

THE MUSLIM COLLEGE GUIDE

2022-2023

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IN MEMORIAM: REMEMBERING SOHAIB SULTAN



Sohaib N. Sultan

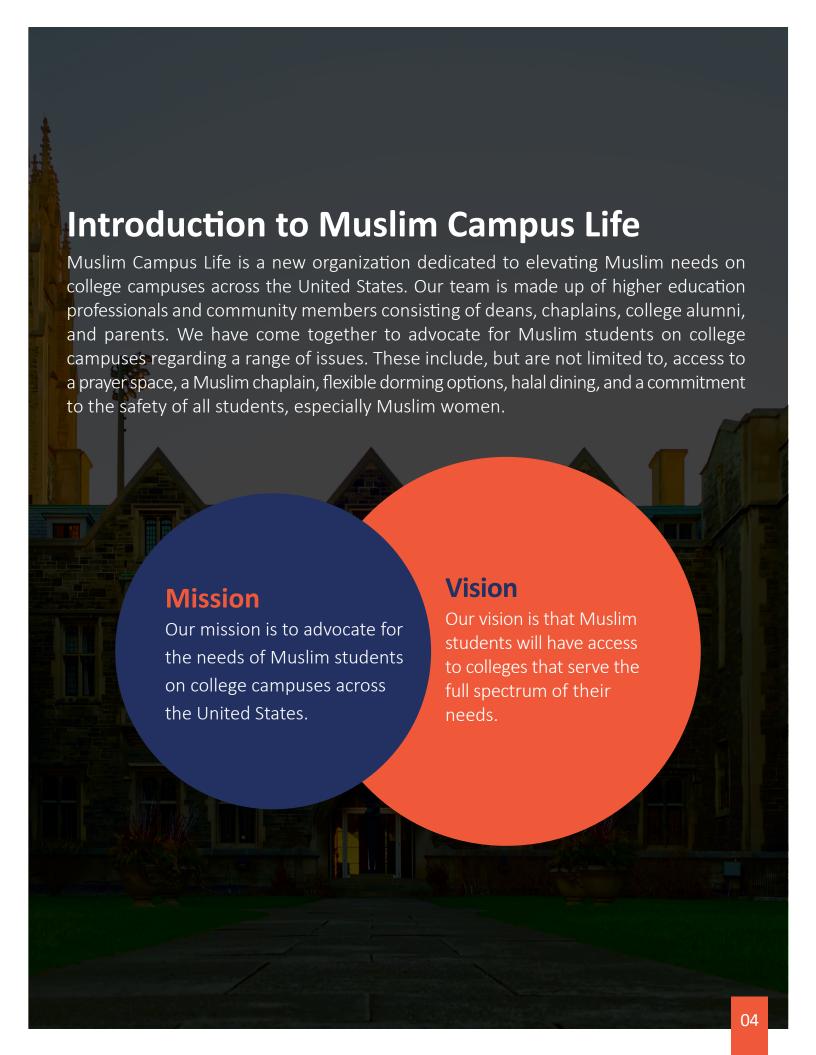
Muslim Life Coordinator and Chaplain at Princeton University (10+ Years) 1980-2021

"Blessed is God in Whose hand is the Sovereignty, and, God is Able to do all things. Who hath created life and death that God may try which of you is best in conduct; and God is the Mighty, the Forgiving." (Qur'an 67:1-2)

"So, my advice to myself, my family and to you is to cherish every day you are given and to do something really beautiful and meaningful with your life. Worship God with all your heart for the time you have on earth is the proximity by which to draw nigh to the Divine. Hold your loved ones, family and friends, tight. And, let not a day pass in which you do not show kindness to someone in some way."

Chaplain Sohaib Sultan

A pioneer in supporting Muslim student needs. A giant whose shoulders we stand on.





THE MUSLIM COLLEGE GUIDE

On a regular basis, we will update this guide to:

- Update the community on our projects and activities;
- Spotlight college campuses that are providing unique and exciting services for Muslim students; Help prospective students, parents, and families make decisions about what college to enroll in by sharing best practices from seasoned higher education experts. In future years, we aim to include
- the voices of fellow students and alum too.

