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CHAPTER
STARTER GUIDE

How To
Establish
And Operate
A Successful
MSA Chapter

MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL.

What is a Muslim Students Association?

A Muslim Students Association (MSA) is an organization devoted to strengthening the Muslim community through service and activism, educating both Muslims and people of other faiths about the religion of Islam, and facilitating a better environment for students on campus.

The establisher of an MSA should make the intention to establish an organization for the sake of Allah. Begin your journey by saying “Bismillahi ‘Rahman ar Raheem,” (In the Name of God) and pray that your MSA is successful, strong, and beneficial to all members and students alike.

Section I. Get Organized

So you want to start an MSA chapter in your area but you're not sure how? Here are some basic start-up advice from MSA National, serving and supporting Muslim students like you across the US & Canada since 1963.

1. Get Information: Visit the Student Union/Office of Student Government at your college/university/high school and ask about starting a club. The University will outline the club requirements and policies such as the minimum number of members required, election policies, etc.

2. Get Members: This can be approached in several different ways:

- Word of mouth - tell your friends to pass it along.
- Start an email list sign-up sheet of those interested.
- Advertise on campus through flyers, etc.
- Set up a table or booth at your student union and have interested people sign up to attend.
- Go to club meetings, like the Black Student Association, Pakistani Student Association or Arab Student Association, that may have Muslim members and tell them about the MSA.

Some schools provide a list of contact information for all the current students. Try to get a copy and look through it to find members.

Whatever method you use to convey the message, make sure you take names and contact information for those interested. Compose a list or database of those individuals, and follow up with emails and phone calls telling them about the first meeting. Try to collect all of the following information from all interested individuals:

- Name
- Year/Class
- Major
- Phone
- Email
- AIM/ICQ/MSN Messenger Name
- Talent applicable to MSA. (Web/graphic design, artist, public speaker, journalist, etc.)

3. Call A Meeting: Make sure this is well advertised on campus.

So what should you talk about at your first meeting? Write an agenda and try to stick to it. If possible, send out the agenda to the students. Ask someone to take notes and another to keep time and make sure the discussion is on track. Here are some things you may want to consider:

Establish A Mission Statement: In order to be successful, you must first get a clear idea of what your MSA's purpose is. A mission statement is essentially a shared vision of the

organization that can be used in planning, decision-making, and evaluation. In a brainstorming session, some good questions to ask include the following:

- What do we want to accomplish?
- What services will we provide?
- Who are our stakeholders?

Ex. Muslim students, students of other faiths, professors, the university administration, the campus community, MSA National.

At the most basic level, the MSA should create a community of Muslims on campus. One MSA's mission statement put it quite well:

The MSA stands for Islam as a complete way of life. By this, we will develop a dynamic, united and welcome community on campus, raise awareness of Islam, and help people become better Muslims.

The MSA is based on the Islamic ideals of united effort and brother/sisterhood. The MSA is a proactive organization based on the Islamic concepts of excellence. This unity is based on common objectives and transcends petty differences in order to have a community that every Muslim feels a part of.

The Mission Statement of MSA National is:

The Muslim Students Association of the U.S. & Canada (MSA National) continues to serve Muslim students during their college and university careers by facilitating their efforts to establish, maintain and develop local MSA chapters. Towards that end, we aim to create a strong, diverse network of students who are conscious of their Islamic identity, well-trained, and committed to serving Islam and Muslims both in North America and around the world.

4. Gather A Core Group Of Members: This group will be responsible for the activities of the coming year. You should have an election according to your school's policies in order to fill positions such as president, vice president, treasurer, public relations contact and so on (Roles will be discussed further in Section II). Also, try to get a list of those interested in volunteering. Email them when you begin a new project to see if they are interested to help.

5. Register As A Club: When organized, you should register your chapter with the university student union. This means the school will recognize you as a religious or cultural organization. It will give you the ability to post signs, be eligible for funding from the university, and allow you to book university facilities and other privileges.



6. Meet Regularly: Establish a time that most of the members will be able to meet. Generally, General Body Meetings should be held at least once a month. Emailing notes to all members or posting meeting minutes on your website will help ensure all members feel included if they cannot attend the meetings.

7. Establish A Bank Account: Some universities provide accounts and accounting for their clubs. Ask your university about its policy on keeping club and managing club funds. It could be that you'll need to establish an account with a local bank. In that scenario, always try to establish the account under the organizational name, rather than the name of the current president or another affiliated individual to promote organizational stability. Ask about tax exempt accounts from your bank. This account becomes especially important for fundraising.

8. Identify Tax Needs: Some MSA's find benefit in acquiring tax exempt status for the purpose of providing tax exempt receipts to donors in order to encourage them to donate to the MSA. While not necessary, you may find that donors are more encouraged to give to a federally recognized tax exempt organization.

State subsidized universities (public universities) are awarded tax exempt status, and will sometimes extend that status to subsidiary organizations such as clubs. It is easier to get exemption from under the umbrella of your university, but there might also be greater restrictions or requirements on what you can do with your status. It could be that obtaining tax exemption is more trouble than it is worth obtaining. Weigh your options carefully to and decide what is best for your scenario.

