

YSU faculty position endowed by local Muslim community

YSU - Announcement of a major gift to support a full-time faculty position for Islamic studies at YSU was made by Dr. Leslie H. Cochran, YSU president and Dr. Nazir Ahmed, president, "Community for the YSU Chair of Islamic Studies."

The announcement was made at a press conference Oct. 16.

Local Muslim benefactors are supporting the new position with

an initial contribution of \$500,000. The Islamic specialist will hold the title "University professor of Islamic studies." Should the gift increase to the \$1 million level, as it is expected to over the next few years, the title will change to "YSU chair of Islamic studies."

Under the agreement signed by Cochran and Ahmed during the press conference, a search will

be undertaken immediately to identify and recruit a new faculty member who will serve in a tenure-track position in YSU's department of philosophy and religious studies.

"This gift will help the University advance its goal to produce graduates who are global citizens—who understand and value the diverse religious and cultural traditions in America and the

world," noted Cochran. "Islam now has more than 1 billion adherents worldwide, making it the second largest religion in the world. The generosity of the Muslims in our service area will help to assure that Islam is better understood on the campus and the community."

There are two Islamic mosques or houses of worship in the Youngstown area.

The committee spearheading

the continuing fund-raising campaign includes Dr. Ahmed of Warren, Dr. Abdul Ghani of Liberty and Dr. Saad of Greenville, PA. All are practicing physicians.

Speaking for the Islamic community, Ghani noted that many Americans know little about Islam, even though it is the fastest-growing religion in the coun-

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try. "Stereotypical and often sensationalized media coverage provides the most common source of information about Islam. For example, few people know that Islam has common roots with the Jewish and Christian faiths and shares many of the same basic tenets," he said. "We feel that education about Islam is very much

needed, and we hope that our gift will help YSU students and the general community gain a better understanding of Islam."

Dr. James Scanlon, YSU provost, said the leadership and initiative of Dr. Thomas Shipka, chair, philosophy and religious studies, made today's agreement possible. "Through Dr. Shipka's

efforts, our students will gain a better understanding of the diversity of our world," he said.

In addition to regular University duties in teaching, scholarship and service, the new faculty member will be expected to provide extensive discipline-related public service by serving as a resource on Islam in the community to both

Muslims and non-Muslims.

Shipka said one of the main goals of his department is to promote understanding, appreciation and tolerance of diverse philosophical and religious viewpoints and traditions embraced throughout the world. "The new faculty position endowed by this generous gift will strengthen our cur-

riculum in world religions and help us to carry out our mission more effectively, both on and off campus," he asserted. "For these reasons my colleagues and I are profoundly grateful to the benefactors."

The University expects that the University professor of Islamic studies will begin his or her duties in September 1996.