STUDENT, ALUMNI, AND PARENT SURVEY Submit & Share!

- We are collecting data on what college students, alumni, and parents value and care about in regards to Muslim life on campus;
- The questions included in the survey will be updated and reviewed annually;
- The results of the survey will be shared on our website.

MUSLIM CAMPUS INDEX

- We are collecting up-to-date data on what services colleges provide to Muslim students. The rankings will be shared on our website and will prioritize sharing official university data;
- As we collect more data, we will begin to develop school profiles that provide holistic information on
- colleges that students, parents, and families can use to learn more about colleges; Rankings on our website will be released by college type (i.e. Ivy-Plus, Top Public Universities,
- HBCUs) using a rating system (i.e. 4 Stars, 3 Stars).

CONSULTING WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM CHAPLAINS

• In partnership with the Association of Muslim Chaplains, we will offer workshops to help interested counseling offices, colleges, and universities improve their understanding of Muslim student needs.

DETERMINING COLLEGE FIT

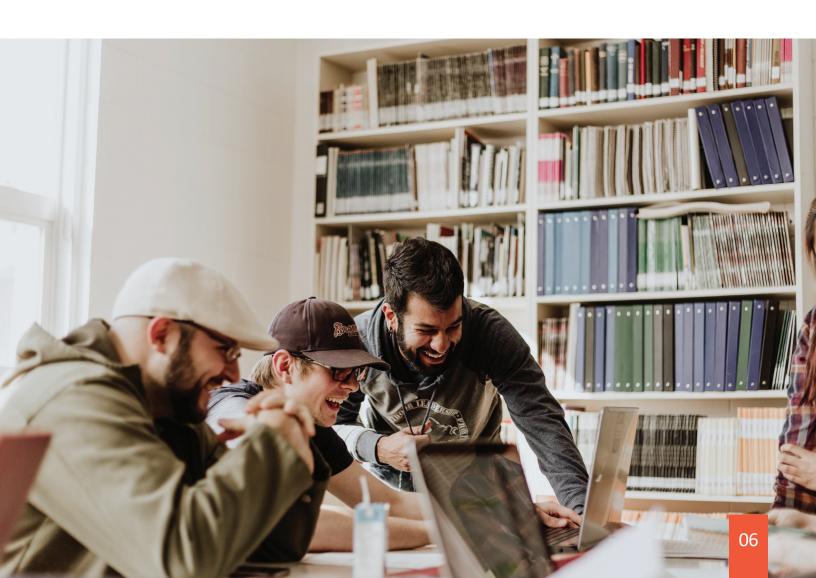
WHAT IS COLLEGE FIT?

There are many factors that students, parents, and families need to consider when applying to and enrolling in a college. Our team of experts have limited these factors into three main categories: academics, financials, and campus culture.

ACADEMIC FIT

Students, parents, and families should prioritize academic fit first and foremost when selecting a college. A college needs to have the intended major, department, faculty, and resources (access to research opportunities, internships, tutoring, and advising) that will allow a student to thrive in their area of study. Finding the perfect academic fit requires research, visiting a college (virtually or in-person), and speaking to current students or alumni that have attended a university of interest. Other important factors that relate to academic fit include college persistence and graduation rates. While no college has a 100% graduation rate, it is very important to understand how a potential college performs on these metrics for the typical student. A low persistence or graduation rate may signal weak support systems at a college.

To learn about specific colleges and their potential academic fit, visit https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/.



FINANCIAL FIT

The second most important aspect for students, parents, and families to consider is financial fit. For many parents this is often even more important than academic fit due to the exorbitant cost of many colleges today. This is especially important in light of the student loan crisis taking place nationally, where outstanding student loan debt is well over one trillion dollars, surpassing total credit card debt. Due to the nature of interest, this is also a theological concern for many Muslim families. Ensuring that students are not taking out excessive loans, especially for colleges where the return on investment may be lower (i.e. for-profit colleges that often have poor employment and salary rates upon graduation) is of critical importance for all families.

