BOSTON ISLAMIC SEMINARY

Preparing the next generation of American Muslim Religious Leaders

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**“And say:
'My Lord, increase
me in knowledge.'”**

Surah Taha, 20:114

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Letter from *the President*

Assalamu Alaikum dear BIS Community,

All praise and thanks be to Allah the Almighty, the Most Merciful, the Most Generous Giver of blessings.

Long before the Boston Islamic Seminary's establishment, we consistently recognized the urgent need and hefty responsibility of building an Islamic academic institution in America to educate and train our community members to become influential religious leaders. A commitment this grand meant that such leaders are expected to deeply comprehend Islam, embody its teachings in their daily lives, and possess the ability to share its message using contemporary means effectively.

Joining this mission required spiritual fortitude, unwavering determination, and a willingness to make comprehensive sacrifices while being cognizant of the inevitable challenges that arise.

The road map to this endeavor was inspired and generated through our collective understanding of the last verse in Surah Al-Ankabut. The Almighty says: *"And those who strive for us, we will surely guide them to Our ways. Indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."(29:69)*

In light of this verse, we made a firm commitment to base all of our administrative operations and academic affairs on three fundamental principles:

1. Sincerity for the sake of Allah
2. Striving to maximize our efforts
3. Pursuing excellence in all of our work

As a result of that, the Almighty honored us by fulfilling His promise to us in many situations and conditions, the most impactful of which are:

- The actualization and fulfillment of the vision that once existed only as a dream over a decade ago is now upon us. Today, we proudly speak of an esteemed Islamic academic institution located in Boston that the state has given authority to grant a master's degree in religious leadership.
- Today, we are preparing to welcome the third cohort of MIRL students while simultaneously preparing to graduate the first batch next year InshaAllah.

- Today, we are proud to speak of an Islamic academic institution with a team of 6 highly dedicated full-time staff and 25 esteemed full-time and adjunct faculty members.
- Today, we partner with Muslim and non-Muslim educational institutions to ensure mutual advancement.

We see all these achievements within the divine promise indicated in the aforementioned verse in Surah Al-Ankabut. We acknowledge that the promised ways of Allah's support are limitless and are provided for those who achieve sincerity, striving, and excellence. Therefore, I urge all BIS members, students, faculty, staff and supporters to work and live by these three conditions.

I am confident that this bountiful tree, nurtured with sincerity, effort, and benevolence, will never wither away but instead continue to yield its fruits with the permission of the Almighty. We envision an Islamic institution that competes in delivering the Islamic model of excellence in science, professionalism, and service to society and humanity, per the path of the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition.

I ask Allah to always use us in what pleases Him and to be an asset for us in this world and the Hereafter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Basyouny Nehela
President & Dean of Academic Affairs
Boston Islamic Seminary

Letter from *the Dean of Administration*

Assalamu Alaikum dear BIS Supporters & Stakeholders,

As Allah describes the parable of a goodly tree in Surat Ibrahim, there is a trait that the Qur'an mentions even before the towering branches reaching into the sky and the fruits yielding at every season: first, the Qur'an mentions its firm roots and solid foundation. As I reflect on our journey thus far at BIS, I am grateful for the branches that increasingly reach across New England and the entire nation, and the many fruits of our positive impact thus far. Yet, what truly motivates me most on this noble journey is the effort that many people fail to see: the hard work of setting firm roots.

It may surprise you to hear me speaking of roots even as BIS crosses the midpoint of its first decade of existence. The timeline for institutions of higher education is much longer than most organizations. The oldest in America have existed for hundreds of years, and the oldest continually operating institutions in the world - which are Islamic in origin, such as al-Qarawiyyin in Fez and al-Azhar in Cairo - have operated continuously for more than 1,000 years. Our ambitions at BIS are no less, so the roots we are establishing must be equally strong and extensive.

