



# US-IRAQ UNIVERSITY LINKAGES PROGRAM

Issue No. 2

Bulletin

## ULP Begins Final Year

*After two years of partnership and exchange, the ULP partners look to promote lasting collaboration and develop university career centers.*

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
- First iteration of career centers created at each Iraqi university.

Spring 2012

In this issue:



**Career Center Conference held in Malaysia**

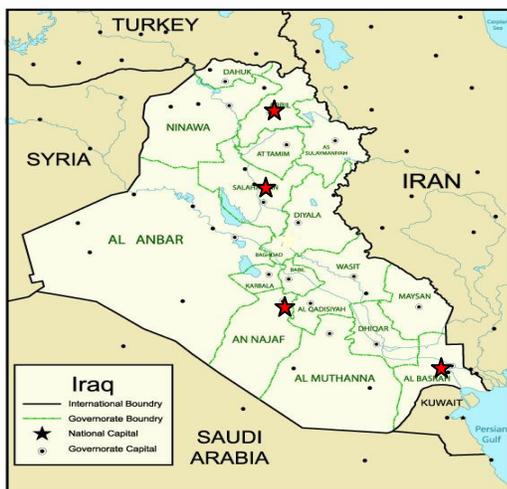


**Kufa University delegation visits University of Kentucky**

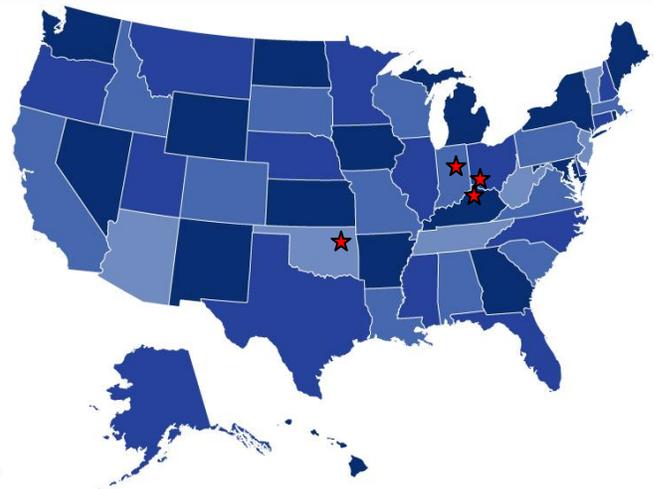
BY THE NUMBERS

# 190

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



Participating ULP Iraq Universities



Participating ULP US Universities

## A Note from the Program Director

From conceptualization to establishment, the FHI 360 ULP Team understands the challenges in establishing career centers in Iraq and is working to build upon the successes of the Program thus far. In our discussions with various Iraqi stakeholders this Fall, we identified key activities of a more “Western style” career center that can be applied in what is a nascent, but growing, Iraqi private sector. With the help of our in-country consultant, Esam Hewayde, we devoted late 2011 to promoting the career center concept and securing leadership in all four locations. Formal letters, sent by FHI 360 to all University Presidents, explained the career center goals, requested institutional support, and acknowledged both the job market and skills acquisition challenges in Iraq.

Ball State’s plan to offer a career center workshop for their partner, Tikrit University, presented a unique opportunity for newly minted Iraqi Career Center staff to engage in some Career Center 101. The US Embassy, Baghdad, agreed and approved our request to realign existing grant funding to secure their attendance. In line with other Linkage activities, FHI 360 also invited career center experts from each American ULP university to attend in order to lay a collaborative groundwork for the centers.

From a project management perspective, the country of Malaysia was a great choice for logistical reasons, as the governments have a special relationship allowing Iraqis to receive visas upon arrival. With ease of travel came ease of communication between Malaysians and Iraqis, who share a common Muslim identity and commitment to education. The presence of Kandahar University representatives added another level of understanding and sharing of challenges inherent to a post-conflict environment.

