

Thursday, November 7, 2024

Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism at the Hashemite University Hosts an Archaeologist to Discuss the "Umm el-Jimal Archaeological Project"

The Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage at the Hashemite University hosted Dr. Darrell Rohl, archaeologist and historian from Calvin University, USA, and co-director of the Umm el-Jimal Archaeological Project. Dr. Rohl delivered a lecture for students and faculty members on the archaeological discoveries in Umm el-Jimal, highlighting its uniqueness, global archaeological and tourism significance, and the stages of its inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List, making it the seventh Jordanian site to achieve this recognition.

Dr. Rohl discussed the historical eras that shaped Umm el-Jimal, from the Nabateans to the Romans, Byzantines, and later the Islamic era. He noted that it is one of the best-preserved Byzantine-era cities in northern Jordan, known for its vibrant community life. He emphasized its ongoing importance as an archaeological, tourism, and cultural site due to its enduring basalt architecture, with some buildings preserved up to their third floors. The site also includes a wealth of residential houses, churches, mosques, as well as administrative and military structures.

He added that Umm el-Jimal is the third Nabatean city, after Petra and Umm al-Rasas, showcasing the Nabateans' ability to establish sustainable and intelligent hydraulic systems despite water scarcity. The city stands as a testament to the resilience of the region's inhabitants, both in ancient times and today.

Dr. Rohl outlined the journey of the "Umm el-Jimal Archaeological Project," initiated by Calvin University in 1972 and continuing to the present. He elaborated on its connections with local residents and institutions, highlighting the role of archaeology and tourism in enhancing the local community's economic and social life. He also emphasized the significance of the project's studies and outcomes in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in preparing Umm el-Jimal's nomination file for UNESCO's World Heritage List, which resulted in its inclusion in 2024.

During his lecture, Dr. Rohl discussed modern archaeological excavation methodologies that enable a better understanding, documentation, preservation, and management of archaeological sites. He also addressed how these methods contribute to promoting the site on the global tourism map and encouraging visitors from around the world. Additionally, he highlighted advanced 3D scanning techniques for documenting Umm el-Jimal with high precision and cost-efficiency, which expedite necessary preservation interventions and enhance tourist accessibility.

The Vice President of the Hashemite University, Prof. Mohammad Suleiman Al-Masha'leh, met with Dr. Rohl in the presence of Dr. Fardous Al-Ajlouni, Vice Dean of the Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage, Dr. Ali Al-Manseer, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Dr. Muwafaq Al-Masaeed, the local director of the Umm el-Jimal project, and research assistant Farah Al-Dhameesha.

Prof. Al-Masha'leh highlighted the university's interest in establishing a scientific and research memorandum of understanding with Calvin University. This agreement would include student and faculty exchanges, collaborative research projects, and cooperation in the Umm el-Jimal Archaeological Project by providing students with training opportunities and involving them in the preservation and documentation of archaeological sites while fostering relationships with archaeologists.

Dr. Rohl welcomed the prospect of collaboration with the Hashemite University, commending its pioneering programs and specialties, particularly those offered by the Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage, which boasts a wealth of academic expertise in these fields.

An extensive discussion took place between Dr. Rohl and his team and the faculty members of the Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism. The dialogue focused on mechanisms for enhancing collaboration, exchanging expertise and experiences, and exploring opportunities for cooperation