One way to determine the usefulness of exemption is to analyze your budget. If you are planning to run an Islamic Awareness Week, sponsored by businesses and funded by large donations, with events totaling above ten thousand dollars, than it will definitely work to your advantage to have exemption, if nothing else than for the purchase orders. Have your treasurer talk to your MSA National zonal representative, or University student activities coordinator to determine if tax exemption is right for you.

9. Establish An Office: This is not always necessary but some MSAs have found that establishing an office on campus is very helpful. A physical location, obtained through the student government, makes it easy for interested parties to contact you for information and is a great channel for facilitating a greater understanding of Islam on campus. Consider obtaining a mailing address, a phone number, website, and email address. Please be sure to update addresses, phone numbers, web addresses, executive officers, and other information with MSA National to ensure you receive valuable information about national projects and resources.

10. Affiliate You Chapter With Msa National

To affiliate your chapter, visit www.msanational.org/contact/affiliate/ or contact your Zonal Rep.

Why should you affiliate your chapter with MSA National? MSA National helps to facilitate the needs of local MSAs and acts as their voice in North America and around the world. MSA National strives to facilitate networking, educating, and empowering the students of today to be citizens of tomorrow's community.

Working towards the same goal of pleasing our Creator (swt), we are strengthened by our collectivity and unity. As Allah (swt) has commanded in the Glorious Qur'an:

“And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves” (Qu'ran 3:103)

This ayah is the statement MSA National was founded upon in 1963.

Your small affiliation fee can help MSA National make strives in Islamic work across the entire United States and Canada. We need your support to sustain and increase efforts such as dawah distribution, political action, conferences and events, education and more. MSA National is only as strong as its locals. So affiliate today. Financial assistance and fee reduction is available for MSA's who cannot afford the fee.

There are also many tangible benefits for your chapter that are provided through affiliation with MSA National:

Communication: By affiliating, chapters are better able to relay information about themselves and their activities. If they have an Islamic Awareness Week, for example, they can contact other local MSA Chapters through their zonal representatives to coordinate their efforts or benefit from each other's experiences. If they want to hold a lecture, they can contact MSA National for a national list of speakers and obtain access to their contact information.

Access to Information: By affiliating, individual chapters can also obtain information about a wide range of important issues. For example, affiliates can learn from other chapters how to start different projects, to obtain tips on how to get their college to recognize the Islamic holidays, as well as tips on how to deal with anti-Muslim sentiment gain valuable insight from MSA National's experience with areas such as fundraisers or program ideas.

Coordination: MSA National has the capabilities to organize nation-wide and international campaigns, has contacts for MSA chapters in the US and Canada, and can easily use its collective voice to make real change. Many issues involve several

MSAs and not just one. Civil rights issues, for instance, need a coordinated national response. By affiliating with MSA National, local MSAs can, in essence, become part of the decision-making process for Muslims in North America.

Services: MSA National serves many other functions as well; your affiliation is part of what supports these services. Among the work MSA National does for local MSAs include:

MSA Training Through Compass: provides training services by professionally trained and experienced trainers available to MSA executives. Training sessions may include time management, gender relations, and succession planning among others.

Leadership-training: alongside COMPASS, conferences help train the incoming executives of local chapters in order to ensure a smooth transition from the previous year. All year long, MSA national serves to help MSAs network with each other, coordinate activities, and help support each other.

In the process of networking, it maintains the MSA-Org email list, which facilitates communication and exchange of ideas between MSAs across North America. It also maintains zonal and other regional lists, such as EZ Can for MSAs in Eastern Canada, WZ Can for MSAs in Western Canada, CZUSA for MSAs in Central Zone United States, and so on. These email lists are meant to encourage communication and close coordination between MSAs.

Zonal Representative: in order to promote more effective networking, the regions of the U.S. and Canada are divided into 5 zones and there is a zonal representative for each of the 5 zones, and their role helps facilitate and promote more effective networking with the local MSA and other MSA's within their region and with MSA National.

MSA National also maintains a speakers bureau. The database contains not only the speakers' contact information, but also his/her specialty topics (if any) and comments from MSAs that have utilized him/her, in order to help guide other MSAs in making the best choice in obtaining a speaker for their particular topic in their local environment.

MSA National holds conferences that thousands of Muslim students attend. The conferences provide a forum to bring students from across the continent physically together, face-to-face, in order to strengthen the ties of brotherhood and help re-energize the hearts and minds to go back and be active on campus. There is the annual MSA Continental Conference, held in cooperation with the annual ISNA convention annually and also the zonal conferences, held during the spring of the academic year, with one conference in each of the 5 MSA National Zones.

Furthermore, being affiliated with MSA gives students the

opportunity to work with MSA National's Task Forces, which include the:

Community Service Task Force (CSTF)

Coordinates the various MSA national community service initiatives such as Project Downtown. CSTF is available for community service project consultations, training and development.

Email: cstf@msanational.org

COMPASS

Training services provided by professionally trained and experienced trainers available to MSA executives. Training sessions may include time management, gender relations, successive training and etc. If interested in this service please contact your local Zonal representative.

Website: www.msacompass.org

Political Action Task Force (PATF)

Works on developing various Political projects related to current events within North America that directly affect the Muslim students.

Email: patf@msanational.org

Programs Task Force (PTF)

Overlooks and aids in developing programs for various MSA National conferences such as the zonal conferences and the Continental conference while maintaining contact with speakers and local committees.

