

# Iraqi Graduates Fear Their Futures Aren't so Bright

**Knight Ridder Newspapers**

The world that awaits Baghdad University's Class of 2003 has changed in ways few could have predicted when school opened last fall. With graduation just weeks away, the seniors must contemplate life in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. The changes go far beyond such things as the Army checkpoints that students pass through as they walk to classes. Among other things they have found new voices, and they are showing themselves to be outspoken in campus debates about the future. Under Saddam they would have been hushed. While opinions on Iraq's destiny might vary, a common bond among students is uncertainty. "I want to be optimistic, and I want to help my country, but I wonder how people will accept

us outside Iraq," said Ahmed Khadim, 23, a senior set to graduate with a degree in information technology.

"We don't have any experience with the latest new technology, and we fear that may be a problem," he said. "We want to work, but we have been isolated. We need real world training."

A common complaint among college students and Iraqi professionals is that the regime's prohibition on travel has kept them from being exposed to developments in Europe, the United States and elsewhere in Asia.

"Our books are from 1989," said Qussey Kahram, 24, also a senior in information technology. He said that sometimes students chipped in to buy a newly published book and have it brought clandestinely to Iraq.

"We photocopy it," he said.

Abbas Hassan, 39, who is getting a master's degree in chemical engineering, felt that despite his hard work, he was far behind the rest of the world in his field.

"I need to get out of the country and find out what has happened in the last 12 years in the civilized world," he said, alluding to the period of U.N.-imposed sanctions that followed the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Limited access to the Internet and strict laws prohibiting satellite television chafe educated young Iraqis.

"I don't even have e-mail," said Ahmed Kamil, 24, who is about to graduate from the university's medical college.

Like others, Kamil said he worries whether his medical degree would be accepted elsewhere.

"What is most important for

us is if other countries will accept us as doctors," Kamil said.

The lure of going abroad for the newly minted Iraqi doctors is money. In Iraq, doctors are paid about \$8 a month.

"Many of us are forced to work in other fields because of the money," said Mace Abdul Aussein, a medical student, adding that he and some friends have a computer consulting business.

There were wide differences of opinion about the presence of the United States in Iraq, but profound agreement that American soldiers should leave as soon as possible.

Aussein said he was uncomfortable having foreign troops in his country and U.S. diplomats running his country.

"I can't tell if I trust them or not," he said.

Noor Hadi, an instructor in

the department of engineering, has made up her mind.

"We are happy about the American occupation because it got rid of Saddam Hussein," said

Hadi, 22. "But after all these years, Iraqi people need to understand democracy, and that it must come in stages."

# Coca-Cola Tops Students' 'Best Job' List

**Knight Ridder Newspaper**

Companies that produce well-known consumer brands top the list of college students' most desirable places to work, pushing out the accounting firms that held that position last year.

Firms with universally recognized products top the list of ideal workplaces, according to an annual survey of 9,000 undergraduates at 56 U.S. universities, conducted by Universum Communications, a recruitment-research firm.

Last year, undergrads pointed to accounting firms as their most ideal workplaces, seemingly in a bid to help cure an ailing industry, but that tide has turned.

The Coca-Cola Company (KO) and Microsoft (MSFT) were the top two favored places to work this year, knocking PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ernst & Young from those positions last year.

Walt Disney (DIS) remained the number three favorite pick in both surveys, followed by BMW, IBM (IBM) and the Central Intelligence Agency in the current survey.

When choosing industries, undergrads continue to give highest marks to the entertainment/media industry, with 20 percent saying it would be their favorite industry in which to work.

But college students signaled a new interest in public-sector work, with education and government/public service tied for second-best industry, each gaining the approval of 17 percent of those surveyed.

Those two industries displaced management consulting, investment banking and advertising/public-relations from their tie as second-favorite industries last year. Still, advertising/public relations and management consultant remained in the top five favorite industries this year.


Another sign of the times: Fewer undergrads expect signing bonuses, with 25 percent saying they will not get one and 43 percent unsure whether they will get one. Last year, 60 percent of undergrads expected a signing

bonus. Also, students' expectations for benefits packages have changed, with dependent health insurance and retirement plans topping the list of desired perks, replacing the stock options and bonuses that topped the list last year.

The following are the top 25 companies at which to work, as chosen by the students: Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Walt Disney, BMW, IBM, Central Intelligence Agency, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young, Merrill Lynch, Sony, Nike, Goldman Sachs, Procter & Gamble, 3M, AOL Time Warner, Deloitte & Touche, U.S. Department of State, General Electric, JPMorganChase, Johnson & Johnson, Bank of America, Dell Computer, Anheuser-Busch, Pfizer and Morgan Stanley.

## The top industries are:

- Entertainment/Media
- Education
- Government/Public service
- Advertising/Public relations
- Management consulting
- Engineering/Manufacturing
- Investment banking
- Auditing/Accounting
- Healthcare/Pharmaceutical
- Computer software
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- Nonprofit.



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