



# Muslim Student Life

## Syracuse University

2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT



# OUR VALUES

# THESE VALUES MAKE UP THE DNA OF MUSLIM STUDENT LIFE

## VISION STATEMENT

01

To be the model University-based education center in the United States.

To create an inclusive community and to engage in sincere reflections that result in religious, intellectual, and social growth through educational programs and spiritual guidance based on Islamic principles.

02

## MISSION STATEMENT



Muslim Student Life  
Syracuse University

## LETTER FROM THE CHAPLAIN



Syracuse University has a long history in serving and embracing Muslim students, faculty and staff. Once at the forefront of providing services, facilities, and spiritual leadership to Muslims in its campus community, Syracuse University has in recent years fallen behind its peers. The alumni and members of our larger Muslim community understood the needs and challenges that the Muslim population faces in the higher education and established the Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University (MSL) to advance the lives of that population.

The board of the MSL brought me to Syracuse University in August 2017 to serve as the Muslim Chaplain and advance the efforts of the MSL and make it a model education center based on Islamic principles. Over the past academic year, the MSL has pursued this goal through a portfolio of educational programs, initiatives, campus-wide collaborations, and community partnerships. These efforts have delivered great opportunities for Muslim students at Syracuse University.

Highlighted throughout this report are examples of innovative and empowering initiatives that have been accomplished in the last academic year. This report is organized around strategic efforts of the MSL that effectively leverages Syracuse University's support, resources, alumni, community supporters, and our students, faculty, and staff.

Today, I am proud to share that with MSL's effort Syracuse University is back on the track of being a leader in providing services, facilities, and spiritual leadership to Muslims in its campus community. Considering that Syracuse University, while providing resources such as space and facilities, does not provide financial support to any chaplaincy, the efforts of MSL would not be possible without the support of our alumni and the greater Muslim community. On behalf of the MSL and those who we serve, please accept our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your support and commitment to our Muslims at Syracuse University.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Amir Durić". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amir" and last name "Durić" clearly distinguishable.

Imam Amir Durić  
Muslim Chaplain  
Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University

# ANNUAL REPORT

YEARLY HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPACT OF MSL @ SU

WORKED WITH OVER



**MUSLIM** STUDENTS

300

PROVIDED

120+

ONE-ON-ONE  
COUNSELING SESSIONS



20

MEDIA RELATED  
INTERVIEWS

1<sup>ST</sup>

**MUSLIM** PRAYER  
AT THE CHANCELLOR'S  
HOUSE

152 PEOPLE  
ATTENDED THE  
FAST-A-THON

3.47

AVERAGE

GPA

OF **MUSLIM** STUDENTS INVOLVED  
IN **MSL** SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

AVERAGE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY STUDENT GPA 3.27  
AVERAGE MUSLIM STUDENT GPA 2.99

8

STUDENTS  
TRAVELED & ATTENDED  
**MAS-ICNA**  
CONVENTION

SERVED MORE THAN



1050

FREE LUNCHES  
AFTER **JUMMAH**

98

STUDENTS  
ENGAGED IN  
**ISLAMIC**  
STUDIES

PARTNERSHIP  
WITH

7

OTHER STUDENT  
ORGANIZATIONS

NETWORKING EVENTS:

1. **COMMUNITY** NIGHT AT **ISCNY**
2. YOUNG **MUSLIM**  
PROFESSIONALS (**ALUMNI**)

## TESTIMONIALS



The Muslim Chaplaincy at Hendricks Chapel is increasingly visible and vibrant. Through the innovative vision of Imam Amir Duric, in addition to the excitement generated by an outstanding group of student leaders, the expansion of Muslim life at Syracuse University allows us to foster and support an inclusive, accessible campus of opportunity for a richly diverse student body.

The Rev. Brian Konkol, PhD  
Dean of Hendricks Chapel



I have been amazed and very thankful for the many voluntary hours that Chaplain Amir Duric was willing to share with me to educate me on the Islam faith and the Muslim culture. I am a Christian and have met many wonderful Muslims, in my community and work environment, and wanted to learn more about their faith and culture. Amir communicates his deeply held faith with such grace, respect and kindness. People from many diverse faith traditions and identities can relate and learn from him, a social leader who stays true to Islamic values and beliefs. I am blessed to have met him, and that I can call him advisor and friend, one who is full of hope and inspiration.