Experts provide several recommendations regarding financial aid, but one that our team finds very valuable is ensuring that a student is not taking out more than \$7,000/year in student loans, unless the college of interest is a college where the return on investment is quite high (i.e. the student will graduate with a good-paying job and repaying the loan seems feasible- typically this is the case for a highly selective college). All students should complete the FAFSA to explore Pell-Grant eligibility from the federal government and state grants from their state higher education office. Below is a brief description of the different types of aid that a student can receive from the federal government, state governments, and colleges.

Scholarships (Colleges and Independent Organizations)

- Determined by academics (GPA, SAT, & extracurricular activities)
- This is money you do **not** have to pay back
- Eligibility and size of the award varies by college or Independent Organization
- Check out these resources to learn more about independent scholarships:
 - Fastweb
 - GoingMerry
 - Islamic Scholarship Fund

Grants (Federal, State, and Institutional)

- Determined entirely by financial need
- This is money you do **not** have to pay back
- Types of grants:
 - Complete the FAFSA for Pell Grants from the federal government
 - Complete the FAFSA for State Grants from your state government
 - Complete the CSS Profile for Institutional Aid from select colleges

Subsidized Loans (Federal)

- Determined by financial need through the FAFSA
- These are loans that do not collect interest until the day you graduate
- There are limited amounts of subsidized loans you can borrow
- If you are eligible, these will be included in a financial award package
- Check out this organization providing interest-free loans to Muslim students:
 - A Continuous Charity

Unsubsidized Loans

- Determined by financial need through the FAFSA or a private lender
- These are loans that collect interest from the day you receive them
- Check out the Smiley Scale below to learn about the various unsubsidized loans that are typically offered by the federal government.

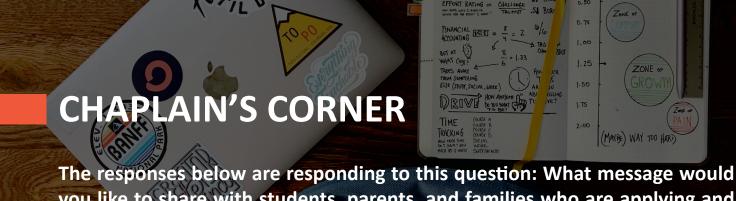
	Pell Grants	Direct Subsidized	Direct Unsubsidized	Perkins	Federal PLUS
Interest Rate	0	2.75%	2.75% - 4.30%	5%	5.30%
Smiley Scale		©	<u>:</u>	<u>:</u>	8

CAMPUS CULTURE FIT

The third most important aspect for students, parents, and families to consider is campus culture fit. There are a number of factors that are important to consider in regards to whether or not a college provides a strong campus culture fit. Below are some factors students and families should consider:



It is important to note that it is in this third set of factors where Muslim Campus Life seeks to support Muslim students, parents, and families in selecting a college. We firmly believe that academics and financials should come before the consideration of campus culture or campus life. After these two very important factors, however, we believe Muslim families should have the necessary information to make an informed decision regarding the experience of Muslim students on campuses across the country. Currently, students, parents, and families have to seek this information through informal channels that are often incomplete, subjective, and limited to a small number of colleges. With your feedback and support, Muslim Campus Life aims to fill in this information gap with complete and objective data for every college in the United States.



you like to share with students, parents, and families who are applying and matriculating to college?

Abdul-Malik Merchant, Former Chaplain at Tufts University

Consider you and your family's cultural and religious disposition, and if you (or your child) will have sufficient scaffolding to navigate their college experience.

Ailya Vajid, Former Chaplain at University of Virginia

It is important to reflect upon what is most important to you in terms of community and support during your college years. Different universities provide various offerings and also have limitations. Some provide resources but have a small Muslim population, while others have a large Muslim community but may not have something like zabiha meat. I have found working on smaller campuses that for some students, even though the community is tight-knit and supportive, having only 15-50 Muslim students can be incredibly challenging, so size can be a significant factor to consider. For others, just having a few Muslim friends and community is enough. Different students have different needs, and together with their families they can discern what is most important and necessary for them as they leave home perhaps for the first time.

