The Class of 2009: Stepping into the medical profession
At right: Inside the organic chemistry lab.
Inside back cover: With its sloping ramp leading up to the mezzanine and second floor, the attractive tower in the South Hall is sometimes likened to the Rotunda in the Guggenheim Museum in New York. From the first floor, with its separate prayer rooms for men and women, the ramp gives access to Lecture Halls 3 and 4, and to offices on the upper level.
Highlights of this issue

6
Eleven of WCMC-Q’s medical students spent the summer at Weill Medical College in New York City doing research and enjoying life in the Big Apple, while others began work on an exciting project in Doha.

10
The Class of 2009 took their first steps in the medical profession this fall; we find out what it’s like to put on the white coat and become a medical student.

14
Breaking new ground: The Clinical Skills Center, the first of its kind in the Middle East, is the ideal setting for medical students to practice and develop their skills in patient care.

18
In the spotlight: In our regular feature focusing on the person behind the name, we meet outgoing president of the MSEC-Q, Fouad Otaki.

27
WCMC-Q students are among the most active and versatile participants in Qatar Foundation’s work-study program. We meet supervisors and students to find out more.
Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) celebrates its tenth anniversary this year.

Dedicated to the development of the potential of Qatar’s people, QF was established in 1995 by His Highness the Emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Among its most important projects is Education City, a campus dedicated to the highest quality of education from pre-school to university level, and to the integration of research and industry in a Science and Technology Park. Other on-campus activities include the Doha Debates and a series of celebrity concerts.

The year’s celebrations began with a Symposium organized by Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar in September. Leaders from QF, deans and faculty members from the five universities in Education City met at the Four Seasons Hotel to exchange experiences and debate priorities for the future. Also among the participants were representatives of the Academic Bridge Program and Qatar University.

The meeting was the first to bring together key figures from the institutions in a forum designed to compare notes on the history and educational philosophy of each university (Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, Georgetown, Texas A&M and Virginia Commonwealth) and their approach to bringing programs of education to Qatar.

In break out groups, participants discussed strategies to build closer links among the institutions, promote good citizenship among students, engage with local industry and assess institutional effectiveness. There was also a plea for the institutions to do more to reach out to the wider academic community in Qatar.

Addressing the gathering, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, said that Education City is part of a drive led by His Highness the Emir to harness Qatar’s considerable economic resources to the development of human resources, with emphasis on the fields of education and health.

Her Highness urged Education City institutions to create a collaborative environment and to achieve “substantial outcomes” that could be a benchmark for other developments of this kind, particularly with respect to integration between research, industry and academic centers.

There was support from participants for increasing cooperation among the institutions, with cross-registration of students, introduced on a trial basis this year, cited as an important step. Senior Associate Dean for Education at WCMC-Q, Elizabeth Alger, M.D., F.A.C.P., called for more opportunities for study of the humanities. There was also a call for a School of Liberal Arts to be established on-campus.

Other ways to build a collegial atmosphere were put forward, including the construction of central facilities (e.g. faculty, student clubs); organizing meetings, conferences and lectures for the whole campus; creating an Education City Council; and improving cross-campus electronic communications.

CMC-Q is contributing to the growth of academic collaboration in Qatar, a role illustrated by the recent appointment of assistant professor of chemistry, Michael Pungente, Ph.D., to the Board of Governors of Education City’s Academic Bridge Program, a post-high school program of studies that prepares students for entry to university.

A former lecturer in the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences at the University of British Columbia, Canada, Dr. Pungente has also been appointed to the Advisory Committee for the new Pharmacy Program at Qatar University. This follows his work earlier in the year on critiquing the proposal for the four-year program.
Qatar National Cancer Society (QNCS) launched a major campaign – “We Are Aware” – to raise public awareness about cancer at a ceremony held at WCMC-Q on October 2nd.

The event saw the unveiling of the ribbon logo – known across the world as the symbol of the campaign to combat the disease – and a mascot (Nasoo, or Advisor), both characterized by the maroon and white colors of the State of Qatar.

It marked the start of a nine-month series of events that will include fundraisers; conferences, seminars and lectures targeting different population groups, including university students; outings for cancer patients; and special days for families and children at different venues in Qatar.

Welcoming leaders and volunteers from QNCS, as well as faculty and students of WCMC-Q, Dean of the Medical College, Daniel R. Alonso, M.D., said that WCMC-Q was extending its support to the campaign in line with its triple mission of excellence in education, patient care and research.

“We are delighted to be part of the campaign led by QNCS, and this is just the beginning. There will be many more such occasions,” Dr. Alonso said.

Chairman of the QNCS Board, Dr. Sheikh Khaled Bin Jabor Al-Thani, expressed pleasure to be working together with WCMC-Q on the launch of the campaign. He paid tribute to the efforts of the Society’s volunteers: “We appreciate our people at the Society – the people who develop these campaigns.”

Cancer cases are on the rise in Qatar and the incidence is now 107 per 100,000 of population, he noted, attributing the increase to significant growth in both the general population and older age groups, and to lifestyle factors such as the popular habit of smoking the water pipe.

Breast cancer is the most common type occurring in Qatar, but cases of colon cancer are rising quite fast, said keynote speaker Dr. Salha Bujussom, consultant hematologist-oncologist at Al-Amal Hospital. A new facility dedicated to treating cancer patients, the Hospital is part of Hamad Medical Corporation.

QNCS, a leading non-governmental organization, has about 100 volunteers who dedicate their free time to fundraising, and organizing information campaigns and workshops for all ages. Volunteer Amal Lingawi, a radiation therapist at Al-Amal Hospital, said the campaign aims to reach young people, with weekly workshops to be held in Arabic-language high schools, as well as the general public. There is wide media interest, she noted, with coverage in Al Jazeera satellite channel’s health-awareness program Reporters, and in the print media.
A udiences worldwide will soon preview two high definition films capturing what it’s like to be a student at WCMC-Q and the evolution of the Medical College since its creation.

Director of Public Affairs, Michael Vertigans, said a seven-minute image-based film and a 20-30 minute documentary with voiceovers in English and Arabic would help to promote the college internationally.

“The films will show the different relationships which contribute to the world-class medical education on offer here, show our state-of-the-art facilities and technology, and explain why students should come to WCMC-Q – because of the teaching and the partnerships that support it, such as the affiliation agreement with Hamad Medical Corporation.

“What we hope to capture is our aim of becoming part of the first major medical facility of its kind in the Middle East, with a medical college, teaching hospital, research program and Science and Technology Park on one site, all with the support of Qatar Foundation.”

While both films focus on students and the environment in Qatar, the documentary, to be produced in two sections, chronicles the history of WCMC-Q. It comprises interviews with those involved in the founding of WCMC-Q, including, among others, Dean of Weill Medical College, Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, Jr.; Dean of WCMC-Q, Dr. Daniel R. Alonso; Cornell University Acting President, Hunter Rawlings III; and Chairperson of Qatar’s National Health Authority and member of the Joint Advisory Board, Dr. Ghalia Al-Thani, as well as students of WCMC-Q.

The interviews give an overview of how WCMC-Q came about, and the vision for WCMC-Q within the development of Education City.

A crew of seven from award-winning UK-based film production company, The Edge, spent three weeks shooting the film in Doha, New York and Ithaca.

Producer Norma Gaunt said the films involved the use of a ‘silent witness’ technique where an actor appeared in every scene as an “invisible, ghost-like character.”

“This technique enables you to get from one scene to another without having to explain things,” she said. “In both films we’re shooting sequences with students in the lab, at home and in class… we’re also filming the environment surrounding WCMC-Q with images of Education City, Doha and the desert.”

The short film will be sent to media in the region and in the U.S; the Cornell University community; parents, students, opinion formers and education establishments worldwide; and hospitals in Qatar and in the U.S., said Vertigans. “The documentary has similar possibilities.”

Medical student Fouad Otaki, who stars in the short film, said it would become “a tool to let people know a superior level of education has been established in the Middle East. WCMC-Q breaks the stereotypical image people have of the Middle East being behind in education, medicine and in their way of life.”

Stars of the screen

Film stars or future physicians? WCMC-Q students could be forgiven for thinking of new careers following a flurry of visits by film crews in recent weeks – and the world premiere of a unique short film made by professor of psychology at Cornell University, James B. Maas, Ph.D. Krista Dobinson reports:
Experience of how first responders work as a team was a highlight of a one-day course for first-year medical students, organized by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) in September and run as part of the Medicine, Patients and Society I (MPS I) course.

Head of Emergency Medical Services at HMC, Dr. Abdul Wahab Al Musleh, and a team of colleagues – Dr. Muayad Khalid, Dr. Ramzi Abdul Jabbar, Dr. Firas Adel Tawfiq, Ridha Miladi and Sonia Bounouh – visited WCMC-Q to give the course.

The Fundamentals of Immediate Responder Support Training Course (FIRST) included five practical 30-minute workstations in the recently upgraded Clinical Skills Center, and a series of lectures by Dr. Al Musleh.

Students were given an outline of the principles of disaster management and a refresher on basic life support, airway management, defibrillation and first responder skills, Dr. Al Musleh said.

“They learned how to manage a disaster scene, perform triage, open the airways of unconscious patients, perform CPR on adults and children, defibrillate patients, and apply pressure and bandage patients’ injuries,” he added.

Assistant professor of medicine and MPS I course director, Wendy Terry, M.D., explained that FIRST covers the basic patient care principles that are central to medical practice and useful in any patient encounter, as well as basic lifesaving practices that are used prior to the arrival of emergency services.