Institution building has guided much of our investments over the past year. You'll notice several new faces in this report, as BIS strengthens our investment in human capital and administrative infrastructure to carry forward the additional stellar, world-class faculty that BIS has engaged. We reviewed our entire technology stack, aligning and consolidating our tools in project management, strategic planning, HR, IT, finance, accounting, and learning management systems - all while leveraging nonprofit discounts and partnerships for maximum value. We are also stewarding the student experience to promote the best possible journey for our BIS students as they bring positive impact to the helm of community institutions.

At BIS, we recognize your generous gifts are a sacred trust from Allah first and foremost, and then from you - an *amanah* - so we steward every penny with even more care and caution than we do for our personal finances. We have made a conscious effort to diversify BIS revenue streams, initiating and expanding efforts in grants, partners, and tuition. We are thus far meeting our ambitious targets and expect this posture to further mature over the next 1-3 years. As with all institutions of higher learning, we continue to rely on your generous gifts, *zakah*, and *sadaqah* to see us through the challenges of the initial phases of growth.

As we look forward, your generous gifts this year can be expected to align to:

- Recruiting an outstanding 3rd cohort for our Master's in Islamic Religious Leadership (MIRL) program
- A nationwide search for an exceptional candidate for our next leadership vacancy, the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs
- Celebrating and placing our first MIRL graduates into impactful institutional leadership positions
- Delivering additional training, expertise, and education through partner organizations and virtual offerings to Muslim leaders outside the MIRL program

We have come far, and we have much remaining on the journey. I am deeply humbled and grateful to share this important responsibility alongside you, our dedicated supporters.

Yours,

Mohamed AbuTaleb

Mohamed AbuTaleb, Ph.D.
Dean of Administration & Faculty
Boston Islamic Seminary

About BIS

The Boston Islamic Seminary (BIS) is an academic institute of higher education that is committed to training religious leaders to serve American Muslim communities and enhance the understanding of Islam for people immersed in the contemporary context. We envision a society with role models of practicing Muslims across all fields who contribute to the wellbeing of America and the world.

Mission

To prepare exemplary and professional American Muslim religious leaders for compassionate service to society.

Values

Continuity and Authenticity

The Boston Islamic Seminary is committed to the authentic, balanced spiritual and intellectual heritage of Islam, deeply rooted in the compassionate teachings and wisdom of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Relevance and Practicality

We are committed to work together to develop practical Islamic solutions at the individual, family and community levels that also enrich our broader environment.

Responsiveness and Rightfulness

We will train competent Muslim religious leaders who have the knowledge and skills to help communities navigate new issues and unforeseen circumstances with wisdom, integrity and dignified human interaction.

Educational Philosophy

The educational philosophy of the Boston Islamic Seminary rests on the integrated development of these three primary facets:

- Knowledge of Islamic texts and sciences: Ensure that students have a strong grasp of normative Islamic teachings.
- Knowledge of contemporary context: Provide students with a deep understanding of the contemporary context within which they will serve.
- Practical application: Equip students with pastoral and leadership skills they need as a fundamental part of their service within their respective communities.

BIS by the Numbers: 2021-2022

23
MIRL Students

15+
Courses Offered

9:1
Student to Faculty Ratio

1500
hours of instruction

60+
Fellows

65%
of students receive scholarships

200+
total number of students taught

25
Faculty Members

6
Full-Time Staff

BIS Academic Offerings

Master of Islamic Religious Leadership (MIRL)

The Master of Islamic Religious Leadership (MIRL) is the flagship BIS program that aims to prepare professional American Muslim religious leaders for committed service to society. BIS's uniquely-designed interdisciplinary curriculum equips students with a deep understanding of Islam, the contemporary context of the modern world, and the skills necessary to serve confidently and successfully in a variety of religious leadership roles in the US.