Kate Connell  
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor



Like many college students, I came into Syracuse University with a lot of questions about my identity and the person I wanted to be. I was looking for answers and a community to call my own, and the Muslim Student Life provided me with both.

The Muslim chaplain Imam Amir Duric and the Muslim Student Life have gone above and beyond to encourage me and help me learn about Islam. Their constant support and guidance always affirms my decision to convert to Islam and pushes me to continue learning and to strive to be a better Muslim, a better human being.

Kaithlynn Chopra  
Syracuse University Student '18

## TESTIMONIALS



The Muslim Student Association at Syracuse University (MSA) has a long tradition of organizing Muslim students on our campus. As a student run organization, the goal of the MSA is to facilitate networking, educating, and empowering the students of today to be citizens of tomorrow's community.

In my humble opinion, the 2017/2018 academic year has been a successful year for the MSA thanks to the support and guidance provided by Chaplain Amir Duric and the Muslim Student Life (MSL). Chaplain Duric empowered our MSA leadership by providing us with spiritual guidance and support, leadership training, and by bringing experts to assist us to think and act strategically to achieve the MSA goals.

Here at Syracuse University, one can't mention MSA without thinking about the Chaplain and MSL. On behalf of the MSA, I would like to thank Chaplain Duric, the MSL, and all supporters of the MSL. Supporting the Chaplain and the MSL, it means you are supporting the success of our Muslim students at Syracuse University, the future of our community (Ummah). Thank you!

Chaudhary Hamza Sadiq  
President (2017-2018)  
Muslim Student Association



## STUDENT ORGANIZATION - MSA



The Muslim Student Association at Syracuse University (MSA) provides great opportunities to get involved on campus and build a community for students during and after their college experiences. The MSA is where students come in close contact with one another in the true sense of Islamic sister and brotherhood. With regular events and outings, students quickly feel home, as they establish lifelong friendships.

The mission of MSA is to carry out educational and social programs that will further advance Syracuse University's knowledge and appreciation of Islam and Muslim heritage. At the same time facilitate networking, educating, and empowering the students of today to be citizens of tomorrow's community.



## STUDENT SUCCESS

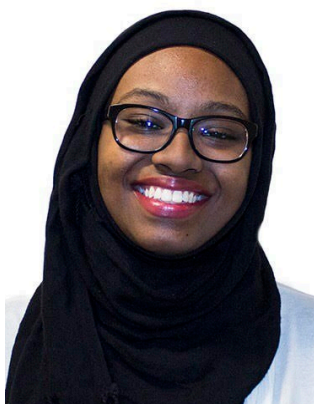
### The Harry S. Truman Scholarship



The Truman Scholarship was awarded this year to 59 exceptional college juniors in recognition of their community service, academic accomplishment and commitment to a career of public service. Since its creation in 1975, the Truman award has become the premier graduate scholarship for aspiring public service leaders in the United States .

Syracuse University junior Dina Eldawy has been named as 2018 recipients of this prestigious Truman Scholarship. Dina, former president of the Muslim Student Association, is pursuing a double major in international relations and citizenship and civic engagement, with a minor in Spanish. Specializing in Middle Eastern studies and international security and diplomacy, Dina interns at a local refugee education center in Syracuse, NY. Dina plans to earn a master's degree in conflict resolution or international development. Her career goals include working with USAID on foreign aid and development projects in the Middle East and Latin America.

### Syracuse University Student Association President



Ghufuran Salih won the 2018 Student Association (SA) election for president at Syracuse University in April 2018 and will serve as the president of the SA for the 2018-19 academic year. Ghufuran is a first-generation American in her family and one of about 300 students who self-identify as Muslim at SU.