For student Imran Farooq, performing triage was the most difficult task during the workshops.

“It was hard ethically because you have to decide which patients to save and who not to save,” he said. “There aren’t enough resources to save everyone.”

Farooq said the doctors from HMC were friendly and helpful: “They treat us like colleagues and that’s really touching.”
Qatar Students Hone Research

“Scientific study integrated with patient care is the core of medical education … At Cornell, research and the advancement of medical knowledge are not only ends in themselves but are integrated in a vision of the scientific basis of a thorough medical education.”

By Jill Gormley

This excerpt from the Weill Medical College of Cornell University’s mission statement reflects the school’s emphasis on research and science as the foundation of good clinical medicine. In keeping with this philosophy, a group of eleven medical students from the WCMC-Q Class of 2008 spent an eight-week fellowship at Weill Medical College in New York City during the summer. They worked in the labs of Weill Cornell faculty, collaborating with, and learning from, other medical, graduate and post-doctoral students, and enjoying an interaction with active researchers that is not yet available at the Qatar campus. All the students who participated in the research fellowships, which are funded by Qatar Foundation, will present their findings at the Annual Medical Student Research Forum in November.

Olaf Sparre Andersen, M.D., professor of physiology and biophysics, Director of the MD-PhD Program, and Thomas H. Meickle, Jr., Professor of Medical Education at Weill Cornell, explains why an early exposure to research is important for medical students: “Only by experiencing it can a student learn what high quality research is. They learn what is involved in science – discipline and structure … Students learn to take a big problem and convert it into smaller, bite-size problems. This skill is of tremendous importance in clinical medicine as well as research.”

Research experience tailored to each student

During their pre-medical education, members of the Class of 2008 had participated in research at Cornell’s campuses in the U.S., but this was the first year of a formalized research program for WCMC-Q’s medical students, said Gary Schneider, Ph.D., Senior Associate Dean for Research at WCMC-Q. Students were selected for the fellowships on the basis of merit, and had to commit to participate in the full eight-week program.

Many of the supervising faculty researchers had vis-
edited Doha during the school year to teach, and others had taught WCMC-Q medical students by e-Learning methods, so the participating faculty and students were familiar with each other. Dr. Schneider was able to place the students in laboratories that he felt best matched their interests, skill level and temperament. The supervising faculty made a sincere effort to design projects for the students that permitted them to make a significant contribution to the research work over the course of their short, eight-week fellowship, Dr. Schneider said.

Ali Farooki worked in the lab of Shahin Rafii, M.D., Arthur B. Belfer Professor of Genetic Medicine and recently named Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator. Farooki’s project focused on the importance of citrullination, a post-translational modification, in the formation of platelets. His duties most days involved preparing slides of tissues or cells, staining them with antibodies and observing them under ultraviolet light.

He enjoyed these tasks: “Being able to get beautiful images from my work is definitely rewarding,” Farooki said. Regarding the experience overall, he felt that working in a lab conducting cutting edge research provided him and his classmates a different perspective on their academic medical studies. “It expands our horizons and exposes us to the basic science behind advances in medicine,” he said.

For Rana Biary, assigned to the physiology lab of Randi Silver, Ph.D., the experience has been critical to her development as a medical student. “Last year I sometimes had difficulty getting a real understanding when I read journal articles, because I didn’t have experience with the laboratory techniques,” she said.

Working in Dr. Silver’s lab investigating the synthesis and release of renin from mast cells has given her the ex-
The students’ summer was not all work and no play. Although their duties kept them in the lab from 9-5 during the work week, their evenings and weekends were free, and they tried to make the most of their leisure time. As Jehan Al Rayahi said, “We realize this is the last summer of fun,” as next summer must be spent in preparation for the USMLE.

Shortly after they arrived in New York in early July the students attended a Broadway production of Fiddler on the Roof, and they made excursions to museums, events in Central Park, and several of the city’s interesting neighborhoods and attractions. Some, like Ali Farooki, spent leisure time visiting friends and relatives who live in the region.

In late July the Qatar campus students hosted a dinner in their apartment for all of the Medical College Class of 2008 students who were in New York City for the summer. About 30 students attended the dinner, which afforded students from both campuses a rare chance to interact with each other on a social basis.

Rana Biary appreciated the fact that the students from the New York campus shared some of the advice and information they had received from more advanced students. She said “It’s nice to talk to the students about the USMLE and other expectations for our studies.”

(Continued on page 35)
Three medical students stayed in Doha through the summer, working on a review of literature that could underpin future research in Qatar in the field of bone mineral density and osteoporosis. One more immediate result may be several manuscripts based on the data collected.

Kunali Dalal, Ayobami Omosola and Ibrahim Sultan are pictured above with Dr. William Greer, assistant professor of public health, who supervised them. Dr. Greer had previously carried out a preliminary review of the literature while at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh.

But this summer’s work at WCMC-Q was more extensive, as the team tracked papers from the Middle East and around the world, and then set out to draw conclusions for women in the Gulf region.

A literature review is directly relevant to any future osteoporosis research in Qatar, Dr. Greer explained. “It is the fundamental starting point for any research project. It’s almost impossible to get funding if you don’t have a good review.”

Tasked with carrying out a comprehensive survey, the team combed through databases – including some they had never previously heard of – in search of relevant publications. Using the Distributed eLibrary facilities at WCMC-Q, they were able to identify and obtain the papers they needed, including many that are held thousands of miles away at Weill Medical College in New York City.

“We reviewed about 1,500 abstracts, from which we selected the papers that were suitable for a systematic study,” said Dalal.

The process was both demanding and rewarding, added Sultan: “This has been more intense than the semester itself for me, but it has been worth it. I think it’s very interesting, and it’s a challenge that it hasn’t been done before.”

Dalal noted that the experience complemented their study of epidemiology in the Medicine, Patients & Society I course. It also fitted well with previous work in the laboratory: “This has filled in the blanks, and helped complete the picture.”

All agreed that it could inform their future work as physicians. “Osteoporosis affects 20 to 30 per cent of older women worldwide… We have learnt a great deal about the disease and how it comes about, so I find this relevant to what I’m going to be doing in the future,” said Sultan.

They stressed the need for future studies and clinical practice in Qatar to focus on women in the region, taking into account both genetics and life-style factors. “The main goal of this particular review is to compare reference populations,” commented Omosola. “You need a reference population that is very close to the population you are going to be diagnosing.”

Looking ahead to a possible study of osteoporosis, proposed for Qatar as part of the WCMC-Q Research Program, Dr. Greer underlined the significance of this recent review of the literature. “Given that the epidemiology of the basic population has to be studied en route to the work on the genomics and genetics of the disease, then the review provides a kind of stepping-off point for that.”
As Orientation for the Class of 2009 began on September 6th, Dean of WCMC-Q, Daniel R. Alonso, M.D., welcomed class members thus:

“This is a remarkable transition: Until today, you were students – sitting in class, doing experiments, reading. Today, you have begun to join the medical profession. We consider you doctors-in-training, and that’s a very important role.”

He went on to explain that with this privileged status came new responsibilities, notably the need for absolute academic integrity as the students began to write not so much about the sciences as about patients. They would be expected to develop their capacities, especially the skill of problem solving – a constant part of their education and work in the years to come, Dr. Alonso said. But how did the Class of 2009 (pictured above with Dean Alonso and medical faculty) react to entering the Medical Program, and what was going through their minds as they listened intently to these opening remarks and, in the days that followed, began their medical education?

Acceptance by email

We begin by going back a few weeks: About one-third of the Class were away from home, working in the labs at Cornell University in Ithaca on summer research fellowships, when they heard that they had been accepted into the Medical Program. At first, it was difficult to believe the news contained in an apparently ordinary email, they recalled.

“The second time I read the email, I realized it had something to do with admissions,” said Ali Saad. “The third time, I realized I might have gotten in, but I didn’t believe myself – I asked one of the researchers in the lab to read it and confirm it.”

Heba Haddad and Nancy Zaki, also in Ithaca at the time, remembered the excitement, the noisy celebrations: “Everyone in the labs knew that we were accepted into med school!”

Building on their strengths

Back in Doha, the three-day Orientation brought them down to earth with a concentrated introduction to the essentials – from the four-year curriculum to needle-stick injuries, from evidence-based medicine to professionalism.

Noor Al Khori found the experience “overwhelming” to start with, but ultimately reassuring. All the faculty members placed emphasis on the professional element of the training, she said. “We are practicing to become doctors. They are watching us and they’re going to help us to improve, to work on our weaknesses. It’s like a journey: You change and improve and, hopefully, by the end of four years, you’re going to be ready to enter the profession.”

The feeling of beginning a new phase, quite different from the pre-medical experience, continued after the formal Orientation, said Saad. “Something special about the medical profession is that you are learning these skills from a master that’s teaching you, rather like a medieval
guild. You have a master-apprentice relationship: They are always teaching, orienting and educating you.

“It’s a lot more intimate. They told us ‘we’re always going to be watching you, assessing everything you do and say, and everything you don’t do and say.’”

Asked if this disturbed him, Saad replied to the contrary: “They criticize, but it’s constructive criticism. I feel they’re looking for things that we could improve – not to correct, but to build on strengths that we already have.”

“Gentle introduction” to patient care

The guidance of faculty would be particularly reassuring as the students prepared to go out to physicians’ clinics in the Medicine, Patients and Society I course, said Al Khori. “They show us how to present and introduce ourselves, and how to react. I haven’t learnt that yet – they’ll guide us in the proper way to do it.”