In Dec. 2020, BIS received degree-granting authority for the Master of Islamic Religious Leadership (MIRL) degree from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

> *Teaching at BIS has been an invigorating experience. Many of our students are already in leadership roles in the community, and I have seen an eagerness to acquire a rigorous foundation of knowledge of the Islamic tradition as it can be applied in today's world. Seeing the sincerity and dedication of our students gives me hope for the future of Islam in America.*
>
> — *Dr. Suheil Laher, Lead Faculty*

According to a recent global economic survey, there is a worldwide crisis of leadership, especially religious leadership. At BIS, we aspire to rise to meet this challenge by giving Muslim leaders the tools to apply the ancient wisdom from divine revelation to the modern world, by equipping our MIRL students with foundational knowledge of the Islamic tradition, coupled with knowledge of the contemporary contexts.

Once when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was talking to his companions, a Bedouin came and asked about the Hour (when the world will end). The Prophet did not reply immediately, but when he finished what he was doing, he told the Bedouin, "When trust is lost, when unqualified people become leaders, then await the Hour."

We see that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned us that a crisis of leadership is a sign of the decline of the world, but he also demonstrated, in this same hadith, that we need to continue doing our part and not get distracted. We must do our best in whatever circumstances God places us, not become despondent, and continue our Prophet's mission of being a source of mercy to all things. That is what we, at BIS, hope we are doing, and success is with Allah.

MIRL Students: 1st & 2nd Cohorts

Sidiratu Bangura

Ashraf Nubani

Mounira Madison

Rashad AbdulAzeem

Mina Zeini

Tahira Wellman-Hosein

Michael Da'in Johnson

Nada El-Alami

Vural Öztürk

Samer Abdel-Aziz

Fatima Mezdad

Othman Ladan

Rubina Siddiqi

Musa Bukhari

Anas Beshir

Ehsan Abu-Dayeh

Rana Elbeih

Dalia Mabrouk

Najia Amara

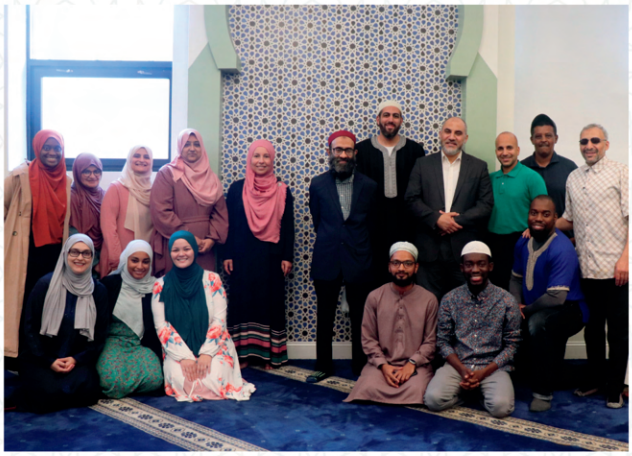
Ibrahim Mossallam

Sundus Mohamed

Hassan Mohamed

Hassan Masood

MIRL Student Highlights



"The classes I take clarify contextual issues and how to address them on campus, and it allows me to have direct contact with scholars and the smart students of BIS, who are always willing to answer questions about resources, discuss solutions to problems, and overall be a support system for my role as a chaplain."

- Nada Miqdadi El-Alami, Cohort 1

"[MIRL has] enabled me to be stronger in my own faith and guidance and a better parent and spiritual counselor to my family and community. I don't shy away from difficult questions or conversations, I welcome opportunities to better someone else's understanding of Islam."

-Tahira Wellman-Hosein, Cohort 1

"[MIRL] has increased my overall Islamic and practical knowledge while providing practical ways to implement Islamic leadership to my surroundings."

- Ashraf Nubani, Cohort 1

"MIRL is allowing me to practically learn how to follow the path of Allah when trying to affect positive change through a structured and systematic approach."

- Rashad AbdulAzeem, Cohort 2

"BIS has sacralized my leadership work through the sacred knowledge that it continues to impart on me. I am infinitely grateful for the privilege of calling myself a BIS leadership student."

