



How Colleges Can Support Students During Ramadan

Ramadan is celebrated by millions of Muslims every year. Understanding the holy month's importance helps support Muslim college students.

- Ramadan Mubarak — meaning "blessed Ramadan" — is a common Ramadan greeting that you can say to Muslims who celebrate.
- Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam and is celebrated during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.
- Suhoor and iftar are the meals that start and end each day of fasting during Ramadan.
- Create safe spaces for students to practice Ramadan on campus, like modified cafeteria hours.

How Colleges Can Support Students During Ramadan Ramadan is considered the holiest month in Islam. It is celebrated at the start of the new moon, during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. In 2024 – March 10th to April 9th

Over [3.5 million Muslims](#), followers of Islam, live in the United States — about 1% of the population. Students on college and university campuses nationwide celebrate Ramadan. Colleges can [support Muslim students](#) by understanding the importance of this month and how it is traditionally celebrated. Making space for on-campus celebrations, providing time for students to honor Ramadan without academic penalties, and protecting students from anti-Muslim discrimination can support students who celebrate this holy month.

What Is Ramadan? Ramadan is a holy month of communal prayer, devotion to the Quran, and internal reflection. "Ramadan Mubarak" is a greeting that wishes a blessed Ramadan to those who celebrate.

The Islamic lunar calendar is shorter than the Gregorian calendar commonly used across the U.S., which is a solar calendar. This means that Ramadan begins on a different day each year.

From dawn until dusk, Muslims practice self-restraint to uphold one of the basic tenets of Islam — fasting. This daily practice includes abstaining from food and beverage and all forms of immoral or unkind behavior. Refraining from impure thoughts and bad deeds holds as much importance as fasting during Ramadan.

Spending time with family and friends, both at home and at mosques, is a common custom during Ramadan. Muslims often break the evening fast with a shared meal and recitations from the Quran.

Eid al-Fitr, a three-day celebration, marks the end of Ramadan and the month-long fast. Muslims often gather together to eat and pray. Many cook special recipes, exchange gifts, or dress up to mark the celebration.

8 Essential Elements to Know About Ramadan

- Sawm, or fasting during Ramadan, is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims refrain from eating and drinking, smoking, sexual activity, negative actions, and unkind thinking during this month as a way to cleanse the soul and build compassion.
- Reading the Quran, saying prayers, and attending mosques are other central practices during this holy month.
- Suhoor is the meal eaten before dawn to start the day during Ramadan. This helps provide sustenance for a day of fasting.

- Iftar is the meal that breaks the fast after sunset during Ramadan. Eating dates is a traditional way to break the fast. Many Muslims provide iftar to others as an act of kindness, inviting friends and family to join in breaking the fast.
- Daily prayers continue during Ramadan, but some Muslims pray more frequently or for longer periods. The qiyam prayer is a voluntary prayer offered at night, typically just before dawn.
- Zakat al-Fitr is a payment Muslims make during Ramadan to help those less fortunate. The head of a household may pay on behalf of their family, or individuals can pay based on their ability.
- During Ramadan, Muslims practice sadaqah — offering good deeds and charitable donations to others.

7 Ways Colleges Can Support Students During Ramadan

- Allow students to take time for prayer, worship, and gathering during Ramadan without academic consequences or penalties. Students may need to miss class or other commitments to honor and celebrate throughout the holy month.
- Ensure that faculty and staff learn about Ramadan. It is not solely up to [religious colleges](#) to teach and learn about religious practices. Understanding the principles of Ramadan can help colleges create safe spaces for students. Muslim students can better advocate for their needs when faculty understand Ramadan.
- Ask Muslim students what efforts feel most supportive. Students on each college campus may have unique needs that will support them during Ramadan. Allow them to take part in crafting support plans.
- Acknowledge Ramadan on campus. Create learning opportunities for other students, post informational signs, and appropriately decorate spaces to honor the holy month.
- Open campus cafeterias before dawn so that students honoring Ramadan can eat their early morning suhoor using their regular meal plans.
- Provide late-night food options for students breaking their fast after dusk. Ensure that food options adhere to [Islamic dietary restrictions](#).
- Help Muslim students connect with volunteer opportunities during Ramadan. For those who cannot fast due to medical or personal reasons, volunteering can serve as a substitute and supports the principle of selflessness.

Resources to Learn More About Ramadan

[Muslim Aid](#): Muslim Aid raises funds, support, and awareness for the needs of people in need around the world. Their blog series provides details about Ramadan's origins and ways to connect to Muslim communities.

[Tell Them, I Am](#): This podcast hosts a new episode every day during Ramadan. Discussing the lives of Muslims around the globe, host Misha Euceph shares universally understood stories of each special guest.

[Salam, Girl!](#): Hosted by Monica Traverzo and Nicole Queen, this podcast empowers American Muslim women through inspirational stories, advice, and personal experiences. In addition to conversations about Ramadan, Salam, Girl! shares insights on Muslim traditions throughout the year.

[A Guide to Ramadan and Fasting](#): This book provides information on each element of Ramadan. It describes the importance of fasting and aspects of Islam that align throughout the holy month.

[Koran by Heart](#): This documentary film, released in 2011, tells the story of three young boys who recite the Quran from memory and compete in the International Holy Koran Competition in Cairo, Egypt.

Conclusion *Ramadan, the holiest month in Islam, is celebrated for the length of a moon cycle. Students benefit from the support of their colleges during Ramadan and can feel a sense of belonging when their traditions are honored. Understanding Ramadan is a first step toward creating environments that honor this Islamic holy month and those who celebrate it.*