All the students felt that this early, gentle introduction to the doctor-patient relationship would be helpful. Haddad explained: “If you compare how they are introducing us here to the clinical aspect of medicine, to other systems around the Middle East, it’s completely different. In other systems, they stay at university and study medicine until the third or fourth year when they are introduced to patients – so it’s a shock, they don’t know what to do.

“It’s good to take it step-by-step this way. We need to be introduced to patient interaction, and the best way is by going to the clinics and experiencing it.”

While many class members had volunteered in clinics and shadowed physicians during their pre-medical education, they felt that their new status as medical students, as shown by the white coat with the distinctive WCMC-Q patch and name tags, would give them added confidence in the clinical setting. “The white coat is comforting,” said Jinan Al Shaarani, “we are proud of our identity as medical students.”

Looking at the logic

There was also a positive view of the emphasis in the curriculum on self-learning and small group work. Newcomer to WCMC-Q, Amira El Sherif, who graduated in biology last summer from the AUC, pinpointed problem-based learning (PBL) – an aspect identified by the Dean as a central part of their education – as particularly attractive.

“I think the technique of PBL is very interesting. It’s a very good way to learn, and a lot more interactive than just listening (to lectures).”

Saad described PBL as “a lot of fun.” He likened it to detective work – “they give you a case and it unfolds over a series of papers that you get in sequence, and you try to... (Continued on page 13)
Opening Exercises and the White Coat Ceremony held September 7th formally marked the entry of the Class of 2009 into the Medical Program.

The highlight was a reading of the Hippocratic Oath by Dean of WCMC-Q, Dr. Daniel R. Alonso, followed by the ceremonial donning of their distinctive short white coats by the class members. After filing down to the front of the auditorium, coats folded neatly over one arm, the students handed them to medical faculty standing ready to assist the young men and women in putting the coats on.

It was a touching gesture, witnessed by parents, brothers and sisters, as well as members of faculty, upperclassmen and guests from Qatar Foundation and the Hamad Medical Corporation.

After the event, Sara Hassan commented: “I felt like I was really becoming a doctor, doing what I want to do. It was a big event for me, so my parents had to be there. If they hadn’t been, it would not have been so meaningful.”

The role of faculty in assisting the students has special significance, said Dr. Pablo Rodriguez del Pozo. “Learning the art of dealing with patients and bringing to the bedside the proper mix of what science can offer and what humanistic values demand requires mentorship and role models. “The White Coat Ceremony, where the new doctors-in-training receive their coats from senior members of the profession, symbolizes the beginning of this trusting, long-lasting relationship.”

In her address to the assembly, Senior Associate Dean for Education, Dr. Elizabeth Alger, noted that the occasion focuses attention on the goals that medical students are working towards by bringing together an ancient tradition of medicine, in the form of the Oath of Hippocrates, and the modern custom of donning the white coat.

She asked the class members to reflect on the qualities and skills they would need to develop as they work with colleagues, learn to use the healthcare system, and care for patients whose trust they must engender. “People will tell you their innermost secrets because you are trustworthy,” Dr. Alger said as she emphasized the need for service and dedication to patients’ wellbeing.

The class took Dr. Alger’s message on board. “It’s such a privilege to be able to wear the white coat, and to be part of the medical group, with the medical professors and students,” said Ali Saad. “It’s a huge leap, because you have responsibilities and people expect so much of you. To wear the white coat means to accept those responsibilities.”

And there was a sense of pride. Evidently happy with her white coat, with the WCMC-Q sleeve patch and her name-tag on the breast pocket, Faizah Siddique reflected:

“The white coat gives you a sense of self. You know that you got here through hard work, and you feel proud to wear it.”

Once the ceremony is completed, Dr. Daniel R. Alonso congratulates Heba Haddad.
figure out what’s wrong with the patient.”

The faculty observe how they work and how they apply logic as they progress through the problem: “It’s not just about learning the material. It’s about how you approach it, seeing how your friends approach it, what you can learn from each other. The professor isn’t there to teach you, but as a member of the group, as a facilitator.”

The experience continues in case-based conferences, he added, where the medical students are asked to try and figure out problems and to move away from the notion that they are looking for ‘the answer.’

There could be no doubt that the students were conscious of the road they had travelled to get into med school – and of the long journey that still lay ahead. But there was a feeling of real achievement, and a buzz of excitement in the air, nowhere better sensed than at the White Coat Ceremony on September 7th, described by Haddad as the “symbolic beginning” of another journey.

Class of 2009 (continued from page 11)

“I felt like I was really becoming a doctor, doing what I want to do,” said Sara Hassan, seen here with Dr. Suresh Tate.

The version of the Hippocratic Oath heard at this year’s White Coat Ceremony is an updated form of a solemn text that goes back over 2,000 years, with its origins in Ancient Greece.

The original text was the work of many, rather than of Hippocrates alone, and it has come down to us in various forms. There have been numerous revisions over the centuries as medical practice, and society, evolved.

A committee from Weill Medical College in New York and Qatar, chaired by Dr. Joseph Fins, chief of the Division of Medical Ethics and professor of medicine, public health and medicine in psychiatry, held roundtable discussions by videoconferencing between Doha and New York earlier this year to agree on a modernized text.

Participants from the Doha side were Senior Associate Dean for Education, Dr. Elizabeth Alger, assistant professor in the Division of Medical Ethics, Dr. Pablo Rodriguez del Pozo and medical student Khaled Al Khelaifi.

The new form was unveiled at Commencement (graduation ceremony) for the Class of 2005 in New York last June.

“The idea was to write an Oath that represents today’s doctors’ professional obligations, duties, responsibilities and commitment, as a kind of canonical text for use in formal circumstances,” said Dr. Rodriguez del Pozo.

There has been a subtle shift: While the text continues to emphasize the responsibility of the physician towards patients, it recognizes the importance of teamwork in medicine today, as well as changes in how healthcare is financed and delivered.

Dr. Alger believes the affirmation that the physician will be “an advocate for patients in need and strive for justice in the care of the sick” is particularly important.

“To me, the most significant changes are the new sections on advocacy for patients and on social justice.”

Being part of the consultative process was “an honor” for Al Khelaifi, who noted the difficulty of grasping some of the nuances of language in the Oath, but found its general meaning both clear and accessible, no matter what linguistic and cultural background one approached it from. By making the opening sentence of the Oath broader – it now opens with “I do solemnly vow…” – he felt that the committee succeeded in ensuring that it has become more inclusive.

Hearing the Oath at the White Coat Ceremony had special resonance for the medical students. “The Oath shows us the frame we should think inside,” commented Sara Hassan.

For Ali Saad, it is a yardstick to measure up to: “As Dean Alonso read it out, I realized what I would have to look forward to, and thought about all the skills I would have to develop, the personal weaknesses I would have to address, in order to be worthy of taking the Oath at the end of the four years.”
Take a walk along the upper level corridor in the North Hall of WCMC-Q, and you soon come across an ordinary set of double doors that leads into one of the most extraordinary and innovative features of the Medical College building.

Opened last June, and upgraded over the summer vacation, the Clinical Skills Center (CSC) is the first of its kind in the Middle East.

The Center is used for both teaching and assessment purposes from the first year of the Medical Program, and it has a vital role in the clinical education of WCMC-Q’s medical students. Most notably, it is the setting of the students’ early encounters with Standardized Patients (SPs.)

If further development goes ahead as planned, it will also be the site of a future Simulation Center, where a range of medical manikins, from the basic Harvey (or cardiopulmonary patient simulator) to sophisticated high fidelity simulators, will be stationed.

“The Clinical Skills Center allows medical students a chance to practice and develop their skills in a safe environment, where they can make mistakes and be corrected before they go out into the community and work with real patients,” explains instructor of family practice and Director of the CSC, Monica Bishop, M.D., C.C.F.P.

This is where, in the first year, they are tested on their ability to carry out a complete patient interview in the Medicine, Patients and Society I (MPS I) course. It is also the setting for second year medical students to learn various components of the physical examination, in the MPS II course, and the neurological examination in the Brain & Mind course.

Medical student Ayobami Omosola learns the components of the physical examination using a Standardized Patient, under the watchful eye of Dr. Monica Bishop.

Exam rooms just like doctors’ offices

There are six identical exam rooms inside the CSC, each one set up like a doctor’s office, with desk, chairs, washbasin, cupboard, examination table, X-ray viewbox, individual instruments and a set of diagnostic equipment attached to the wall.

The principle is that the rooms should replicate the standard set-up of any doctor’s office or examination room. As Dr. Bishop says, “We make it as realistic as we can.”

In a quiet corridor just outside each office there is also
a cubicle, where the medical student sits to perform tasks such as filling out a post-encounter questionnaire or checklist, or viewing a lab report. These post-encounter stations provide a private space for completing such tasks.

**Monitoring the student-SP encounter**

However, if each room appears at first glance to be just like a physician’s office, a number of features set it completely apart. To start with, a large mirrored one-way window allows a faculty member outside to view what’s happening on the inside. Even the post-encounter station has a small window above the desk, so that the student can be monitored as he or she works.

Step inside a room, and you may spot two discreet cameras tucked close to the ceiling. These pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) cameras film the student and SP during an encounter. They can also zoom in for a close-up of how a physical exam is being conducted.

Two small microphones on the wall, one above the desk and the other close to the examination table – so unobtrusive that you might not notice them – pick up sound as each session proceeds.

The microphones and cameras feed into an audiovisual matrix switcher in the control room nearby. From there, the audio and video signals are sent to monitors in the observation area outside the rooms, allowing a faculty member to watch and listen to each encounter almost as if he or she were an observer inside the room, switching between cameras by using the touch screen panel, and listening to the exchange on headphones.