Amir Duric, Chaplain at Syracuse University

Prospective students should consider universities and campuses that support intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Such universities will enrich student identity development and their overall well-being.

Bilal Ansari, Assistant Vice President for Campus Engagement at Williams College

Muslim campus life matters, so choose wisely.

Faiyaz Jaffer, Chaplain and Research Scholar at New York University

It's important for students to find an institution that will embrace their unique identity & appreciate the diversity of perspective they bring. At the same time, look for opportunities where you can utilize your faith as an inspiration to make a long lasting communal impact.

Furhan Zubairi, Dean of IOK Seminary and Chaplain at University of California Irvine

College is one of the most important experiences in a person's life. As a college student a person is still finding and forming their identity. The college experience plays a large role in shaping what type of a person an individual will be for the rest of their adult lives in terms of their beliefs, values, morals, principles, and character. It is essential for a Muslim college student to be grounded in their faith and identity. Oftentimes college is where students either find faith or lose it. Choosing a school that has a large Muslim population, a strong MSU/MSA, and a chaplain can help Muslim students grow in their faith and remain steadfast.

Joshua Salaam, Chaplain at Duke University

Find the best balance that works for you and your family. Each college campus may have something that you value. One college may be ranked the best in your area and another college may be close to friends and family. Just remember that college can be a very difficult time for young adults where their values, beliefs, and identity are challenged and explored. It is important for students to have as much support as possible through that journey.

Kaiser Aslam, Chaplain at Rutgers University

Discovering, building, and maintaining our spiritual identities is important at every stage of our lives and should not be neglected especially in transitionary periods (like higher education). It is in moments of transition that we decide to take on and leave ideas, practices, and affiliations. Therefore making sure there are diverse, approachable, and well established Muslim communities during your college years is imperative.

Nisa Muhammad, Assistant Dean of Religious Life at Howard University

The next four years can be the most amazing time in your life. Insha'Allah. Choose a campus with active Muslims that look like you. Talk to Muslim students to see how they feel about their experiences at the university. Does the campus have a Muslim chaplain? Do they have an active MSA? Does the MSA welcome and treat Black Muslims or other marginalized groups with love and respect? Does the Muslim community reflect Prophet Muhammad's, peace and blessings be upon him, love for diversity and inclusion? Choose wisely so the time spent there is an amazing experience and not one where you feel unwanted or unwelcome.

Nomaan Baig, Founder and Director of the Chaplaincy Initiative at IOK CHESS

It's essential to choose a college that is not only beneficial for your professional education but for your personal and spiritual development as a Muslim as well. Choosing a campus which has a Muslim chaplain and a strong Muslim student community will contribute to a student's spiritual development making the experience much more holistic from an Islamic perspective.

Nora Zaki, Chaplain and Advisor for Muslim Student Life at Vassar College and Bard College

Make sure your children have a God conscious identity, not a cultural identity that is one-dimensional. They should be proud of where they come from, but the MSA is not for one ethnic group. It's for all Muslims, including those who are different in terms of sect, ethnic background, socioeconomic background, level of practice, and sexuality. Build relationships with others. Don't be afraid to advocate and speak up for yourself and your needs. Have administrative backing when making a request. Look for a campus with a Muslim chaplain. If there is no Muslim chaplain, befriend the Christian chaplain. They are meant to be there for every student while accommodating your needs.

Reem Shaikh, Former Chaplain at Boston University

Make sure to always keep a part of your life that is dedicated to your faith and spirituality, no matter how busy your schedule is. Even if it means just pausing parts of your day to pray your five prayers or interacting with Muslim students. In the end, the connection to your spirituality will help ground you in all the other aspects of your life.

Yasin Ahmed, Chaplain at Cornell University

Before you enroll in a college, reach out to a chaplain or student to ask about the Muslim life experience on that campus.

We thank our official partner, the Association of Muslim Chaplains, for their support in collecting these powerful and insightful quotes.







