Greetings from the Muslim Chaplaincy and the Tufts Muslim Students Association!

Our shared mission is to provide spiritually enriching environments for Tufts students, faculty, staff, and guests, to foster appreciation for Muslim cultures, and to provide a range of learning opportunities about Islam. Each year brings a broad range of special events and programs, many put on collaboratively by the University Chaplaincy and the Muslim Students’ Association among other Tufts departments and programs. Some of the Muslim Life events focus on cultivating spirituality and religious learning, some focus on engaging diversity, some on learning about Islam or Muslims around the world, and many providing within which to celebrate Islamic holidays or special university occasions.

Friday Prayers

The Muslim Chaplaincy sponsors a weekly Friday prayer service. We are fortunate to have many prominent scholars from across the greater Boston area.
deliver our Friday sermons as well as talented and provocative students. Our Friday prayers, held throughout the year at the Tufts Interfaith Center, located at 58 Winthrop Street, include Tufts students, Tufts staff, Tufts alumni, interfaith guests, prospective students and families, and Muslims from the wider community. All are welcome. Details about the Friday prayer location and start times can be found on the Tufts Muslim Chaplaincy website.

Religious Literacy

Throughout the year, we explore different aspects of traditional religious learning, such as Qur’an memorization, recitation, and exegesis. Our past events have brought prominent Islamic scholars to Tufts, including Dr. Carl Sharif El-Tohgui of Fawakih and the American Islamic Institute, Dr. Joseph Lumbard, co-author and co-editor of The Study Qur’an, and Ustadh AbdelRahman Murphy of Qalam Institute. Chaplain Celene Ibrahim, also an Islamic Studies specialist, provides additional opportunities for exploration.

Holiday Programming

The Muslim Chaplaincy and the Tufts Muslim Student Association work together to commemorate Muslim holidays and holy days, including programming throughout the blessed month of Ramadan. Last Eid Al-Adha we were joined by nationally renowned organizer Linda Sarsour (pictured here). During holidays, the community also conducts fundraisers and awareness campaigns to support local and national organizations, including new Massachusetts branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) led by Tufts affiliate Dr. John Robbins.
Islam-Awareness Programming

Islam continues to be one of the most misunderstood religions on the wider American landscape. In addition to our regular programming, Tufts students organize an annual Islam Awareness series each spring to draw attention to different aspects of Muslim life, culture, and beliefs. This year’s programming included a rich slate of events featuring an Islamic calligraphy workshop and a panel on healthcare needs among Muslim immigrant populations in the Boston area. Read student press coverage in The Tufts Daily here.

Global Awareness Programming

The Tufts Muslim community cares deeply about political conflicts abroad that affect many in our community. This year featured a sustained focus on the Syrian refugee crisis. The Muslim Chaplaincy hosted a conversation with Rania Abouzeid, a prominent journalist whose reporting from the ground in Syria is regularly featured in renowned international publications such as *Time* and *The Guardian*. She shared her insights on the Syrian crisis from her months of coverage on the ground since the inception of the conflict. Her perspective brought a unique window and drew an audience from across the university. In the spring, the Muslim Chaplaincy co-sponsored a student-organized event that raised awareness about the Syrian refugee crisis with a number of guest speakers, including Founder and President of NuDay Syria, Nadia Alawa.

Muslim Wellness Programming

Wellness is an important programing theme for students. Programs have included a collaboration with the Muslim students at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology entitled “Creating Safe Spaces: Muslim Women, Sexuality, and Health,” a program facilitated by HEART Women and Girls. Another event drew media coverage from Public Radio International’s program *The World*. The story is available here.
Diversity Programming

Muslim students come to Tufts from locations from Senegal to Iran, from Indonesia to California, Wisconsin to Puerto Rico, and to many places in between. Engagement with diversity is a core priority of the Muslim Chaplaincy. This year, diversity programming included several interreligious events and a “Being Muslim is Being Me,” lunch discussion series made possible by a grant from the AS&E Diversity Fund at Tufts. The Muslim Chaplaincy helped facilitate a number of programs sponsored by different Tufts departments, including a forum entitled, “Active Listening for Facilitating Difficult Social Justice Conversations,” sponsored by Tufts University Dean of Student Affairs Office and University Chaplaincy.

