

Iraq Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

Weekly Update

CPA Higher Education Team Current Policies and Initiatives, Issue 5, Saturday, 16 August 2003

http://www.cpa-iraq.org/ministries/higher_education.html

This week's highlights:

Conferences in Iraqi Kurdistan mark new era of openness in higher education: Two academic conferences held this week in Iraqi Kurdistan mark another step forward in Iraq's journey out of academic isolation and separation. In Dohuk, American scholars met on Iraq soil for the first time with their Iraqi counterparts to discuss innovative approaches to developing conflict resolution curricula. In Erbil, the technical institutes and colleges of *all* Iraq came together to discuss their shared future in a unified Iraq. Both events were unimaginable just one year ago.

Advisor Council Meets; Considers Post-Graduate Admissions Reforms

The Advisory Council to the Senior Advisor Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research (MHESR) convened again at the University of Technology in Baghdad on 11 August. All the higher educational institutions of Iraq – including the universities and technical institutes of Iraqi Kurdistan – are represented in the Advisory Council, which serves as the Senior Advisor's main consultative body for educational policy.

Dr. Andrew Erdmann, the CPA Senior Advisor to the MHESR, briefed the Advisory Council on his recent trip to Washington, DC. He stressed the great interest in the United States, and around the world, in helping Iraqi scholars and students reconnect themselves to their colleagues abroad. He also provided an overview of the progress in the USAID Higher Education Academic Development (HEAD) program and reviewed critical administrative matters, especially those related to budgeting.

A representative of the World Bank, Mr. Peter Buckland, then briefed the Advisory Council on the joint World Bank-United Nations (WB-UN) needs assessment of the Iraqi education sector currently being conducted. The CPA higher education team is helping support this effort by freely sharing its own assessments and information from its database on Iraqi higher education. The WB-UN needs assessment will provide essential background information for the international donors conference that will meet in Madrid, Spain, in late October. Mr.

Buckland's briefing highlighted both the international community's interest in assisting Iraqi higher education, as well as the need for Iraqi higher education institutions to develop their own project proposals for possible consideration by the donor's conference. The initial draft of the report will be completed before the end of the month.

Dr. Sami Mudhaffar of Baghdad University then delivered the recommendations of the Temporary Advisory Committee on Post-Graduate Admissions.

The report stressed the need to preserve academic standards and the autonomy of the universities in making admissions decisions. It also addressed the need to end immediately policies that discriminated against graduates from universities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Advisory Council's debate of the report's specific recommendations was constructively critical. Highlighted was the need to end the existing age limit of 45 years for entering a Ph.D. program. Such an age limitation is not only discriminatory in principle, but also adversely impacts those communities that have not been able to send students for post-graduate study during the past decade. The Senior Advisor concurred that all such restrictions should be eliminated; admissions should be based upon individual merit.

The Senior Advisor again emphasized the CPA's commitment to preserve the autonomy of the higher educational institutions over academic matters as establishing specific entrance standards for particular post-graduate degree programs – such as language requirements. He also stressed the imperative to end immediately all policies that discriminate against applicants from Iraqi Kurdistan. Finally, Dr. Erdmann stressed that the MHESR would look favorably upon funding proposals independently developed by the universities to increase the number of post-graduate students from Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Temporary Advisory Committees on Curriculum Reform and External Relations are scheduled to deliver their initial reports

during the next meeting of the Advisory Council on 18 August.

Representatives from the Iraqi higher educational institutions lead all three Temporary Advisory Committees.

(The establishment of these committee and their objective were detailed in *Iraq Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research Weekly Update, Issue 1, 19 July 2003*).

New Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs

Dr. Mohammed Nasser was appointed by the Senior Advisor to serve as the MHESR's new Acting Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs. Dr. Ermann was pleased to introduce Dr. Nassser personally to the members of the Advisory Council on 11 August.

Dr. Nasser previously served as the dean of Baghdad Technical Institute and has over two decades experience in Iraqi higher education. He immediately turned his energies and expertise to the preparation of the critical 2004 budget.

The entire CPA higher education team is delighted that he accepted this great responsibility.

Senior Advisor Participates in Conferences Marking New Era of Openness

On 11-13 August, Dr. Erdmann and members of the CPA higher education team traveled to Dohuk and Erbil for two seminal academic gatherings.

