

THE MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO



MCUIC IMPACT REPORT





THE MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY

at the University of Illinois at Chicago

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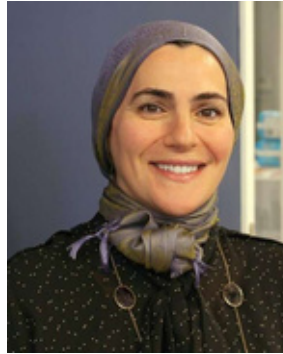
MEET THE BOARD

MCUIC seeks to build a strong board that is reflective of the diversity of the Muslim community in the Chicagoland area and UIC.



Jeremiah Abiade

Associate Professor,
Department of Mechanical
and Industrial Engineering,
Faculty Director,
DuSable Scholars Program,
University of Illinois
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Suzanne Akhras

Founder & Executive
Director, Syrian
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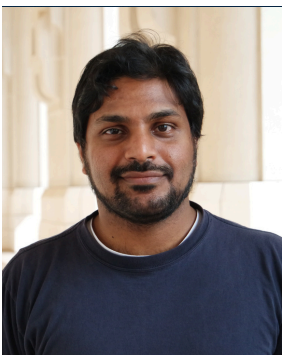
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Executive Associate Vice
Provost for Student
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Mohammed Kaiseruddin

Co-Founder and Former
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Junaid Quadri

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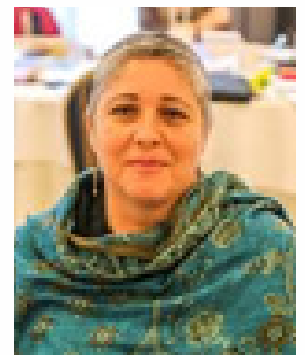
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THE MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY AT UIC



Mission

The Muslim Chaplaincy at UIC (MCUIC) provides religious, spiritual, educational, and social support to the Muslim population on campus, advocates for the needs of Muslim students, and works to build bridges across the diverse communities that make up the fabric of life at UIC. Our services include one-on-one pastoral care, advocacy, consulting, and community programming.

Vision & Values

MCUIC seeks to foster a space where members of the UIC community can learn about and practice their faith freely, engage and connect with the diversity of the Muslim community in an inclusive and welcoming environment, and gain a deeper understanding of Islam and Muslims. We serve all Muslim students at UIC, regardless of sect, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, and degree of religiosity. MCUIC also strives to be a spiritual care and wellness resource for the UIC student body as a whole.

MEET THE CHAPLAIN



Chaplain Ariz Saleem holds a Master of Divinity in Islamic Chaplaincy from the University of Chicago and has completed two units of Certified Pastoral Education. His divinity studies afforded him an opportunity to gain a broad survey of the Islamic intellectual heritage, including readings in early Islamic texts, like the Sirat of Ibn Hisham to reviewing works by later scholars like al-Muhasibi, al-Ghazzali, Ibn Taymiyya, and al-Tilimsani.

Prior to his graduate studies, Chaplain Ariz traveled to Egypt for nine months in 2015, centering the study of Classical Arabic and completing a course on the science of Tajweed. While there, he also received lessons in fundamental Islamic Sciences. He continues to augment his knowledge of the Classical Islamic Sciences along with the academic study of Islam. Chaplain Ariz has had a diverse set of work experiences ranging from Benefits Administration in Corporate America to Community Organizing for ICNA Relief. He has prior chaplaincy experience at Loyola University, Rush University Hospital, and Cook County Jail.

Chaplain Ariz's academic interests include the intersection of Islamic spirituality and psychology. His hobbies include writing and reciting poetry, playing basketball, and spending time in nature.

CHAPLAIN REFLECTION ON INAUGURAL YEAR

To our community,

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your inaugural Muslim Chaplain at UIC. Carving out a new space on campus and building relationships with new people is no easy task. Without a doubt, it was the warmth and welcome of supportive students, faculty, and staff that made this accomplishment possible. Whether it was the moment I was invited by a group of students living near campus to dinner (which included excellent pizza and a free-style cypher), or the memorable multicultural event, “Chai, Shay’, and Bean Pie,” organized by the Chaplaincy Fellows, each step of this journey has been marked by the joy of witnessing the blossoming of a thriving community capable of embracing the diversity of Muslim life on our campus.

Some of the accomplishments I want to note include our weekly Shama’il discussion circle for both undergraduate and graduate students, our series on the history of Muslims at UIC, our multicultural social event, our large Ramadan Iftar (organized in partnership with Undergraduate Student Government), and our Eid celebration on West Campus which brought together students, faculty and staff of the health sciences. Additionally, we developed projects such as our creative social media series, MCUIC x Humans of UIC, which is still in progress, and our ongoing advocacy efforts for transparency and more zabiha halal options on campus.