Remarkably, each panel allows the observer to view and listen to an encounter in any of the six rooms in the CSC. Computer support technician, Ali Aljabir explains: “You can choose any room, press on the number and then choose which camera you want – the audio will come through at the same time. So faculty sitting outside one room can monitor all the others.”

**State-of-the-art audio-visual system**

Inside the CSC control room, nerve center of the monitoring and recording system, there are computer monitors and a battery of mini-screens on a table, a stack of DVD recorders to one side, and another stack of machinery with what Ali refers to as “the brain of the whole system,” a Creston controller, placed right at the top.

(Continued on page 30)
Discovering Knowledge Through Language

First-Year Writing Seminars widen students’ horizons

Reading, debating and writing about issues as diverse as the nature of virtue and poverty in nineteenth century Russia may not, at first glance, be an obvious part of a pre-medical student’s education. Yet vigorous exploration of social, cultural and moral issues is in the air at WCMC-Q, and it has clearly caught on among the students.

We are not referring here to the students’ poetry club formed last year, or to their magazine; nor even to their regular participation in the Doha Debates. Rather, our focus is on a part of the curriculum: the First-Year Writing Seminars.

Starting in fall 2004, these writing-centered courses have brought further depth to the humanities in the Pre-medical Program, in addition to the humanities in the Pre-medical Program, in addition

Facility for the First-Year Writing Seminars, Mary Ann Rishel (standing) and (from left) Peter Fortunato, Irene Mittelberg, Ph.D., and Deena Shehata meet to discuss the fall program. Diverse in background, with interests that range from body language to the short story, they bring a wealth of experience as writers and teachers to pre-med classes at WCMC-Q.

Mary Ann Rishel, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Cornell University, has over 30 years’ experience of teaching First-Year Writing Seminars and literary forms including the personal essay, fiction and the short novel. A past president of the International Society for Humorous Studies, she is an expert in humor and language, and the author of Writing Humor: Creativity and the Comic Mind.

Using short stories by writers from across the world, pre-medical students explore social, cultural and moral issues – guided here by Peter Fortunato.
to the medical ethics course in the second year, challenging the students in new ways, and developing their powers of analysis and skills of communication.

The results? Students we spoke to believe that they have become sharper thinkers, better listeners, more confident speakers and more effective writers.

At the same time, they have enjoyed discovering a world of writing, from classic short stories to journalism, that offers what pre-med student Nigel Pereira describes as “welcome relief” from intensive study of the sciences.

Writing as part of the Cornell experience

Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education, David Robertshaw, Ph.D., explains the importance of the seminars and sets them in the context of Cornell University’s approach to education. “Writing has been particularly well developed at Cornell, as fundamental to all types of education. It is recognized that the ability to communicate verbally or in writing is a very important part of the basic education of all students.”

Writing is part of the fabric of our lives, says Katy Gottschalk, Ph.D., Walter C. Teagle Director of First-Year Writing Seminars at the University and course director for the seminars at WCMC-Q. “It is how we learn and how we communicate with others. There’s hardly a profession in which people aren’t writing, and that includes scientists, doctors, people in almost every field.”

Cornell offers writing courses at all levels in disciplines across the curriculum, organized through the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. For first-year students, there are over one hundred writing seminars per semester, in one of the largest and most diverse programs of writing in the disciplines in the U.S.

The seminars are integrated into – and taught by faculty and graduate students in – each department. “Writing is not an element, it is part of the study of the subject,” Dr. Gottschalk states.

“Sensitizing” the students

Phased in with one course for each pre-medical class last year, the Writing Seminars at WCMC-Q are now established as two sequential, three-credit courses in the first year of the Program.

This fall, students are taking Writing about Literature 185–15. Entitled Beyond the bones – writing about literature and society, it is built around a core of short stories by international writers, including a number of pieces that have been translated into English. Supplementary materials selected by the faculty give additional dimension, and may raise issues that are closer to the medical field.

Next semester, students will choose a second course from among six offerings, where the focus may be on literature and medicine, poetry, or other areas.

“The courses are about writing, critical thinking and how one discovers knowledge through language,” says course coordinator, Professor Mary Ann Rishel. “By writing about literature and accompanying scholarly articles, we hope that our students will become more sensitive to the intricacies of society and its values. By acquiring this knowledge, we hope they’ll become better doctors.”

Initially apprehensive that the experience might be remote from medicine, Pereira was soon won over. “When I started to read, not peripherally but actually going right

(Continued on page 32)
Fouad Otaki, first year medical student, member of the class of 2009 and only the second president of WCMC-Q’s MSEC-Q (the Medical Student Executive Council) has had an eventful year in office. It might be more accurate to say that his whole life has been eventful to date.

Born in Chicago to Syrian parents, Otaki lived in Dubai, Riyadh, Sharjah, Damascus, Beirut and London before coming to Doha to join WCMC-Q. Medicine as a career runs in the family. His father qualified as a doctor, and is now involved in hospital management and the supply of medical equipment. His mother is a mathematician and financial executive, disciplines that also have a connection to the pre-medical sciences that Otaki completed last May.

After finishing O-levels in Syria and a high school diploma in Beirut, he took A-levels in the British education system in London before moving to Doha, where he applied to WCMC-Q. The proximity of his family in Damascus, the world-class nature of the education at WCMC-Q and recognition of Cornell University’s reputation for excellence were the attractions, he says.

“As a first year pre-medical student, I was amazed...
Chairing an MSEC-Q meeting last year, with representatives from each class. “Being president has taught me a lot about leadership, about the art of delegating authority and about time management,” says Otaki.

“**It is immensely rewarding to see your efforts fulfilled working with student councils, and to see happy and satisfied students benefiting from our activities.**”

by the size of the campus, by the sheer feeling of space. Finding your way around was an adventure.

“You soon come to realize that faculty and students here are all in the same boat, we have a unique family identity. The door is always open to our professors if we have any problems or don’t understand a concept. It’s the same way with students here, we all help each other with our studies and are very supportive of each other.”

On joining MSEC-Q as a representative of the Class of 2009, Otaki was club coordinator for a year. In the second year, he stood for president of the student body and won the race, starting his one-year term of office in November last year.

And with the title come numerous responsibilities he says, bringing with them an even more varied and eventful life.

“No two days are the same. Outside of formal classes I am in meetings every day as the student representative, whether with faculty or the leadership of the Medical College. I regularly get together with fellow students to brainstorm ideas or to work on creating rules and procedures for our organization.

“Then there are all the social and charity events we organize and fund outside of the curriculum, often to help worthy causes in Qatar. We have organized blood drives with Hamad Medical Corporation, fund-raising campaigns, inter-college sports events and community outreach projects, for example.”

The MSEC-Q comprises four students drawn from each of the classes currently in session. Otaki meets with them regularly, and also with the heads of each of the affiliated student clubs and societies, which span the spectrum of culture and sport. A special “Magical Night” to celebrate Ramadan, annual sports events and outings such as boat trips are all part of the social calendar.

Otaki has also progressed formal contact with the student organization at Weill Medical College of Cornell University in New York through video conferencing. Contacts are growing: A New York MSEC member visited WCMC-Q recently, while preparing a research paper on the ethics of medicine across religions, and he saw for himself the activities of the students here in Qatar.

Reflecting on the experience of being president of the MSEC-Q, Otaki feels it has been a fulfilling experience:

“It is immensely rewarding to see your efforts fulfilled working with student councils, and to see happy and
Being MSEC-Q president also means public speaking at more formal events like the end of year celebration last May.

satisfied students benefiting from our activities. It has taught me a lot about leadership, about the art of delegating authority and about time management, balancing my commitments with my education. At the same time, it has added to my understanding of different cultures, which is one of the greatest features of our community here. With twenty-three countries represented across all four classes we have our own version of the United Nations and you meet people from all walks of life, backgrounds and societies.”

So what else has Otaki done in his time at WCMC-Q? Among the highlights was his first visit to Ithaca last summer, where he joined a team conducting research into the evolution of reproductive proteins in fruit flies in Dr. Charles Aquadro’s lab in the Department of Population Genetics. The aim is to understand fertility and associated problems in humans, isolating the biological components of evolution without the emotional and social interaction common in human societies.

Another highlight was his work with RAND-Qatar Policy Institute. Otaki was one of two WCMC-Q students to assist in collecting data and carrying out research into healthcare systems in the Middle East (see: A Taste of Independence, page 27.)

Otaki has set his immediate horizons on completing his medical degree and entering either clinical medicine or medical management. He intends to keep all options open – more research work beckons and this could also be a career path he may follow.

For now, his life is all about exploring the world of medicine and continuing his education while bringing his term of office at the head of the MSEC-Q to a close as new elections for a president take place.

Any clues to whether he might stand for a second term? Otaki is non-committal. “Let’s just say there is no campaign to re-elect the president…yet,” he smiles. Maybe one day Otaki may run in another presidential race… I wonder which one.
Faculty Appointments

Richard Coico, Ph.D., appointed Vice Provost for Inter-campus Affairs

With the different campuses of Cornell University physically miles, even oceans, apart, the University is keen to foster closer relations between them.

Collaboration between the Ithaca and New York City campuses already takes place in a number of areas, particularly biomedical research. One of the main engines of this collaboration has been the growth in inter-disciplinary research.

Appointed in April to the newly-created post of Vice Provost for Inter-campus Affairs, Richard Coico, Ph.D., will be a key figure in driving forward plans to strengthen links between the University’s major institutions.

