



US-IRAQ UNIVERSITY LINKAGES PROGRAM

Issue No. 4

Bulletin

Extension Period Begins After Two ULP Conferences Held in Erbil

At the close of the third year of the partnerships, major programming has been approved for extension until June, 2013. This allows more time to apply the outcomes of the recent ULP Best Practices Conference and the Career Center Training and implement exciting new project activities.

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.

Winter 2012-2013

In this issue:



**FHI 360 Holds
Best Practices
Conference for
Iraqi Partners**

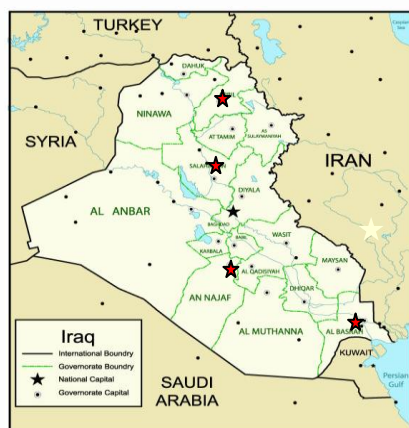


**Career Center
Training held in
Erbil with
American
Counterparts**

BY THE NUMBERS

220

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



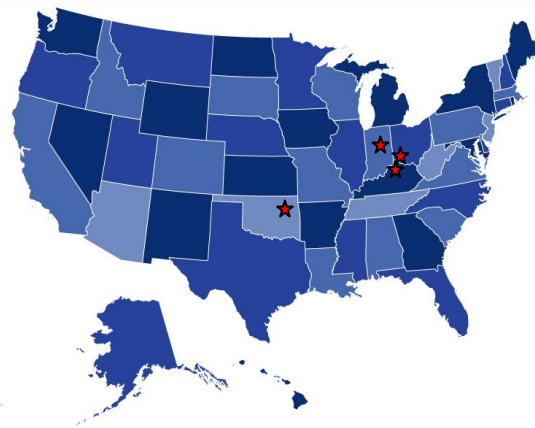
ULP Partnerships

**Salahaddin University-Hawler -
University of Cincinnati**

**Tikrit University -
Ball State University**

**Kufa University -
University of Kentucky**

**University of Basrah -
Oklahoma State University**



Iraqi ULP Faculty Gather in Erbil For Best Practices Conference



Above: Participants discuss program activities during a breakout session. Right: Participants from both events pose outside the conference venue in Erbil. (Photos courtesy of Dheyab Mohammed, Tikrit University Career Center)



On November 3rd-6th, the FHI 360 ULP Team facilitated a Best Practices Conference in Erbil, Iraq for select Iraqi ULP partners. Thirty-two faculty and staff, representing each of the departmental linkages from all four Iraqi universities, were in attendance. Participants were invited based on previous program involvement and day-to-day implementation of program goals in order to generate a well-informed assessment of academic, pedagogical and logistical best practices. Sessions focused on major program goals including, curriculum and course revision and development, acquiring and utilizing academic resources, enhancing professional development and expectations for faculty exchanges.

Participants were organized into small groups according to academic or university affiliation to support targeted, relevant discussion. The methodology for each session followed the same outline. Participants would address a specific topic by dissecting the activity undertaken – why was it chosen, what was done and who was involved in the process? Discussion then highlighted successful activities and how best practices could be developed from these efforts. At the end of each session, FHI 360 staff would help each group to describe departmental or personal goals and expectations of their partner universities. Results of each step were captured in the participants' workbook as a resource upon return to their university.

One major goal of the conference was to connect the larger network of ULP implementers in a collaborative and meaningful situation. By exchanging ideas in academic and university group settings, participants met colleagues from similar disciplines but different universities from across the country. They discussed their shared experiences in areas of common cause such as curriculum development and departmental leadership. Even faculty from the same university benefited from the opportunity to see to each other as in-house resources. Participants were formally introduced to their university's career center staff, also in Erbil for the ULP Career Center Training, and participated in a joint faculty-career center session to determine how each department might best support and utilize this new university resource.

On the final day, participants had department-specific appointments with the FHI 360 ULP Program Director to assess departmental progress in achieving ULP goals and to identify action items for strengthening each partnership. Participants sent after-action reports with conference outcomes to their university leadership and returned to their respective departments armed with a renewed understanding of program goals and how best to achieve them.

-Josh Walsh
Senior Program Officer
University Linkages Program
FHI 360

U.S. and Iraqi Career Center Staff Come Together in Erbil for Training

“The Iraqi Career Center staff’s enthusiasm for bringing new opportunities to their students was one of the most encouraging outcomes of the Career Center training. This commitment was evident throughout the sessions and conversations between the trainers and the trainees, and culminated with the thoughtful questions posed to the distinguished members of the employer panel. It was exciting to watch their enthusiasm grow as they learned how receptive the business community was to working with their respective Career Centers to facilitate employment opportunities for college students in Iraq.”