- Fatima Mezdad, Cohort 1

BIS Academic Offerings

Graduate Certificate Courses

The graduate-level certificate courses provide a firm foundation in Islamic Studies, introducing students to the framework scholars have used for over 1400 years to compile, authenticate, and apply the sacred texts of Islam to ever-evolving situations.

100+
STUDENTS

400+
HOURS OF FACULTY-STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

15+
COURSES

Graduate Certificates are awarded to students who successfully complete five courses within a given program. These certificates provide students advanced instruction and training across a range of topics to anchor Islamic religious leaders in America. Some offer core foundational knowledge that any chaplain or educator must possess, while others offer a more specialized focus for those already established in a given field.

Current Offerings

- Islamic Bioethics
- Muslim Educators
- Islamic Foundations
- Islamic Intellectual History

Coming Soon

- Public Speaking
- Youth Community Leader
- Board of Directors
- Islamic Chaplaincy
- Family Counseling

BIS Academic Offerings

Iqra Fellowship

The Iqra Fellowship is a year-long program that empowers college students and young professionals with the traditional, philosophical, and spiritual foundations needed to navigate modernity and succeed as Muslims in America. It fosters the growth of capable, confident, and compassionate Muslim leaders by providing them with a clear and convincing presentation of our rich spiritual, intellectual, and philosophical traditions, and the resources to address the existential questions of today by learning to critically appraise information and approach the world through an Islamic lens.

> *Iqra did not only hand me a sheet of do's and don'ts, but gave me answers to paramount questions, such as what is knowledge? How do we as humans, and specifically Muslims, seek knowledge? How do we know what is true from what is false? What does it mean to learn critically? What is the nafs, heart, and soul, and how do they guide us in this journey of knowledge?*
>
> — *Fatimah Alshaikh, Iqra Fellow 2022*

The Iqra Fellowship has been two things for me: it was the bridge, and the log of the tree. It was the bridge in the sense that it connected the Islamic learning to my lived reality as Muslim in America. But bigger than that, it set up the log of my tree of knowledge: it did not only hand me a sheet of do's and don'ts, but gave me answers to paramount questions such as what *is* knowledge? How do we as humans, and specifically Muslims, seek knowledge? How do we know what is true from what is false? What does it mean to learn critically? What are the extents and limitations of our 'aqil? What is the nafs, heart, and soul, and how do they guide us in this journey of knowledge?

Iqra helped establish in me the principles of seeking 'ilm and profound knowledge, which is the most critical to guide my journey as a student of Islam. These principles now help root my pursuit of Islamic knowledge in an especially spiritually-challenging American society. And for that, I am grateful to the Boston Islamic Seminary, alhamdulillah.

Academic & Institutional Partnerships

BTIC Boston Islamic Seminary is the first Muslim institution to join the Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium (BTIC), the world's largest consortium of theological institutions. Being an Associate Member has been an incredible opportunity to establish valuable academic relations with other prestigious religious seminaries and institutions, and we were pleased to represent BIS at their annual retreat in October. We believe that Muslims must be vibrant members of America's pluralistic society, and we intend to continue these collaborations on matters of common concern towards a better world for all.

BOSTON ISLAMIC SEMINARY

BOSTON UNIVERSITY School of Theology

BOSTON THEOLOGICAL INTERRELIGIOUS CONSORTIUM

BOSTON COLLEGE School of Theology and Ministry

BOSTON COLLEGE THEOLOGY

SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY

HEBREW COLLEGE

Hartford International UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE

GORDON CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

HARVARD UNIVERSITY MUSLIM ALUMNI

جامعة حمد بن خليفة
HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY

HARVARD ISLAMIC FINANCE CONFERENCE

BIS was honored to be an academic partner of the 25th Annual Harvard University Islamic Finance Conference in October 2022, which brought together academics, professionals, and community leaders of waqf and philanthropic foundations in the US and from across the world to examine the use of modern tools and techniques to address societal needs and overcome the challenges in the management of philanthropic institutions.

