

GU-Q Announces Fatima Yunusa as Third Alumnae in Five Years to Receive Prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University



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Class of 2024 Georgetown University in Qatar graduate Fatima Yunusa (SFS'24), has won the 2026 Rhodes Scholarship – the world's oldest and most competitive international scholarship.

A Nigerian public policy researcher, Fatima is one of three recipients of the 2026 Rhodes Scholarship in West Africa. She is also among more than 30 other Georgetown students and alumni who have received the scholarship, and the third graduate of Georgetown's Qatar campus to receive the award in the past five years, joining the likes of [Khansa Maria \(SFS'21\)](#), and [Asma Shakeel \(SFS'24\)](#).

The scholarship selects promising young people from around the world who demonstrate integrity, leadership, character, intellect and a commitment to service to study at the University of Oxford.

“Fatima's commitment to uplifting others combined with her focus on public policy and public service exemplifies Georgetown's highest ideals, and we look forward to seeing what she will accomplish,” said Georgetown Interim President Robert M. Groves.

As a Rhodes Scholar, Yunusa wants to build on her skills through public policy and public policy research graduate programs in order to advance her home country's national development.

“I'm concerned about poverty eradication, poverty, and how it prevents people from living a life of dignity. My interest in development comes from recognizing that high-quality jobs and opportunities are the most sustainable way for poverty alleviation,” said Fatima, adding: “It's a huge opportunity. I'm excited to learn from people who know public service from around the world.”

Realizing Unfulfilled Potential

Fatima grew up moving across different parts of Nigeria. Along the way, she noticed how highly skilled individuals often lacked meaningful employment opportunities. She also saw people she loved struggle with these challenges in professions that hardly made ends meet. Fatima's experiences made her question what she could do to empower communities to maximize their skills and talents.

“While talent development initiatives exist in the country, they are not sustainable enough to yield the scale of transformation necessary to secure the country's future. Existing initiatives are fragmented across sectors, often outdated, or tied to political administrations rather than lasting

institutional mandates,” she said. “Nigeria must align its talent, market needs, and position within the international economy to advance.”

Through her education, Fatima has sought to acquire the skills needed to reverse this trend and shape Nigerian public policy and economic development.

In high school, she led a team of classmates in an innovation challenge that taught young girls business modeling and coding skills in the context of public policy. After graduating, she attended the African Leadership Academy, a two-year program for talented African students to equip them with leadership, cultural, and critical thinking skills to become changemakers.

At Georgetown, Fatima majored in culture and politics and minored in French while focusing on women and socioeconomic development, particularly the education policy in North Africa and the impact of Nigeria’s Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act on women’s socioeconomic outcomes. She also fostered cultural activities on campus as president of the African Student Association.

Her faculty mentors, including professors of African history Phoebe Musandu and Lynda Iroulo, French professor Damien Tissot, CULP professor Firat Oruc, and curricular advisor Christine Schiwietz enthusiastically recommended her for the scholarship.

“Fatima’s sensational achievement is a milestone for her and a defining moment for our institution,” said Dean Safwan Masri. “It signals the kind of intellectual power Georgetown University in Qatar releases into the world—restless, incisive, and at home with magnitude. Hopefully, Oxford can keep up.”

After graduating with highest honors and earning the Dean’s Medal and Qatar’s Education Excellence Award in 2024, Fatima interned with Libra Philanthropies in New York and collaborated with African nongovernmental organizations on education, economic empowerment and sustainability initiatives.

Fatima currently works at the U.S.-Qatar Business Council in Doha as a programs associate. In her role, she collaborates with the International Finance Corporation and the Qatar Fund for Development on initiatives to harness private sector investment and spur employment for vulnerable populations in developing countries.

She plans to bring all of her experiences to the United Kingdom as a Rhodes Scholar to inform her research. Her goal is to pursue a career that can leverage technology and help young people in Nigeria transition from education to full employment.

“My journey began with the frustration of seeing brilliant people constrained by faulty talent development systems. If we can prepare Nigerians to bridge education and industry, and create scalable innovations, we will accelerate individual and national advancement,” she said. “The Rhodes Scholarship offers the education and network to scale it—ensuring that in my generation, talent in Nigeria will finally be met with the opportunities it deserves.”