Ghufuran is a junior studying information management and technology in the School of Information Studies. Ghufuran works for Student Centers and Programming Services, she served as the director of public relations for the Muslim Students Association, is an orientation leader, and is also involved in First Year Players. In addition, Ghufuran is a mentor in the Syracuse City School District to two high school students and coaches golf to middle and high school students in her free time. After completing her degree, Ghufuran hopes to work in the field of medicine, working with medical technology development and implementation.

### Prestigious Nationally Competitive Scholarship Awards Winner



Zainab Abdali graduated summa cum laude with majors in English & Textual Studies and Mathematics from Syracuse this May. During her time at Syracuse, Zainab was a Coronat Scholar, Remembrance Scholar, Rossman Scholar, and a member of the Renée Crown University Honors Program. She was the President of the MSA from 2015-2016 and represented the MSA on Hendricks Chapel's interfaith student council. Zainab is one of several Syracuse University students and alumni that Fulbright has awarded the opportunity to explore their research and teaching interests around the world for the 2018-19 academic year. As a Fulbright Scholar, Zainab will be teaching English in Kenya and after her Fulbright year, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in English literature with a focus on postcolonial and race studies .

## PROGRAMS

### Friday Lights: Surah al-Kahf, Jumu'ah, Coffee Hour, Breaking Bread Together, Tafsir Class

Given that Friday is a special day of week for Muslims, we are happy to enlighten it with many different programs and initiatives. Thus, we start with the first light, the light of chapter Al-Kahf. Students get together before Friday prayer and collectively enjoy recitation of this chapter. The Friday prayer and sermon follow. In the meantime, all visitors of Hendricks Chapel enjoy free coffee at People's Place, which is an act of Muslims' hospitality. Right after Friday prayer and sermon we break bread together and explore common and different grounds with each other. The lunch is served to everyone, Muslims and non-Muslims. This a great opportunity to build healthy relationships, develop positive attitudes towards each other, and build a community. This academic year we served more than 1050 free lunches to Syracuse University students, faculty and staff. After the lunch, the students were able to enjoy Tafsir Class and explore different themes and meaning of the Qur'an with Dr. Ahmed Malik.



## PROGRAMS

### What's Brewing with Muslim Chaplain

Morning coffee at Cafe Kubal is brewing every Thursday morning. According to many students, these coffee get-togethers were something special. Students were excited for every single Thursday morning and the new chapters of conversation. Initially, the Cup of Joe with Chaplain started with reverts to Islam, our sisters and brothers, who decided to start a new journey of their life. However, their attractive personalities pulled together many other students, who engaged in productive discussions on various themes.



### Understanding Islam Series at Bird Library

This six-week long series were started by Muslim Chaplain, Imam Amir Duric in collaboration with Syracuse University Libraries and Hendricks Chapel. It attracted over 30 participants of different faiths and backgrounds, who wanted to gain some appreciative knowledge about Islam. They wanted to understand Islam better and to engage in dialogue with Muslims. Each session had a presentation, discussion and Q&A part. Themes covered included pillars of Islam, articles of faith, misconceptions about Islam, Muslim culture and social activism, manners, and much more. This was a historic moment on campus given that such series were offered for the first time in this format. The last session of the series included a visit to local mosque. We plan to continue this collaboration with SU Libraries next semester and offer a new series on ethics, good character and well-being. Our intention is to make these two series an annual event in partnership with SU Libraries and other campus partners.



## PROGRAMS

### 101 Qur'an and Tajweed Classes

Everyday, Monday-Friday before and after Dhuhr prayer Chaplain Amir Duric offered individual and small group sessions that help students' engagement and advancement with the Qur'an. These sessions range from very basic lessons of Arabic alphabet, and correct and fluent recitation of the Qur'an with tajweed rules.



### Weekly Halaqahs: Living the Iman & Imam Ghazali's Book of Knowledge

Goal of weekly halaqas/study circles was to bring smaller groups of students together where they have opportunity to gain deeper understanding of certain topics through collective reading, discussion and reflection. Usually, halaqah was facilitated by Chaplain, a student or another person who were able to ignite critical thinking about selected topics.