With the workshop underway on the campus of the University of Malaya’s Centre for Continuing Education, I led a kick-off meeting with the jetlagged but highly enthusiastic American group. In addition to covering goals for the week, we openly discussed the barriers to achieving these goals and how to get conversations started on the right foot.

The next day, the Iraqis and Americans met for the first time at the workshop. U.S. experts delivered presentations on their respective roles and university career services. After each presentation, hands shot up for questions, reassuring all that the Iraqis were just as eager to get started! After presentations, linkage universities were paired up and began working on the Career Center Packet, a document created by our Washington, DC-based team to more systematically approach the project during this rare face-to-face opportunity. The following topics were completed during intensive sessions throughout the week:

- A **Career Center Inventory Survey** to assess staffing, space, equipment, and other needs.
- A **Company Outreach Brainstorming** sheet to identify current and potential companies to begin interacting with.
- A **Company Outreach Process Flowchart** (including a case-study) to share methods of outreach and promote student experiential learning opportunities and employment.
- An **Iraq Career Website Brainstorming** sheet to gauge online needs and capacities for companies and students alike.
- A **Work Plan Template and Calendar** to pinpoint, step-by-step, the main goals of each center and tasks to achieve these goals.

Since February, each career center has made strides in their work plan and updated us via Google documents, Skype, or conference calls. Check out the next ULP newsletter for an in-depth update!



-Husna Ali-Khan  
University Linkages Program  
FHI 360

## Ball State University – Tikrit University

Ball State University brought together career center staffs from Kandahar University, Afghanistan, and four universities in Iraq to participate in a Career Center Conference on the campus of the University of Malaya, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 13-24. Participants from Iraq included staff members from Ball State's partner, Tikrit University, and three other University Linkages Program partners. In total, there were 13 Iraqis and seven Afghans. For two weeks, the groups participated in a common workshop on how to establish and grow a university career center. They frequently interacted with each other, including asking each other questions and making presentations about their institutions and plans for the new career center. Joining the staff members were three high-level university administrators— Vice-President of Tikrit University and the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of Kandahar University. Their presence was a demonstration that the two universities' leadership was behind this important project. The Afghans and Iraqis entered the workshop as equals—they were building the first university career centers in their countries.

Having launched their career center last October and offered their first student workshop soon thereafter, Kandahar University had a bit of a head start on the Iraqi institutions. The Afghans shared their center's brochure and first experiences in serving students with their Iraqi colleagues. Another benefit was that the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malaya hosted a dinner for all the participants and came to the workshop to give an inspirational address. He followed up with offers of scholarships to help Iraqi and Afghan lecturers earn Master's and Ph.D.s at the University of Malaya, one of the top institutions of higher education in Southeast Asia. Both countries have significant steps to take in order to offer a full range of student services, but were able to learn international best practices together from career advisors and managers from the University of Malaya and their counterpart US universities.

The Afghans and Iraqis exchanged contact information and left Kuala Lumpur with promises to share successes with and assist each other. The Malaysia workshop was the first time that Iraqi and Afghan university staff participated in a common workshop funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs. One goal of the career centers is to link the universities with the emerging private sector and thereby support a priority that the United States government has for both Iraq and Afghanistan—the development of a vibrant free market economy. The experiment of holding a common Iraqi-Afghan workshop was a great success and augurs well for future joint training activities.



The Vice President of Tikrit University, Dr. Saeed Hussein Ali, and the Vice Chancellor of Kandahar University, Eng. Abdul Tawab Balakarzai, discuss opportunities and challenges during the Career Center Conference at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

-Dr. Ken Holland  
Ball State University



Iraqi and Afghan participants and Malaysian facilitators pose as a group during the Career Center Workshop at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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## University of Cincinnati – Salahaddin University

The meetings in Kuala Lumpur were very helpful in moving forward the establishment of a Career Center at Salahaddin University in Erbil. One member of the Salahaddin team, finance professor Dr. Khalid Chawishli, had already visited the University of Cincinnati last summer and knew the Cincinnati team consisting of Dr. Sourushe Zandvakili, Head of the Economics Department at the College of Business and myself. The newly appointed director of the Salahaddin Career Center, Dr. Ghazi Mamandi, was introduced to us for the first time in Kuala Lumpur, so this meeting gave sides of the partnership the chance to establish positive good working relationships.