Social Events Hosted by Tufts Muslims

Fostering intra-Muslim community is particularly important for Tufts Muslim students who may desire social spaces that support Islamic values. Such social forums include student lunches, barbecues, retreats, and formal diners. The Muslim Student Association and the Muslim Chaplaincy sponsor regular programming such as game nights, outings in Boston, and community service opportunities.
Muslim Living on Campus

Tufts undergraduate students have a dedicated Muslim culture house that provides a handful of residences and themed programming. The Muslim house is an important place for community life at Tufts, with the living room of the house functioning as a place of prayer and study.

New Medford Campus Musallah

We are delighted to be constructing a new convenient location for daily prayer that is in close proximity to academic and residential spaces. The space will serve as a dedicated niche for Islamic learning and small Muslim life gatherings. Stay tuned for details, and contact Tufts advancement for how you can support this historic project.

New Alumni Interest Group

Members of the Tufts Muslim alumni community are registering as an official interest group that will cater to fostering connections among alumni and providing

“The MSA has played an integral part in shaping our freshman year. Through hosting events and holding informative and relevant lectures, the MSA has fostered a strong sense of community which helps its members grow spiritually. We have been lucky to be recipients of advice and friendship from upperclassmen in the MSA, whose guidance aided our transition to college life. The Muslim community at Tufts encompasses a diverse array of students from different countries and in different fields of study, giving us the opportunity to learn something new in every encounter. We truly appreciate having such an enthusiastic and passionate group of people as our community.”

Iqra Asghar and Rumzah Paracha, Class of 2018
continued opportunities for learning and service. Are you a Tufts alum who would like to be involved? Contact us or visit the Muslim Chaplaincy website to be connected with the alumni leading the initiative.

**New Web Presence**

The Muslim Chaplaincy recently launched a new comprehensive website. The website, accessible [here](#), serves as a portal for community information and has a Facebook feed that updates regularly with information about Tufts Muslim events and area happenings. The website was designed with the support of Muslim Chaplaincy student worker, Imtiyaz Hossain (above).

![Image of Muslim Chaplaincy](#)

**New Muslim Life Fund**

Would you like to make a gift to support and sustain these programs? The web portal for giving can be accessed through the advancement tab on the chaplaincy website, or [here](#).

Supporters may also Contact Christopher Pinault, Associate Director of Development at 617-627-3018 or christopher.pinault@tufts.edu.

**Alumni News**

In 2013, a small group of individuals, including Tufts alum Saad Munir ’07 (below) decided they could become their own charity action committee. They organized, through social media a multi-city 5K run/jog/walk during the month of Ramadan. Since its inception, the effort, known as the FASTING 5K, has raised over $80,000 for local and international charities aligned with their
mission to support youth to be the catalysts for change in the future. Fasting 5k has grown from about 60 participants over 3 cities in 2013 to over 200 participants in 6 cities this past Ramadan. Learn more at: www.fasting5k.org

Saad writes: “Giving back is a key tenet of Islam, and taking care of the bodies that have been entrusted to us is also Islamic. Fasting 5k raises awareness and money for children in need and also allows the participants to get outdoor activity during Ramadan in a fun and safe way.”

Reflections from the desk of John Robbins, Ph.D.

When I first arrived on Tufts’ campus late in the summer of 2013, I felt like I was home. I was just starting a Mellon Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the Humanities Center, after finishing a Ph.D. in English Literature from Cornell, and found the scenery and the intellectual camaraderie invigorating. For me, Tufts quickly became a place where I felt “plugged in” to an astonishingly large network of people at the cutting edge of thought and action: those who were joining academic work with real-world activism, who saw no conflict between the life of the mind and work of the hands. Within the Muslim community especially, I found a group dedicated to promoting justice, peace, and mutual understanding, both on campus and beyond. Inspired by these examples, I began to think more seriously about questions I had been asking myself for years, about whether the teaching skills and strategies for critical thinking that I had cultivated as an academic might enable me to serve the larger Muslim population outside the academy.

(Above) John delivers a talk at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center.
After finishing my fellowship at Tufts this year, I’ve found a wonderful fit for these skills at a position within the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a nonprofit Muslim advocacy group. CAIR works to defend the civil liberties of Muslims, challenges Islamophobia within local communities, empowers Muslim leadership, and conducts youth advocacy. I’m currently the Executive Director of the newest state chapter of CAIR, in Massachusetts. This position allows me to wed my passion for social justice and community service, developed through years of volunteer work in New York and Boston, while still drawing on my academic background: in the last few months already I’ve written op-eds to local Boston papers, educated people of other faiths about Islam and Muslim beliefs, and researched Islamophobic practices. I’m thrilled by the opportunity to use the skills I developed at Tufts to continue serving the Boston Muslim community, and grateful to be able to keep working closely with people of all faiths on Tufts’ campus.