Accordingly, this academic year our students were able to participate in Wednesday study circle, "Become Successful by Living the Iman" that was facilitated by Chaplain Amir Duric. This halaqah helped students think about benefits of the knowledge and learned the differences between knowledge of the heart and knowledge of the tongue. One of the outcomes: the students learned how to transform their studies into worship of Allah (God) Almighty, and thus increase their Iman. This transformation enabled them to achieve success in both worlds, with Allah's will and permission.

Another study circle took place on Saturday mornings with Ahmet Celik, a PhD student in Department of Religion, who facilitated discussion around Imam Ghazali's Book of Knowledge.



## PROGRAMS

Fun Nights: Tie & Die, Bowling Night, Trivia Nights, Soccer Night, Poetry Night, Movie Nights

All these activities were ice breakers, which helped students connect with each other while staying in a safe and healthy environment. These activities enabled students to build a community and have fun.



## PROGRAMS

### Workshops: Dating & Marriage in Islam

These workshop sessions were intended to overcome some misconceptions about dating and marriage from Islamic perspective. The workshop helped students explore dating and marriage related topics that are very important but often taboos in Muslim communities. Yet, our students were able to share their expectations about future spouses, learn more about the process of getting to know each other, and develop a framework and understanding of a healthy marriage.



## The Second Annual Syracuse Community Iftar

Muslim Student Life at SU was actively involved in planning, sponsoring and organizing the Second Annual Syracuse Community Iftar. Imam Amir Duric was the catalyst for bringing the larger Muslim community together and leading the organization of this beautiful event. Even though this is the second community iftar, it is the first of its kind, as all local Muslim organizations participated in the Iftar in collaboration with Syracuse University and the City of Syracuse. More than 600 guest from various backgrounds and faith traditions attended, shared meal together and exchange contact information with the goal to build a greater community. Our goal is to move this event to the Carrier Dome next year, make it an annual event, and increase the number of guest above 1,000.



### 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL SYRACUSE RAMADAN DINNER PROGRAM

- 7:00 Welcome  
Masters of Ceremony Mirza Thihic and Shewa Shwani  
Qur'an Recitation  
Imam Muris Neimarija  
Translation by Cjala Surrat
- Speakers:  
City of Syracuse Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens  
Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney  
SU Hendricks Chapel Dean Brian Konkol  
SU Muslim Chaplain Amir Duric
- Nasheed (Islamic Music)  
Youth from the Islamic Cultural Center of Bosniaks
- Speakers:  
Imam Muhammed ElFiki  
Imam Siraj Wahhaj
- Keynote Speaker:  
Dr. Mohamed Khater
- 8:43 Athan (Call to prayer) and Maghrib (sunset) Prayer  
Imam Yahia Afify  
Dinner

Syracuse University

## EVENTS

### Welcome Back Dinner & Eid Celebration

This was our first event of the academic year. More than 120 students joined the dinner and Eid celebration. The freshmen students were able to meet with their peers and mentors and kick off the semester in good company. Dean of Hendricks Chapel the Rev. Brian Konkol joined the event and gave a motivational speech to the both, returning and new students.



### Open House for Friday Prayer and MSA Room

At the beginning of the Fall semester we held an Open House once a month inviting everyone to the Friday Prayer and the MSA room. The Open House gave our non-Muslim peers, faculty and staff the opportunity to observe, ask questions, and learn more about Islam and Muslims. The Open House was a success and it transformed into a weekly Friday event, namely during and after the Jumu'ah all Hendricks Chapel visitors were treated with free coffee and were welcome to join the Muslims for a free lunch after the prayer. Friday Jumu'ah has become a bridge building tool for Muslims and non-Muslims at Syracuse University.

## EVENTS

### Public Lecture by Ermin Sinanovic, Ph.D. (Maxwell School Alumnus)

Dr. Sinanovic was our guest lecturer in November. He delivered a public lecture, “The Great Interregnum: Islam and Muslims in the 21st Century.” This gave attendees an excellent picture about Muslims in America, their past, present and future.