Email: programs@msanational.org

Media and Communications Task Force (MCTF)

Responsible for various media initiatives including the monthly MSA National E-letter, publication development for MSA chapters across North America and compiling MSA success stories for In the News.

Email: mctfchair@msanational.org

For submissions to the e-letter contact: elletter@msanational.org

Muslims Accommodations Task Force (MATF)

Research on the various needs of MSA students on campuses in North America and develops tools that will be able to provide them with reasonable accommodations on campus such as prayer space, halal food, etc.

Dawah Task Force (DTF)

Responsible for developing guides and ideas for the various dawah initiatives of MSA such as Islamic Awareness Week, while compiling relevant information for the various events along with statistics of past years.

For Fast-A-Thon contact: fastathon@msanational.org

For IAW contact: iaw@msanational.org Information

Technology Task Force (ITTF)

Responsible for the various technical aspects of MSA National, including maintaining the website and server while updating online content and payments.

Email: itfchair@msanational.org



Section II. Assign Roles

Once a strong member base has been established, the newly formed MSA should elect its officers (see university rules for election procedures). The following are suggested positions (addition or omission of positions may be required):

President: The president is responsible for overseeing everything that goes on within the organization. He/She delegates responsibilities / tasks, works with the university administration, and checks on the progress of activities. He/She also acts as the public face of the organization (with the help of any public relations representatives).

Vice President: The vice president assists the president in overseeing operations. The vice presidency is usually the individual who receives the second-largest amount of votes in the election.

Treasurer: The treasurer creates and balances a budget, coordinates fundraising and maintains accounting procedures. The treasurer is responsible for allocating funds and handling all financial transactions.

Secretary: The secretary keeps meeting minutes; records ideas, policy changes, and action items; and sees to the archiving or dissemination of that information. Depending on the MSA's structure, the secretary may also be responsible for room reservations.

Sisters' Coordinator: Although many events are for both brothers and sisters, there may be a need for sisters-only events and correspondence. The sisters' coordinator advertises and organizes such events and facilitates communication between sisters. It is crucial that the sister-specific needs are also addressed in co-ed gatherings and events.

Brothers' Coordinator: The role of the brothers' coordinator emulates that of the sisters' coordinator.

Public Relations Director: The public relations director creates flyers, advertises for events, establishes contacts with the media, issues press releases when necessary, and keeps the MSA executives informed about pertinent issues on and off campus. The PR director should be in frequent correspondence with the MSA National Zonal Rep in case of any issues that arise on campus. This will help the MSA synchronize responses with the response of the national Muslim community.

The following positions are usually not determined through elections, but instead assigned by the board of directors based on interest and qualification.

Project Chairs: To make event organization as simple as possible and get more people involved, there should be one person responsible for each project or event. This person should communicate with the board of directors and work with a team of volunteers.

Committees: It is often helpful to form committees or task forces to focus on specific events or tasks. Committees can be standing (ex. Education, Community Service, etc.) or one-time committees (ex. Eid Banquet). MSA National, for example, currently has the following standing task forces: Finance, Information Technology, Muslim Accommodations, Dawah, Media and Communications, Political Action, Programs, and Education. There are also groups formed for special issues such as the Free Iraq Foundation.

There are numerous different projects to pursue and positions to fill. So try to get everyone involved!

Section III. Get Started

Once you've established your MSA Chapter, it's time to get to work! Every MSA chapter is different so there is no single way to do things. You have to assess your needs, available resources, and create a strategy. For example, one of your main goals may be to work on prayer accommodations and activities to fulfill a social need. If these needs are already met, your goals may be more complex. Start off small: don't spread your resources too thin. Start out with the basics and as you grow, gradually expand your activities. Below are some possible MSA projects and event categories.

Prayer accommodations: Every Muslim needs a place to pray on campus where they feel comfortable. Talk to your university/school about designating an area especially for Muslims to pray. You can do this by either establishing a permanent space just for prayer or simply schedule on empty classrooms to use for this purpose.

Jumma: Depending on how many people you expect at Friday prayer, you can either use the same prayer space as mentioned before or you can ask your school to find a larger room to reserve every Friday. You will also need to find a qualified individual to give the khutbah and lead the students in prayer. Traditionally, this is one of the largest events MSAs hold. This is a good time to make announcements and encourage people to participate in MSA events. It may be beneficial to do social events (lunch, BBQ, picnic, etc) following the prayer to build unity and invite others to learn about Islam.

Communication: In order to stay connected to your members, create a list serve and a website for the MSA. There can be a general list serve as well as separate brothers and sisters list serves to advertise for specific events. A popular service is yahoo or gmail groups, available through yahoo.com or gmail.com. You should also be able to arrange a list serve using the address book provided by your schools email account. Consult your school's IT department for more information.

Advertising: Advertising is a key part of event planning. Muslims new to campus often find the MSA through flyers,

a booth at a club fair, or the school-wide online calendar. Good publicity will make sure all the Muslims know the MSA exists and invite students of other faiths to learn about Islam and to socialize. Advertising tips from MSAs across the country include:

- Have a booth at New Student orientation; if possible become part of the orientation schedule.
- Post flyers around campus in high-traffic areas and at the prayer room. This may seem redundant but it's always a good way to advertise to students who may not be connected with the MSA (be sure to check your school's flyer posting rules).
- Get a group to "go flyering" is a great way to not only make putting up flyers fun, but to also get freshmen and new members involved.
- Send an e-mail on your list serve.
- Ask members to forward the e-mail flyer to their contacts
- Give each MSA member a packet of five mini-flyers. Have each MSA member give out all of the flyers.
- Announce the event at General Body Meetings and after Jummah.
- Post all events on the university online calendar.
- Post events and announcements on the MSA website.
- Make announcements in relevant classes. For example, if your MSA is holding an Islam Awareness Week, have students announce the week and pass out flyers in all Islam classes (be sure to ask the professor before making the announcement!)
- Network with other campus groups. Ask other groups to co-sponsor related events.