Dr. Coico also holds academic appointments as professor of microbiology and immunology at Cornell’s Weill Medical College in New York City, and as course director for the first year basic science course, Host Defenses, at WCMC-Q.

Interviewed while in Doha last semester, Dr. Coico, who joined Cornell from City University of New York Medical School, explained that, for much of the academic year, he will divide his time between the campuses in Ithaca and in New York City, with an extended period in Doha every May-June.

“I think the interest in having me serve as Vice Provost came in part from the fact that I would be working in Doha for at least two months a year,” said Dr. Coico. “I will have a good bird’s eye view of what’s happening at each campus, and this allows me to meet the players and to facilitate interactions in any way I can.”

He is keen to encourage more faculty members from Weill Cornell in the U.S. to visit WCMC-Q, and to develop contacts among students on all three campuses.

“My main objective is to become a person who can receive ideas and – if they are good ideas – then drive their implementation. There are treasures waiting to be discovered in all the institutions of the University, including in Doha.”

Marco Ameduri, Ph.D. is new Assistant Dean for Pre-medical Education

Providing guidance to students as they progress through the Pre-medical Program and consider their future career is among new tasks for Marco Ameduri, Ph.D., since his appointment as Assistant Dean for Pre-medical Education at WCMC-Q in the spring semester.

Dr. Ameduri, who has held the post of senior lecturer in physics since classes opened in September 2002, regards this advisory role as a “fundamental component” of his new position.

He is also keen to help build community outreach. Beginning with a pilot “enrichment program” last summer for freshmen about to enter the Pre-medical Program, WCMC-Q has begun to formulate new ways of reaching out to high school students and others who may be interested in pursuing a career in medicine.

Such a move would assist in identifying the students who are potentially interested in studying medicine, and ensure that they obtain the information they need to make the right choice, he says.

Enrollment in the Pre-medical Program is nearing capacity, and Dr. Ameduri believes it is inevitable that a minority of pre-medical students will decide to pursue an alternative career. They may, for example, opt for a future at the bench rather than the bedside. In this case, it is important to provide the information and guidance that will help them to make informed decisions.

A popular figure with the students – there is a humorous “portrait” of the physicist on his office door, the work of a student now in the medical class of 2009 – Dr. Ameduri continues to teach, run physics lab sessions and build collaboration with fellow-physicists in other academic institutions, such as Qatar University.

With an interest in the cultural heritage of this Gulf country, Dr. Ameduri is learning Arabic, and even tackling Arabic poetry. “The students are extremely open to cultural exchanges when one shows curiosity about their way of thinking and traditions,” he comments. “They are eager to tell me about their culture, and they tease me with lines of Arabic poetry that usually take me several days to translate.”
Lotfi Chouchane, Ph.D., D.Sc.

Dr. Lotfi Chouchane is professor in the departments of genetic medicine, and microbiology and immunology, teaching in the Molecules, Genes and Cells course. He also teaches the human genetics course to pre-medical students; and he will be involved in the forthcoming research program to be carried out by WCMC-Q.

Dr. Chouchane received his Ph.D. in immunology from Pasteur Institute of Paris and the University of Paris VII. Following a four-year post-doctoral position at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, in the U.S., he obtained a D.Sc. from the University of Tunisia. He then joined the National Institute of Medical Research of France as senior scientist.

Before joining WCMC-Q, Dr. Chouchane was professor of human genetics and immunology, and chief of the laboratory of immuno-oncology, in the Faculty of Medicine of Monastir University in Tunisia.

In 2002, he was appointed by the Tunisian government to a commission overseeing all aspects of the education and research mission in the medicine and biotechnology field. Two years later, he was appointed as scientific advisor to the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technology, coordinator of the European Commission program and member of the steering committee of the National Center for Cancer Research.

His current research interests include genetics and immunology of multi-factorial diseases including cancer, obesity and diabetes.

Joining the Pre-medical Program this fall is Roger Hinrichs, Ph.D., professor of physics.

With a bachelors degree in physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, and a doctoral degree in experimental nuclear physics from the University of Washington in Seattle, Dr. Hinrichs joined WCMC-Q after a distinguished career at the State University of New York (SUNY)-Oswego.

Dr. Hinrichs has carried out investigations in fields from nuclear physics to air and water pollution to biophysics – the area where physics meets biomedical research. Working with physicians in New York State, he used applied nuclear physics to identify trace metals in blood and hair samples from patients with Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

His research in trace metals extended to the Sultanate of Oman, where he was a Fulbright scholar at the Sultan Qaboos University in the early 1990s.

Dr. Hinrichs has a keen interest in the fields of teacher education, and energy and the environment. He has been closely involved in outreach work for over 20 years, running summer workshops for science teachers from New York State high schools.
Nounou Taleghani, M.D., Ph.D., is assistant professor of medicine, course director for Medicine, Patients and Society II and course co-director for Basis of Disease.

Dr. Taleghani was raised and educated in California. She earned both her M.D. and Ph.D. degrees at University of Chicago Medical School, with her Ph.D. being in neuroscience. She completed her residency in emergency medicine at Stanford University in 1999, and joined the faculty at Stanford’s Emergency Department as a Board certified emergency medicine specialist, working both as a clinical physician and teaching residents and medical students.

Dr. Taleghani has published several articles and abstracts in the field of neural regeneration. Prior to her arrival at WCMC-Q, she was quite active in the voluntary sector, dividing her time between the Breast Cancer Foundation, the local fire department, and the camp for terminally ill children.

Leopold J. Streletz, M.D., is associate professor of neurology and neuroscience, and course co-director for the second year Brain and Mind course.

Born and educated in the U.S., Dr. Streletz earned his M.D. degree from Temple University School of Medicine in 1969, and completed his neurology training at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. There he continued his academic career, attaining the rank of professor of neurology and director of the division of electro-diagnosis.

With extensive experience in the U.S. in the academic field, as well as in the clinical practice of neurology and clinical neurophysiology, Dr. Streletz was appointed head of the neurology section of the neuroscience department at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in 2000. Three years later, he became consultant neurologist and Director of the Clinical Neurophysiology Laboratory at Saad Specialist Hospital in Al Khobar.

Dr. Streletz is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) and he is certified in the subspecialty of clinical neurophysiology. An associate examiner with both the ABPN and the American Board of Clinical Neurophysiology, he is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology. His research interests encompass stroke management and epidemiology as well as clinical neurophysiology, particularly the clinical applications of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and motor evoked potentials.

F. Tuna Burgut, M.D., is assistant professor of psychiatry and instructor in neurology, as well as course co-director for the Brain and Mind course for second year medical students.

After obtaining her M.D. degree from Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine in Turkey, in 1995, Dr. Burgut completed her residency training in the Combined Neurology and Psychiatry Program at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell.

Before coming to Qatar, Dr. Burgut was working in the Memory Disorders Clinic at Weill Cornell in New York City, and she was assistant attending neurologist and psychiatrist at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. She was taking care of patients with complex neuropsychiatric disorders including dementias, and psychotic and depressive disorders, as well as patients with dual problems of the brain and mind.

Her research interests include neuropsychiatric disorders, affective disorders in adults, cognitive deficits in personality disorders and transcultural psychiatry.
**Notes from Faculty**

### Insight into cell lines

In a recent paper, *Nithila Isaac, M.S., Ph.D.*, and her co-authors from Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons in New York, describe a method for obtaining cultures of human ventricular cardiomyocyte cell lines and characterizing them by several methods, including electron microscopy.

Previously, it was very difficult to obtain successful cultures of these cell lines and to produce high quality, accessible images for research and teaching purposes.

The team established proliferating human cardiomyocyte cell lines derived from non-proliferating primary cultures of adult ventricular heart tissue, using a novel method to obtain their results. The method may be applicable to other post mitotic primary cultures – that is, to cultures of cells that do not divide after birth, in most cases.

Dr. Isaac, who is assistant professor of anatomy, was able to establish the identity of the differentiating cardiomyocytes by ultra structural study, and to confirm the integrity of the cell line.


### Papers on biosafety, Lassa virus published

Information about biosafety is critical for scientists, laboratory personnel and healthcare workers who may come in contact with biohazards such as infectious bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

In a recently published article entitled *Biosafety Guidelines for Working with Pathogens and Infectious Microorganisms,* Richard Coico, Ph.D., professor of microbiology and immunology, and George Lunn, describe local and national guidelines and regulations, and biosafety information, needed to perform the procedures using pathogenic microorganisms. The article also provides detailed guidelines for using disinfectants and disposal of biohazards, and includes definitions of biosafety levels as established by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.


In a second article, Dr. Coico and co-authors Agnieszka Boesen and Krishnan Sundar describe how they identified immunogenic Lassa virus peptides (epitopes) that may serve as candidate vaccine components.

Lassa virus (LV) causes a severe and often fatal hemorrhagic disease called Lassa fever. LV is endemic in rural Africa and has been estimated to cause more than 300,000 infections/year. The mortality rate is ~30% with some groups, such as neonates, suffering fatal infections at a rate of 88%. There are currently no vaccines to protect individuals from Lassa virus infection.

In the studies described in this paper, Dr. Coico and his co-authors mapped the epitopes within the Lassa virus glycoprotein and showed that when used to immunize mice expressing human MHC antigens, immune responses were generated as evidenced by the induction of peptide-specific cytotoxic T cells. Cytotoxic T cells are crucial for protective immune responses to viruses.

These findings provide direct evidence for the existence of Lassa virus-derived epitopes that may be useful in the development of protective vaccines against this hemorrhagic virus.