Career Center staff from U.S. and Iraqi universities pose with FHI 360 staff at the November 3rd – 8th ULP Career Center Training in Erbil. The training, conducted by the U.S. staff and facilitated by FHI 360, focused on creating content for student-centered workshops and revising career center goals. (Photo courtesy of Dheyab Mohammed, Tikrit University Career Center)

-Lindsay Vallaster
Career Coordinator, Business
Student Success Center
Oklahoma State University

“It was fascinating to see first-hand the Iraqi Career Centers formulate the tools needed to empower current and future Iraqi students so they can adjust to a new democratic society and find employment in an emerging free-market economy. At the same time, staff from the U.S. Career Centers and Iraqi Career Centers genuinely enjoyed each other’s company and developed relationships that will benefit all institutions as we move toward a truly global economy.”

-Meredith Boyd
Student Affairs Officer, Graham
Office of Career Management
Success Center
University of Kentucky

“The Career Center training in Erbil was as much a learning experience for those of us from the United States as it was for the Iraqi Career Center staff. Throughout the week we learned differences between our cultures. Culture, as anyone in a career center will tell you, is an important part of career development.

Success was found by working with the Iraqi Career Center staff to determine where the similarities were and brainstorming how to create usable information for the centers to use when there were differences. It was a wonderful collaboration of professionals from the U.S. and Iraq. Delan Akrawi, Salahaddin University Career Center Director, helped bring together the guests on the employer panel, who gave credibility to what we had been discussing all week and helped confirm for the Iraqi staff the need to begin making changes. For our last night we joined together for dinner and experienced yet another culture at a Turkish restaurant. This allowed us to laugh with one another and gave the Iraqi staff the chance to share something with us that none of the U.S. staff had ever experienced before! It was a productive week for all of us.”

-Theresa Aberle
Program Coordinator, Career
Development Center
University of Cincinnati

Updates from the Tikrit University Career Center

In the News: The Opening of the Career Center at Tikrit University, July 12, 2012.

Following its inauguration, the Tikrit University Career Center was featured in a news report discussing the issue of unemployment in Iraq. The reporter interviewed one of the Career Center staff members, Mr. Dheyab Mohammed, who explained that “The Career Center aims at connecting graduates with employers” and that “One of the short-term goals is to teach newly graduated students (and students who are about to graduate) how to use computers in making their resumes and CVs, and how to research jobs using several internet resources.” The complete news story can be viewed on [YouTube](#).



Dheyab Mohammed talks to a reporter in a screenshot of a local news report on unemployment featuring the Tikrit University Career Center. (Photo courtesy of Tikrit University Career Center)

Since the November Career Center Training in Erbil, Tikrit University staff have been quite busy applying the lessons learned. We have created an official Career Center Facebook page for students and staff to connect and also held three separate workshops on resume writing:

- December 2nd Workshop - attended by 38 English Department students
- December 9th Workshop - attended by 29 English Department students
- December 17th Workshop - attended by 23 Computer Science Department students

One of the great things that we learned at the Erbil Career Center Training was how to prepare successful workshops and how to use our skills in a professional way to provide services to our students. Managing workshops has been a challenge for us, and now we have more experience in how to set up workshops. In December we conducted many of workshops about how to write a resume and we are continuing to prepare other workshops in future. This success is because of the support that was given to us by FHI 360 and their partners. We very much appreciate their work and support.

-Omar Idrees Yousif
Career Center Director
Tikrit University

Career Center Development in Review

In September 2011, a faculty contingent from Tikrit University visited Ball State University to begin an eighteen month collaboration called the University Linkages Program (ULP) funded by the U.S. Department of State and administered by FHI 360. As the director of the Career Center at Ball State, I was enlisted by Dr. Kenneth Holland, Dean and Director of the Ball State Center for International Development, to participate in the project. My assignment was to support the professional development of Tikrit University staff and the establishment of a historic new Career Center at Tikrit University.

The Tikrit University representatives toured the Ball State University Career Center, met with members of the staff to discuss their roles, attended the annual Fall Career Fair, and sat in on a workshop designed to prepare students for attending the career fair. This comprehensive introduction to a well-established career center was a great experience for the Iraqi visitors. Our initial meeting allowed us to establish a strong relationship to build upon during the project period, and was beneficial to me in developing the syllabus for a two-week training workshop planned for all new Career Center personnel at four ULP Iraqi universities.

