



US-IRAQ UNIVERSITY LINKAGES PROGRAM

Issue No. 3

Bulletin

ULP Schools Launch Career Center Services

In the third year of the partnerships, ULP schools have developed career centers aimed at connecting the academic and private sectors.

The Iraq University Linkages Program (ULP) is a three-year project funded by the U.S. Embassy, Baghdad and administered by FHI 360, a global human development organization. It is designed to facilitate the development of long-term, bilateral partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi universities, including the development of career centers at Iraqi universities to forge relationships between the public, private and academic sectors. The ultimate goal of the ULP is to guide the university partners to establish self-sustaining, mutually beneficial relationships capable of producing enduring change.

Key accomplishments of the partnership so far include:

- Courses revised and new courses developed through departmental collaboration;
- Pedagogical training with emphasis on student centered teaching skills;
- New, modern textbooks and materials entering Iraqi classrooms;
- Professional development exchange programs and course delivery, both in person and via digital video conferencing; and
- Established and supported career centers at each Iraqi university.

Summer 2012

In this issue:



FHI 360 Conducts Best Practices Conference for U.S. Partners

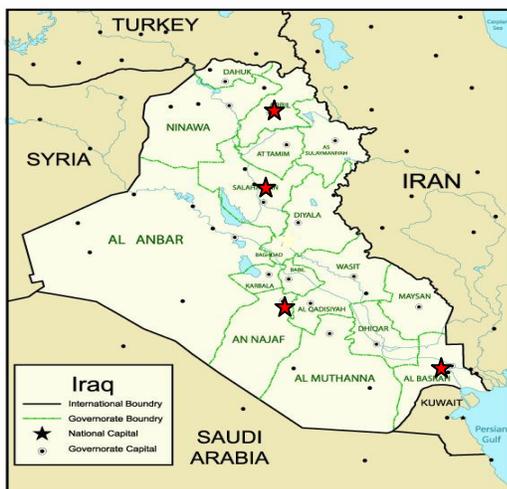


Iraq University Career Center Updates

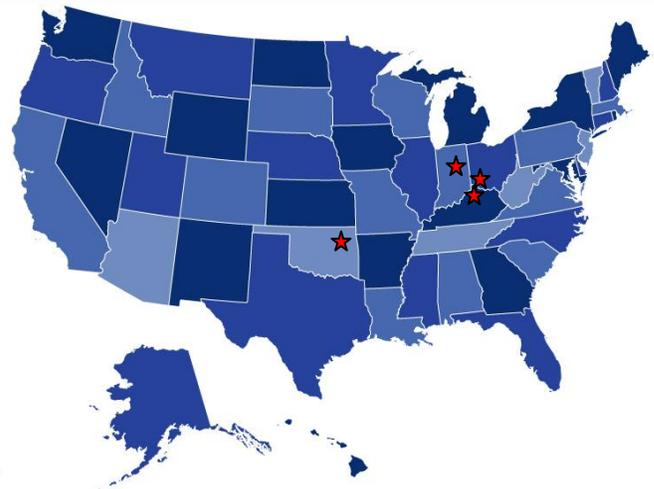
BY THE NUMBERS

195

Number of faculty members from U.S. and Iraqi universities who have collaborated on ULP activities.



Participating ULP Iraqi Universities



Participating ULP U.S. Universities

ULP Best Practices Conference for U.S. Universities

On May 20-21, the FHI 360 ULP Team hosted a Best Practices Conference in Lexington, Kentucky for the U.S. ULP partners. Seventeen faculty and staff, representing each of the departmental partnerships from each U.S. University, were in attendance. The purpose of this conference was to provide an opportunity for the U.S. partners to meet one another, and to learn about the challenges and successes of the other linkages and to gain new ideas for enhancing their own partnership. In just one month post-conference, each University indicated in their reporting that they had already begun to implement new best practices or expand upon existing ones. Updated practices include: using the process of modeling, demonstrating and scaffolding when mentoring, providing Iraqi faculty with a list of free online resources and software programs, and improved criteria for selection of faculty for professional development opportunities.

Beginning with a group dinner Sunday evening, all attendees were eager for the opportunity to talk with one another and share stories and experiences. During dinner, each University ULP Team gave a short presentation on the goals and objectives of their respective partnership, and highlighted key challenges and successes for each departmental linkage. We also asked each University Team to share one cross-cultural experience that taught them something new about Iraqi culture; one common theme was the increased understanding of effective communication with their Iraqi partners and the importance of building strong personal relationships.

Monday was quite busy as we made full use of the face-to-face opportunity. The day was split into four sessions focused on key components of the partnerships. During Sessions I and II, participants worked in small, mixed-university groups to generate a list of three key best practices for each topic by critiquing the what, why, who, how and the intercultural context of their respective linkages.