These events and initiatives occurred in tandem with the meaningful work of one-on-one pastoral care and weekly Jumu’ah khutbahs on West Campus.

I want to express my gratitude, foremost, to God, Allah (SWT), who facilitated the path for all these wonderful endeavors to bear fruit. I also want to express my gratitude to the MCUIC board, our generous donors, and the students, administration, and faculty that supported our efforts. Lastly, I offer a special thanks to the Chaplaincy Fellows who served as pioneers in planting the seeds of the Muslim Chaplaincy at UIC and contributing to its bright future.

Looking ahead, here are some of the things we have planned: offering an email listserv to increase our reach on campus and in the Chicagoland area, expanding educational and social programming by inviting more community involvement, and further empowering Chaplaincy Fellows to push forward their own creative initiatives and events! I am looking forward to continuing this beautiful journey with you all!

With care,
Chaplain Ariz Saleem



EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL PROGRAMMING



**MUSLIMS AT UIC -
A HISTORY**



**ASH-SHAMA'IL
AL-MUHAMADIYYAH**

A weekly discussion circle featuring a new theme on the virtues of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, highlighting a collection of narrations regarding his appearance and noble character. Offered on east and west campus.



**CHAI, SHAY,
& BEAN PIE**

Open to all to build bridges and friendships, through the celebration of different tea and desserts in Muslim culture.





**A SEAT AT THE TABLE
MCUIC X USG INAUGURAL IFTAR**



**REAL TALK BETWEEN AN IMAM
AND PASTOR**



**RACISM IN THE MUSLIM
COMMUNITY**



**COMMUNITY DHIKR AND
DU'A FOR PALESTINE**



**WEST CAMPUS EID
PARTY**

THE CHAPLAINCY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



The MCUIC internship program is an excellent opportunity for students to explore their interests, gain new skills and experience, and become an integral part of the chaplaincy, while working closely with the chaplain and their peers.

Through the internship program, the chaplain is able to foster character building and leadership development training for students while providing an avenue for student involvement, one of the core tenants that allows the chaplaincy to succeed.





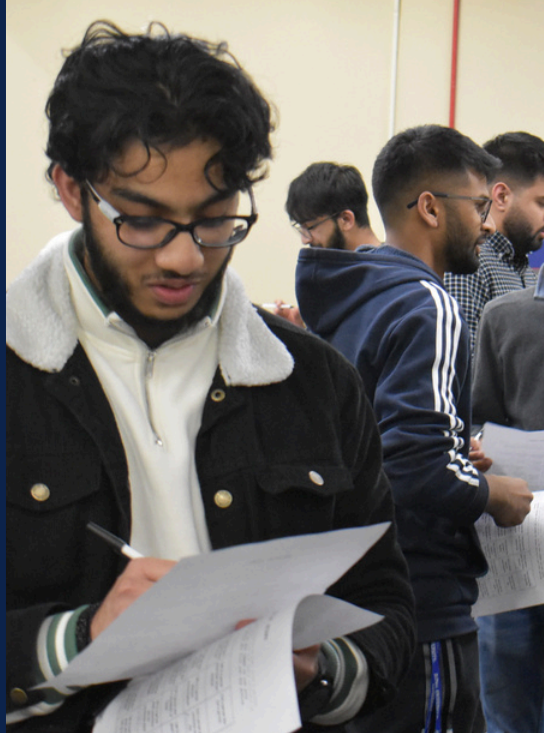
STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

We asked UIC students and recent graduates to answer questions about their experiences with the MCUIC and how it shaped their personal, academic, and professional trajectories.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU PERSONALLY BENEFITED FROM HAVING A MUSLIM CHAPLAIN AT UIC?

I personally benefited from the Muslim Chaplain at UIC in many ways. I would say [firstly], having an older Muslim-American at campus with knowledge to give advice and guide me spiritually gives a more comfortable space. Giving insight and having a sense of understanding on a cultural and religious level truly helps tremendously.

RICARDO AILLON
Class of 2024, History



WHAT IS A NOTEWORTHY EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR TIME AS A MCUIC INTERN OR COMMITTEE MEMBER?

Being a part of the chaplaincy gave me the opportunity to meet so many different kinds of people and get to know the Muslim student body a lot better. It also gave me a lot of real-life experience working with others on events and projects. I remember when we were coordinating the MCUIC iftar, our supplies for the event weren't delivered, so I had to go out and buy everything we needed hours before the iftar was due to start. That last minute panic and success in getting it all done is definitely something I will always remember.

SAMI BASHEER
Class of 2023, Computer Science

HOW WOULD YOUR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE AT UIC BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF A MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY?