This training workshop, which took place in February 2012 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, addressed the foundations for establishing new career centers, such as strategic planning, staff development, program development, employer relations, and marketing. Twelve Iraqi Career Center personnel were joined by four new staff members from the Kandahar University Career Center from Kandahar, Afghanistan, the latter of whom were working with Ball State University through a separate grant. The historic collaboration between administrators and U.S. Embassy officials from the two countries enabled the group to learn and share experiences that benefitted all. I was thrilled to develop relationships with the directors of all the Iraqi Career Centers and to be able to communicate directly with them. In September, we were happy to learn that FHI 360 had scheduled another workshop in Erbil, Iraq in November 2012 and that I would be able to participate.

The Career Center Training in Erbil reunited the trainees from the Malaysian workshop and introduced new Iraqi personnel and trainers. I enjoyed seeing my Iraqi friends again and was happy to learn of the progress they had made in the nine months since the first workshop toward establishing their respective centers. They seemed glad to see us and one another, and shared prepared "Elevator Speech" presentations to update everyone on the Career Centers at each of the four universities. Improvement with English language and communication from the on-going mentoring relationships was clearly evident. Meredith Boyd and Theresa Aberle, new Career Center representatives from the University of Kentucky and University of Cincinnati, respectively, joined us to work with the Career Centers at Kufa University and Salahaddin University. These new representatives, as well as Lindsay Vallaster, the Oklahoma State University mentor for Basrah University, joined me to present valuable "nuts and bolts" training for creating and implementing student workshops.

It was clear by the end of the Erbil Conference that each Career Center was becoming established, that the universities were supporting their new centers and that the confidence and skill levels of the Career Center personnel was growing. Work plans for the extension of the ULP grant were discussed and goals clarified; the new FHI 360 initiative for creating a jobs web site encouraged the directors that more opportunities would be available for their students in the near future; and the directors pledged their support to one another as professionals who could help solve problems.



Mollie Fout working with Omar Idrees, the Tikrit Career Center Director, in Erbil. (Photo courtesy of Dheyab Mohammed, Tikrit University Career Center)

Editor's note: Mollie Fout has recently retired from Ball State University, with the Erbil Career Center Training as one of her final duties in that role. FHI 360 thanks her for her commitment and involvement in Tikrit's Career Center development.

-Mollie Fout
International Development Specialist
Ball State University

University of Kufa Civil Engineering Capstone Project Providing New Opportunities

One of the civil engineering courses developed as a result of the Kufa-Kentucky partnership of the University Linkage Program is the capstone graduation project course. The course is modeled after one offered at the University of Kentucky, entitled "Civil Engineering Systems Design." The main objectives of this course are to provide students an in-depth understanding of the multidisciplinary nature of civil engineering projects, to allow students to become familiar with various stages of project development and design, and to provide students experience working on a real-life project. The University of Kufa's Civil Engineering Department does not consider these objectives in graduate project courses, and instead courses focus on developing research skills of students, despite the fact that most of them will be site engineers.

Through the program, a new plan was started in the 2011-2012 academic year to develop a graduation project similar to that offered by the University of Kentucky, titled the "Capstone Design Course," as named by the accreditation board. An actual residential project was chosen to be the multidisciplinary design project a group of students would work on. This course was optional for the students, and unfortunately most of the students were afraid to work on this type of project. Students' feedback regarding this matter may be summarized in the following points:

- Students are not familiar with group work
- Students did not have communication skills, especially for oral presentations
- Most of the students are female and this might not be considered proper for field work for them



The civil engineering student group from the current 2012-2013 academic year on a site visit to an actual engineering project. (Photo courtesy of University of Kufa)

However, six students chose to work on this project as one group, half of whom were female. At the end of the academic year, the students presented their multidisciplinary design work as a group. One of the students, Baqer Al-Mosawi, who worked for several months after graduation in a residential project, said that the graduation project was really useful for him, and that his employer valued his previous real-world experience.



Baqer Al-Mosawi after graduation, working on a residential complex project. (Photo courtesy of University of Kufa)

The words of Baqer encouraged others in the current 2012-2013 academic year to undertake a similar project. Nineteen students are now working in three groups to do multidisciplinary design works for another residential project. Only four of the students are male, which presents a real challenge because the project will require visits to the work site. Sally, one of the female students, said that site visit will encourage her to be a woman engineer in the near future because she saw several amazing young engineers leading that project. To enhance communication skills between students working in one group, a Facebook page was devoted to their activities where they can find different resources necessary for their work. This page will be developed as a separate page on the department website.

- Dr. Ali Naji Attiyah
Department Head
Civil Engineering Department
University of Kufa

University of Cincinnati Visits Salahaddin University-Hawler to Observe Classroom Teaching

Throughout the two-year partnership between the University of Cincinnati (UC) and Salahaddin University-Hawler (SUH), UC faculty have worked with SUH English Language and Literature professors via Skype, email, Blackboard, and video conferences on how student-centered teaching practices can help college instructors better meet their programmatic and curricular goals for improved student learning. A delegation from UC previously visited SUH in April 2012 to demonstrate student-centered teaching practices with SUH faculty and students. From November 3-15, a follow-up visit was made when two teams visited SUH to check the progress of over two years' worth of collaborative work around redesigning the SUH English Language and Literature curriculum through integrating student-centered teaching practices and technology.