When all groups reconvened to share their list, I was amazed by the depth and variety of ideas generated by each group. Following group discussion, all were encouraged to reflect on their respective partnership and capture concrete ideas for changes worth pursuing now within the scope of their grant and to think through what would be needed to put those ideas into action. This proved to be a great learning opportunity for both FHI 360 staff and the University Teams.

The newly-developed Career Centers were the topic of Session III, with progress updates and a review of early successes at each institution. The final session of the day, focusing on post-grant sustainability, provided an opportunity for each University Team to put on their creative hats and brainstorm what they would do to keep their partnerships alive in the post-grant period. Ideas included more joint-research collaboration, use of virtual communities to facilitate additional faculty mentoring and professional development for effective implementation of new courses, as well as ideas for expansion of their partnership scope, given support from their Iraqi partner university.

There was consensus among all attendees that this opportunity to learn about the other linkages' experiences was especially valuable for assessing and improving one's own linkage. The only drawback of the day was that it had to end while the excellent conversations were still going strong. Following the conference, I created a Google discussion group to provide a forum for this continued conversation and I encourage all U.S. partners to join the group and continue sharing ideas. It was our pleasure and privilege to meet with this dynamic group of individuals and we look forward to conducting a similar conference with the Iraqi partners this Fall.



Dr. Khaled Gassam, professor of chemical engineering at Oklahoma State University, discusses his work with Basrah University to the assembled U.S. ULP partners at the University of Kentucky.

-Larissa Popp
Program Officer
University Linkages Program
FHI 360

Tikrit University Meets Ball State University Partners in Baghdad

On June 2, thirteen faculty members and administrators from Tikrit University participated in a day-long workshop in Baghdad. Representing Ball State were Project Director Dr. Kenneth Holland, Dr. Mary Theresa Seig, Director of the Intensive English Institute, and Mr. Charles Koontz, Adjunct Professor of Computer Science. The Tikrit delegation drove down from Tikrit the day before in a university bus. They stayed at the Ishtar Hotel in Baghdad for two nights and returned to Tikrit on June 3rd. The workshop was held at the Edinburgh International Villa near the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because the villa is located in the Red Zone, the Tikrit delegation had no difficulty traveling from the hotel to the workshop. Access to the Green Zone requires extensive planning and advance permissions.



ULP partners from University of Tikrit and Ball State University pose as a group during their June 2 meeting in Baghdad.

The workshop provided an opportunity for Dr. Holland to review the goals of the partnership, mark progress that has been achieved so far and identify activities that still need to be completed. Each participating department made a separate presentation on achievements and future goals: Department of Computer Science, Department of Accounting, Department of Cultural Relations, the Career Center and Department of English, Faculty of Education. The delegation was headed by Dr. Talab Sabar Mahil, Dean, Faculty of Arts.

One of the most interesting outcomes of the meeting was a request from all three English departments at Tikrit University to be included in the linkage with Ball State. Tikrit has three English Departments: College of Education, College of Arts and College of Education for Women. They presented a joint list of benefits they hoped to receive from the partnership.

The participants were very pleased with the outcomes of the project so far and asked for the following:

- More faculty development, including additional visits to Ball State and more mentoring and collegial interactions with their Ball State counterparts
- Opportunities to attend international conferences and present jointly authored papers with BSU colleagues
- Access to more digital resources
- More classes supported by DVC and DVD
- Intensive training courses taught by BSU faculty in Erbil (a safe location for both Iraqi and American academics)
- Opportunities to study English intensively in either the United States or Malaysia
- Short-term research visits to Ball State by Tikrit University faculty and graduate students
- Continued support for the Career Center
- Renew the MOU with Ball State University when it expires

A significant positive outcome of the workshop was the opportunity for faculty from several departments to learn more about the new Career Center and pledges from the Departments of Accounting, Computer Science, English and Cultural Relations to provide support for the center. The director of the Career Center, Omar Idrees, made an excellent presentation explaining the purpose of the Career Center and how it can help students.

As a follow-up to the June 2 workshop in Baghdad, Dr. Saeed Hussein Ali, Vice President of Tikrit University, and Dr. Holland made a joint presentation on the partnership between their two institutions at a State Department-sponsored conference on academic linkages in Erbil on June 29.