Cincinnati and Salahaddin participants started off with designing a vision and mission statement that should help to direct in the future. We also completed the career center work plan which allowed us a clearer path of where we wanted to go and the role that the University of Cincinnati could play in enhancing the success of the new Salahaddin Career Center. Erbil currently is inviting and receiving significant international investment and this is an excellent time for a career center to connect the university with the growing private sector.

Without a doubt, the interactions we had over the days we worked together have already created a greater understanding of our common ground and solidified the goals and scope of the Career Center. These new relationships will be very helpful in the months ahead. Both universities used this chance to learn more about one another and from one another. It was a long trip, but clearly worth the effort.

-Dr. George Vredevel  
University of Cincinnati



The participants from Basrah and OSU pause during a breakout session. From left to right: Tamara Alattiya, Dr. Sami Hatto, Lindsay Vallaster and Phillip Goodwin.

A blossoming private sector in Iraq that brings new employment prospects presents a unique opportunity for educating students and employers alike. The Career Center team is preparing to offer services ranging from student educational services such as resume development, interview skills training, and professional development to employer outreach activities in order to broaden the opportunities for students and graduates. One thing is certain – the geographic advantage of Basrah University has private sector employers already knocking and the Career Center staff stands more poised and prepared to help them make connections to their future workforce.

-Lindsay Vallaster  
Oklahoma State University

## University of Kentucky – Kufa University

The University of Kentucky (UK) sent two representatives to Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia to meet with two representatives from Kufa University, and work on developing strategies for opening a career center on Kufa's campus. During the day, Dr. Ghazwan, from the College of Engineering, and Dr. Asaad, from the College of Medicine at Kufa University, attended a career center workshop organized by Ball State University at the University of Malaya. During scheduled times, Ilka Balk, the Engineering Co-op and International Programs Director at the University of Kentucky, and Brendan O'Farrell, the Director of the Global Scholars Program in UK's Gatton College of Business and Economics met with Dr. Ghazwan and Dr. Asaad in order to put the theory about career centers into a plan of action specifically designed for Kufa.

It was immediately apparent that the representatives from Kufa were very enthusiastic about the Career Center and the work that they would be doing with students. It turned out that there was virtually no language barrier between the UK and Kufa representatives, and the discussions were very productive, and we are all excited to continue to implement the plans developed during the week in Kuala Lumpur. Beyond that, it was also wonderful to see that the delegation from Iraq connected with some of their former colleagues and students who now live in Kuala Lumpur.

-Ilka Balk  
University of Kentucky

## Oklahoma State University – University of Basrah

When opportunity knocks, will you be able to answer? The University of Basrah is committed to ensuring that its students and graduates are ready to answer the call of employment through the creation of a Career Center located in the Central Library on the south campus. Recently, two of the Career Center's employees, Director, Dr. Sami Hato and Assistant Director, Tamara Husien, attended specialized training at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During their stay, they were teamed with two career services representatives from Oklahoma State University in order to identify ways to advance the Career Center initiative through the Iraq University Linkages Program. The four worked diligently throughout the week, sharing stories of cultural uniqueness, discussing career center philosophies, and planning next steps to take the Basrah University Career Center to the next level.



The Kentucky and Kufa team pose with the United Buddy Bear painted by an Iraqi artist. The bears were in Kuala Lumpur during a world tour of the art installation featuring bears from 140 countries with a goal of promoting international understanding. The ULP participants adopted them as symbol of "friendship, co-existence and integration." From left to right: Phillip Goodwin (OSU), Lindsay Vallaster (OSU), Brendan O'Farrell (UK), Dr. Asaad's friend, Ilka Balk (UK), Dr. Asaad Al-Abboodi (Kufa).