MAS-ICNA

Alhamdulillah, it was a blessing to represent the Boston Islamic Seminary at the annual MAS-ICNA Convention in Chicago Dec. 25-28 with several members of our team, where we met with friends (new and old), students, and faculty. BIS offered a dedicated full-day Religious Leadership track to the convention attendees for the very first time! MASCON22 attendees walked away recognizing that every Muslim must be a religious leader, as we must begin with leading ourselves.

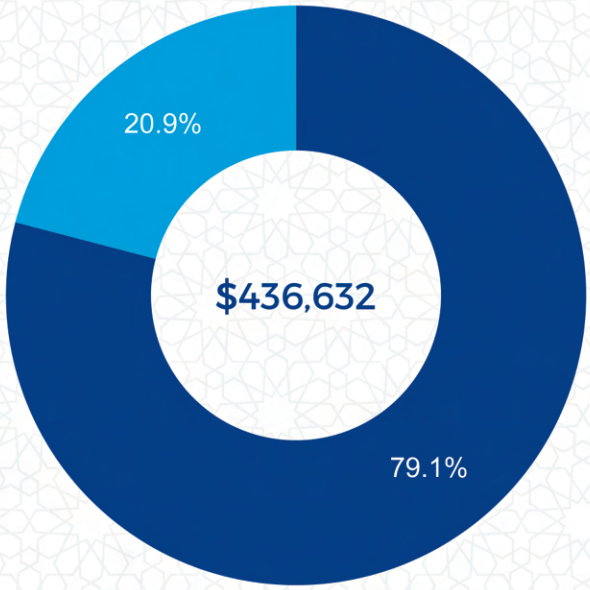
Community Engagement

After being confined to our homes and separated from our dear community and friends for a couple of years as a result of the pandemic, we were grateful for the great blessing of being able to reconvene in-person meetings this past year; gatherings that were marked by fullness and incredible energy, alhamdulillah. Whether you joined us in person, made a gift to BIS online, or included us in your prayers - thank you for helping to make this past year a success.

Financial Summary

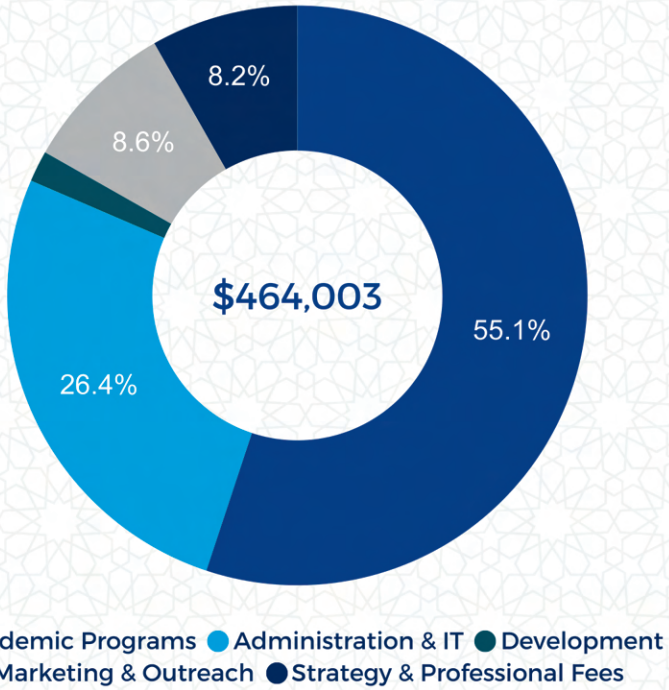
Revenue

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



Expenditure

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



The Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Summary for the Boston Islamic Seminary illustrates a year of mission-aligned investments promoting growth and strengthening infrastructure, while maintaining overall balance sheet strength in a volatile market environment.

