

October 6, 2017

Dear Friends,

Thank you for helping to make 2016 the greatest fund raising year we have ever had. Our goal of \$55,000 was shattered by contributions exceeding \$70,000. They have been accompanied by spontaneous emails and telephone calls appreciating the diverse and exciting courses and the thought-provoking free web video programs that the Institute was able to offer through your generous contributions.

The level of support we received in 2016 gave us confidence to move forward with our plan to expand the scope of our offerings and engagement with academic institutions. We are excited to share with you that on May 17, the Wilmette Institute signed an agreement with the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (UTS) to provide a "core" of six online courses on the Bahá'í Faith that their students can take for graduate credit. The courses are open for students at other academic institutions by registering as a special student and paying UTS tuition, then possibly transferring these courses toward their degree programs. UTS agreed to provide partial tuition reimbursement to the Wilmette Institute. Courses other than the "core" will be considered for credit as needed.

The historic significance of this agreement is immense. It will allow us to pursue similar agreements with other institutions. Through your generous contributions, the Wilmette Institute will be able to develop and upgrade additional online courses to allow students with a variety of interests to take courses with a Bahá'í perspective related to their majors. Undergraduate economics majors could take a course examining the Bahá'í approach to economic issues; psychology majors could explore the Bahá'í concept of the nature of human beings; environmental science majors could study the Bahá'í understanding of nature and its implications for sustainability. These examples can be multiplied a hundred fold.

The Wilmette Institute has been consulting with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, of which it is an agency, to focus on the further professionalization of its operation, so that its course quality can be further enhanced, including the 110 online courses it currently offers. With the availability of credit for some courses and the increase in planning, teaching, and assessment, the faculty, who currently work for a minimal honorarium, will be compensated on par with the pay of adjunct college faculty. Additional training to enhance online engagement will also be required. Further, the Institute's staffing needs to grow; a registrar needs to be appointed, marketing needs to expand, course development and review needs to be systematized, use of web video needs to increase, and information technology needs considerable development.

While we will charge comparable rates for credit courses, we would like to maintain our current tuition rate for noncredit offerings. These courses will be of interest to the general Bahá'í population and the community of interest. We would also like to subsidize tuition for students interested in taking Wilmette Institute courses for external credit, especially students who cannot afford our courses' new tuition rates, which might not be covered by financial aid.

To meet our expanded services' costs—probably double our current expenses—the Institute has defined a series of funds that include funds for scholarships, web video development, and faculty development. It plans to raise \$100,000 this year as a foundation for its future.

We look forward to your generous contribution to support these efforts and the many plans that the Institute hopes to implement next year. For your convenience, we have included a Contribution form that you may use to send us a donation. You can also follow the enclosed instructions if you prefer to make your contribution electronically. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need further clarification.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,



Robert Stockman, Director



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**Director**

Robert H. Stockman

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## Contribution Form

*O God, my God! Illumine the brows of Thy true lovers, and support them with angelic hosts of certain triumph. Set firm their feet on Thy straight path, and out of Thine ancient bounty open before them the portals of Thy blessings; for they are expending on Thy pathway what Thou hast bestowed upon them.*

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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**Our goal is to raise \$100,000 in scholarships and other crucial funding**

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**Please provide the following information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please make checks payable to Bahá'í Services Fund: Wilmette Institute, and send to the address below.***

Wilmette Institute  
Bahá'í National Center  
1233 Central Street.  
Evanston, IL 60201-2886

*Your charitable contributions may be tax deductible.*

It is now possible to contribute to the Wilmette Institute online, if you are a Bahá'í residing in the lower forty-eight United States. Here are the simple steps:

- Type in <https://ocs.bahai.us/ocs/>.
- On "Online Contribution Page," type in your User ID and Password. Then click on "Sign In."
- On the next screen, click on "Enter Contribution."
- On the following screen, click on "One-Time Contribution" or "Continuing Contribution." Now you are five steps away from completing your contribution to the Wilmette Institute. For a one-time contribution, follow the steps below (steps for a continuing contribution are very similar):
  - 1. Select Fund and Donor:
    - A. Click on first blue square with white down-pointing arrow.
    - B. Choose "Wilmette Institute – Contribution."
    - C. Enter amount you wish to contribute (include household members if you wish).
  - 2. Confirm Amount: View fund selected and amount.
  - 3. Select Payment Method:
    - A. Select payment date.
    - B. Select method of payment (bank account, credit card).
  - 4. Authorize Contribution.
  - 5. Contribution Complete.

# Wilmette Institute

## Fact Sheet

The Wilmette Institute, an educational agency of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, was founded in January 1995 to contribute to the development of human resources within the Bahá'í community, its friends, and supporters. It delivers flexible, well-organized, formally conducted academic, professional, and service-oriented courses that are designed according to standards of excellence and the Bahá'í standard of the independent investigation of truth.

The Institute began offering summer classes in 1996 and online courses in 1998. The online courses, available for individual or group enrollment, involve a series of units that require the learner to read and post comments and complete a final integrative assignment. Local groups of learners who take courses together may enroll at a discount.

While only two courses were offered online in 1998, the number increased to fifty-five in 2016. More than 110 courses have been developed and offered, some as many as nine times. Over 11,000 students, residing in over 123 countries, have participated in our courses. In a typical year, about a third of our students either request scholarship assistance, benefit from needs-based discounts, or take advantage of discounts necessary to make the courses affordable to non-Bahá'ís or large numbers of Bahá'ís.

In January 2008 a new course-management system using Moodle software went live, greatly improving the quality of our courses. In November 2009 a new registration system using Cvent, a commercial event-registration system, was inaugurated. Its registration and marketing capabilities more than doubled the Wilmette Institute's enrollments overnight. In November 2012 the Institute upgraded its course software and added video conferencing; in 2013 and 2017 it upgraded the Moodle course-management system. In 2015 it inaugurated a series of free Web Talks and in 2017 it inaugurated deepening webinars.

Over the next five years, the Institute aims to establish partnerships with dozens institutions of higher education that will allow many students to take online courses on the Faith for credit. It plans to steadily improve course quality, expand its use of web video to reach young adults and the community of interest, increase its web publication of student projects and faculty research, and train its faculty in order to become the main source of Bahá'í-inspired university-level courses in the world.