

2020-2021  
Annual  
Report

MUSLIM  
STUDENT  
LIFE IN THE  
*changing  
world*

Muslim Student Life  
Syracuse University

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Why “Muslim Student Life” (MSL) at Syracuse University? What is the vision of MSL?**

The “Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University” was established to serve Muslim students in the higher education and to facilitate building a community, learning skills to become participatory global citizens, engaging in meaningful programs and initiatives, while establishing and maintaining a healthy Muslim identity. Our vision is to be the model University-based education center in the United States.

## **What is the difference between MSL and Muslim Student Association (MSA)?**

The “Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University” is a not-for-profit organization, which hires and manages the Muslim Chaplain, and raises funds to sustain the Muslim Chaplaincy in order to serve our students, faculty, and staff and the larger community. The Muslim Student Association, on the other hand, is a student-run organization under the Student Association (SA). It is governed by its student members. MSA is eligible for programming funds through SA, and those programs must be MSA related. The SA mandates an advisor, and the Muslim Chaplain serves as an MSA advisor. Not every student, who identifies as Muslim, is a member of MSA. MSL serves every student, who identifies as a Muslim and works with the broader community both on campus and off campus.

## **What is the difference between Muslim Chaplaincy and MSL?**

There is no difference.

## **Why does Syracuse University not pay for the Muslim chaplain?**

Syracuse University, while providing resources such as space and facilities, does not provide financial support to any chaplaincy at Syracuse University. Syracuse University hosts 9 chaplaincies, including Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. All chaplaincies are sponsored by national or regional religious associations, organizations, and communities. Hence the need for the MSL.

## **Why do we need a Muslim Chaplain?**

Muslim chaplaincy is seen as following the tradition of the prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, and is a means of supporting a Muslim student community. The US Muslims live in a plural society, and they are confronted with various issues that require ethical agency and spiritual guidance. Chaplaincy focuses on faith issues and crises intervention, and provides religious and spiritual support to Muslims in higher education and people of similar faith. A counsellor or a social worker would not be able to provide such support. The Muslim Chaplain contributes to informing, educating and empowering the future generations of leaders and ambassadors of Islam.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAPLAIN



This summer marks the full four years since the Muslim Student Life at SU's board appointed me to serve as the full-time Muslim Chaplain at Syracuse University. While reflecting over these four years, I cannot be grateful enough for all the opportunities, friendships, connections, and the amount of support and trust that I have received. It is an honor to be a part of the thriving Muslim community at Syracuse University. Along with our mission to create an inclusive community and engage in sincere reflections that result in religious, intellectual, and social growth through educational programs and spiritual guidance based on Islamic principles, we work hard on creating new resources that will add to the Muslim students' experience here at SU.

The 2020/2021 academic year was challenging in many different ways for all of us. However, we became more creative and found new ways to support each other and stay connected. We worked with our campus partners to enhance Muslim students' experience. For instance, although Halal food was available in all five dining halls, we worked with SU Food Services to review and enrich the Halal menu and offered limited Ramadan accommodations due to the COVID-19 restrictions. We engaged Muslim students for ideas and suggestions of the MSA room renovations to make the space more efficient. A prayer room in Bird Library was made available, and 14 designated rooms for daily prayers across various residence halls. Besides, we confirmed with the University College that the prayer room in their facility would continue to be available for Muslim students.

After many years, Ramadan overlapped with the academic year. It will remain a historic one at Syracuse University as it may be the first-ever Ramadan with all thirty Taraweeh prayers and Eid prayer offered on campus. Along with that, iftars were provided on selected nights, students spent together the 27th night of Ramadan in worship at Hendricks Chapel followed by suhoor, and they enjoyed an Eid celebration catered by our own People's Place.

This report is a concise overview of the 2020/2021 academic year, and it displays only some of the programs and accomplishments of our students. It shows that they continue to excel academically, socially, and spiritually. Being a part of the broader Hendricks Chapel community, we organized this report around the Chapel's overarching values of belief, community, outreach, stewardship, and excellence. You will recognize that our impact, reach, and presence is not just on the SU campus but also beyond it. All this is possible because of your continued support and trust, as Syracuse University does not provide financial assistance to any chaplaincy. We appreciate that you recognize the depth, importance, and meaning of our presence and services. It is needed now more than ever before. On behalf of the MSL and Muslim students, accept our heartfelt gratitude for your commitment to our work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amir Durić". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Imam Amir Durić  
Muslim Chaplain  
Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University

