

PRESS RELEASE

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University System of Ohio Becomes First Statewide System to Participate in Iraq's Education Initiative

The Partnership advances a key strategy of the Chancellor's 10-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education to increase the number of international students studying and graduating in Ohio

COLUMBUS – On Saturday, Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric D. Fingerhut announced a partnership with the Republic of Iraq to make the University System of Ohio the first statewide system to participate in the Iraq Education Initiative (IEI). The Chancellor participated in a signing ceremony with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Dr. Zuhair Humadi, Executive Director of the Higher Education Committee for the Educational Development of Iraq, to formalize the agreement. The partnership advances a key goal of Ohio's 10-year *Strategic Plan for Higher Education* of increasing the number of foreign students studying in Ohio and graduating from Ohio universities and community colleges.

"This agreement will forge a long-lasting relationship between the State of Ohio and the Republic of Iraq," said Chancellor Fingerhut. "Our Strategic Plan calls for more international students to attend the University System of Ohio because businesses need students who can work in a global environment. With this new partnership, Ohio students will be studying side by side with the best and brightest from Iraq, giving our students the crucial global experience they need to succeed. And, with some of Iraq's top students graduating from Ohio universities and colleges, Iraq's emerging economy will be driven by young business leaders with strong ties to Ohio and Ohio companies."

The Iraq Education Initiative, created and funded by Iraq, is designed to alleviate four decades of underdevelopment due to wars and the economic stagnation of the last two decades by increasing the educational attainment among the young people in the Republic of Iraq. The Higher Committee for the Educational Development of Iraq will manage the Initiative under the supervision of Dr. Zuhair Humadi with advisory support provided by AED. AED is a nonprofit social change organization which works globally to improve education, health, social, and economic development.

Fully funded by the government of Iraq, the IEI's initial goal is to send up to 10,000 Iraqi students per year over the next five years to the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia to complete their higher education studies. The Initiative will begin with a pilot program of 500-600 students for the 2009-2010 school year. The Higher Committee for the Educational Development of Iraq will award scholarships to high-achieving Iraqi high school students who have taken required college admission tests. Students will be allowed to study nearly all majors and seek all degrees, including some PhDs. Iraqi students will be especially encouraged to study engineering, education, information technology, business, law, and medicine.

In the pilot year, the Higher Committee for the Educational Development of Iraq will recommend at least 100 qualified students – of approximately 300 students who are expected to come to the United State in the pilot year – to Ohio institutions of higher education. In subsequent years, at least one-third of the total number of qualified IEI students will be recommended to Ohio institutions. All Iraqi students will be expected to apply and be accepted by the Ohio college or university according to the school's regular admission standards. The partnership will provide direct economic benefit to the State of Ohio and create long-term economic, academic and civic relationships.

Overall, Twenty-two universities, which are founding members of the American Universities Iraq Consortium, will welcome these students to their campuses. Among these universities are Vanderbilt University, Virginia Commonwealth University, West Virginia University, and Texas A & M. The intent of the Consortium is to streamline the admissions process for qualified Iraqi students, with more universities expected to join the Consortium.

The Initiative has the support of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the U.S. Department of State.

Photo courtesy of Larry Glenn, AED.

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