

**Islamophobia Working Group  
End of Year Report, 2016-2017**

The Islamophobia Working Group (IWG) was assembled in January 2016 to address the national crisis of Islamophobia and its impact on our campus community. The purpose of this group of faculty, staff, and students is to study the climate and its impact on Arab, Muslim, and MENA-identified students and the campus community at large and to strategize on how to create a safe and more inclusive campus environment for those who are impacted by anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments. We have become actively involved in the University's strategic plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and gained visibility across the university.

We are a group of approximately 100 faculty, staff, and students from across the campus; on average 25-30 members attend each meeting. In addition to undergraduate and graduate students from various schools and faculty from American Culture, History, Islamic Studies, Near Eastern Studies, Anthropology, and Communication Studies, our staff members include representatives from the Department of Public Safety and Security, the LSA Associate Dean's Office, the Dean of Student's Office, Counseling and Psychological Services, Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, Office of the Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion, & Academic Affairs, Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs, English Language Institute, and the Office of the President.

During Winter 2016, we accomplished two major goals: (1) We drafted and submitted a report to the LSA Associate Dean suggesting ways to include Arab, Muslim, and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) students in the University of Michigan's strategic plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This report was included as an addendum to LSA's strategic plan that was submitted to the President. (2) We created a resource list for Arab, Muslim, and MENA-identified students who are impacted by Islamophobia. Both are available to view at <http://lsa.umich.edu/amas/islamophobia-working-group>. Our efforts in the 2015-16 academic year led to a series of meetings and conversations across campus (e.g. Department of Public Safety and Security leadership, Dean of Student's Office leadership) on how to create a more inclusive campus environment during an era of increased hostility towards Muslims.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, we have focused on three areas.

First, we have sought to increase the number of reflection spaces on campus in order to facilitate prayer for those Muslim students who pray 5 times per day. A new reflection room was established in 1506 Haven Hall. It is likely that by the

beginning of fall term 2017 there will be a reflection room in North Quad. Members of the IWG met with administrators from the Provost Office, LSA Facilities, the LSA Dean's Office, the School of Information and a few other units to look at two potential spaces. The space selected by the IWG members will accommodate 5 individuals at a time, and is on the ground floor near a staircase right off the main entrance of North Quad from Washington Street. IWG members are also working on establishing an additional reflection room on North Campus.

Second, we are advocating for a Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) category on undergraduate applications so that we can know how many MENA students there are on campus and better serve their needs. The U.S. Census is currently considering the possibility of adding a MENA category in 2020. People of MENA origin are expected to identify as white on the census despite many not having an experience of whiteness in the U.S. The same is the case at UM. Some of our student members have worked to get Central Student Government to pass a resolution in support of adding this box to applications and have had meetings with various administrators on this issue. As of April 2017, we are in preliminary conversations with the Office of Enrollment Management to determine the information needed and best routes for advocating for such data to be collected. At this point, OEM has asked us to provide the "rationalization, critical population and proposed use of data" which we are working on addressing.

Third, we have been advocating changing the Arabic language textbook used at UM, al-Kitaab (The Book). This textbook is internationally recognized as the standard in Arabic language teaching. However, students at the University of Michigan, Stanford University, Tufts University and other campuses have noted that the textbook prepares students to work for the U.S. State Department and is thus taught differently from other languages. Students have reported that they learn terms like terrorism, army, and United Nations long before they learn colors. The textbook had been criticized for politicizing Arab culture and portraying it as exotic and violent. As a result a few undergraduate students have been working on raising awareness about the issues with the textbook with the goal of changing it. They have been active in researching complaints about the textbook across the country, getting a resolution passed with LSA Student Government in support of changing the textbook, and influencing the creation of a taskforce within the Department of Near Eastern Studies to investigate the problems with the textbook and potential alternatives.

In addition, members of the Islamophobia Working Group participated in organizing events. These are just a few examples:

- The Dean of Students Office, Rackham Graduate School, and the College of LSA collaborated on organizing a series of self-defense classes in the winter term. This was in response to Muslim women students desire to learn self-defense after the election of Donald Trump. The first set of classes filled very quickly, so a second series was offered later in the term.

- Rana Elmir of the ACLU on Trump's Executive Order Banning Travel from 7 Muslim-Majority countries and its impact on UM students, Collaboration with the Muslim Graduate Students' Association and Arab and Muslim American Studies, February 2, 2017.
- Stephen Sheehi, author of *Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign Against Muslims*, "Islamophobia: Then and Now," Collaboration with the Conflict and Peace Initiative, Islamic Studies Program, Arab and Muslim American Studies, and Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies, February 11, 2017.
- Muslim Diag Day took place on March 31, 2017. This was an event aimed to increase contact between students who haven't met Muslims or don't know much about Islam and the Muslim students on campus. It was an informal event on the diag that offered coffee and baked goods for free, but in exchange for meeting a fellow Muslim wolverine and conversing with them. The aim of this event was to for non-Muslim students to ask Muslim student any questions they might have and to dispel stereotypes about Islam through meeting and talking to a Muslim student. Zingerman's and Washtenaw Dairy donated donuts and cakes to this event. It was a huge success and many thought it was a great way to bring people together.

In the 2017-18 academic year, we will continue meeting once per month to strategize on how to create the most inclusive campus environment possible during a national climate that is unabashedly Islamophobic.