Mary Ann Bodine Al-Sharif, PhD | Assistant Professor & Program Coordinator, Higher Education Administration, The University of Alabama at Birmingham

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Make sure that the institution you select is the right institution for you. Be selective about the program that you choose. Make a list of all the institutions you are interested in that offer the degree you are looking to study. Visit the campuses both virtually and face-to-face. Create a checklist of questions that you would like answered by all the institutions so that you can compare responses before making a final decision. Ask many questions about the program you are interested in, the amount of faculty support you can expect to receive, possible scholarship opportunities, and programming that will best support your needs both within and outside of the classroom. Ask about the experiences of others like you, if there are any clubs and organizations that align with your identity as a Muslim, as well as those that match your major. Ask about housing and food options on campus; what accommodations have been made for religious holidays; and what religious spaces/places are available for Muslim students. Ask how they work to create inclusive spaces for individuals like you both on campus and in the classroom. Be proactive in your search for the right institution with the degree program you are seeking and the support you will need.

Once you have applied and been accepted, the most important advice that I can give to any student is to get involved on campus. Do not isolate yourself. Be proactive with your education and the college experience. Students who are involved within the classroom and through co-curricular opportunities are more likely to retain and graduate from college. When you are not getting the support you need, ask for assistance. Speak to your academic and faculty advisors on a regular basis. Meet with your professors during office hours and stay engaged. Manage your time. Good time management equals success in college.



Leroy Thomas, PhD | Retired Associate Dean of Students, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Muslim Student Association Advisor, and former Director of Housing and Residence Life at Three Public and Private Universities

Once a student receives acceptance to his or her final choice, go over once again why the chosen college is the best fit for you. I have spent years meeting with students who really thought that they made the right choice. And unfortunately I had to send out many academic probation and suspension letters. The college decision will be the largest financial decision one will make outside of buying a home. So keep in mind that there are no refunds for a bad performance that result in making a bad decision.

In addition to research, co-op, and internship opportunities, also look for a faculty member in your academic department who can serve as a mentor. This is very important because not only will that faculty member recommend or assist you in obtaining an internship, but you will need that person to provide a recommendation for your graduate or professional school applications. Think long-term from the start. Too many students wait until too late before realizing the importance of a mentor.

Lastly, I cannot stress enough that the most successful students are those who become active on campus in co-curricular activities. Keep in mind: Students spend less than 25% of their college lives inside a classroom or lab. So there are great opportunities for growth and development outside of classes. Look for and take advantage of them.



Abiya Ahmed, PhD | Associate Dean of Students & Director, The Markaz Resource Center, Stanford University

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Muslim Life on campus can be what you make of it. Some campuses have more resources and systems already in place (with room to grow, of course); others require that students organize and advocate for themselves to create the Muslim Life experience they wish to have. The key is to find a core group of like-minded students as well as faculty and staff support to be able to curate that experience.

I suppose the first thing to consider is whether the institution is the right fit for your academic interests; everything else really can be adapted to or curated. In terms of Muslim Life, some things to consider are whether or not it is a residential campus, what is already available for Muslim students on campus, and perhaps also proximity to Muslim spaces locally.

College can be both exciting and challenging. My recommendation would be to pick a campus that intersects with your academic interests so the excitement doesn't fizzle out; and to ensure that there is a support network (even if it's a few other people, peers, parents, family, etc.) that can help mitigate the challenges. My personal experience indicates that Muslim students are hard-working and focused, and that with even a small support network they can not just survive the college experience but thrive.



Farouk Dey, PhD | Vice Provost for Integrative Learning and Life Design at John Hopkins University and Former Dean of Career and Experiential Education at Stanford University

Congratulations to you and your family on reaching this important milestone. Before you do anything, take the time to celebrate all your hard work and sacrifice. If you have more than one choice for where to attend college, recognize that this decision process may involve many blessings and some stress. While you will enjoy the great diversity of college life and meeting with people from different backgrounds, you may need to connect with a community that shares your culture, faith, food, and values from time to time. A home on campus away from your home will be important to your growth and success as a student. Do your research, talk to people, and pay attention

If you decide that support of your growth as a Muslim student is important to you, you should inquire about the availability of the following resources:

to the colleges that make an effort to point out the resources available to you as a Muslim student.