At Dohuk University, the CPA higher education team joined the innovative "Conflict Resolution Curriculum Development Project". This project is the result of over 5 years of effort by the Academic Consortium for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, which has brought together representatives from Columbia University, American University, and Conflict Management

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Group of the United States with the three universities of Iraqi Kurdistan. By bringing American and Iraqi scholars together to discuss curriculum reform on Iraqi soil, this event captures how the new era of academic relations between the United States and Iraq has already begun.

The CPA higher education team then traveled to Erbil for the trailblazing "Conference on the Status of Technical Education in Kurdistan Region and Its Future Aspects for Federal Iraqi States". This conference was planned by the joint efforts of the Foundation of Technical Education headquartered in Baghdad. UNESCO generously helped sponsor this event, along with additional support provided by the MHESR.

This event brought together for the first time representatives of all the technical institutes and colleges in Iraq to map out a shared agenda for the future. Dr. Erdmann was honored to deliver the opening address to this historic gathering.

For many participants from Baghdad and the south, the conference had a personal significance because it marked the first time in over a decade that they could travel freely to Erbil. Families and friends are thus reunited as the higher educational establishment seeks to come together again.

The 101 Airborne supported this three-day mission with helicopter transportation for each leg of the journey. The CPA higher education team extends its personal thanks to Col. William Harrison, Major Mike Shenk and their crews for their efforts to make this trip a success.

Deputy Senior Advisor to Assist USAID in HEAD Review

LTC Steve Curda, deputy senior advisor and member of 352 Civil Affairs Command, departed on 11 August for Washington, DC to assist USAID in the review of Higher Education Academic Development (HEAD) program proposals. HEAD is a \$20 million dollar grant from USAID to foster universities in US to develop academic relationship with Iraqi universities. Dr. Curda brings to the review his hard-earned, firsthand experience with Iraqi higher education.

Ambassador Bremer Meets Baghdad Undergraduates

The evening of 15 August, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority Ambassador Paul Bremer III met with a small group of undergraduates from Baghdad University, Al Nahrain University and the University of Technology. The students, male and female, represented the spectrum of disciplines from engineering to political science to dentistry. They shared with Amb. Bremer their frustrations as well as their hopes and ambitions for the future of their families and Iraq. In particular, they stressed their intense desire to move beyond the restrictions of the past and to reconnect themselves to the world outside of Iraq through scholarships, exchanges, and revitalized curricula.

Harish Rajguru of UK Departs

After two months serviced with the CPA higher education team, Harish Rajguru of the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) returned to London for a new position handling UK-Iraqi affairs. Harish played a pivotal role in establishing an effective office system for the team, and tackled a range of critical administrative and policy tasks. His contributions to the team were many, and he will be missed.

The UK FCO plans to commit another officer to the CPA higher education team within the next two weeks to assume Harish's responsibilities.

Dana Baschová of Czech Republic Joins CPA Higher Education Team

The CPA higher education team welcomes Dana Baschová of the Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dana comes to Baghdad after extensive experience in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as with NATO and the EU. Dana will assume lead responsibility for our project to help establish in every university in Iraq fully functioning offices of external relations. These offices will have the communications, resources, and trained staff to assist Iraqi students and scholars identify and apply for opportunities to study and travel abroad. She

will also be responsible for helping cultivate academic relations between Europe and Iraq.

With Dana's arrival, the CPA higher education team continues to become more diverse. To date, citizens of the Czech Republic, Iraq, Italy, The United Kingdom, and the United States have served as members of the team.

Columnist Tom Friedman Quotes Imad al Tamini

CPA higher education team member Imad al Tamini once again made news –this time not just in Iraq, but around the world. The dean of American foreign affairs commentator, *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman, quoted Imad in the "Power and Peril" column on 13 August.

Events Calendar:

August 16-22 – USAID HEAD program proposal review in Washington, DC

August 18 – Advisory Council Meeting, hosted by University of Technology

August 20 – Ambassador Bremer's "town hall" meeting with Iraqi undergraduates to discuss future of Iraq, hosted by University of Technology

Please e-mail questions, comments, or suggestions:
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