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Finding Hope: How Georgetown's Campus in Qatar is Educating Diplomats for a New Era



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RKI Network

Kareema Dauod-Akguc (SFS'04, MSFS'05) reflects on her time teaching at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) during a sabbatical from her two-decade-long career as a diplomat at the U.S. Department of State. The views expressed herein are her own.

There is no place like home, and when offered the chance while on sabbatical to return to my alma mater to teach courses on diplomatic tradecraft and Citizen and Multitrack Diplomacy, I gladly accepted. As a graduate of Georgetown University in Washington, DC's BSFS program as well as its MA in Arab Studies program, I relished the opportunity to teach at the Qatar campus, which has a highly diverse student profile of over 50 nationalities with a relatively small student body. While there, I was struck by how homey it felt, its unique character as an educational institution, and the way it was fostering life-long bonds cemented through a commitment to making the world a better place.

A Unique Student Body

The students I taught during my year and a half as a professor at GU-Q were some of the brightest individuals I have ever encountered in any academic or professional setting. They went on to become Rhodes Scholar finalists, were admitted to highly selective graduate programs in the USA and Europe, and have landed prestigious jobs in government, the media, academia, and consulting.

My three classes alone included students from over 20 different nationalities, some of the best of the best from their home countries, who are passionate about public service. Many of my students have seen or witnessed first-hand poverty, destitution, war, and homelessness, but could

envision a better world and came to GU-Q with the drive to “be the change they want to see in the world,” quoting Gandhi. Thanks to the generosity of Qatar Foundation (QF), some of the world’s greatest minds who might otherwise not have opportunities to study at home, let alone abroad, are afforded scholarships to study at GU-Q.

A Commitment to Service

With the support of Qatar, the Georgetown values of *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person, and Community in Diversity seem to be bearing real dividends in the form of students who take world citizenship seriously, are mature and hard-working, and who approach the world’s problems with keen understanding and compassion, driven to give back and “pay it forward.”

Their active research agendas and service projects are truly impressive. Students are granted funding to participate in service-based trips and research projects, attend and present at academic conferences, and even publish papers, an opportunity usually only afforded to Master’s and PhD students in the USA. They also have the opportunity to join faculty and staff in volunteer work with local populations, such as an English language course for civilian evacuees from war-torn countries. Their activities filled me with pride to be affiliated with a university that cares deeply about its community

Unparalleled Access to Diplomats and Networks

Another unique aspect of teaching on the Qatar campus is the way students are immersed in the region's issues and have the opportunity to establish themselves as true experts. Due to the campus's strategic location, it has positioned itself as a leading voice on Middle Eastern issues and relations. In addition, Qatar is home to numerous foreign embassies where students can intern for academic credit. Ambassadors also frequently guest-lecture on campus, including Georgetown's current Ambassador-in-Residence, whom I was fortunate to have speak to my class about diplomatic careers. I also welcomed both the Mexican and U.S. Ambassadors to my courses, and my students had the chance to visit the U.S. Embassy twice and meet with the Ambassador there.

Qatar, and by extension GU-Q, regularly hosts high-profile events in the realms of sports, business, technology, and politics. During my time teaching, students were invited to speak at and were encouraged to network at events with high-level speakers and executives ranging from Georgetown's *Hiwaraat* conferences, to the FIFA World Cup, the Doha Forum, the Qatar Economic Forum, and WebSummit. Being part of Education City's Multiversity, GU-Q students are unique in that they have access to mentorship and teaching from world-renowned faculty not just at GU-Q, but also at Northwestern, Carnegie Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Texas A & M. Yet as members of the greater Hoya family, they still

benefit from Georgetown's vast alumni network around the world.

A Hope for the World

As a result, although I taught my students how to write policy papers and craft campaigns, explaining what we do as diplomats in the field and why foreign relations matter, they taught me so much more about the world we live in, the challenges this generation and future generations will grapple with, and how the Global South and regional blocs fit within the larger context of multilateral diplomacy.

This Spring, I am returning back to service in the diplomatic corps with a full heart. Even if a handful of my students end up joining the global diplomatic ranks as my future colleagues, helping to make foreign policy decisions and spearhead global peace initiatives, I will have contributed to making the world a better place. I found a nurturing and welcoming home at GU-Q, and I am hopeful with GU-Q's students at the helm, the world will become a smaller, more integrated, and peaceful place.