The Muslim Student Organization: Dedicated to building community

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There was much to discuss at the second meeting of the Muslim Student Organization (MSO) on Jan. 28. Around the table sat a group of ten Metropolitan State students. MSO President Guyo Kotile and Vice President Samira Diinsheikh kept the meeting on track and guided the discussion.

The students were excited. The group was coming up with ideas for group activities. Some wanted the organization to stage presentations at schools in the area. Others were discussing the merits of various volunteer opportunities. Someone suggested that they should play laser tag. It was a lot of activity for a group that had been defunct as recently as last fall.

In the spring of 2015 the MSO disbanded, leaving many of Metro State’s Muslim students without a way to connect. According to Kotile, “MSO was there in the past, from Spring 2007 to Spring 2015. But due to budgeting and loss of interest, it kind of died out.”

In October 2015, a small group of students, led by Kotile, began rebuilding the organization. Kotile is happy with the progress so far and with the fact that the group recently acquired its four core members.

These core members, the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer, are looking for ways to expand membership, stimulate dialog and reach out to the Metro State community at large. Khalid Dayib, the group’s treasurer wants the group to give Metro’s Muslim students “a place where their voices could be heard and come together as community so we can spread diversity.”

Dayib is working on branding for the MSO. He is designing a new logo for the club and looking into creating public relations position within the organization.

Kotile is thinking about outreach, too: “We’re looking for positions like web designer, graphic designer, and on-campus recruiter. […] We want to use a platform, like Facebook, Twitter, maybe Instagram. Because people, students, use that, so it would be a good marketing tool [to] get the message out there.”

Adam Abubakar, a student in the College of Individualized studies and father of three, sees the MSO as an opportunity to find his community. Abubakar said that the group allows him to “connect to other Muslims on my campus so I can network and hopefully get some educational resources.”

Naima Haro has attended Metro for two years. She’s happy that the MSO is back and thinks the organization will give gives members an opportunity to reach out and have discussions with non-Muslims. “I actually want to inform the community […] who Muslims students are. We should have a voice in this world and express ourselves. And delete the stereotype that’s on Muslim students,” she said.

Iman Geleto, a PSEO student, agrees. “I want more awareness and I want people to be educated about what Islam is really about, instead of what the media is trying to portray or what politics is bringing into the picture lately,” she said. “I want them to hear it from an actual Muslim,”

Going forward, the group will be participating in and sponsoring outreach events. According to Kotile, the MSO is planning to host a documentary screening in either February or March. The group will also volunteer for projects like feeding the needy or helping at a homeless shelter. They are currently making plans for an event in celebration of Islamic Awareness Week in April.

The organization convenes at 4:30 every other Thursday night. The meetings and events will be open to all Metro students, not just Muslims. “We hope to build a community at Metro State where we can educate students and faculty about who we are and what we stand for. Hopefully this will turn into acceptance and tolerance for all types of people,” said Dayib.