- **Prayer space:** is the location central and convenient for students, prominent and visible, easy to find, has appropriate ablution facilities connected to it, spacious, and seems to be more than a converted closet?
- Muslim holidays in the college calendar: are your holidays acknowledged in the university calendar? Are staff and faculty encouraged to plan major programs and activities outside of religious holidays? While coursework can be made up, opportunities to connect with speakers, alumni, and companies may not be.
- **Muslim student organizations:** Muslim student organizations are often the anchor of Muslim student life and will give you the opportunity to pray Friday prayers in congregation, develop deep friendships and networks, and grow as a student and a Muslim.
- **Dedicated staff:** some colleges have made great strides in hiring full-time or part-time staff and chaplains to support Muslim student life.
- **News history:** search for news articles that covered how the college dealt with issues that impact Muslim students in the past. For example, the way colleges responded to the Muslim travel ban or violence and hate crimes towards Muslims may give you a good sense of how they will lead with similar incidents in the future.

The way to ensure a successful college experience is to immerse yourself in experiences that challenge you and connect you with people. You will have the opportunity to do this within and outside the Muslim student community. Take advantage of these opportunities, pursue your curiosity, challenge yourself, and seek mentoring relationships with older students, faculty, staff, and alumni who can guide your decisions and potentially open doors for you.

CAMPUS **SPOTLIGHTS**



ISLAMIC CENTER AT NYU

The ICNYU is an exemplar of Muslim campus life in higher education. Muslim students at NYU have access to a Muslim mental health professional, a dedicated prayer space, four renowned Muslim chaplains and scholars (spanning different theological & legal practices), and over 10 different student clubs (like the Black Muslim Initiative and MSA) dedicated to Muslim life. They also have access to a fully halal dining hall, the first of its kind on any college campus. With over a decade of experience and leadership, the ICNYU continues to set the standard for excellence for serving the needs of Muslim students.



MISSION

The Islamic Center at NYU serves a diverse Muslim population in the New York and the tri-state area. Located in the heart of lower Manhattan, the Islamic Center at NYU provides a safe place for individuals with multiple points of entry to learn, pray, socialize and utilize a space situated at intellectual and spiritual crossroads. Inspired by the belief that communities develop in a supportive environment, people from all backgrounds are welcomed to engage in cross-cultural experiences, social justice endeavours, civic engagement initiatives, multi-faith programming, spiritual practices and religious education.

VISION

Our vision at the Islamic Center is to provide a space for a pluralistic future on and off campus for American Muslims. We hope that the Islamic Center at NYU will become a spiritual and intellectual crossroads of Islam and America, creating a deep and diverse community of ambitions and resources.



VISION:

Mu Delta Alpha ($M\Delta A$) is a Muslim sisterhood that inspires leadership in all women and empowers them through professionalism.

Inspired to achieve professionalism and defeat the stereotypes and prejudices faced by Muslims, Samira Maddox and her friends came together to form Mu Delta Alpha in 2014 at the University of Texas at Dallas as "Muslimahs for Change". At the time, these founders wanted to support the young Muslim girls whose potential was being suppressed by the foreign cultures brought by immigrant parents and American stereotypes. Over time, as the organization gained attention, the purpose behind the organization expanded. Today, Mu Delta Alpha stands to support all women, regardless of race or religion and raises its hands high, so all women can break the glass ceiling with their own two hands and reach their ultimate goals.

CHAPTERS:

Chapter Name	Host University	Launch Year
Alpha	University of Texas at Dallas	Fall 2014
Beta	University of Texas at Austin	Fall 2017
Gamma	University of North Texas	Fall 2017
Delta	Wichita State University	Fall 2019
Epsilon	University of Toledo Ohio	Spring 2020

PROGRAMMING:

- Annual Summer Leadership Retreat Program
- Professional Speaker Series
- Junior MDA leadership academy for girls
- Annual Mu Delta Alpha Summit

OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF THE CHAPEL, HOWARD UNIVERSITY

As the center of religious life in the University since its inception in 1894, we celebrate the Chapel's enduring legacy of developing spiritually grounded leaders for America and the global community.