Dr. Saman teaching a class at Salahaddin University-Hawler. (Photo courtesy of John Kendall, University of Cincinnati)

During this two-week visit, the UC delegation observed 22 classes at SUH in the College of Education, the College of Languages, and the College of Basic Education. The UC teams included faculty and doctoral students from our Literature and Second Language Studies department from the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services, and the Economics department in the College of Business. Using a peer teaching observation form modeled on the form used at UC, each classroom visit was geared toward training SUH faculty to use peer observations to identify best practices and offer suggestions for integrating more student-centered instructional approaches. Additionally, during the visit UC Business and Economics faculty members also consulted with the SUH Career Center faculty and staff to assess the center's progress and create an action plan for further collaboration between UC and SUH Business faculty.

We noticed significant gains made in student-centered teaching practices since our last visit in April. Specifically, SUH faculty was no longer positioned as the "sage on the stage," but was ably shifting to the role of the "guide on the side." This change in teaching style was evidenced by a reduction of lecturing in class, an increase in small group work and whole class discussions, and the use of student-led discussions and presentations in class. Additionally, SUH faculty is using a broader range of technology tools in their teaching, including PowerPoint, YouTube videos, and the Internet.



Dr. Khalija's class at Salahaddin University-Hawler, with Thomas Highley and Connie Kendall Theado speaking to students. (Photo courtesy of John Kendall, University of Cincinnati)

Now that the SUH professors are more adept in the use of student-centered teaching practices, our partnership's next goals are to help SUH faculty spread these skills to a larger group of colleagues in order to encourage more participation in planning and managing student-centered lessons and activities at SUH.

- Laura Dell
Academic Director, eLearning
School of Education
University of Cincinnati

- Connie Kendall Theado
Assistant Professor & Program
Coordinator
School of Education
University of Cincinnati

Basrah University Finance Department Develops New Curriculum

The Finance Departments at Basrah University and Oklahoma State University were chosen as part of the US-Iraq University Linkages Program, with the aim of developing and improving performance in several departmental areas:

1. Curriculum Development
2. Laboratories
3. Libraries
4. Faculty Training
5. Post-graduate Studies
6. Course Delivery Methods
7. Career Development Center

After a number of face-to-face meetings and Skype conversations to evaluate the current status of the Finance Department at Basrah University, it was determined that curriculum development was the area most in need of improvement. Since the Finance Department of Basrah University is newly established its curriculum was designed by professors in finance

without specialized fields. After sending the current curriculum and syllabus to Oklahoma State University, the decision was made to make large changes in the curriculum. This began with a review and comparison between Basrah University's curriculum and ones used in American universities, particularly those used at Oklahoma State University. Then, these comparisons were discussed, and proposed curriculum modifications were agreed upon with professors from the University of Oklahoma. After that, the proposed curriculum was discussed by the Basrah University Finance Department's Faculty Council, and a committee was formed to review the proposed curriculum and syllabus. After that, it was submitted to the college council for approval.

The proposed curriculum and syllabus was then sent to the counterpart finance departments in other Iraqi universities for the purpose of receiving comments and opinions. In December 2012, a meeting with the Counterpart Finance Department Committee was held for the approval and adoption of the proposed curriculum and syllabus. The curriculum and syllabus are currently under review but it is expected they will be approved and implemented in the next academic year.

The efforts of the Oklahoma State University's Finance Department faculty were dedicated and cooperative. They submitted materials like text books, papers, and DVDs to support the newly-developed curriculum and syllabus. Also, we can't forget the efforts of FHI 360 in supporting the two linkage sides.



Faculty members from the Basrah University and Oklahoma University Finance Departments meet to conduct curriculum review. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Ab dul-Khaliq Al-Albadran, University of Basrah)

- Dr. Abdul-Khaliq Al-Badran
Finance Department
Basrah University



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Digital Video Conferencing Connects Iraqi and American Students



(Photo courtesy of University of Kentucky)

Holly Hapke, Marketing Lecturer at the Gatton College of Business & Economics, led a DVC (digital video conference) between the University of Kentucky and Kufa University students on international strategy in the fast food industry. Holly wrote a one page case study about the challenges of introducing a hamburger chain into Iraq. The students were asked to read the case and answer questions about whether this strategy could be effective and under what conditions. The students learned not only about strategy but also about each other's assumptions about the industry and food culture. DVC technology has been used by all four partnerships to enable American and Iraqi classrooms to exchange ideas, to allow professors to deliver regular guest lectures and to help linkage faculty partners to regularly meet face-to-face in virtual space.

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.