The resulting total net assets, the equivalent of the Seminary's net worth, saw a slight decrease of 5.3% during the fiscal year. The slight operating decrease was primarily attributed to a period where the Seminary's Certificate of Solicitation lapsed, and the Seminary was not able to actively solicit funds - this has since been remedied and BIS has worked diligently to acquire an active certificate.

BIS successfully increased its revenue percentage from tuition after admitting its first Master of Islamic Religious Leadership (MIRL) graduate cohort and expects this percentage to grow, as it has its first full cadre of students in FY24 and anticipates its first graduates on the same timeframe.

The Seminary began a concerted investment in human capital towards the end of FY22 that is expected to continue into FY23. Among the objectives of this investment is to enable revenue diversification, increasing the share of revenue from grants, partnership programs, certificate programs, and gifts from outside of New England.

Thank you for supporting the Boston Islamic Seminary. *BIS has the unique privilege of supporting students who are already committed to service and leadership within their communities. Thus, your contributions are not only supporting students in their personal and professional development, but immediately empowering them to have greater impact in the communities they serve. Your charitable gifts to support even one BIS student enriches an entire community, which is truly a sadaqah jariyah, a continuous charity. Jazakum Allahu khairan.*

Our Faculty

The training at BIS comes at the hands of a group of instructors and faculty members who are diverse in culture and outlook. Our faculty provide the education and mentorship that builds up our next generation of Muslim leadership. Individually, each instructor brings depth to their area of expertise or interest. Collectively, the scholarship at BIS brings a holistic curriculum that is much needed for our current and future generations of American Muslim religious leaders. *May their example inspire us all to strive for greatness, to pursue knowledge with passion and curiosity, and to make a positive difference in the world around us.*

Dr. Asif Hirani

Dr. Fella Lahmar

Dr. Hassan Lachheb

Dr. Sharif El-Tobghi

Dr. Celene Ibrahim

Dr. Ayman Ibrahim

Dr. Ermin Sinanovic

Dr. Harun Spevack

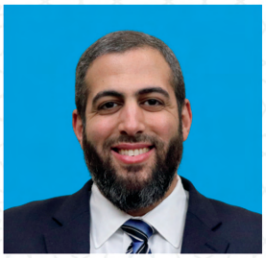
Dr. Zainab Alwani

Dr. John Robbins

Dr. Noor Hashem

Dr. Suheil Laher

Dr. Basyouny Nehela


Dr. Mohamed AbuTaleb

Dr. Tahir Wyatt

Ust. Umar Shareef

Dr. Mohamed Lazzouni

Dr. Ovamir Anjum

Ust. Zaynab Ansari

Sh. Taha Abdul-Basser

Sh. Muntasir Zaman

Dr. Marwa Assar

Sh. Furhan Zubairi

Dr. Umar Moghul

Dr. Adnan Rehman

Our Staff

Accomplishing Boston Islamic Seminary's mission to train American Muslim religious leaders would not be possible without the sisters and brothers who have committed themselves to excellence and spent countless hours working for this noble cause. The success of a project like BIS often comes as a result of the efforts of those who are not nearly thanked enough. *May Allah increase them and their families for all that they do and accept their efforts.*

Dr. Basyouny Nehela
President & Dean of Academic Affairs
July 2018

Dr. Mohamed AbuTaleb
Dean of Administration & Faculty
April 2022

Dr. Suheil Laher
Lead Faculty & Assistant Professor
February 2022

Hana Khalil
Development Director
June 2022

Hassan Masood
Marketing & Communications Manager
May 2022

Romiesa Ahmed
Academic & Student Affairs Coordinator
May 2021

Glenn Silver
Senior Grant & Development Specialist
December 2022

OUR NATIONAL REACH

BOSTON ISLAMIC SEMINARY

Preparing the next generation of American Muslim Religious Leaders

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