John Robbins, Ph.D.
Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow
Center for the Humanities at Tufts

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The Role of the Muslim Chaplain

I receive many questions about what my role as a Muslim university chaplain entails. In addition to the programs and initiatives above, here is a little insight into what I do…

Pastoral Care and Mentorship

I meet regularly with students and Tufts employees who seek me out for one-to-one meetings to provide confidential spiritual care. I am sought out regularly by Tufts students and affiliates seeking spiritual counseling or working on academic or civic projects that relate to Muslims. I also serve as a source for recommendation letters and references for students who are applying to scholarships, programs, jobs, and further degrees. I mentor Tufts students in developing strong leadership skills in the areas of religious and civic
leadership. I promote creativity and social entrepreneurship, coach for confidence in public speaking, and support student employees of the university chaplaincy. I work closely with the Tufts Muslim Students Association and the Muslim House Manager to provide ample opportunities for Islamic learning, outreach, and community building. I also support the logistical implementation of student-run events; it is the students, however, who receive the vast majority of the credit for the level of excellence that they bring to their outreach!

Representing the Tufts Chaplaincy

I am honored to be part of a vibrant multifaith team of religious life professionals. Throughout the year we work collaboratively to sponsor many programs and events such as an interfaith pre-orientation program and the annual Tufts MLK community service day. I am deeply enriched by the wisdom and grace of my colleagues and the passion, and talent of students.

As chaplains, we also give invocations and blessings on a variety of university forums throughout the year, and we are on hand for helping the university community through moments of turmoil or other types of traumas.

(Above) Chaplain Celene Ibrahim is in conversation with Associate Provost Dr. Dawn Geronimo Terkla at the Annual Russell Lecture on Spiritual Life honoring the Rev. Janet Cooper-Nelson.

“My involvement in the MSA and the Chaplaincy at Tufts has really allowed me to have a religious and social community during a very important part of my life. I have made friends that I will have for life and I have learned more about Islam, in a super welcoming and relaxed environment, through my peers than I would have ever imagined coming into college. But beyond community, being involved in the leadership for a majority of my years at Tufts has allowed me to experience and learn first-hand what it takes to create such a vibrant community. Having now graduated, I am immensely grateful for these opportunities and moments.”

-Abdurrahman Abdurrob, Class of 2015, former MSA President and University Chaplaincy student employee
Representing Tufts University

As a chaplain, I regularly attend workshops, seminars, conferences, and give public lectures throughout greater Boston, nationally, and internationally to bring visibility to Tufts University. I speak regularly at area houses of worship, public libraries, and universities as well as media venues.

We are very proud to have rich intellectual and multifaith life at Tufts. A highlight from this past year was serving on a panel entitled, “Theological Education for Changing Chaplaincies,” co-sponsored by Tufts University Chaplaincy.

(Left) Members of the community at a vigil co-sponsored by Muslim Chaplaincy and the Muslim Students’ Association for three Muslim students fatally wounded in a shooting near the campus of the University of North Carolina.

(Left) Chaplain Celene and former Tufts Chaplain Shareda Hossein speaking on a panel sponsored by CIRCLE, the Center for Interreligious and Communal Leadership Education.

(Left) A diverse panel presentation at Harvard’s Memorial Church.

(Right) A diverse panel presentation at Harvard’s Memorial Church.
SUPPORT TUFTS MUSLIM LIFE

Celene Ibrahim, M.Div., Tufts Muslim Chaplain
Rom 201, Interfaith Center, 58 Winthrop Street, Medford, MA 02155

The University Chaplaincy website is a rich source of information about spiritual life at Tufts.

University Chaplaincy publishes a weekly e-newsletter, which is a great way to keep current on activities related to spirituality, cultures, and service.

Please make your gift to the Muslim Life Fund

https://tuftsgiving.org/giving-form.html?id=1&appeal_code=U0105/

In the first field that says “school” select “other,” and in the second field type: Muslim Life Fund #C112407