# ANNUAL REPORT

YEARLY HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPACT OF MSL @ SU



500

PARTICIPANTS IN OUR ONLINE CLASSES

PROVIDED

220+

ONE-ON-ONE COUNSELING SESSIONS



15

MEDIA INTERVIEWS & ARTICLES

1<sup>ST</sup> EID PRAYER ON CAMPUS

1120 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE JUMUAH PRAYER

OVER 250 IFTARS SERVED TO STUDENTS

1<sup>ST</sup> FULL PROGRAM FOR THE 27<sup>TH</sup> NIGHT OF RAMADAN INCLUDING SUHOOR

SERVED MUSLIM STUDENTS FROM 30 COUNTRIES

1<sup>ST</sup> TARAWEEH ON CAMPUS SERVING MORE THAN 70 STUDENTS



SERVED MORE THAN 900 FREE BOXED MEALS AFTER JUMMAH

## HONORING TANWEERUL HAQ



Tanweerul Haq, a founder and board member of Muslim Student Life (MSL) at Syracuse University, passed away on March 2, 2021 after a difficult battle with cancer. Haq served as Muslim Chaplain at Hendricks Chapel from 2011-2014 and was a member of the Hendricks Chapel Advisory Board. He was honored by Interfaith Works of Central New York in 2016 with an Interfaith Leadership Award, and in 2019 the Tanweerul Haq Excellence Award was introduced and presented in honor of his lifelong and dedicated service to the support of Muslim students at Syracuse University.

Haq was always an example of selfless and visionary leader for the Muslim community in CNY. Haq laid the foundation for the Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University and was instrumental in creating a sustainable Muslim Chaplaincy at Syracuse University. Muslim Student Life at SU will continue to carry the legacy of Tanweerul Haq, and we kindly ask all to keep him in prayers.

May Allah grant him the highest place in Jannah, ameen.



Tanweerul Haq receiving the inaugural Tanweerul Haq Excellence Award in 2019 from Dr. Riazur Rahaman, President of the Muslim Student Life at SU, and Brian Konkol, Ph.D., Dean of Hendricks Chapel.

## 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 & ALUMNI CORNER



“Through MSA, I have met so many students from all around the world, and it is greatly appreciated to learn more about different cultures that share the same beliefs.”

**NIDAA ALJABBARIN '22**

**Biology, B.S. at Syracuse University**

Nidaa joined the Muslim Student Association (MSA) last academic year and will serve as its Vice President in the 2021/2022 academic year. In addition to her position on the executive board, Nidaa serves as the MSA's representative at the Hendricks Chapel's Student Assembly of Interfaith Leaders (SAIL) meetings.



“As humans we are in constant need of acknowledgement and comfort. That is what we commonly refer as 'empathy.' We try to find that in the communities around us. I believe that the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) is striving towards that goal. Those of us in the MSA try to be true to the notion that we are one!”

**SAAD SAYED '21**

**Engineering Management, M.S. at Syracuse University**

Saad recently received his master's degree in engineering management. He was the Muslim Students' Association's (MSA) chief strategist during the 2020-2021 academic year and contributed to the MSA by establishing strategic partnerships with other student organizations, clubs, and external resource providers that advanced the mission of the MSA.



“The MSL initiative has been there during my toughest moments in college, and the team has even helped me better understand my faith in Islam after graduating and transitioning into adulthood. The phenomenal Islamic chaplaincy at SU is one that I will forever be grateful for. It was a critical part of growing in my faith throughout my experience at SU. The friendships I built through the MSL programs will last a lifetime.”

**SHONNAN USMAN '18**

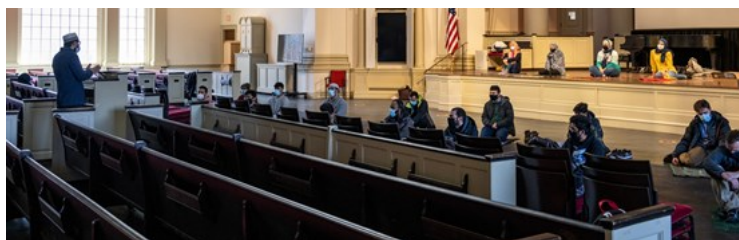
**Public Relations, B.S. at Syracuse University  
Upstate NY Area Manager, Helping Hand USA**

# MUSLIM STUDENT LIFE IN THE MEDIA

An excerpt from The Revealer. Published in July 2020 by Katie Breslin.