Our Mission

The Office of the Dean of the Chapel is committed to empowering leadership development, engaging the global community, and enhancing the Howard University legacy of Truth and Service.

Time has affirmed that what happens at Howard University has implications for the nation and the global community. In 1994, Dr. Bernard Richardson, Dean of the Chapel, appointed the first Muslim Chaplain ever at a coed higher education institution in the United States of America. Interestingly, Dr. Richardson followed the path of interfaith engagement laid by the first Dean of the Chapel, Dr. Howard Thurman who took an interfaith pilgrimage to India, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), known as the "pilgrimage of friendship" in 1936. In India, Dr. Thurman met Mahatma Gandhi who exposed Dr. Thurman to diverse faith perspectives. After Dr. Thurman's return to the university, Howard University has been sacred ground where faith, and faith exploration is celebrated.

The Muslim Students Association (MSA) was established in 1977 under the Office of the Dean of the Chapel. The Muslim students at Howard University are involved in every aspect of religious, social, and academic life of the university. They serve as officers in a variety of campus clubs and activities from the NAACP to the African Students Association to the Saudi Students Association to Residents Assistants and everything in between. The MSA won the Bison Ball Award for Religious Organization of the Year for the past three years in a row (2019-21).

Jummah prayer service is held every Friday where the khutbah is given by noted scholars like Imam Siraj Wahhaj, Imam Zaid Shakir, Imam Suhaib Webb, Imam Omar Suleiman and many more. There are halaqas and special events like HU Hijabfest. Students also produce a quarterly magazine called Al Qalam.

Dr. Nisa Muhammad is the Assistant Dean of Religious Life and the advisor for the MSA. Her door is open to all students searching for answers on race, religion and relationships. Follow the Office of the Dean of Chapel and the MSA on social media @howarduchapel, @hu msa, and @alqalamhumsa.







IOK CHESS, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA/CALIFORNIA STATE SYSTEMS

The IOK Center for Counseling, Higher Education and Spiritual Support [CHESS] combines our Seminary program, with our Chaplaincy and Counseling services. Curated with young people aged 16-32 in mind, all our programming exists to ensure wrap-around spiritual support is available to the future leadership of our communities, meeting their every need through counseling, mentorship and further pursuit of Islamic Studies.

The IOK College Chaplaincy Program provides university students a safe and nurturing space to talk through their experiences and receive insight from scholars on issues that concern them that have the potential to impact the course of their lives. Offered weekly on campus through the facilitation of the campus Muslim Student organizations — this Chaplaincy program currently serves 8 campuses with 5 Chaplains.

IOK's Community Chaplaincy Program provides spiritual support, guidance, and a supportive ear by Chaplains who are also certified Mental Health First Responders. This network of support is available five days a week, for up to 20 hours a week. Through its multitude of programming, IOK CHESS seeks to Sustain a Finer Future by ensuring the Muslim community in the United States and around the world has the resources it needs to remain connected to Allah (SWT).



CURRENT GOALS

STUDENT, ALUMNI, AND PARENT SURVEY Submit & Share!

• To ensure that our rating criteria and perspective on Muslim needs is up-to-date and accurate, we need your help to understand what you are looking for in a college campus. Please complete this survey and share it widely with your peers!

MUSLIM CAMPUS INDEX View the Index!

• We have launched our first set of rankings for colleges. Keep in mind this is not a comprehensive list of colleges, due to the data collection process and how quickly colleges respond.

MUSLIM CAMPUS LIFE INNOVATION GRANT | Apply & Share!

• We are launching an innovation grant for colleges that seek to improve Muslim life on their campus. We are offering a grant of \$1,000 for the most innovative idea. For more information on the grant, please click the "Apply & Share" button above.









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