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By Mehreen Rasheed
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“Only one can survive. Are you ready?” challenged slogans for the first annual Battle of the MSAs on promotional flyers and videos circulating local Muslim Students’ Association chapters, as well as Facebook and YouTube.

Battle of the MSAs, a jeopardy-style knowledge bowl among fourteen metro area MSA chapters, was hosted by the MSA DC Council at George Washington University.

The event included dinner and a speech by Altaf Husain, but it was not until the quizzes began that the ferocity of the competition became almost tangible.

“It was insane, you were seriously on the edge of your seat,” recalled Nour Al-Muhtasib, UMD-College Park competitor. After elimination rounds, fourteen schools were narrowed down to three, until George Mason University answered the final decisive question. American University placed second by four hundred points and Towson University in third, by another 2700 points.

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Greater than bragging rights and a trophy however, the George Mason team won a trip to Umrah. The already emotionally-charged room practically burst when this surprise was announced. In shock, the team embraced; some fell into prostration. Cheering “Allahu Akbar”, the audience too seemed moved to tears.

George Mason University Victorious in Battle of MSAs

Written by Administrator

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“It was amazing,” said Arqam Ahsan, a Virginia Commonwealth University competitor, “It was very moving to see the reaction of the winning team.” Mariam Khan from UMD-College Park agreed, “It brought tears to my eyes. You could tell they really deserved it.”

The money for Umrah was anonymously donated; the benefactor only asks well-wishers to pray for him and his family.

“The last thing I expected was for us to win. It was a really great feeling” said Abdulrahman Aulabi of the GMU team, “when they announced it, I was shocked...my legs couldn’t hold my body.”

“The George Mason Sheeps” as they have been nicknamed after the winning answer, plan to make Umrah next summer.

The idea for Battle of the MSAs was collaborative effort developed by Sufia Alnoor, Secretary of MSA DC Council, and Ubaid Bandukra, DC Council Treasurer and the project’s Amir. They drew inspiration from MIST’s Scholastic Bowl, and worked with its organizers, looking to them for experience.

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Despite its parallels to MIST however, Battle of the MSAs was organized with different goals in mind.

“Holding this event at a collegiate level is important, especially in such a crucial time in our lives when we’re in college...we are establishing our Islamic identities and are being faced with so many challenges,” said DC Council Vice President Saud Inam.

Alnoor agreed, pointing to the importance of communication, “We have over fourteen MSAs in the area but some are near dead. We should be helping one another out...that’s what brothers

and sisters do [for each other].”

Bandukra noted the growing need for a “support network” among MSAs, wherein they help each other by sharing knowledge and resources in addition to brotherhood.

“The main purpose is bringing us together for the sake of Allah, because after we establish the unity, after we know each other, then we have the potential for a lot more,” he said, “the potential...of all these MSAs working together fisabeelillah is greater than the individual parts.”

“I think we accomplished this goal and many others through the grace of Allah,” remarked MSA DC Council President Ramy Zamzam, voicing the overall positivity toward the end result, “bringing Muslims together for good is a great blessing, and these events do just that.”

The Council now looks to the future, hoping that Battle of the MSAs has generated greater interest in area MSA collaboration and other DC Council events such as Project Downtown to be held December 6.