-Kenneth Holland
Dean, Rinker Center for International Programs
Ball State University

IJMA3 and FHI 360 Conduct Market Research for Iraq Jobs Portal

In direct coordination with FHI 360, the Arab ICT Organization, better known as IJMA3, conducted a survey in July 2012 during a visit to Iraq in order to assess Iraqi employers and job seekers and identify their expectations with regards to the launch of an Iraqi Employment Portal. The research covered five main cities in Iraq – Erbil, Baghdad, Tikrit, Basrah and Najaf. The study was divided into two main surveys; one to survey potential employers and the other to survey potential job seekers. IJMA3 sought to approach most of the segments of the Iraqi society in order to ensure receiving the proper feedback. On one hand, with regards to Iraqi employers, stakeholders from both public and private sectors were surveyed, as well as unions and associations. As for potential job seekers, university students and social media Iraqi youth were mainly approached. IJMA3 team, led by the program manager, started contacting stakeholders in Iraq by email and telephone prior to their visit, in order to set meetings with them while the program manager is in Iraq, and have them fill the survey either as a soft copy, hard copy or online. Once onsite, the data for the survey was gathered via face-to-face interviews with stakeholder representatives.



Salam Alwaili leads a discussion of students and career center staff at the University of Basrah.

As IJMA3 program manager, I met with the ULP career centers staff in each of the following universities: Salahaddin University located in Erbil, University of Tikrit, University of Kufa located in Najaf and University of Basrah. In-person focus group discussions were then scheduled, gathering university students who completed survey after being introduced to the project and its impact on the job-hunting delicate process. The students were cooperative especially after IJMA3 addressed the security issue with regards to their personal information which shall remain unrevealed and used only for the purpose of the survey.

More than 90 students were surveyed and over 50 potential employers from both private and public sectors were approached while hundreds are being surveyed online. Even today, IJMA3 continues the efforts to reach

more jobseekers and employers to maximize the survey reach and accuracy. IJMA3 Iraq-based coordinators continue approaching more employers and jobseekers, while the IJMA3 regional team is mobilizing jobseekers online and following up with employers via phone and email. Moreover, the future portal's users, stakeholders and job seekers allowed the IJMA3 team to better understand their needs so as to be able to properly reflect them in the portal design by developing additional features and services that would best serve the portal objectives. The survey results will also allow FHI 360 to inform the University Linkages Program Career Centers about student/business workforce expectations.

-Salam Alwaili
Project Manager
IJMA3, the Arab ICT Organization

Meet the ULP Career Centers!

Salahaddin University Career Center

After two years of partnership and exchange with the University Linkage Program, Salahaddin University has opened the first university career center in the Kurdistan region. The mission of the Career Center is to better serve the regional and national economy by linking the growing private, nonprofit and government sectors to the university, and help prepare students to align their competencies and capabilities with suitable employment opportunities.

Currently, Kurdistan is facing high unemployment due to a shortage of jobs available in the public sector and the limited knowledge graduates have about the opportunities available in the growing private sector. In order to change this, the Career Center has set up an array of leaning services that take advantage of the many employment and training opportunities available in the private sector. These services include:

- CV writing skills workshops to ensure students get noticed at first glance.
- One-on-one interview skills training.
- Internship programs, giving students the opportunity to gain valuable hands on experience.
- Study abroad application help, allowing postgraduates to gain new perspective on world issue and increase language skills.
- Inviting guest speakers to the university in an effort to build important linkages between the students and the private workforce. It is hoped that by improving this academia and industry connection through guest speakers it will lead to networking opportunities for industry to meet students and help to fulfill employment needs.



Salahaddin University students engaged in resume review at the temporary Career Center space.

The Career Center staff has proudly marketed these services to students and businesses alike. As a result in the last few months the Career Center has distributed hundreds of resumes to students and staff members. The center has held CV help workshops, in addition to one-on-one help offered at the center. Moreover, during the month of May the Career Center conducted three career planning sessions with perspective employers. These firms have shown interest in training and recruiting interested students within their organizations. So far the several firms have presented workshops to students with over 200 students in total.

The staff at the Career Center is dedicated to delivering programs and services that enrich student's employment opportunities. Thus, the Salahaddin Career Center has made tremendous progress in turning its mission into a reality since opening in February 2012.

-Delan Akrawi
Director
Salahaddin University Career Center

We at Basra University started the task of student advising as a unit created by the university to assist our students and teaching staff get scholarships at the different programs in the US and had a MOU that the university signed with different American universities by assisting them with paperwork and supplying them with recommendation letters. This is done without any knowledge of the standard practices of a career center till we had a chance to meet with Husna Ali-Khan the ULP director with FHI 360 who introduced us to the idea of a formal career center and invited us to the Career Center Workshop in Malaysia in February 2012.