You may want to extend a warm welcome to other faith-based groups such as the Jewish Student Association (JSA) and Christian groups. Let them know that you want to work together to provide beneficial services to students, and facilitate a stronger student environment on campus. Make sure they see you as a potential ally for certain issues.

Social Events: Getting to know your fellow Muslims is a very important part of campus life. For many students, college is their first time away from home and they are looking for a group of friends. Muslim students should be able to support and encourage one another. Create a Muslim community at your campus and invite others to Islam.

Dawah/Interfaith: The campus is the perfect opportunity to engage both Muslims and people of other faiths in dialogue. Today's students will be tomorrow's leaders; you have the ability to inform their perception of Islam. So how do you get the message to them? The possibilities are endless. To be effective, it is important to be friendly and welcoming to people from all walks of life.



Here Are Some Ideas from MSAs Across the U.S and Canada:

Islam Awareness Week (IAW): Started in the 1990's, this event became a national program through MSA National. Variations include IAD (Islam Awareness Day) and IAM (Islam Awareness Month). The following activities can be held as part of an IAW or separately (more about IAW under "Events, Projects & Other Useful Ideas").

The Dawah Table: Inform people about Islam in your central campus hangout. Get a group of brothers and sisters to pass out flyers, pamphlets, and other materials. Have a sign-up list for your list serve and flyers for your upcoming events. Ask questions to encourage a dialogue and try to get people's attention. Be creative, be nice and be careful. If you're not sure about something, say, "I'm not sure, but I can find out and get back to you." Try not to speak on a subject or answer a question you are unfamiliar with.

Sign Dawah: Think of something eye-catching, a slogan, or "brain teaser" to teach about Islam. Put it on a poster or sign for all to see. Creativity and originality are key. Include your website address or office location where passers-by can find more information. Some successful slogans include: "In the US there are approximately 7 million _____. For the answer visit www.xyzmsa.org (Answer: Muslims)" "Think Fast To learn more about the Fast-A-Thon visit: www.xyz.org"

Lectures Series and Interfaith Dinners: Invite knowledgeable speakers on interesting topics or host a dinner. Have other student groups co-sponsor the event to increase attendance. Its beneficial to have "greeters" who welcome attendees and if necessary help them find a seat.

Dawah By Example: As Muslims on campus, MSA members often find themselves representing Islam to their classmates and professors. Thus it's important to be conscious of this role and portray Islam in a positive light through our behavior. Continue to be a part of the campus community and support worthwhile activities on your campus. Some possible activities include:

- Support, establish or help a food/clothing bank
- Join in Alcohol & Drug Awareness campaigns
- Support human rights organizations with similar goals

Education: Make the most of your college years; it's a perfect time to increase your own knowledge about Islam. Start study groups that meet once a week or every two weeks. Have students take turns each week to prepare a topic to give every student the opportunity to research, grow, and learn. Some examples include Qur'an memorization sessions, Islamic history classes,

listening to lectures, reading Islamic books, or taking distance learning classes together. The local Muslim community may also have learning opportunities.

Political/Campus Action: Consider forming committees for certain issues that need to be addressed on the campus or larger level. It's best to be proactive rather than reactive.

Get involved in university/community affairs: This could mean networking with other groups that are interested in the same issues as your MSA chapter. It could also mean individual MSA members joining other clubs and, if interested, holding a position on the board of these organizations. This will help to ensure that Muslims are well represented.

Utilize the Media: Take an interest in issues related to your cause. Respond and inquire not only to issues relating to Muslim countries or just political issues but social issues as well. Discuss national and local issues, the needs of the disadvantaged, the weak, the poor, etc. It's helpful to appoint a public relations representative. Use whatever channels are available to you: local radio, local paper, university paper, etc.

Get involved in your University: Hold events about Islam's contribution to various subject areas such as history, sociology, medicine, architecture etc. Invite professors who teach courses related to these fields of study. Hold rallies, call-ins, and other peaceful, well-organized events.

Section IV. Procedures Guidelines

Creating An Annual Budget: Although creating and sticking to a budget is the ultimate responsibility of the treasurer, it is very difficult to balance a budget without input and adhesion from all other 'departments' and individuals. Before the year begins, the treasurer and his/her financial team should consider possible fund-raising activities for the year. At the same time, the President should ask each committee to meet regularly to create a list of activities and a budget for the committee by a certain date. The calendar of activities and budgets of all the committees should then be reviewed by the Executive Committee for discussion, modification, and approval. After approval of the committee or project budgets, the treasurer can compile the committee budgets and other administrative costs to create an organizational budget that is all-encompassing for the year.