The MCUIC has undoubtedly been the most instrumental factor in helping my racial, religious, student, advocate, and personal identity develop and flourish during my four years at UIC. I am eternally grateful for the support and resources the MCUIC has provided during my time [here]. The chaplaincy has created both a safe space where I could come as I was and a brave space where I could ask hard questions and venture out of my comfort zone toward vulnerability and growth.

NURIA RODGERS
Class of 2025, Human Development and Learning

HOW WAS PASTORAL CARE OR SUPPORT FROM THE CHAPLAIN BENEFICIAL FOR YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY?

The Chaplain was there for me when a close friend of mine passed away. He comforted me and gave appropriate grievance guidance to get me through [that] hard time. He also advocated for me to some of my professors when I was going through personal problems and guided me through them.

TAUSEEF PATEL
Class of 2025, Biological Sciences



HOW HAS THE MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY HAD A ROLE IN FOSTERING YOUR MUSLIM IDENTITY ON CAMPUS?

The Muslim chaplaincy plays such a pivotal role in fostering my Muslim identity on campus by creating an inclusive and welcoming community.

Unlike other Muslim organizations at UIC that sometimes feel cliquish, segregated, or unknowingly discriminatory, the chaplaincy celebrates the diversity of Muslim students. It acknowledges and uplifts people from all cultural and racial backgrounds, ensuring everyone feels seen and valued. To me this approach exemplifies what Islam truly stands for and reinforces my connection to my faith in humanity.

HIDAYAH ABDULLAH

Class of 2025, Integrated Health Studies



HOW WOULD YOUR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE AT UIC BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF A MUSLIM CHAPLAINCY?

Without the chaplaincy, I would be truly lost. [Chaplain Ariz] has helped me and my [peers] with even the tiniest of anxieties, whether about career development or about personal stresses. His emotional intelligence is admirable and his attention to detail even more so. I can say with full confidence and zero ounce of doubt that the Muslim community has changed for the better with his presence on campus.

ZAINAB AHMED

Class of 2026, Integrated Health Studies

HOW WAS PASTORAL CARE OR SUPPORT FROM THE CHAPLAIN BENEFICIAL FOR YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY?

Over the Fall 2023 semester, I began meeting with the chaplain regularly to essentially relearn Islam, this time through the lens of mercy and nurturing care.

These sessions covered various topics, including Islamic rulings, Muslim identity in the West, navigating familial issues, Quranic tafsir, memorization of Islamic attributes, and intersectionality as a Muslim. In less than four months, I experienced a transformation, becoming a better version of myself with the chaplain's unwavering guidance and mentorship.

His commitment to my learning journey provided the foundation I needed to re-embrace my Muslim identity confidently, begin observing hijab, and deepen my understanding of Islam both fundamentally and personally. The chaplain went above and beyond, even meeting virtually during the summer to support my learning. He worked with me to create a personalized study plan, ensuring I could continue my growth at my own pace.

NURIA RODGERS

Class of 2025, Human Development and Learning



LOOKING AHEAD TO FUTURE GOALS

INDEPENDENT MCUIC SPACE

The Chaplaincy will eventually need an independent space that is accessible to undergraduate and graduate students that can serve as a central place for worship, spiritual and educational programming, companionship building, and pastoral services vis a vis the Chaplain's office. Having an independent space would resolve issues like room-booking and campus food restrictions, providing greater agency to the Chaplaincy.

HALAL ON CAMPUS

One of the efforts the Muslim Chaplaincy hopes to bring to fruition is raising the standard of halal-certification to hand-slaughtered meat, so that all of our students can benefit from the halal dining options available on campus. With assistance from the community, the additional expenses associated with a higher standard can be off-set, making more inclusive dietary options a reality for our students.



PART-TIME FEMALE CHAPLAIN

While the chaplain currently serves all members of the Muslim student body on campus in equal capacity, there would be great benefit for female-students to have access to a part-time female chaplain who may address their needs on a more personal matter or with whom they can fashion a more intimate relationship.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, we thank Allah (swt) for enabling our community to initiate this important project.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude for the pioneering support of our institutional sponsors:

WF Fund and Zakat Chicago

The MCUIC would also like to acknowledge the many efforts by previous MSA alumni, boards, and advisors like Jeremiah Abiade to establish a chaplaincy at UIC. Their cumulative work and effort they undertook over many years has made it possible for this institution to come to life.

We are indebted to our founding members: Aisha El-Amin, Abdul Basith Basheer, Junaid Quadri and Zeina Zaatari.

We would also like to recognize the following UIC alumni for their time and efforts: Salmah Abdulbaseer and Sami Basheer.

May Allah (swt) continue to allow the MCUIC to do important work in our community.

