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EIU Professors Lead Economic Development Workshop in Northern Iraq

Apr-04-2011

Two Eastern Illinois University School of Business faculty members, Marko Grünhagen and Richard Flight, recently delivered a week-long economic development workshop in Erbil, Iraq.

Working in concert with the U.S. Department of State, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Kurdish Textile Museum, Grünhagen and Flight assisted the museum and six other local agencies in their business planning and development process.

Realizing the need for economic stability and cultural preservation, the Kurdistan Regional Government of northern Iraq seeks to promote local tourism and commerce through state- and non-state-funded businesses.

The Kurdish Textile Museum, a nongovernmental organization in Erbil, Iraq, is focused on the cultural preservation of hand-woven textiles such as clothing and ornamental rugs. Their current activities include the operation of the museum and preservation of historical artifacts as well as the teaching of traditional weaving as a craft-form to local women.

"Economic stability through local commerce and the maintenance of cultural heritage is important to all people," Flight said.

"Furthermore, the desire to promote one's history through art as the Kurdish Textile Museum does reflects the pride and progress the people of this troubled area of the world have made."

Using the Textile Museum as the case study, the training included an intense five-day workshop designed to teach techniques required to develop a successful marketing strategy and create a viable three-to-five-year business plan for any nonprofit or for-profit business.

The workshop attendees plan to transfer what they learned to other small-business owners by hosting their own workshops and training sessions.

"Our ability to impact these organizations will hopefully extend throughout the region," Grünhagen said.

"One business's success will benefit others and, in effect, spread to the whole region. Ideally, participants of this workshop will start an economic chain reaction which ultimately helps everyone. Ultimately, this is true economic development assistance."



Marko Grünhagen



Richard Flight

Participating Organizations

- Kurdish Textile Museum
- Iraqi Kurdish Non-Government Organizations Network
- Erbil Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Women's Empowerment Non-Government Organization
- Achievement, Community and Employment
- Directorate for Employee and Vocational Training and Employment/Duhok
- AGER, German NGO