For many students, religion is about community, celebrating holidays together, and feeling a connection with others who share similar interests. When the pandemic threatened to leave student feeling isolated, the staff at Hendricks Chapel at Syracuse University changed how they provide students with a religious community. Friday prayers for Muslim students had been a way for Syracuse students to practice their faith and come together weekly. Amir Duric, the Muslim chaplain at Syracuse University, recognized the immediate need to bring this community online and expand it. Duric started a new program called “Spiritual Sitdowns” for students to discuss current events. He says, “Spiritual Sitdowns bring together not just students, but also recent graduates and people from all over the world. It became one coherent group of recent graduates and students. I wanted to create a safe space where they could share how they feel and what we were able to navigate together.” Originally Duric thought this program would end after the spring semester, but after receiving requests from students he is continuing through the summer and starting to figure out how to keep the group going online and in-person in the fall. Duric is already starting to consider the logistics of prayer on campus if students return this fall. “How many students would be able to participate in that? Are we going to have to have two or three services that we don’t pass that limit or what is going to be limited? And then usually when we pray, we stand next to each other. But some mosques are resuming prayers now and they now, which was never the case, are praying six feet away from each other while it was always shoulder to shoulder. It’s just the new reality. We have to adjust to it.”





## Building Community to Enhance the Muslim Student Experience, Saturday, November 7, 2020, *By Eileen Korey, SU News*

Growing up in Bosnia, Amir Duric saw the worst of what can happen when differences among cultures, ethnicities and religions lead to fear, prejudice, intolerance and even war. He also experienced the best of what can happen when people of all backgrounds come together in collective understanding and community.

“Sarajevo is a perfect example of peaceful co-existence,” says Duric, Syracuse University’s Muslim chaplain. “You see mosques, cathedrals, synagogues, orthodox churches. People learn how to contribute to a community of understanding where, despite their differences, they feel a sense of belonging.”

It is that sense of belonging that Duric, his colleagues at Hendricks Chapel, the Office of Diversity of Inclusion and other University staff strive for as they expand services and programs for Muslim students. From educational programs, to prayer spaces, to dining options, the growing Islamic community on campus is finding new ways to build community.

“There is a new dedicated prayer space on Bird Library’s fourth floor originally initiated by the practice needs of our Muslim students, though it is open to all faiths and all people for prayer and meditation,” says David Seaman, dean of libraries and University librarian. “Students are in the library for long stretches of time. For Muslim students in particular, it was really inconvenient for them to have to pack up five times a day and leave the building to pray.”

In addition to prayer needs, the libraries have invested in online collections because of an increased interest in Islamic studies, as evidenced by the popularity of Duric’s Understanding Islam lecture and discussion series, launched two years ago.

“I had planned to offer it only one semester,” says Duric, “but interest has been so strong, I have already facilitated five consecutive semesters. The diversity of community members from all faiths who have attended demonstrate the desire to learn about each other, learn from each other and get to know each other, an essential step in tackling Islamophobia and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.”

With COVID-19 related restrictions, the series recently morphed into one-on-one or small group discussions, but Duric is hoping it will return in series format next semester. In direct response to COVID-19, Duric launched Spiritual

Sitdowns, an opportunity for Muslim students to stay connected to each other through cyberspace. “In addition to the Friday reflections and online classes, I thought creating a space where students could share and process feelings could be of tremendous value. This online space became an oasis of peace, learning and community bonding that brought together current students and recent graduates.”

A recent survey of 498 Muslim college students from 32 states found an overall increase in anxiety, stress and depression, along with an increase in religious practices and rituals. “In challenging times, there are indicators that the meaning of these religious practices increases as well, and they become effective coping strategies,” says Duric. “If the prayers and other spiritual practices are always approached with such concentration, presence of mind and heart, and contemplation, they will help develop self-discipline and resilience and positively impact well-being.”

Another way to positively impact well-being and enhance the Muslim student experience is through the dining experience. According to Stephen Brandt, Ernie Davis dining center manager, the interest in Halal foods (translated as permissible according to Islamic law), has increased dramatically. With feedback from Muslim students, “we went back to our vendors and suppliers of meats and other products to ensure that items were acceptable,” says Brandt. “Now, the majority of bone-in chicken served is Halal, which is good for everyone who dines in a dining center.”