Fortunately for us, many international oil and gas companies started working in Basra because Iraq shifted from a strictly centralized socialist economy to a free market economy. Since February 2012 we started with a staff of two and got some assistance from the university to buy furniture and employ five other staff members. We created a data base for our graduates and connected the center with many international companies. To date, these efforts resulted in getting jobs for many of our graduates. Despite this achievement we still face some challenges like the absence of a web site, needing to educate of our students about the reasons for the career center and the need for improving the workplace English skills of our students. Most of the hiring companies require English-speaking graduates with computer skills; to address this we started organizing workshops with the help of the Department of Continuous Education. An additional challenge is to encourage all university departments to use the benefits of the Career Center when dealing with outside companies. We hope to overcome this by issuing new notification and coordinating our work with the different departments. Overall, the work in our Career Center is very helpful and encouraging especially in a country like Iraq.

-Dr. Sami Hato
Director
Basrah University Career Center

Basrah University Career Center



Career Center Director Dr. Sami Hato poses outside Basrah's new career center space.

Tikrit University Career Center



Above - Meeting in the new Career Center space. From right to left: Tikrit University President Dr. Maher Alawi, Career Center Director Omar Idrees, Vice President Dr. Saeed Al Salab, Career Center Staff Member Mr. Dheyab Mohammed and Computer Center Director Mr. Harith Hussein.



Left - New signs welcome and encourage students to use the career center space and services.

Through a partnership between the Tikrit University and Ball State University, we began discussions for how to establish a Career Center during a first meeting in May 2011 in Erbil, where we decided on steps to reach the goal of beginning the center. The second meeting was in September 2011 at Ball State University, where I was able to learn a lot from that university's experiences and we agreed to train my staff at an upcoming conference at University of Malaya in Malaysia.

The Career Center Workshop in Kuala Lumpur in February 2012 was our third meeting, where we received training and put together a work plan for the next year. Finally, we were able to achieve the goal when we opened the Career Center in May 2012. We appreciate the continuing support and assistance by FHI 360 as well as the support from Ball State University. Kufa President Maher and Vice President Saeed have also visited the Career Center, asked many questions and given their full support as well.

Since opening the Center I have met with many students to explain the goals of the Center and services to be offered, in addition to conducting a student needs assessment survey. This summer I have focused on employer outreach and met with representatives from Tikrit government and with local NGOs regarding apprenticeships and a small businesses grant opportunity. With the support of my Career Center team, we are currently working on creating resources and brochures to distribute to students and employers.

-Omar Idrees
Director
University of Tikrit Career Center



US-IRAQ UNIVERSITY LINKAGES PROGRAM

Kufa University Career Center

In early 2012 Kufa University issued an order to establish a career center in the university and named Dr. Assad Hassan as Director and Engineer Ghazwan Noori Jreou as Assistant Director. Rehabilitation work was done to create the space for the center at the University in central library and the new space was furnished with some supplies. We formulated the staff of the career center by adding two support staff from the university's engineers as well as a secretary.

Since the founding of the Kufa University Career Center in March 2012, we have carried out many tasks:

- Established first-ever space for the Career Center and furnished it with supplies.
- Performed outreach to private sector companies such as Zain for Communications Company and Zain of Life, for the purpose of creating job contracts for some students.
- Made contact with the Commerce Chamber and Industry Chamber of Najaf for the purpose of cooperation and have also contacted with the Governorate of Najaf for the purpose of opening the door of cooperation with them.
- Dr. Assad submitted a plan for the next academic year with a plan for the Career Center's schedule of services. Kufa University leadership discussed the plan and gave him an agreement for execution.
- Conducted presentations on the career center for students of the Colleges of Engineering, Science, Agriculture, Mathematics and Computer Science.



Students attend a career center presentation at the University of Kufa.

- Met with a graduation committee in the College of Engineering to hold a discussion symposium with the employers of civil engineering to evaluate the role of their alumni.
- Student survey forms were printed and distributed for the students of five colleges.
- A database for results and assessments of the student survey was created by Engineer Ahmed Yassin.
- In June we hosted an interview with Salam Alwaili from IJMA3 with a sample of students from the Colleges of Engineering, Management, Economics and English Language Arts for the purpose of researching student opinions on a jobs portal.

-Ghazwan Jreou
Assistant Director
University of Kufa Career Center

FHI 360 would like to acknowledge the U.S. Embassy of Baghdad, Iraq for initiating and funding the Iraq University Linkages Program (ULP), a three-year grant that envisions the facilitation of long-term, bilateral relationships between U.S. and Iraqi universities through collaborative efforts of faculty and staff at partnered universities. ULP's purpose is to assist Iraqi higher education institutions with curriculum development of selected subject matter, introduce the latest teaching techniques and educational technologies, engage in faculty/student exchanges, and to maximize the relationships between public, private and academic sectors in Iraq to better serve its academic and public constituencies.