Implementing Your Budget: The treasurer should work directly with each committee to oversee their financial expenditures. If a financial team/committee has been successfully composed, each member can be assigned to a committee (or to multiple committees, depending on the number of financial committee members and the number of committees). The financial team member will then be responsible for overseeing all finance-related activities for that committee for the year.

All financial transactions should go through the Treasurer for approval and recording. The Treasurer should keep a log of all monetary transactions, as well as oversee and monitor all financial accounts (university checking accounts, bank accounts, etc.). The Treasurer should head the financial committee and keep up to date with their progress. All committees must carefully watch their expenditures so they do not exceed their budgetary limits.

The Treasurer is responsible for distributing a financial report to the Executive Committee and all interested members at the end of each term.

Fundraising: Fundraising takes creativity and enthusiasm. Here are some examples of ways to raise funds for your MSA chapter:

- **Membership Dues:** This is helpful to get started but don't let this alienate potential members. Always let members know what services they are receiving by paying their membership dues. Membership dues vary by MSA but typically are around \$5-\$20.
- **Sell Memorabilia:** This can require money upfront, but will also help to advertise for your MSA and will promote unity and loyalty. Products include T-shirts, calendars and books. T-shirts / sweatshirts are the most successful product if the right number and sizes are ordered. MSAs can reduce risk by requiring members to pre-order shirts.
- **Fundraising Drive:** Distribute pamphlets, postcards or mailing well written letters with a description of the needs of your MSA chapter. Likely donors include parents, other family members, friends, alumni and local businesses.
- **Jummah Fundraising:** Make Announcements after Friday prayer and pass around boxes. Try taking your campaign to the local Mosque; ask if your volunteers can make an announcement after Jummah and pass around boxes.
- **Events:** Host a lecture dinner or a similar activity to solicit donations. Focus on inviting potential donors and creating a powerful yet simple program. Create pledge cards and donation boxes to pass out. Hosting meals during Ramadan and collecting donations are also a good way of collecting funds.
- **Ad Booklet:** If your MSA is holding an event, give local businesses the opportunity to advertise in your program or create a separate ad booklet that will be distributed to attendees. Businesses and organizations will receive recognition for their generosity and your MSA will raise funds.
- **Co-Sponsorship:** For iftars (Ramadan Dinners) or other events, consider having organizations, campus departments, or student groups sponsor the event by covering all or part of the cost. In exchange the sponsor may ask for speaking time in the program. In appreciation, consider inviting the sponsor to the event, publicly recognizing the sponsor(s) and sending a thank-you card signed by your Executive Committee.

Planning an Event: Great! You're ready to plan your first event! Here are some guidelines for you to consider:

Reserve a location

Check with your university to see what rooms are available for the date you desire (consider size of room, setup, and availability of necessary equipment).

- Make a list of your university's policies concerning food, fundraising, etc.
- Make sure you have the required audio-visual equipment.

Depending on the nature of the event, you may need special permits or support from the university or the local government. For rallies, marches, and off-campus events, contact your local police or park authority

Find a Speaker

First, think about your event's theme, then think about what local or national speakers are knowledgeable about the topic.

If you are an affiliated chapter, you can e-mail: speakers@msanational.org to request speaker contact information.

Negotiate an honorarium or some form of compensation, travel accommodations, and other issues with the speaker. Treat your speaker with the utmost hospitality; make sure your guest feels welcome.

Discuss what type of lecture you would like and work with the speaker to make sure he or she has ample time to prepare and address the topic.

Delegate to Volunteers

You should have volunteers for each committee. For a lecture dinner, for example, you would need volunteers to be in charge of the following areas:

- Hosting the speaker
- Room/equipment reservation
- Food
- Decoration/Setup
- Registration (if applicable)
- Event moderator (this person should introduce the speaker, handle questions and make sure everything is going smoothly; this role is especially important if the topic is controversial.)
- Cleanup

Be prepared for the worst-case scenarios and create backup plans.

Advertise for the Event

Advertising for the event should be done in advance and perhaps a more intense advertisement should be planned for the day before/of the event. Be creative, make people think, make them interested. Of course, make sure your university approves your advertisements. Free food is always a great incentive for people to attend.



Section V. Events, Projects & Other Useful Ideas

Ramadan Fast-a-Thon: During the month of Ramadan, many MSA chapters organize Fast-a-Thons to educate people of other faiths about Islam, raise money for the hungry, and remind each other of the blessings of Allah. Muslim students encourage their non-Muslim peers to fast for one day and get local business to sponsor the event and donate money for a local food bank or shelter. Join over 200 campuses across the US and Canada and hold a Fast-a-Thon!

MSA National has a how-to packet for the Ramadan Fast-a-Thon. To receive the packet e-mail fastathon@msanational.org Also, after your Fast-a-Thon, e-mail fastathon@msanational.org with the number of attendees and amount raised so MSA National can accurately answer media questions and highlight the positive contributions of Muslims on campus.

Islam Awareness Week/Month Islamic Awareness Week/Month is an event that is scheduled for the spring semester of each year. During this week or month, events are held by the MSA to encourage awareness of Islam, dispel misconceptions, reach out to the larger campus community, and encourage less active Muslims to participate in an MSA event.

Muslim Accommodations: Work to get accommodations on campus such as Muslim housing, a prayer area, and Islamic holidays. To view professional guides visit: <http://www.msanational.org/taskforces/matf/>

Management Training: Do you want to take your MSA to the next level? Do you believe in professionalism? Hold a day-long training event with COMPASS, MSA National’s management training task force. With trainers with years of MSA and professional experience, COMPASS will train your members using modules designed specifically for the MSA context. And there is NO fee for MSA chapters! Visit www.msacompass.org for more information.