“We also discovered that some of the cheese we had been using was not Halal,” says Ruth Sullivan, the assistant director of nutrition management, explaining that enzymes used to make cheese can come from animal, vegetable or microbial sources. Cheese products from microbial/bacterial cultures are Halal. “We had our vendor substitute a parmesan cheese that is Halal, and we now use that in our dining options.” The Halal food choices are clearly marked on the dining services menu and more options are being considered as students offer favorite recipes, including kabobs, shawarma, gyros and biryani.

# RAMADAN and EID at Syracuse University

Muslim Student Life at SU organized the first Taraweeh prayers on campus. This year our Ramadan Program included Taraweesh, 27<sup>th</sup> Night Prayers and Suhoor, Iftars, Fats-a-thon, spiritual sit-downs, and tafsir classes. We were also able to host the first Eid prayer followed by Eid celebration that was catered by Hendrick’s Chapel’s People Place.



**RAMADAN SCHEDULE**

**Taraweeh**  
Every night at 10:00 pm, Main Chapel

**Jumua/Friday Service**  
Fridays, April 16-May 7, 1:10 pm, Main Chapel & FB Live

**Fast-a-thon: Experience a day of fasting and break fast with us**  
Wednesday, April 21, 7:30 pm, Noble Room  
DM us to get the registration link

**Iftars**  
Fridays, Apr 16, 23, 30 & May 7, 7:30 pm, Noble Room  
DM us to get the registration link

**Spiritual Sit-downs (Ramadan Special):**  
Mondays, Apr 12-May 10, 7-7:45 pm via Zoom  
Meeting ID: 6693774487

**Tafsir Class**  
Fridays, April 16-May 7, 6-7:00 pm via Zoom  
Meeting ID: 3074878901

Muslim Student Life  
Syracuse University






Go Hungry to Fight Hunger

SU MSA & RAHA SYR PRESENT

## FAST-A-THON

Wednesday, April 21st, 4:47am - 7:54pm



RAHA SYR  
YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY RELIEF

Fast from food and water to experience what its like for Muslims who fast, and step in the shoes of the Impoverished

How to participate:

- 1- Visit our Instagram @syracusemsa
- 2- Sign up using the link in our bio
- 3- Nominate someone to fast with you
- 4- Donate to RAHA Syracuse (link in bio)
- 5- Join us for a free dinner from RAHA

@syracusemsa



## PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

### Ramadan Goodie Begg

Student leaders distributed Goodie Begg during the month of Ramadan. The purpose of making Ramadan Goodie Begg was to bring joy and Ramadan spirit to Muslim students on campus who are fasting away from their families. Students can feel lonely as they have to eat at unconventional times and may lack support. Creating a community within Syracuse University for students who fast during Ramadan is important to ensure that students feel home away from home. The Goodie Begg contained candies, dates, a card that has Ramadan tips, and a quote to cheer up the students.



### Pre-Ramadan Hiking with the Student Leaders

Imam Duric joined the students for hikes that included reflections, team building, community development, both physical and spiritual preparation for the month of Ramadan,



# PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

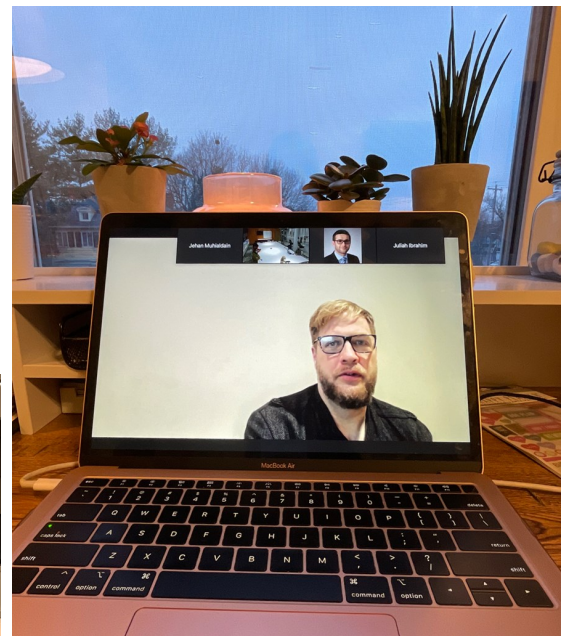
## Student Leadership Meetings

COVID-19 did not stop our student leaders from working hard and supporting their peers amid a new normal. They collaborated with other student organizations and local community organizations, kept meeting online and in-person to provide a good student experience. They also managed to apply for funding and invite a few guest speakers as a substitute for similar on campus gatherings and events that usually used to happen in pre-COVID time. Although all agreed that the experience was not the same as when they get together in a physical space, they also agreed that this new format expanded outreach opportunities and enhanced overall ideas on how to serve others.