*Lassa Virus Peptides Predicted by Computational Analysis induce Epitope-Specific Cytotoxic T-Lymphocyte Responses in HLA-A2.1-Transgenic Mice* by Agnieszka Boesen, Krishnan Sundar and Richard Coico in Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology, (Volume 12: 44-56, 2005).
Open access article assesses Medline database

Pablo Rodriguez del Pozo, M.D., J.D., Ph.D. and Joseph Fins, M.D. recently put the medical profession’s most popular database to a cultural test and published their findings in an online journal.

The authors searched MedLine, an unparalleled source of information on the medical sciences, for articles on the topic of death and dying in the traditions of the three major monotheistic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism). The idea was to get a sense of how doctors seeking to understand their patients’ cultures would fare if they turned to MedLine, as they often do.

The authors found that the retrieved literature was rather partial and unbalanced, with information on Islamic traditions particularly scarce. Their findings suggest that information found using MedLine may not realistically represent themes involving culture and religion.

The article was published in the open-access journal BiomedCentral-Medical Ethics. The authors are enthusiastic about their first experience of open access, a model of online publishing where users can freely read and download articles, subject only to authorship attribution. The journals are peer-reviewed, their editorial times are streamlined to a minimum, and they match the standards of quality of traditional journals. With no limitations of space or periodicity, a paper that receives final acceptance is immediately posted on the Internet.

Dr. Rodriguez del Pozo is assistant professor in the Division of Medical Ethics, department of public health. Dr. Fins is chief of the Division of Medical Ethics, professor of public health, and professor of medicine in psychiatry, at Weill Cornell in New York.

"The authors are enthusiastic about their first experience of open access.... With no limitations of space or periodicity, a paper that receives final acceptance is immediately posted on the Internet."

Textbook on energy goes into fourth edition

The fourth edition of Energy: Its Use and the Environment, by Roger Hinrichs, Ph.D., professor of physics at WCMC-Q and M. Kleinbach of SUNY-Oswego, was published in October.

From carbon-based fuels to wind energy to radioactive waste, this introductory textbook describes the physical principles behind energy and its effects on our environment. Practical examples of individual energy use and hands-on activities are described to make the topic relevant and interesting to the student. Many of the activities are taken from Dr. Hinrichs' experience during the 21 years that he directed summer workshops for secondary school science and technology teachers in New York State.

International perspectives on energy use are emphasized throughout the text, many taken from Dr. Hinrichs’ time in the Middle East, India and Kenya. The book, which first appeared in 1990, is used in universities worldwide in physics, technology and environmental science courses.

Summer NASA mission

A summer job with a difference brought chemistry TA Erin King into close contact with NASA scientists and astronauts this year, and opened new areas of interest in biomedical research for the Cornell graduate.

King spent six weeks as a project counsellor at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral in Florida, supervising ten undergraduates as they gained their first taste of research in fields directly related to the space shuttle program.

Assigned to the Flight Experiment Group, King began to discover the range of projects that NASA scientists work on.

One major study is into the effects of micro gravity on humans, both in space and when they return to earth.

“The main problem is that they have issues with their blood pressure dropping, and when they return to earth they pass out or have problems with being able to walk,” she said.

Scientists are now developing a device that would prevent this drop from happening.

Other projects include a paint that changes color in the presence of hydrogen – which could be applied to gloves worn by workmen at the launch pad to detect fuel leaks – and an ‘electronic nose,’ a device that registers variations in levels of gases in space.

A graduate in biological and environmental engineering, King had experience of research while at Cornell University, so she was familiar with the kind of challenges that research presents.

“They went through the same thought processes, sat in the labs saying ‘Why am I here? This is taking forever!’ I guess I could see where they were going and what their goals were. The fun part was watching them get to their goals.”

King is due to enter Weill Medical College in New York City in fall 2006; now, she is considering applying to do a rotation at NASA during her clinical education.

Studying the “cream of the crop” would be an interesting way to learn more about the human body: “You are not dealing with the sick, but with very healthy people. It seems really interesting to look into what type of medicine you apply to this specific population, what kind of tests are run on them.”

And her view of the scientists at NASA? “Working with the researchers one-to-one was amazing. Of course, they are just regular people doing research, but they are working on ideas like going to Mars – many of them spoke about going to Mars like it was the grocery store!”

Former TA escapes Katrina ……. and Rita!

Amy Abdallah, TA for biology from 2003 to 2005, had a narrow escape when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast of the United States on August 29th.

A former pupil of the American School of Doha and a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, Abdallah had enrolled at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans a few weeks before Katrina stormed over.

In email contact from Houston, Abdallah described what happened. “I was staying in Tulane’s med school dorms, which are supposedly not able to withstand major hurricanes, so when a hurricane is expected to hit New Orleans and the school closes, it’s required for students to evacuate the dorms. On August 27th, Tulane decided to close until September 1st. I really wasn’t all that worried that it would cause so much damage. Had I not been staying in the dorms, I probably wouldn’t have left as early as I did.”

She set out with friends for Houston, on a journey that proved arduous. “It took us ten hours to get there because of all the traffic leaving New Orleans. The trip usually takes less than six hours.”

Once in Houston and preparing to start medical school in temporary quarters at Baylor College of Medicine, she had to evacuate a second time – moving to Austin as Hurricane Rita approached the coast in September. This time, the interruption was short, and Abdallah resumed her studies early October.

Students from Gulf coast institutions have been welcomed and assisted to continue their education at universities across the U.S., including Cornell in Ithaca. Tulane students and administrators have also been “very supportive,” Abdallah commented.

“While this is obviously not how I anticipated the start of medical school would be, I’m trying to make the most of the situation. I feel so sorry for the people who had their lives in New Orleans, and who have lost everything. Many of them are very poor and had very little to start with. I can’t even imagine what these people must be going through.”
Qatar Foundation program offers work experience – and ways to make a contribution

As if they were not busy enough with study commitments, hospital observerships, sports and other clubs, WCMC-Q’s students are among the most active participants in Qatar Foundation’s (QF) work-study program.

They have applied, and continue to apply, their talents in activities as diverse as working with analysts at RAND-Qatar Policy Institute (RQPI); keeping a watchful, but friendly, eye on fellow students in the dorms; and providing administrative support to a number of departments at QF.

Set up some two years ago, the program offers students work experience in a supervised environment and the chance to be financially a little independent, says the Foundation’s administrative assistant for student affairs, Arwa Suleiman Ibnouf.

“They gain a work ethic, coming on time, leaving on time and doing what they are asked to do professionally. With training and supervision, they learn a lot.

“They can earn enough money for their personal expenses and be more independent from their family.”

A two-way process

Second year pre-medical students Divya Varghese and Nihan Mirajkar have worked with L. Kay Allen, supervisor of social facilities in the Facilities Management department.

Their tasks included clerical work, providing assistance with drafting policies, editing documents such as a handbook for student housing, and planning events.

“I give them freedom to explore,” says Allen, “I have a task in mind and I know how I would do it, but part of having the students is to facilitate their sense of responsibility and confidence. You can see how good it is – they become so confident.”

The experience gave Mirajkar an understanding of how to coordinate with groups of people and pull their views together, as well as the chance to attend meetings. “Although the work was very different from what we want to do in life, it was a very good investment of time,” she comments.

Varghese believes that it provided a useful foretaste of professional life: “You get exposed to a proper work environment, see different people and hear different opinions.”

She also highlights the opportunity she had to make a contribution to campus life: “We worked together on policies and procedures for student accommodation. It was good, because I could voice students’ opinions on a lot of issues.”

Such input is invaluable, says Allen. Students are among the main end users of the social facilities, and of the programs she organizes, so they can give important feedback. “We need to keep a finger on the pulse of what’s going on in Education City, and the students bring a fresh perspective.”

She is positive about their contribution: “I’m very impressed with the students, for their interest and willingness (to help), and their ability to balance their studies with their responsibilities.”

(Continued on page 31)
As the Class of 2011 trickled into WCMC-Q’s North Hall bright and early on August 28th for registration, many of the upperclassmen recalled their own Orientation, which took place at the same time last year. However, this year’s class was larger and more diverse than last year’s class—an impressive total of 57 students were reported to have joined the WCMC-Q family.

The incoming students embarked on a three-day adventure as they prepared to acquaint themselves with the expectations, hopes, and even fears that they would face in the coming years at WCMC-Q. Orientation took place over three days, beginning with a jovial welcome from faculty, along with an introduction to almost twenty “buddies,” mostly second year pre-medical students. The buddies enthusiastically received their peers, not hesitating to answer questions and address concerns raised by the new students. Several freshmen described them as being “very supportive and helpful.”

For many, Orientation was an important factor in easing their transition into university life. “I found the lectures very informative. It’s a good way to guide new students in a new place. Most of us would still be lost if it weren’t for the Orientation,” said Vijaytha Rathnam.

Not only was the Orientation a precursor for students to become comfortable with academic life at WCMC-Q, but it was also a social chain of events that allowed everyone to get to know the faculty as well as fellow students. Undoubtedly the most popular events were the Treasure Hunt at City Center-Doha; and the Bowling and Ice-Skating Night, at which high-scoring bowlers were awarded prizes, as were those who needed improvement. Those who preferred to skate took to the ice, peppering the rink.

“Buddies” play a big role in helping freshmen to feel at home while faculty, including Dr. David Robertsshaw (above), also warmly welcome the incoming class.
Among the most enjoyable events of Orientation was the Reading Project. Chinua Achebe’s classic novel, Things Fall Apart, prompted lively debate amongst incoming students.