Community Service: Work with other MSAs and campus groups to feed the homeless each month by hosting a Project Downtown. A small act can have a profound impact. For more information visit www.projectdowntown.org

MSA National Conferences: Each year, MSA National holds and sponsors many conferences. Affecting hundreds of students, these conferences provide an opportunity for Muslim students to interact with scholars, learn about Islam, network with other students, and learn how to improve their MSAs (all for typically less than \$100 for registration, food and hotel). Often MSAs can get their university’s to pay for part of the registration expenses. Also, consider working with other MSAs and state / regional councils to organize carpools and buses to make the trip even more affordable and fun. For dates and locations of Zonal, Continental and other conferences, visit www.msanational.org

MIST: The Muslim Interscholastic tournament is a program for high school students designed to encourage their participation in MSA, network with fellow MSA students, work together in teams, and increase their knowledge in Islam. MIST has regional tournaments that also follow a conference style of education demonstrated by MSA National. MIST cannot, however, be practiced by high school MSAs without the sponsorship of a University MSA. Remember, high school students are tomorrow’s university MSA officers, so encourage and mentor the youth in your area by participating in MIST. For more information, visit: <http://www.getmistified.com>

MSAs in the News:

Interested in learning more about what other MSAs are doing across the country? Visit www.msanational.org/inthenews to see a database of news articles about MSA events and activities.

Outreach Within Your Muslim Community:

Consider working with the Muslim community near your campus to access more resources and further strengthen the Muslim community. If you are part of a high school MSA, contact your local college MSA chapter.

Establish and maintain contact with High School MSA chapters or MYNA chapters and work on enriching the development of the Muslim youth within them.

Make a constructed effort to reach out to the Muslims within your school that are not involved with the MSA. Make all students feel like there is place for them within your MSA. Outreach outside of the Muslim community:

Develop interfaith partnerships with other faith groups within your school.

Giving Charity plays an important role in a Muslims life and this should be considered during the developmental stages of your outreach campaigns. Focus on easy ways to serve your community such as holding a project downtown by volunteering at homeless shelters, assisted living centers, food kitchens or non-profit organizations. These organizations will often be happy to have the extra help!

Try your best to practice Islam as the Prophet (pbuh) did. You can tell people all about the beauty within Islam, but it will be easier to convey this message through your everyday actions. Allah (swt) says,

“Is there any reward for good other than good?” (Qu’ran 55:60)

Appendix A: Resources

MSA National: www.msanational.org

MSA National Zonal webpages:

East Zone USA: www.ezusa.msanational.org

Central Zone USA: www.czusa.msanational.org

West Zone USA: www.wzusa.msanational.org

East Zone Canada: www.ezcan.msanational.org

West Zone Canada: www.wzcan.msanational.org

Ramadan Fast-a-Thon: www.fastathon.org

Speakers Database: Contact: speakers@msanational.org

Halal Food guide, Prayer Room Guide, Islamic Holiday Guide, all available through the Muslim Accommodations Task force. These guides are free when you become a member of MSA National. See www.msanational.org/taskforces/matf/ for more details.

Workers Training Program: An Interactive lecture series with trainers who are sent to your MSA chapter to go over the organization, management and maintenance of a chapter. Contact compass@msacompass.org

Visit our website on a regular basis: <http://www.msanational.org>, and sign up for MSA mailing lists including zonal lists!

A database of MSA projects and activities: Get the info on what Muslim Students are doing in the United States and Canada: <http://muslimstudents.info>

Muslim Interscholastic Tournament: www.getmistified.com

We hope this guide has been helpful! Please keep your Zonal Rep informed about your MSA development and visit www.msanational.org often for more updates and resources!

MSA National is always looking for insights into serving chapters better. If you have any suggestions please contact your Zonal Rep or manager@msanational.org or call 703-820-7900.

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Appendix B: Sample Constitutions

Georgetown University MSA:

Introduction and Mission

We, the Muslim students of Georgetown University, out of our faith and dedication to the service of Islam, do hereby proclaim the establishment of the Muslims Students Association, so that collectively we can share in a common set of moral commitments rooted in the message of Islam; engage in religious, social and community activities; support educational and intellectual pursuits; and continue to promote the goals of Muslim students in Georgetown University, and thus serve our faith as best we can.

To this effect, we hereby set forth and enact the following laws governing the Muslim Students Association which shall be binding on each and all of us in totality, until and unless properly amended by the provisions herein.

Article I– Establishment and Name

The name of the organization will be the Muslim Students Association henceforth referred to as MSA. As an Islamic institution it will strive to conduct itself in accordance with the Qur’an and Sunnah. In such a capacity the organization is bound first and foremost by the aforementioned sources.

Article II– Affiliation

The MSA will function under the auspices of the Office of Student Programs in all matters related to the successful fulfillment of its mission and will abide by all policies set forth by Georgetown University in accordance with its mission. In those matters permitting a closer interaction with the Campus Ministry, the MSA will actively seek the Campus Ministry’s cooperation in its activities so as to strengthen the MSA’s ability to fulfill its mission as outlined in Article III.