## Conversation with Suhaib Webb


MSA students hosted an online conversation with Suhaib Webb in Spring 2021. Imam Suhaib Webb, also known as the Snapchat Imam, is known for his sense of humor and ability to impact and inspire Muslim college students. It was a real treat and an intimate conversation where students asked many questions.



# PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

## Jumuah, Friday Lunches, Interfaith, Tafsis Classes, Reflections with the Chaplain


Given the COVID-19 restrictions, Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University continued to engage students in all possible capacities; thus, adjusting to online counseling, classes, reflections, and networking. When possible, jumuah prayers were held in Hendricks Chapel and students were provided with free boxed lunches and coffee beverages from People's Place.



syracusemsa

### JUMMA MUBARAK EVERYONE

WE ARE STILL DOING JUMMA PRAYER IN THE MAIN CHAPL. OF @HENDRICKSCHAPEL



WE ARE PROVIDING PORTABLE PRAYER MATS OR YOU CAN BRING YOUR OWN!

PRAYER STARTS AT 1:10 PM

**MASKS ARE REQUIRED**



## COMMUNITY

### Learning Together with Our Neighbors

In March, 2021, Imam Amir Duric presented on the topic “What does God ask of us? What do we ask of God?” along with Father Fred Daley, Rev. Eric Jackson and Rabbi David Kunin. This interfaith initiative brought together Muslims, Catholics, Protestants and Jews for a day of learning where participants had the opportunity to learn from presenters, but also from each other, ask questions, and meet their neighbors who share or don't share the same background and values. However, getting together is an initial step in combating stereotypes and misconceptions. Organizations that sponsored the event were All Saints Church/St. Lucy's Church, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, CNY RISE and Plymouth Congregational Church.

### Understanding Islam Initiatives

In Ramadan, Chaplain Duric was invited to Onondaga Community College to be present and answer questions about Islam. Along with Duric, members of OCC Muslim Student Association were present and they provided a small treat to those passing by the table to demonstrate an Islamic tradition of breaking fast with a date.



### Ramadan Program at Masjid Isa Ibn Maryam (MIIM)

Imam Amir Duric was one of the teachers during the MIIM's Ramadan Program for children. The program provided an opportunity for children to learn more about their faith and understand Islam better.



## COMMUNITY

### Climate Ribbon Project with Lutheran Campus Ministry and Campus Connect

Based on The Climate Ribbon website, The Climate Ribbon Project uses art and ritual to grieve what we each stand to lose to Climate Chaos, and affirms our solidarity as we unite to fight against it.

*“We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.” —Dr. Martin Luther King*

People from all over the world are sharing what they love most and that they don't want to lose to Climate Chaos. They're sharing ribbons and committing themselves to work to beat back Climate Chaos so that our worst fears never come true. Together, our commitments weave a giant thread connecting all of us as we work for a healthy, sustainable planet.

Pastor Gail Riina, Lutheran Chaplain and Imam Amir Duric, Muslim Chaplain learned about this project at the Parliament of World Religions 2018 in Toronto and brought this idea back to Syracuse University. Their student groups partnered to build a climate ribbon tree and offered it to the campus community. Students also shared from their faith traditions various teachings about the role of humans in maintaining order or creating mischief on earth.