### Workshop on Islam and Modernity

Considering that our students are the leaders of our community, this day long workshop helped students recognize and develop their leadership skills. Through the first sermon of Abu Bakr they learned about importance of context, audience, and justice when appointed to high impact and responsible positions.



## EVENTS

### Seerah Conference

Students had opportunity to reflect upon and learn about different aspects of the Prophet's life from various speakers. Each speaker emphasized on various roles that the Prophet had, as we read in the Qur'an: "Our Lord, send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them..." (Qur'an, 2:129)

Students became inspired, motivated and empowered through the examples from the Prophet's life, particularly his approach to young adults.



### Public Lecture and Workshop on Islamophobia by Anisa Diab

Anisa Diab is a professional public counselor. She created a safe space, in which students were able to express themselves and share their experiences of trauma related to Islamophobia. Additionally, she offered valuable practical advice and taught the students practical skills in terms of how to react when one is facing Islamophobia, or how to become an ally and help someone who is facing it in one's presence.



## EVENTS

### Public Lecture and Visit of Imam Khalid Latif

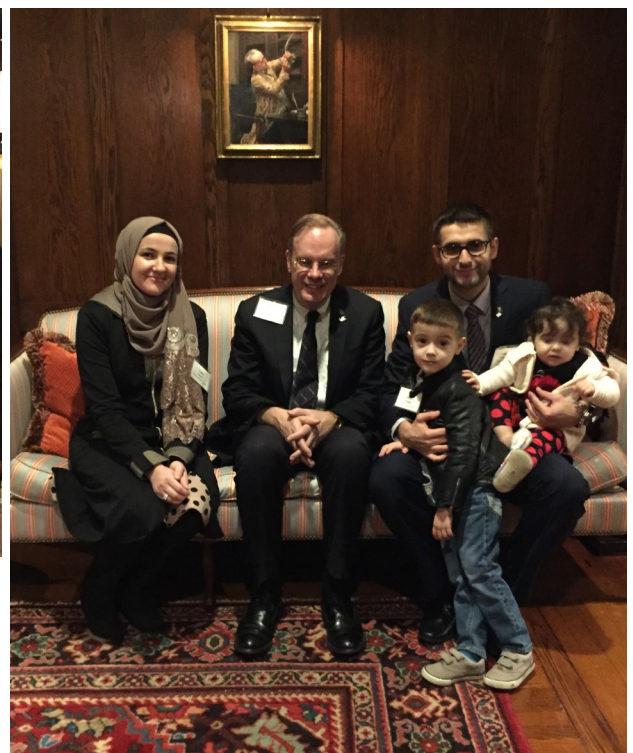
We were honored to host Imam Khalid Latif who is the Muslim Chaplain at NYU and NYPD.. He spoke about importance of justice in the time of injustice with the focus on Rohingya Muslims, their lives, and their needs. He called attendees to think about individual and collective responsibility toward not just other Muslims, but other human beings. Given that Allah ordered justice, he addressed the questions about how we can live justly, and justly distribute our time, wealth and other blessings. Following the lecture, our students were able to have a dinner with Imam Khalid and discuss various issues of contemporary world.