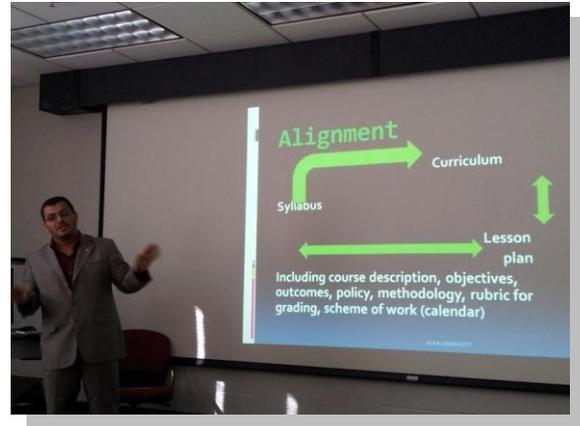
## Kufa University Delegation Visits University of Kentucky

A pillar of the University of Kentucky and Kufa University partnership has been Kufa delegation visits to UK. In April 2012, the second of three proposed visits took place. I was able to attend closing presentations given by six Kufa faculty members representing the Business, Civil Engineering, and English Departments. It was during these presentations that a few striking developments in the overall partnership were revealed. Kufa faculty exhibited new and engaging presentation styles that they pledged to incorporate into lectures back home.

English faculty were decidedly “out with the old, in with the new,” wisely using their time in the U.S. to gain administrative approval for new courses and resources to improve their curriculum. Business faculty discussed incorporating guest speakers from local multinational companies into their lectures, a goal which has natural crossover with goals of the career center. Vice Dean of Civil Engineering, Dr. Hasan Mahdi Mohammed Al-Khateeb, and faculty, discussed the road to building a Capstone course to make students more competitive on campus and within a global marketplace.

UK faculty noted that the delegation members were chosen wisely and the trip was perfectly relevant to improving their academic roles at Kufa. They were also happy with the impact delegation visits were having on the UK faculty and community. The ULP has been challenging, but it has promoted a collaborative and international spirit within and between various UK departments, including increased involvement of the Center for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. FHI 360 looks forward to sharing these best practices to help shape future activity on other Linkages.

-Husna Ali-Khan  
FHI 360



Musaab Abdulzahra Raheem Al-Khazaali from the Kufa English department, delivers his closing presentation



Professor Hussein Dhahi from the Kufa Department of English delivers a lecture to his students incorporating teaching techniques learned during his visit to the University of Kentucky.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the full lecture.



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## Recent and Upcoming Events

- **January 29-31:** University of Kentucky and Kufa University staff representing Civil Engineering attended Standards of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Workshop in Erbil, Iraq.
- **February 14-18:** Ball State University and FHI 360 conducted Career Center Conference with participation from all eight U.S. and Iraqi university partners in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- **February 16-17:** University of Basrah Chancellor visited Oklahoma State University campus and partners.
- **February-March:** University of Kentucky conducted English lessons via DVC for Kufa faculty.
- **March 26:** University of Kentucky College of Medicine welcomed second visiting scholar in orthopedic surgery from Kufa University for professional development and targeted training.
- **March:** Iraqi universities initiated career center work plans and began offering selected services.
- **March 8:** Student-to-student DVC session held for business students from Kufa University and University of Kentucky.
- **March 19-April 13:** Six Kufa University faculty representing the Colleges of Business, Civil Engineering and English visited the University of Kentucky for curriculum and professional development.
- **April:** Ball State University faculty resumed offering real-time instruction to Tikrit via DVC.
- **April 13-20:** Salahaddin University hosted a University of Cincinnati delegation for meetings to review developments with the Business, Finance and English Departments and to meet with Career Center staff.
- **April-May:** Salahaddin University Career Center conducted four workshops and career planning sessions for over 200 university students.
- **May 19-20:** FHI 360 held a Best Practices Conference for U.S. universities at the University of Kentucky campus with over 20 faculty and staff in attendance.
- **May 31-June 6:** Visit by three Ball State University faculty to Baghdad to meet with Tikrit University President and faculty.

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*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.*