Article III– Objectives

The objectives of this organization are to provide a means for Muslims at Georgetown University to fulfill their obligations to Islam:

- To create an environment on campus that will foster the development and growth of the diverse Muslim community at Georgetown University.
- To provide Muslims with proper accommodations to fulfill religious obligations including maintenance of the Prayer room, the organization of the Friday prayer, as well as any accommodations for Ramadan.
- To sponsor programming and events that positively contribute to the development of Islam and Muslims on campus. This may include lectures, panel discussions, halaqas (Islamic discussion groups) as well as social events.
- To act as a resource to the whole campus community and represent Islam in the best possible manner.
- To actively engage both Muslims and non-Muslims in a portrayal of the message of Islam as completely and accurately as possible.



Article IV- Membership

The MSA openly admits undergraduate students to its membership and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.

Regular: Membership shall be limited to persons officially connected with the University as enrolled undergraduate students. Only regular members have voting rights.

Honorary: The MSA may elect an honorary member from outside the University to recognize any person who has given distinguished service to the organization.

Associate: The MSA also recognizes the significant Muslim population at Georgetown University that does not fall under the category of regular membership. The MSA invites interested graduate students, faculty members, staff personnel, and alumni to actively participate in the organization. Such members will henceforth be recognized as Associate members.

Article V– Internal Structure

General Body: The general body shall consist of those individuals who have been accepted as members in accordance with the provisions listed under Article IV. Regular members shall be the main policy-making body of MSA. It may, however, for the smoother running of its affairs, delegate this authority to the various components as outlined herein. All actions taken by any officer may be approved, rejected, or amended by this body.

Executive Board: The Board shall be the executive body of MSA and shall consist of at least five officers elected by the regular members of MSA.

Article VI– Officers

Eligibility: Voting officers of MSA must be full-time undergraduate students at Georgetown University capable of sincerely performing and executing the mission of the MSA as stipulated in Article III of this document. They must be regular members in good standing prior to being considered for office.

The President, in consultation with the Board, may appoint other non-voting officers if necessary. Non-voting officers must be full-time undergraduate students enrolled at Georgetown University and must be regular members in good standing prior to being considered for office. The board shall execute its commitments in accordance with the principles of shura (consultation) outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Removal: Any officer of the MSA in violation of the organization's purpose or constitution may be removed from office by the following process:

- a) A written request by at least ten (10) members of the organization to the Executive Board stating the reasons for removal.
- b) Written notification by the Executive Board to the officer

- c) of the request, asking the officer to be present at the next meeting prepared to speak in their own defense
- c) Written notification to the membership by the Executive Board
- d) After due deliberation, the Executive Board, minus the officer in question, will present its recommendation to a general body meeting called for this purpose. The quorum for this meeting shall be at least two-fifths (2/5) of the regular members in MSA in good standing of which a 2/3 majority vote is necessary to remove the officer.

The President, in consultation with the Board, reserves the right to remove non-voting officers.

Article VII– Amendments

Amendments may be proposed to the constitution by

- a) At least ten (10) regular members in good standing
- b) The MSA Executive Board

After due deliberation, the Executive Board will present its recommendation to a general body meeting called for this purpose. The announcement for a meeting for a constitutional change must take place at least one week prior to the meeting. The quorum for this meeting shall be at least two-fifths (2/5) of the regular members in MSA in good standing, of which a 2/3 majority will be needed to amend the constitution. The amendments will become effective immediately upon adoption and adjournment of the general body in which it is passed.

Bylaws

Article I– Dues

Members of MSA shall pay dues and assessments as determined by the Executive Board. All interested undergraduate students must pay the set amount per election year to qualify for regular membership in good standing. Associate and honorary members will not be required to pay dues. In those years in which the Board chooses not to set dues, interested undergraduate students are exempted from this requirement.

Article II– Meetings

General Body: The date and place of the meeting will be decided by the Executive Board. The meeting will be announced at least one week in advance. At any general meeting of MSA, the membership may direct the Board to appoint committees that pertain to the aims and objectives of the Association. A quorum shall constitute the presence of at least two-fifths (2/5) of the regular members of MSA. A simple majority of those present will be required for adoption of a resolution. To override a Board action, a majority of two-thirds (2/3) of those voting will be considered affirmative.

Executive Board: The Board shall meet at a time determined by its voting officers. The Board may also be called into session at any time by the President or any three (3) members of the Board. MSA Board meetings may be attended by any member of the MSA. A quorum of the Board shall constitute of no less

than fifty (50) percent of its voting members, one of whom must be the President or Vice-President. Officers may vote in absentia provided that they submit a signed confirmation of their vote. Board meetings will be scheduled once a week. These meetings will be open to all MSA members. The Board can also decide to schedule other meeting times; attendance at these meetings is at the discretion of the board and may be closed.

Article III– Duties of Officers

The voting officers of this association shall have the following duties:

President:

1. Be the presiding officer of all meetings
2. Appoint all committee chairpersons and make individual appointments with consultation of the Executive Board
3. Be an ex-officio member of all committees
4. Set the agenda of all MSA meetings
5. Attend 90% of all meetings

Vice-President:

1. Preside at all meetings and functions that the president cannot attend
2. Act as an advisor to the President
3. Serve as President in the event that the President resigns

Secretary:

1. Keep a record of all meetings of MSA
2. Supervise all arrangements for the holding of each meeting in compliance with the constitution and bylaws
3. Conduct membership drives and update the directory
4. Maintain a list of voting and active members and handle incoming new members
5. Maintain email server list.

