading American community colleges and other global institutions of repute. The Steering Committee is currently in the process of meeting with the leadership of two-year college organizations, noted experts in the educational field, and with the leadership of accreditation/quality assurance organizations. Degree equivalence mechanisms and modalities of articulation agreements with local and overseas universities are also being explored.

Overall, the recent study and findings from other recent studies in education in Qatar indicate a very urgent need for a community college-type of institution in Qatar to meet the current and emergent educational and labor market needs. There is strong support from local universities. The number of high school graduates from all types of schools will increase steadily and representatives of major sectors of the world of work feel that a community college can successfully prepare students well for entry-level professional positions in their fields, while also equipping them to pursue higher studies if they choose to do so. Above all, The Community College of Qatar will help us continue towards our goal of developing a modern, world-class education system that is purely Qatari both in principle and in practice.

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