A reading forum, moderated by coordinator of the First-Year Writing Seminars, Mary Ann Rishel, introduced the freshmen to the activities. This year’s panelists, second year pre-medical students Tasnim Khalife, Hekmat Al Rouh, Mohamed-Ali Babi, Amer Al Saied and Tala Rifai, presented their views in the light of various aspects of the novel.

“Orientation enables students to make new friends and just have fun! It helped me to forget about being homesick…”
— Vijaytha Rathnam

“The Treasure Hunt was the best part…I told all my friends around the world about it!”
— Abidah Khalife

“The ‘buddies’ were really nice and helpful, and it felt as if we’ve known them for ages!”
— Karl Migally

The experience culminated with a parents’ Orientation, followed by the memorable Opening Exercises, in which the students received pins to commemorate their entrance into the WCMC-Q Pre-medical Program. “During the Opening Exercises I felt like I was graduating even though the scholastic year hasn’t even begun yet. It was like an open window to what the real thing will be like in six years,” said freshman Tania Jaber.

A reception followed, marking the end of an unforgettable experience. By this time the general consensus amongst the students was that Orientation was so much fun, it should have lasted longer!

Article by Tasnim Khalife, Class of 2010

Reading Project a real page-turner

Among the most enjoyable events of Orientation was the Reading Project. Chinua Achebe’s classic novel, Things Fall Apart, prompted lively debate amongst incoming students.

A reading forum, moderated by coordinator of the First-Year Writing Seminars, Mary Ann Rishel, introduced the freshmen to the activities. This year’s panelists, second year pre-medical students Tasnim Khalife, Hekmat Al Rouh, Mohamed-Ali Babi, Amer Al Saied and Tala Rifai, presented their views in the light of various aspects of the novel.

“As it has been for the past two years, my experience in the Orientation Reading Project this year was exhilarating for the vivacious reading of the novel our students provided for us,” commented Rishel.

The forum was followed by a brown-bag lunch, where the freshmen met in groups and got to grips with the issues raised.

The Reading Project is part of Cornell University tradition. It not only gives students at WCMC-Q a sense of unity with the mother campus, but it also serves as an insight into what the pre-med Writing Seminars will have to offer.

Assistant Dean for Pre-medical Education, Dr. Marco Ameduri noted: “There is an added value in conducting the Reading Project here in Doha. The diverse backgrounds of the students allow them to incorporate their personal, cultural, and national views into the discussions. It is an enrichment for me to have a different point of view.”

Freshman Nadia Merchant was enthusiastic. “The Reading Project was a great way to get students to communicate with each other – both in the group discussion sessions and outside of them. Students were even discussing the book in the dorms, on the bus, and during breaks.”
Amid the whirr of the server, he describes how this dedicated, industrial microcomputer receives commands from the touch screen panels outside and relays them to the equipment. Capable of being connected to up to 250 devices, this incredible piece of hardware passes messages on via serial commands to the digital audio-visual system (DAVS), and infrared signals to the DVD recorders.

Checking the mini-screens – one for each camera in the six offices – Aljabir makes sure that the cameras inside the exam rooms are correctly trained on the encounters, and manipulates them using the DAVS to provide the views and close-ups that have been requested by faculty.

In reality, he says, this is not so difficult to achieve: “Once you become familiar with the system and with the case in each room, you know what to expect in an encounter, and you can use pre-set positions (for the cameras.)”

**Recording system offers flexibility of review**

The state-of-the-art recording system offers an excellent adjunct to teaching, as well as true flexibility for assessment of students’ performance, says Dr. Bishop.

“It’s a brand-new digital recording system. SP encounters and teaching sessions can be recorded for educational or grading purposes. Everything from the cameras can be put on to a DVD if we need a hard copy. The intention is that each individual encounter may be accessed by the student under their name and password, on the Intranet.”

Using a Webviewer browser, the students will be able to access their own files and review the encounters after the event. Showing them what they have done right or wrong is “an excellent teaching tool,” Dr. Bishop believes.

A further advantage of the technology is that, in assessment situations, faculty do not have to be physically present to observe and mark the exam as it is going on. They can access the encounter and mark it, all in the privacy of their own office.

**Putting the physicians-in-training at ease**

Dr. Bishop has no doubt that the experience of learning clinical skills using Standardized Patients and, in the near future, patient simulators, will bring great benefits to WCMC-Q’s medical students and prepare them for future patient encounters.

“I can speak as a physician myself. When I was training, oftentimes you actually had to perform diagnostic procedures for the first time with real patients. This can be quite stressful. One of the biggest fears for medical students everywhere is that you’re going to hurt somebody.

“It’s very important to be able to practice beforehand, and to get feedback when you’re doing an examination.”

The Clinical Skills Center is the ideal setting for such encounters—and there are further exciting developments ahead, including the utilization of automated sessions, precisely timed and regulated by a system of pre-recorded messages as students and SPs progress through each encounter.

In the next issue of Qatar Chronicle, we’ll meet some of the pioneers of a new form of medical education in Qatar – Standardized Patients – and observe how technology is regulating the patient encounter in the CSC.
A taste of independence (continued from page 27)

The staff of RAND come from different backgrounds – psychologists, epidemiologists and others in the medical profession – and they all contributed to helping us achieve the team’s goals. I think the biggest part of this venture isn’t the data we collected, but how much we gained from the experience.”

— Fouad Otaki, Class of 2009

Researching healthcare systems

Marla Haims, Ph.D., management scientist at RQPI, supervised two WCMC-Q students, Noor Al Khori and Fouad Otaki, during their second year as pre-meds. They were assigned as research assistants to a team working on the development of a national strategy for healthcare in Qatar.

Tasked with carrying out fieldwork, the students visited public and private health clinics to interview patients and gauge levels of satisfaction with the health services across the country. In addition, they each researched healthcare provision in another country in the Middle East. The aim was to build up a map of the type and quality of services available across the region.

Al Khori and Otaki assisted in finalizing the Arabic version of the questionnaires for patients and they were given training in RQPI’s interview protocol, so they were well prepared to conduct interviews. They were accompanied in the field by senior researchers who could assist in case of difficulty.

“It was a perfect opportunity for them to learn something about the quality of care, research, and engaging with patients,” says Dr. Haims. “They saw the patient’s side of things, as opposed to the physician’s side – and they helped us, because we needed bilingual research assistants.”

Communication skills boosted

Otaki, who is considering a career in healthcare management, estimates he completed up to fifty questionnaires with patients from a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in Doha and towns to the north. On a personal level, he derived two main benefits from the work: familiarity with the techniques of doing surveys and a sense of ease when talking to patients.

“The surveys were very helpful with developing communication skills. The staff of RAND come from different backgrounds – they are psychologists, epidemiologists and from other areas of the medical profession – and they all contributed to helping us achieve the team’s goals. I think the biggest part of this venture isn’t the data we collected, but how much we gained from the experience.”

For Al Khori, it was important that the experience was related to her career: Although she remains undecided about her future specialty, she intends to go into patient care, possibly in the field of oncology.

Sifting through the applicants

Since their studies should come first, applicants for posts under the work-study program are required to be in ‘good academic standing.’ In addition to filling out a form for QF’s human resources department, they may have to provide supporting statements and they may be interviewed – medical student Muhamed Baljevic appeared before a board of interviewers when he applied for the post of resident assistant in the men’s dorms.

Careful selection of candidates seems understandable, if they are to exercise authority over their peers – but Baljevic has a different perspective. Already a ‘veteran’ of the dorms after four years in residence, first as a boarder at Qatar Academy and then as a student at WCMC-Q, he sees his role as one of persuading – “promoting collaboration and friendship, so we have a friendly environment.”

Financial rewards add up

In many other areas, WCMC-Q students are working alongside colleagues from institutions across campus. Ibnouf confirms that there are currently more applicants than places available, and she is keen to see new openings appear.

While the concept of working your way through school is far from being the norm in the Middle East, some students say that being able to earn their own money really makes a difference.

The rates of pay (QR20-30, or up to about $8, per hour) mean that they can afford to finance some of their everyday needs. Varghese quips that it “kept her going” for a few months, Mirajkar says the pay gave her a sense of independence.

“It’s a very good feeling spending your own money the way you want to,” she comments.

The flexibility of the system means that, although QF limits the permitted hours to no more than 20 a week during the semester, students can work a full 40-hour week in vacations.

Sounds ideal? Yes, says Varghese: “It definitely gives the students opportunities in terms of working and making themselves independent.”
inside the text, I began to believe that there are subtle things that relate to medicine. It is really important to understand the psyche of your patients, and of the other people that will be around you in your career.”

Springboard to debate

The required reading is no more than seventy pages per week, and students meet in groups of up to 17 to debate the writers’ ideas and themes. They are expected to take a disciplined approach, anchoring their arguments in the material they have read, says Rishel. “I teach them that there is a difference between uninformed and informed opinions. When they argue, they have to do it from an informed position.”

For pre-med Tasnim Khalife, the discussions were a highlight of the course and a voyage of discovery with colleagues in her group. “Some of the people that are usually quiet would engage in heated discussions. I don’t think people thought I was as talkative as I was in fact in class! I do have strong opinions and I know that this made people see me in a different way; I, in turn, saw them in a different way too.”

Indeed, some of the discussions last year were so intense that Rishel regretted having to bring the sessions to a close. “More often than not, in a debate the class would go over. The enthusiasm and the dynamics in these exciting discussions were transferred to their papers.” In over 30 years of teaching, Rishel has found the experience at WCMC-Q “among the most exciting” of her professional life.