Treasurer:

1. Keep a record of all funds of MSA
2. Dispense funds as approved by the Executive Board and under direction from the Office of Student Programs
3. Present a state of accounts to the Executive Board or General Body upon request
4. Notify each member of their financial obligations, including dues and other costs

Public Relations

1. Supervise and execute all announcements of programming or meetings to the members and larger community.
2. Remain in touch with campus media groups and academic departments.
3. The non-voting officers of the organization shall have the following duties:

Past-Officers:

1. Act as advisors to the Executive Board

Class Councilors (4):

The President, in consultation with the Executive Board, may

appoint a representative from each undergraduate class. Their duties include:

1. Serve as a conduit between the constituency and the Executive Board.
2. Find key ways to mobilize grass-roots support for MSA activities.
3. Contribute to the organization and running of MSA activities.
4. Assist the secretary in membership drives.

Article IV– Standing Committees

To facilitate discussion and planning, the Executive Council shall maintain standing committees comprised of a chairperson and other members. The chairperson shall be a regular member in good standing while any member- regular, honorary, or associate- may sit on a committee. Standing committees may only make recommendations to the Executive Board.

Article V– Relationship to Faculty Advisor

MSA may select a member of the faculty in good standing from the University to advise the Association on matters relating to the pursuit of its mission. The Executive Board will nominate a candidate and will present him or her to the General Body for approval. A quorum shall constitute two-fifths (2/5) of the regular members of MSA, and 2/3 vote is necessary to approve the action. The faculty advisor retains their position for a maximum of two years, upon which their position can be renewed through voting procedures. The removal of a faculty advisor shall require a meeting of the general body in which a two-fifths (2/5) of the regular members shall constitute a quorum. A 2/3 vote is necessary to remove the faculty advisor. It is not necessary for the MSA to maintain a faculty advisor position.

The Faculty Advisor Shall Have The Following Duties:

1. Advise the Association in all matters relating to the pursuit of its mission.
2. Serve as an advocate for the Association in Georgetown University.
3. Attend at least one general body meeting per semester.

Article VI– Relationship to Imam (Campus Ministry)

MSA recognizes the important role that Campus Ministry fulfills in Georgetown University and affirms that it provides a positive resource for the enrichment of the Muslim common life on campus. The Campus Ministry is a source of guidance and spiritual leadership that provides MSA with advice, programs, financial resources, and an opportunity to engage other faiths. The Muslim Imam of the Campus Ministry shall serve as a liaison between the MSA and Campus Ministry.

Article VII– Elections

Voting Eligibility: Only those members meeting all requirements of regular membership under Article IV of the Constitution and Article I of the bylaws will be eligible to vote.

Election: The election will be held by the general body on



an annual basis no later than February 15 of each academic year. The President will take nominations from the floor, the nomination process must be closed, and the movement seconded. The nominated parties will be allowed to vote if they are eligible voting members. The elections will be conducted by secret ballot and a simple majority will determine election to an office. Votes shall be tabulated by the secretary and one MSA voting member appointed by the outgoing president. No member can be elected to any office unless enrolled in classes at Georgetown campus during the semester.

Run-Off: In the case that a majority of votes is not achieved by any candidate, a run-off election will be conducted between the top two candidates receiving the most votes. New names will neither be sought or added to the list of candidates indicated on the original ballot for the post in consideration. The reelection will be conducted by the same voters present and no new votes will be allowed.

Terms: All candidates will be limited to a one-year term. Term of office will begin two weeks from the date of election and end when new members take office the following year.

Article VIII– Vacancies

An office of MSA shall be declared vacant by the Executive Board when an officer resigns or becomes unable to carry out duties of the office for reasons of health or otherwise. The Executive Board shall fill a vacant post under the following guidelines:

President: The Vice-President shall succeed to the presidency for the un-expired term. If the VP declines, the Board shall choose a new President from the elected Board members.

Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations: The vacancy will be filled by a special election to be directed by the President in accordance with Article VII of the Bylaws.

Class Representatives: The President, in consultation with the Executive Board, shall appoint a new representative immediately.

Article IX– Finances and Records

Funds for meetings and expenses of MSA shall be raised from the Student Activities Commission's annual allocation, Campus Ministry, annual dues if necessary, special assessments, and voluntary contributions.

MSA will submit a budget to the appropriate office of the student program advisory board on an annual basis and request funding appropriate for the effective operation of MSA. MSA will conduct all financial activities in accordance with Islam as well as with university policy and place all funds in its university account. MSA funds and records will be handled and managed exclusively by the MSA Executive Board under the direction of the Office of Student Programs.

Article X– Amendments

The bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the full Executive Board. These amendments shall be presented to the general body at the following general meeting.

Article XI– MSA Web page

The MSA web page will be maintained by the MSA Board. This responsibility may be delegated to a member of or outside the Georgetown University MSA. The content of the MSA web page will be determined by the Board.

Other MSA Constitutions:

University of Michigan:

<http://www.umich.edu/~muslims/PDFfiles/MSAConstitution2005.pdf>

Simon Fraiser University:

<http://www.sfu.ca/~msa/constitution.html>



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