

Muslim college purchases Berkeley campus that was Lutheran seminary

Sale follows PLTS move to downtown office building

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [October 25, 2017](#) issue

A Muslim liberal arts college that offers subjects such as Islamic law alongside courses in math and philosophy has bought a former seminary campus for its undergraduate program.

Zaytuna College, the nation's first accredited Muslim college, paid \$10 million for the ten-acre Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary on a hilltop in Berkeley, California. The college, whose name means "olive tree" in Arabic, integrates Islam with the Western canon.

Zaytuna, which has 52 male and female undergraduates enrolled this fall, will move to the seminary grounds in January. It will continue to own three buildings near the Graduate Theological Union, also in Berkeley. Those buildings will be used to develop a graduate-level seminary down the road, said Amna Mirza, a spokeswoman.

Pacific Lutheran is one of seven seminaries affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The school, which is part of California Lutheran University, moved to an office building in downtown Berkeley this summer.

Karin Grennan, a seminary spokeswoman, said that admissions at the seminary have decreased, and it wanted to provide students opportunities to work with social service agencies and develop urban ministries near downtown Berkeley.

Pacific Lutheran has 49 students enrolled in various degree programs. It had occupied the hilltop campus, with six buildings, for 64 years.

"We are delighted that the property is going to another nonprofit, faith-based educational institution," said Chris Kimball, California Lutheran University president, in a PLTS statement. "We are also pleased that Zaytuna is committed to preserving

the campus and its buildings as neighbors had wanted.”

Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, a Muslim scholar and sheikh, founded the Zaytuna Institute in 1996, and it evolved into the college. He is now its president. Zaytuna is seeking to partner with the Graduate Theological Union, a consortium of research centers and seminaries in Berkeley, located in an area sometimes called Holy Hill.

“We hope for a continued cooperation with all the great schools on Holy Hill, with special affection for our Lutheran brothers and sisters after this sincere and heartfelt demonstration of trust and solidarity,” Yusuf said in a PLTS statement. —Religion News Service

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