The outcome, for Pereira, was a change in outlook. “When you really listen to other people, you learn a lot, and you begin to look at things from others’ perspective. Your horizon widens and you develop a good understanding of the things happening around you. I think that, after joining WCMC-Q, I’ve become a better listener.”

Other students found the class discussions confidence-building, as well as stimulating. Medical student Muneeva Al Muhannadi looks back at her experience and says: “I gained more confidence. The discussions helped me: Before this, I didn’t have the ability to discuss in this way.”

Writing their way to understanding

Over and above the readings and debates, the superstructure of each unit in a 15-week course is a series of sequenced writing assignments. Students tackle ideas by writing essays that range from interpretations of a single story, to analyses that address interrelated ideas from several stories, to multi-source papers that integrate complex issues.

Each type of writing presents its own challenges, Rishel notes. Drafting a summary paper may seem straightforward, yet it can be difficult to get right. “It sounds like a minor assignment, but to do a good summary requires that the students understand and articulate concepts, and this is a high level of thinking. It also prepares them for the persuasive essay, since summaries of their sources become supporting evidence for the argument.”

Dr. Gottschalk highlights the development of analytical skills that will help students at the Medical College in other fields of study. Often, “they need to explain the application of an idea to a new situation – that’s exactly the kind of
thing we do in a writing course. They are reading multiple texts and they are identifying likenesses and differences between them, and how we can apply the theories to a new situation. Most of the time, the way those thinking processes go on is not just in discussion, but in writing.”

For the students, the readings and discussions in class bring structure and clarity to a subject before they start work on the writing assignments. “We’d throw an idea on the table and discuss it thoroughly in a logical way. So when you came to write your essay, this would be in the back of your mind,” says Khalife.

Positive outcomes

While it is too early to judge the outcome of the seminars in terms of improved student performance in science courses, there is anecdotal evidence that they are having a beneficial effect.

Dr. Robertshaw notes the positive feedback from students in their assessment of last year’s courses, and the observation by faculty that the quality of lab reports has improved.

Meanwhile, some students attribute their capacity to meet the challenges of the MCAT to the preparation provided by the humanities. As Al Muhannadi says, “once we had done the medical ethics and the writing courses, with so much reading and writing, my ability to read faster and absorb the paragraphs in the MCAT improved.”

In addition, Khalife believes that the discipline of referring to examples in a text and finding relevant analogies to support an argument brought dividends.

There is another aim, perhaps more difficult to measure, says Rishel: the creation of an atmosphere of respect and collegiality among the WCME-Q community. Students are encouraged to bring in their draft essays and read out passages to their classmates, seeking feedback. The faculty member may also select samples of their writing to illustrate a principle for comment in class, and encourage students to critique one another’s work by exchanging papers.

Khalife found the practice “really helpful.” On the one hand, it helped her to write more clearly, to be sure that the reader would understand her. On the other hand, conscious of the responsibility of critiquing another person’s work, she strove to be objective, and to confine her comments to “logic and relevance of ideas” in the essay.

It is Mary Ann Rishel’s hope that they come away with a sense of having created new knowledge. “I hope they feel that we – as a community – have examined well the issues in these texts and that we have all come out of this experience with new sensitivities and a deeper understanding of humanity.”
Al Jazeera crew explores coeducation

Pre-medical faculty and students voiced their views on coeducation during a film shoot by an Al Jazeera television network training crew in September.

The five man crew captured on film second-year pre-med students working in an organic chemistry laboratory, interacting outside class, and in a 10-minute forum.

The training film crew’s program on coeducation was not for broadcast, but was made as part of their recruitment process.

Al Jazeera Media Training translator Ahmad M. Ibrahim said the crew chose to profile WCMI-Q because it was the first coeducational university in Qatar.

“We want to find out whether coeducation hinders education or if it’s the most natural thing. We’re particularly interested in students who have been in single gender schooling all their lives until now,” he said.

Student Mohammad El Shazly said coeducation had helped him learn how women thought and felt: “I attended an Egyptian language school in Qatar which had different buildings for boys and girls. When I came here I adjusted quickly. First of all I wasn’t sure if the girls would be embarrassed if I talked to them, but within one or two months everyone was talking.”

Suzie Skef, who attended coeducational schools, said gender mixing at WCMI-Q was not a distraction, as students were serious about their studies.

“Although I was aware there were schools in Arab countries that had only males or females, I was shocked when I came here and the boys sat at one table and the girls at another,” she said. “But soon they were all like one big family. The boys became like brothers to us.”

Professor of physiology and Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education, Dr. David Robertshaw, witnessed students’ adjustment to coeducation when WCMI-Q started classes in fall 2002.

“The main difference we saw when we came was the physical separation of males and females, but after time that disappears,” he commented. “I think coeducation enriches the environment and it’s more natural. I don’t think it gets in the way of what we’re here for.”

“Although I was aware there were schools in Arab countries that had only males or females, I was shocked when I came here and the boys sat at one table and the girls at another. But soon they were all like one big family. The boys became like brothers to us.”

— Suzie Skef, second-year pre-med student
Staff News

Congratulations to Laurie Summers on her promotion to the post of assistant dean for academic planning and development.

We also extend a warm welcome to the following new members of staff: Susan Lacey, assistant dean for administration; Sharon Hynes, director of human resources; Jeremy Merrill, director of the WCMC-Q New York Office; Nonie Pegoraro, director of research compliance.

Patrick Erbeck, senior support technician; Vadym Nosovskyy, Unix administrator; Krista Dobinson, assistant editor/writer; Leah Robinson, curriculum coordinator; Gavin Daley, building services coordinator; Nashira Abdhameed, academic planning and development coordinator; Glen Henderson, computer support technician; Michele Wathen, information and reference technician; Abeer Gohar, administrative secretary; Shyma Al Mizrakchi, data coordinator; Lorraine Timm, housing coordinator.

Summer research (continued from page 8)

any lab experience but they accepted me... Everyone works in a very friendly and relaxed environment... It’s amazing the way everyone gets along in a very friendly manner, in a very competitive field,” she remarked.

Jehan Al Rayahi and Subhi Al Aref both participated in research fellowships in 2004, Al Rayahi in New York City and Al Aref in Ithaca. They felt that last year’s experience gave them grounding in basic scientific research techniques, but that their projects this year were more satisfying on an intellectual level.

This year Al Rayahi worked with Dr. Hazel Szeto, professor of pharmacology, investigating the role of a tetrapeptide created in Dr. Szeto’s lab – SS31 – in apoptosis. She participated in lab meetings and journal clubs, and enjoyed the work so much that she is considering a career in academia – although she points out that, as she has yet to have any significant clinical experience, she may change her mind.

Working quite independently in Dr. Olaf Andersen’s lab, Al Aref discovered that a compound called BDM (butanedione 2,3 monoxime), at physiological concentrations, has an effect on the elastic properties of the lipid bilayers in cell membranes. Dr. Andersen characterizes Al Aref’s finding as “significant” and plans to submit a paper describing the finding to a peer-reviewed journal – with Al Aref as a co-author!

Al Aref said that he “fell in love” with research. He enjoys the creative aspect of medical research; he finds the opportunity to elucidate principles that clinicians apply to real patients pleasing. Andersen agrees that research is the right field for him: “With the curiosity and intensity he has shown... the considerable ownership he took of his aspect of the project... I have no doubt he will be a scientist.”

“It is a joy to teach the(se) students. I appreciate their energy level, their level of excitement and dedication…”

— Dr. Olaf Andersen

Enthusiasm all around for summer research fellowships

Clearly, the summer research fellowships have been a great success, as faculty and students feel enriched by the experience. Dr. Silver pointed out that, since most American students have had significant lab experience by the time they reach medical school, few are interested in doing basic research. This is in contrast to the students from WCMC-Q, who take to their basic research assignments eagerly. “It’s refreshing to have enthusiastic students for the summer,” Dr. Silver remarked, “and they bring up very good questions.”

Dr. Olaf Andersen echoed that sentiment: “It is a joy to teach the(se) students. I appreciate their energy level, their level of excitement and dedication...they have no sense of entitlement.” He is hopeful that many of them will use one of their fourth year elective classes to return to the New York City campus to engage in further research.

For their part the students were equally enthusiastic, despite the fact that participating meant that they had limited “chill” time during the summer. Farooki appreciates that the experience provided extra preparation for future clerkships. Shafaaee remarked that her experience not only taught her skills necessary to basic scientific research and clinical research, but also enabled her to expand her social skills. Perhaps Al Aref said it best: “This is one summer that I will carry until the last day of my life.”
Visitors to WCMC-Q in recent weeks have included delegations from Singapore and New Zealand, while – in July – the Medical College hosted visits by groups of Qatari girls attending summer camps in Doha and Al-Shahaniya.

The Minister of Transport of Singapore, Mr. Yeo Cheow Tong and an accompanying delegation were given a tour of the Medical College in September.

Above: Also in September, Senior Associate Dean for Education, Dr. Elizabeth Alger, welcomed New Zealand diplomats and educational consultant, Mr. Russ Skinner.

The summer brought an opportunity for Qatari girls attending summer camps in Doha and the central town of Al-Shahaniya to spend time at WCMC-Q, learning more about what it is like to be a student at the Medical College. They toured some of the facilities, found out about the Distributed eLibrary (left) and watched a presentation by students on life at WCMC-Q, with advice on how to organize their daily routine and reach their goals. The morning ended with presentation of gifts including baseball caps. Above, Bothina Al Mulla and Muneera Al Mirza were among the pre-med students to welcome the young visitors to the Medical College.
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar was jointly established by
the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development
and Cornell University

www.qatar-med.cornell.edu