2025 Muslim Campus Life Summit
Formal Report
Rutgers University | January 26-28, 2025

Prepared by:
2025 MCLS Steering Committee

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Executive Summary

Summit Context

The Muslim Campus Life Summit (MCLS) aims to bring together university professionals who serve and/or do research on Muslim college students, as well as Muslim professionals in the higher education space in various non-student-facing roles. The goals of this convening are: 1) to engage diverse perspectives and frameworks (academic, chaplaincy, DEI, administrative, student affairs, etc.) on key issues and 2) to determine strategic collaborations, learning models, and future prospects for Muslim campus life in the US.

The first summit was held at Stanford University and hosted by the Markaz Resource Center. The second summit was held at Duke University and hosted by the Center for Muslim Life at Duke University. The third summit was held at Rutgers University and hosted by the Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers University (CILRU). The third summit focused on leveraging diversity as a strength, fostering a sense of belonging, strategically scaling initiatives, navigating complex political landscapes, and building robust community support systems. The summit emphasized the importance of prioritizing current student needs, cultivating interfaith coalitions, and adopting strategic approaches to combat Islamophobia and advocate for broader human rights issues, particularly concerning Palestine. Participants highlighted the need for actionable strategies, collaborative partnerships, and a commitment to continuous improvement to ensure a positive campus environment for Muslim students.

Key Themes

- **Addressing Islamophobia & the Palestine Exception:**
    - Islamophobia remains a significant concern, requiring strategic interventions and reframing narratives.
    - Navigating complex political issues, particularly concerning Palestine, necessitates coalition building and strategic communication.
- **Diversity as a Strength & Shared Struggles:**
    - Diversity within the Muslim community is a powerful asset that is not always leveraged on campus.
    - Despite cultural differences, Muslim students across campuses share common challenges, highlighting the importance of working together.
- **Community & Belonging:**
    - Proximity to masjids can foster vital community connections for campuses without access to robust support services for Muslim students.
    - Creating a sense of belonging is paramount, ensuring students feel valued and supported.
    - Current and enrolled students should be the priority.
- **Strategic Growth & Scalability:**
    - Initiatives should be strategically scaled, monitoring growth and resource allocation.
    - Sohaib Sultan's advice: Prioritize doing less for many people or doing more for less students.
- **Building Strong Support Systems:**
    - Cultivating strong alumni networks and fostering interfaith collaborations are crucial.
    - Engaging non-Muslim allies and leaders amplifies advocacy efforts.
- **Strategic Advocacy & Action:**
    - Empowering individuals and communities requires careful discernment.
    - Tenured professors have more protections than chaplains and should utilize their position.

Emerging Questions

1. **Activism and Social Justice**
    a. How can students effectively address complex political and social issues in light of changes to student policies and external university pressures?
    b. What does strategic coalition building look like?

    c. How can students navigate institutional pressures while maintaining their voice?

2. **Community Building and Belonging**
   a. How do we create a sense of belonging for Muslim and Palestinian students on campus?
   b. What strategies help students feel supported and understood?
   c. How can campuses build stronger connections between Muslim students and the broader community?

3. **Institutional Support and Resources**
   a. What infrastructure is needed to support Muslim students (prayer spaces, halal food, religious accommodations)?
   b. How can universities develop more inclusive policies?
   c. What resources are necessary to support Muslim student initiatives?

4. **Growth and Scalability**
   a. How do initiatives evolve from small-scale to campus-wide impact?
   b. What are the challenges of scaling student support programs?
   c. How can alumni networks contribute to ongoing student support?

5. **Combating Islamophobia and Discrimination**
   a. What are effective approaches to addressing systematic bias?
   b. How can non-Muslim allies be effectively engaged?
   c. How can Muslim Campus Life help combat discrimination through training sessions?

6. **Strategic Representation and Leadership**
   a. How do we develop leadership that represents diverse student experiences?
   b. What does effective student advocacy look like?
   c. How can students and administrators work together to create positive change?