# NEW PROGRAM (FALL 2021)

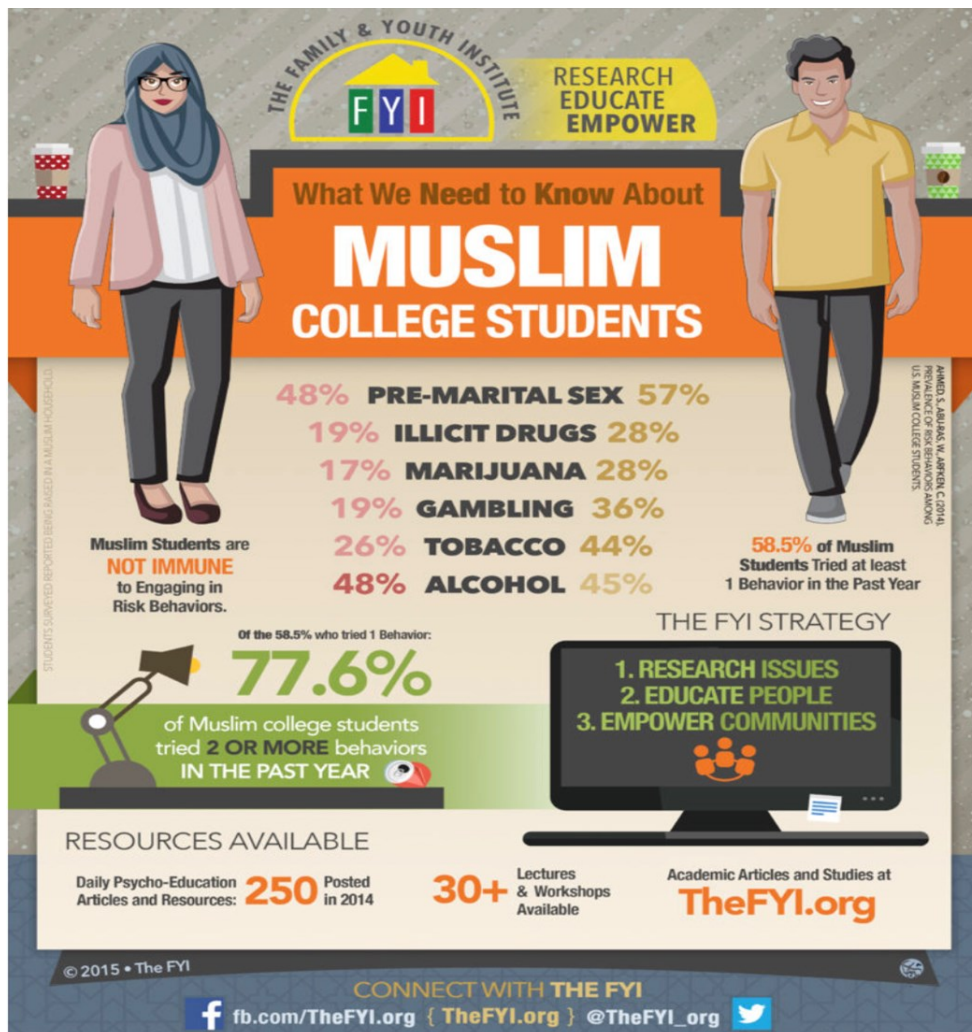
## Muslim Student Life Mentor Program

The Muslim Student Life Mentor Program is run by our Muslim Student Life mentors and gives new Muslim students on campus an opportunity to meet new people, receive peer advising, find resources on campus and explore their new campus, all before even starting their first day of classes! New Muslim students will get to know the campus, find their classes and create a network in hopes to feel prepared and ready to begin their first year at Syracuse University!

The program will be August 23-25, 2021 and the student will pay a \$30.00 fee that covers all expenses of making the programs success as well as food and the goodies that the students will receive.

Pre-Welcome programs are supported by the Office of First-Year and Transfer Programs, and traditionally occur one to three days prior to Syracuse Welcome. Organized by interests and identity spaces, programs offer students the opportunity to meet and connect to fellow new students in small groups. Learn more on the First-Year and Transfer Programs website.

Applications are accepted until July 26, or when all spots are filled. For more information or to request accommodations, call the Office of Muslim Student Life at 856.266.8625 or email at [msl@syr.edu](mailto:msl@syr.edu).



## UPCOMING

### Muslim Student Life Waqf

The Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University was established to enable our Muslim students 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. As the research from the Family and Youth Institute shows (see page 19), Muslim students are not immune from risk behaviors.

In order to have a continuous presence for Muslim students and sustain the efforts and chaplaincy work at Syracuse University, the MSL is under way to establish its first waqf in Syracuse. The MSL came across an opportunity to purchase the house at 1443 E Genesee St, which comes with an apartment and commercial space. The apartment will be rented and funds will be used to sustain MSL. Since it is a walking distance from campus, the commercial space may be used for various student activities, etc.

Everyone is welcome to assist with creating this legacy, secure some ongoing charity and help us establish an endowment fund (Waqf). The Waqf will enable MSL to function for many years to come and thus annually directly impact hundreds of students at Syracuse University, and indirectly impact thousands in their respective communities. Our students have visited the property and are very excited to get in and leverage it for programing and initiatives .



## 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 [mssl@syr.edu](mailto:mssl@syr.edu) or visit <http://msslatsu.org> to give online.

This report was made possible by a generous donation and contribution of eLumination, LLC

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