Story of Knowledge Platform

Center for Entrepreneurship

College of Business and Economics – Qatar University



In light of the growing role of entrepreneurship and innovation in supporting a knowledge-based economy, the Center for Entrepreneurship at Qatar University continues its efforts to empower innovators and entrepreneurs while supporting researchers and students in transforming their ideas and research outputs into projects with sustainable economic and societal impact.

To learn more about the center's vision, objectives, programs, achievements, and its role in supporting researchers and strengthening the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in Qatar, we met with Dr. Khalid Al Hashimi, Director of the Center and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at the College of Business and Economics, in this interview.



Some of the Center's Activities.

To begin, Dr. Al-Hashimi, could you introduce us to the Center for Entrepreneurship at Qatar University and its key objectives and role in supporting the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem?

The Center for Entrepreneurship (CfE) at the College of Business and Economics, Qatar University, serves as a dynamic platform for fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking among students, researchers, faculty members, and the wider community. Established in 2013, the center bridges academic knowledge with real-world application through experiential learning, startup support, and ecosystem engagement. It has evolved into an integrated hub combining entrepreneurial learning, pre-incubation support, and cross-sector collaboration, contributing to Qatar's innovation ecosystem and economic diversification.

CfE demonstrated significant impact in 2025 across multiple dimensions. Key achievements include reaching 4,512 total participants and engaging 2,605 Qatar University students. Additionally, 19 initiatives were delivered, including 11 newly launched programs, and 16 joint initiatives were executed with partners. The center also supported 101 startup teams and contributed to thought leadership through participation in 6 International and National conferences and forums.

What are the main programs and initiatives offered by the center to foster entrepreneurial culture and innovation skills among Qatar University students?

The center delivers a comprehensive portfolio of initiatives through its Entrepreneurial Learning and Pre-Incubation sections. These include: Startup and SME Clinic, Shell Intilaaqah-Qatar Program, Al-Fikra National Entrepreneurship Competition for Higher Education, The Deal: Cash Catch, the Foundation Showcase Competition, Qatar Entrepreneurship Award, and Inspirational Talks. These programs provide experiential learning opportunities, competitions, mentoring, and workshops that equip students with skills in creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, and business development, enabling them to transform ideas into viable ventures.

How does the center support students in exploring entrepreneurial opportunities and transforming their ideas into viable ventures?

The center supports students through a structured entrepreneurial journey from idea generation to venture development. Through initiatives such as the Startup & SME Clinic, students receive one-on-one advisory support in business model development, prototyping, market validation, and pitching. The Clinic serves over 200 participants annually, highlighting the strong demand for practical entrepreneurial guidance.

Students also engage in experiential learning through programs such as The Deal: Cash Catch, which involves around 155 students, and the Foundation Program Showcase, which attracts over 500 students each year. In addition, Shell Intilaaqah received 421 applications from Qatar University and graduated 283 students, demonstrating the scale and impact of the center's entrepreneurship initiatives.

At the national level, the Al-Fikra National Entrepreneurship Competition for Higher Education attracted 117 applications from 409 participants across 8 universities in 2025, while the 2026 edition expanded to approximately 750 participants from 14 universities. The Health Tech Hackathon further engaged over 420 participants and 52 multidisciplinary teams, providing opportunities for innovation and real-world problem-solving.

By combining advisory services, experiential learning, competitions, and ecosystem engagement, the center helps students develop market-ready solutions with economic and societal impact. It also promotes student ventures through platforms such as the Qatar Entrepreneurship Award and supports leadership development through the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Student Association.

What are some of the center's most notable local and international partnerships, and what impact have they had?

The center collaborates with a wide network of strategic partners including Shell Qatar, Qatar Development Bank, Qatar Science & Technology Park, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Ooredoo, Nama Center, QNB, QIIB, Al Rayan Bank, Dolphin Energy, Visit Qatar, and Snoonu. These partnerships enhance the center's programs, provide access to mentorship and funding opportunities, and strengthen collaboration between academia and industry, contributing to the advancement of Qatar's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Could you share some success stories or outstanding examples of individuals or projects that have benefited from the center's services?

Through its programs and collaborations within Qatar's entrepreneurship ecosystem, the center has supported a wide range of student-led innovative projects that have progressed beyond the university setting.

For instance, through national platforms such as Al-Fikra National Entrepreneurship Competition for Higher Education, which is one of Qatar's leading entrepreneurship competitions for higher education, participating teams have developed high-potential startup concepts across sectors such as fintech, sustainability, and digital solutions, with several progressing to further support programs offered by entities such as Snoonu and Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP). These pathways typically lead to incubation, funding opportunities, and continued startup development. In addition, the winning teams of Al-Fikra are directly entered into the National Hult Prize shortlist, enabling them to compete globally and pitch their ideas internationally. Similarly, the Shell Intilaaqah program, delivered in collaboration with Shell Qatar, is widely recognized in the local ecosystem for nurturing early-stage entrepreneurs. Across Qatar, Shell Intilaaqah Alumni were also given the chance to be part of the Shell LiveWire Impact Award 2026.

At the university level, students participating in initiatives such as The Deal: Cash Catch have created and tested real business ideas in live environments—ranging from e-commerce concepts and campus-based services to digital platforms—gaining hands-on experience in revenue generation, customer engagement, and venture execution. This competition results in prize money for the winning teams, with a total of around 30,000 QAR for six teams

What challenges do students face when transforming their ideas into real business, and how does the center help them overcome these challenges?

The Center assists Qatar University students from the earliest stages through the Clinic,

competitions, workshops, and other initiatives. Students may join the entire entrepreneurial journey or participate in selected stages. The challenges they face are common among aspiring entrepreneurs worldwide, as we are a very diverse community of around 30,000 students at QU. Examples of challenges faced include limited experience in developing business models, difficulty validating ideas, and lack of exposure to real entrepreneurial environments. Here, our role in the center is taking care of the students as well as leveraging the ecosystem network and exposure so they can also get incubated!

The center addresses these challenges through a structured, hands-on approach. For example, through national platforms like Al-Fikra National Entrepreneurship Competition for Higher Education, 39 teams advanced to the competition stage and 6 finalists reached Demo Day, gaining direct exposure to expert feedback and venture development opportunities.

Additionally, the Business Readiness Mastery Program supported 85 students in building practical skills in areas such as innovation management, marketing, and resilience.

Also, we provide customized on-demand workshops for Colleges and Programs, for example: Arabic for non-native speakers, College of Engineering, Health Cluster.

The center also promotes social entrepreneurship through collaboration with NAMA, exposing students to real societal challenges and solutions.

Following the successes achieved by the center, what accomplishments are you most proud of, and what is your vision for the next phase?

The center is proud of building a comprehensive entrepreneurial pipeline that supports individuals from idea generation to market readiness. Key achievements include increased participation, stronger partnerships, and improved quality of entrepreneurial ventures. Moving forward, the center aims to expand its programs, enhance research commercialization, strengthen partnerships, and further position itself as a leading hub for entrepreneurship and innovation, as we serve around 5,000 participants per year.



The Entrepreneurship Center Team at the College of Business and Economics.