The Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage — Erbil, Iraq

The Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) preserves the unique legacy of humanity that is contained in the cultural heritage of ancient Mesopotamia, the “cradle of Western civilization.” In 2008, a remarkable U.S.-Iraqi partnership created the IICAH, a multi-institutional collaboration that brings experts from around the world to Erbil, Iraq, to train Iraqi museum and heritage professionals in the preservation and conservation of their national treasures. The IICAH’s state-of-the-art educational facility brings together Iraqi men and women, Arabs and Kurds, Muslims and Christians, Sunni and Shia—all drawn together by a shared passion for the preservation of one of the world’s oldest civilizations and home to some of mankind’s most ancient artifacts.

At a Glance

• Only educational institution in Iraq training museum, archaeology and historic architecture professionals in modern preservation techniques and methodologies
• US and Iraqi partners include the U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Kurdish Regional Government and the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage
• Managed by a five-member Board of Directors established by a Memorandum of Understanding (2010) between the Erbil Governorate and the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage
• Guided by an international Advisory Council including members of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Kurdish Regional Government, UNESCO, University of Delaware, The Walters Art Museum, Winterthur Museum, University of Arizona, University of Pennsylvania and the Getty Conservation Institute

Goals

• Improve heritage preservation, collections exhibition, and site management to better engage visitors and researchers, and to prevent future losses of cultural heritage resources
• Cultivate a collegial group of Iraqi cultural heritage leaders who will implement, disseminate, and sustain the IICAH mission and programs for future generations
• Prepare Iraq’s heritage personnel to assume leadership roles in international cultural heritage discourse
• Support Iraqi advocacy of museums and heritage sites as places for community learning, discovery, and enjoyment
• Use the shared values of Iraqi communities to foster new connections between the national government and its people, through cultural collaborations between the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the Kurdish Regional Government
• Restore self-confidence in the community of Iraqi museum and heritage professionals by building an interdisciplinary and sustainable national heritage preservation program

More Information

• 135 professionals have received training since 2009
• Parallel English language instruction provides a bridge between Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking cultural heritage professionals and empowers them to participate in international scholarship and professional activities
• In 2011, the University of Delaware expanded the IICAH curriculum with preventive conservation and advanced conservation courses (advanced participants selected from among previous students)
• The 2012 curricula will include two-tier (introductory and advanced) programs in historic preservation and archaeological object preservation
• IICAH facilities are available for use by other training programs and have been shared with programs from Italy, Poland, Greece, and the United Kingdom
• Continued fundraising is necessary to oversee the IICAH’s short-term finances, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program
• For additional information please contact Jessica S. Johnson, IICAH Academic Director, at jjohnson@udel.edu or visit the IICAH web site at www.artcons.udel.edu/public-outreach/iraq-institute