Introduction:
Ramadan is considered the holiest month of the year for Muslims. In Ramadan, Muslims fast from food and drink during the sunlit hours as a means of learning self-control, gratitude, and compassion for those less fortunate. Ramadan is a month of intense spiritual rejuvenation with a heightened focus on devotion, during which Muslims spend extra time reading the Qur’an and performing special prayers. Those unable to fast, such as pregnant or nursing women, the sick, or elderly people and children, are exempt from fasting.

When does Ramadan take place?
Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, which is based on a 12 month lunar year of approximately 354 days. Because the lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar year, each lunar month moves 11 days earlier each year. It takes 33 solar years for the lunar months to complete a full cycle and return to the same season. This year, the month long fast of Ramadan is set to begin on May 6th, 2019. The month traditionally begins and ends based on the sighting of the first crescent of the new moon. Starting on May 5th, Muslims throughout the United States and the rest of the world will begin to search the sky for the new crescent, or in some cases, they will follow a pre-determined date based on astronomical calculation. During this month, Muslims fast from pre-dawn until sunset, as a means to grow in God-consciousness and moral excellence.

The Length and Purpose of Fasting:
Muslims fast from pre-dawn to sunset, a fast of between 11-16 hours depending on the time of year for a period of 29-30 days. The fast of Ramadan entails forgoing food and drink, and if married, abstaining from sex during the fasting hours. For Muslims, Ramadan is a time to train themselves both physically and spiritually by avoiding any negative acts such as gossiping, backbiting, lying or arguing. Muslims welcome Ramadan as an opportunity for self-reflection, and spiritual improvement. Ramadan is also a highly social time as Muslims invite each other to break fast together and meet for prayers at the mosque.

The ultimate goal of fasting is gaining greater God-consciousness, in Arabic, *taqwa*, signifying a state of constant awareness of God. From this awareness a person should gain discipline, self-restraint and a greater incentive to do good and avoid wrong. In commemoration of the revelation of the Qur’an, Muslim’s holy book, which began during the month of Ramadan,
Muslims attempt to read the entire book during Ramadan and gather nightly at mosques to hold special prayers during which the entire Qur’an is recited by the end of the month.

**Who needs to fast?**
Fasting is required of all Muslims who have reached the age of puberty, and who are physically able to do so. Those with medical conditions whose health may be endangered as a result of fasting are not required to do so, nor are breastfeeding mothers or those who are travelling long distances.

**Special Activities**
Many mosques host daily community dinners where Muslims can break their fast together. This is a great service for students, the poor and anyone who desires a break from cooking. Almost all mosques also host a community dinner on the weekends.

Special Ramadan prayers called *taraweeh* are held in most mosques after the night prayer. During *taraweeh*, the prayer leader recites at least one thirtieth of the Qur’an so that by the end of the month the entire Qur’an will have been recited.

Since Ramadan is a time for Muslims to be especially charitable and fasting helps Muslims feel compassion for the hungry and less fortunate, many mosques hold food drives or fundraisers for charity during Ramadan. Many mosques also host open houses for their friends and neighbors of other faiths to join them for their fast-breaking dinner or *iftar* at the end of the fasting day.

The Night of Power known as *Lailat al-Qadr*, is believed to fall on one of the odd nights during the last ten days of Ramadan, but is most widely observed on the 27th night of Ramadan. It is considered the most blessed night in Ramadan because it is believed to be the night in which the Qu’ran was first revealed. Mosques are open all night as Muslims hold vigils in prayer, Qur’anic recitation, and contemplation.

**Eid al-Fitr**
At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate one of their major holidays called Eid al-Fitr or the “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast.” This year, it will be held on June 5th, 2019. Children traditionally receive new clothes, money or gifts from parents, relatives and friends. A special prayer and sermon are held the morning of Eid day, followed by a community celebration usually in a park or large hall. Food, games and presents for children are important parts of the festivities, as friends and family spend the day socializing, eating and reuniting with old acquaintances.

**Accommodating Muslim students:**
During Ramadan, Muslim students may appear to be more tired or inattentive, particularly at the beginning of the month. Faculty can help by granting concessions for fasting students where possible, such as requests for time out, flexible schedules, exam scheduling and activities, especially towards the latter half of the day.
Here are some common challenges students face during Ramadan and attending school:

1. Having exams or major assignments due while fasting.
   - It would be helpful for students to take exams during a time where they’re not feeling super tired and hungry; this can be earlier in the morning or after they break their fast during sunset.

2. Having an exam or class that cuts into your Iftar (breaking of fast).
   - Some students might have late afternoon class or evening class that affects their iftar. Providing an opportunity for these students step out to get food or eat food would be essential.

3. Having multiple exams in a day.
   - Students who are fasting might not have the energy to take multiple exams in one day. Allowing a student to take the exam on other day if needed would be essential.

4. Study Abroad during Ramadan.
   - The holy month of Ramadan is an important month for Muslims around the world and going on study abroad interrupts their religious obligations. Thus working with Muslim students to complete their study abroad requirement outside the month of Ramadan would be helpful.

5. Prayer obligations.
   - Prayer is very important for Muslim students during the month of Ramadan. Faculty should be mindful if students want to step out and go utilize the Mind, Body and Spirit Room.

6. Eid Celebration.
   - Eid Celebration is the holiest holiday for Muslim students it occurs twice a year, after Ramadan and after Hajj Pilgrimage. Please be mindful of students not wanting to come to class or work as they would like to spend their holiday with family.