## EVENTS

### Reception at Chancellor's House

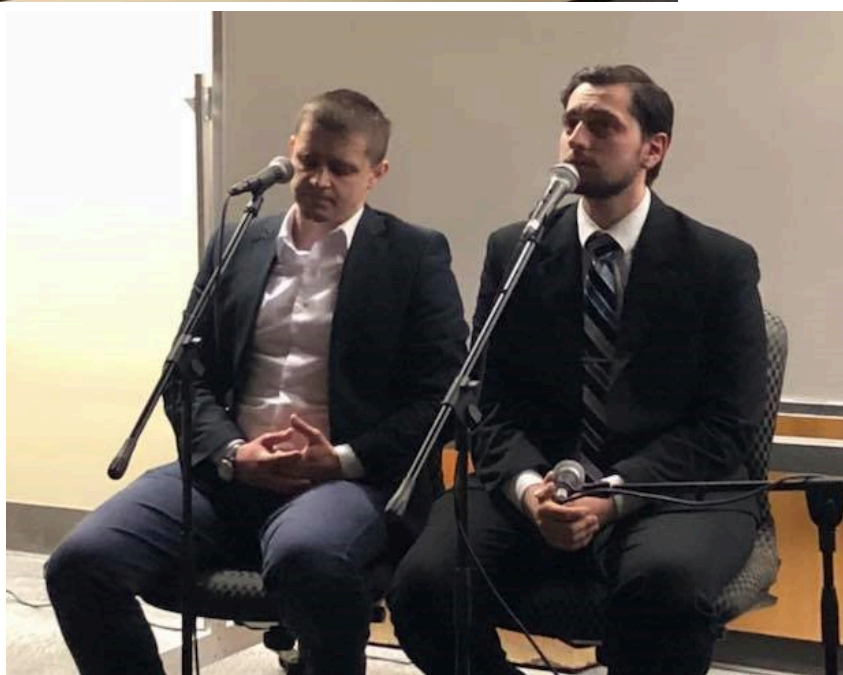
It is always honor to visit the Chancellor Kent Syverud and his wife Dr. Ruth Chen. This year we were blessed with a such an opportunity again, and we are grateful to the both of them for enormous hospitality and delicious halal food. This years reception happened to be a historic moment since it was the first time that Muslims performed a congregational daily prayer at the Chancellor's House.



## EVENTS

### Night of Nasheeds and End of Year Banquet

Ammar Charaf and Imam Dzamal Crnkic made the end of year banquet a favorite MSA event for over 120 Muslim and non-Muslims students. Their performance of Nasheeds, recitation of the Qur'an and lectures found a special place in the hearts of our students. Through the beautiful voices and reminders students were able to connect with the legacy of prophet Muhammad, and reaffirm many positive values in their lives. This was the first time that students came back to the auditorium after the program officially ended and asked for more. Ammar and Dzamal performed for another hour, but even that seemed to be short. Finally, a group of students hit the midnight in Noble Room with the guests and the chaplain singing and sharing their favorite Nasheeds and stories.



## EVENTS

### Annual Fundraising Dinner

We had a successful annual fundraising dinner. Our students' presented MSL and MSA achievements during this academic year, while exemplifying diversity among them. In addition, Mirza Tihic, a board member presented a strategic plan and goals of Muslim Chaplaincy and summary of MSL's impact over this academic year. Dean of Hendricks Chapel, The Rev. Brian Konkol was the keynote speaker while Muslim Chaplain Amir Duric recited verses from the Qur'an. It was an evening of celebrating our student success.



## NETWORKING & EMPOWERMENT

Given that our mission is to create an inclusive community and to engage in sincere reflections that result in religious, intellectual, and social growth through educational programs and spiritual guidance based on Islamic principles, we created many programs, initiatives and opportunities for our students to help them achieve growth and development. We believe once they are empowered they will be able to empower others as well, hence providing networking opportunities for our students has been one of our goals, too. The networking events that our students hosted and participated as guests include:

***Community Night at ISCNy*** - networking with local community

***Coffee Hour - Syracuse Young Muslim Professionals*** - networking with SU alumni and other young Muslim professionals

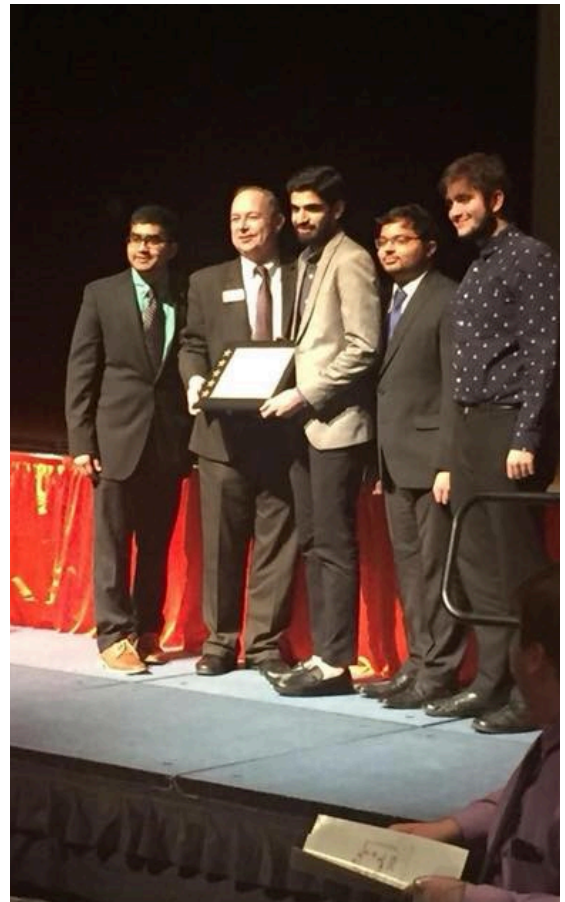
***MLK Dinner*** - empowered through networking with greater campus community

***ICNA-MAS Convention*** - religious, spiritual and intellectual growth.

***NSLC Fundraising Dinner*** - networking with greater Syracuse community and empowerment through social activism.

***44 Stars of Excellence Dinner and Recognition for Diversity and Inclusion*** - empowerment and motivation.

***Ramadan Iftars*** at different locations - religious and spiritual growth. Building health relationships, brotherhood and sisterhood = community.



## INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

### Interfaith Dinner with Catholic Student Association & Movie Screening: The Sultan & the Saint

This dinner and the movie without any doubt highly emphasized common values between two different faith traditions. In addition, it was discussed how a faith could be misused to divide people and ignite conflict among them. Through the conversation and discussion it became clear how leaders play a key role in navigating big crowds in either the right or the wrong direction. Overall, we are happy that this event deepened our relationships and mutual understanding and brought us closer to each other.



### Interfaith Shabbat Dinner with Jewish Student Association at SU Hillel

It was an excellent experience to observe Shabbat and have discussion with Jewish Students. After discussion we had two separate prayers, one for Jewish and one for Muslim students. However, some Muslim students observed Jewish prayer, and some Jewish students observed Muslim prayer. Shabbat dinner was served afterwards where all students shared meal and broke bread together. This resulted in new friendships, and improved relationships.



## INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

### Demystifying Religion/ Chaplains Panel

This panel was organized by Spiritual Life Council and it took place in the Main Chapel where chaplains of different faith backgrounds were responding to different students' questions. Muslim Chaplain Amir Duric was also a part of the panel, and was talking about the most common misconceptions about Islam related to women's rights, social justice issues, understanding of the word "Allah", Islamic stance on killing innocent people and terrorism, and much more.



### Dean's Convocation: Gathering and Love

Dean's Convocation takes place every Sunday at 7:00 p.m. in the Main Chapel. In addition to support by attendance, Muslim Chaplain Amir Duric was the keynote speaker and shared his reflection about very important themes, Gathering and Love. Throughout his speech he recited verses from the Qur'an in Arabic language, while student Kaithlynn Chopra read translation of these verses in English.



## INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

### Common and Diverse Grounds: Interfaith Dinners and Discussion

Muslim students and Muslim Chaplain were actively involved in these discussions where they were able to receive and offer support from/to other minority students and groups. Overall, the Muslim students and the Muslim Chaplain used any opportunity to engage others and build common grounds.



## SUPPORTING OUR MUSLIM STUDENTS

“INFORMING, EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING THE FUTURE LEADERS AND AMBASSADORS OF ISLAM”

The “Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University” was established to enable our children, Muslim children, to build a community, learn skills to become participatory global citizens, engage in meaningful programs and initiatives while maintain and build a healthy Muslim identity.

We would like to thank our donors for their generous gifts and continued support, without you any of the work that has been accomplished within the last academic year and so far would have not been possible.

Thank you!

If you would like to help us continue our tradition of servicing Muslim students and representing Islam in its true light at Syracuse University by making a gift to the Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University, please contact us at [msl@syr.edu](mailto:msl@syr.edu) or visit <http://mslatsu.org> to give online.

