

September 20, 2014



Dear Friend:

The Wilmette Institute, an educational institution operating under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, enters its nineteenth year stronger than ever. Our expansion has continued with the number of learners reaching 992 in 2013–14. The number of courses being offered, which stood at 16 in 2009, has more than doubled to 34. In 2009, people from 36 countries were involved in our courses; in 2013–14, that number has increased to 51. As the quality of our courses improves, we have more and more repeat learners, with a few having taken as many as 10 courses.

The demand for scholarships continues unabated. From May 2013 to April 2014 we gave out \$14,904.00. Some of it was in the form of tuition for those who could not afford the full price of our courses. Some of it was in the form of necessary discounts for students, seniors, and pioneers. Some of it was to cover half-price specials and other “deals” that were necessary to fill low-demand courses, such as—unfortunately—courses on the writings of Shoghi Effendi.

The generosity of the Wilmette Institute in awarding scholarships, however, has had the serious consequence of draining all the surplus financial aid it had accumulated during previous years. Last year’s fund-raiser brought in only \$4,700, not quite a third of the assistance we gave out. Our fund is now at zero.

What will we do this fiscal year? Turning away learners who need partial support makes no sense, for the partial tuition they pay helps cover Institute expenses. Wilmette Institute courses, like airplanes, have fairly fixed costs and should, therefore, “fly” as full as possible. But we cannot create money out of thin air. The scholarships that the Institute awards learners become income to cover Institute expenses and prevent it from operating in debt. The National Spiritual Assembly, when it created the Wilmette Institute in 1995, made it clear that it had to cover its expenses or close its doors.

Therefore, we turn to you, our generous supporters and donors, to close the gap between scholarships and the scholarship fund. Our scholarship expenditures have been fairly steady at \$15,000 for the last two years. Hence for 2014–15 we are setting a **goal of \$15,000**. Please contribute sacrificially so that the Wilmette Institute will be able to continue offering the support its eager learners need to develop their capacities to serve the Cause. Please use the attached Contribution Form to ensure the continuing success of the Wilmette Institute.

With warm Bahá'í greetings,

Robert H. Stockman
for the Wilmette Institute

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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

Our goal is to offer \$15,000 in scholarships

These contributions will be used to provide full and partial scholarships, discounts, and other course subsidies to interested individuals, in the United States and other countries, especially developing countries.

Please provide the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

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

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 thirty-four in 2013–14. More than sixty courses have been developed and offered, some as many as nine times. Over 7,700 students, residing in ninety 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 it upgraded the Moodle course-management system twice.

Over the next five years, the Institute aims to improve its services to youth, develop courses on the Faith that are potentially accreditable by universities, expand its use of social media, steadily improve course quality, begin to publish student projects on the web, and train its faculty. The Wilmette Institute seeks to be a major center of study for Bahá'ís, their friends, and supporters as the need to study and apply the principles of the Bahá'í revelation continues to increase.