My senior year of high school was a memorable time. It was a year of changes, of saying goodbye, of learning to let go of youth and begin the voyage to adulthood, a voyage that started the first day after graduation. My classmates would discuss college with such yearning and anticipation, because to them, it spelled F-R-E-E-D-O-M, freedom to finally live life as they wanted, to experience independence, in other words to “party”.

I always viewed college as a place to study, to mature, and to gain the necessary skills and tools to live a full, rewarding life as a responsible adult. How different my views were from those of my peers!

Many Muslim parents are not aware of exactly what occurs in the university. I have heard horror stories of Muslim youth, who have become engulfed by the whole college experience. Parents should be wary and really talk with their children before they send them off on their own.

There have been numerous studies conducted regarding the amount of alcohol that is consumed in the freshman year. According to the Core Institute, an organization that surveys college drinking practices, 300,000 of today’s college students will eventually die of alcohol-related causes such as drunk driving accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, various cancers and heart disease. And 159,000 of today’s first-year college students will drop out of school next year for alcohol or other drug-related reasons. (http://www.factsontap.org/collexp/Collexp.htm)

The only way to protect our Muslim youth from the vices of college life is by giving them a strong foundation in the Deen. For example, praying five times a day serves as a continuous reminder that we are always in the presence of Allah (SWT), and thus it helps us to avoid being led astray by Satan. Likewise, hijab serves the same purpose; similar to police and other officials in uniform, we tend to behave more honorably when dressed such. We are human beings; we are imperfect, and we tend to forget and slip at times (like our parents, Adam and Eve, who forgot and ate from the tree). Hence, we need to be consistently reminded of the fact that we are never alone; Allah is always watching.

Hijab, also, helps to safeguard and protect Muslimahs from the negative aspects of the college environment. There are many benefits to wearing hijab on campus, but before I name them, I would first like to define what hijab is. Many of my sisters mistakenly think that by simply wearing a headscarf, they are observing proper hijab. However, this is not the case. Hijab is an all-encompassing term that denotes the entire aura, demeanor of the Muslimah, from her clothes, to her attitude, and most importantly to her hayah and modesty. When we practice true hijab, we never allow ourselves to be alone in the company of non-mahrem men because we know this would negate our hijab. When we practice true hijab, we not only ensure that all of our hair is covered, but also that the rest of our body is properly attired with LOOSE, modest clothing.

Benefits of wearing hijab on campus:

1. Hijab helps to keep women from being objectified by her male peers and to be taken more seriously, thus easing the way for her to succeed in the academic environment.

2. Hijab makes her stronger because wearing it on campus is not an easy task, and most likely she may be viewed as odd or a social “misfit” who does not belong with the rest of the sorority sisters or typical college coeds. She becomes immune to the stares and the whispers and uses each experience to become wiser.

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opinion, she is a strong, independent woman who doesn’t compromise her values and beliefs in order to fit into the popular mold. She upholds her morality in an environment that has long since forgotten the meaning of the word. She stands apart, and she knows that though she may be a figure of ridicule to some, in the eyes of her Lord, she is BEAUTIFUL. She does not need society’s acceptance, nor stamp of approval, because she only aims to please her Creator.

3. Hijab serves as a protective barrier between her and the ills of campus life. In hijab, she is less likely to be approached by members of the opposite sex and less likely to be invited to parties and other such gatherings where, most likely, alcohol and drugs will be prevalent.

4. Hijab improves her self-image and confidence because she does not need to spend an hour each morning primping and pruning to please others. She dons her modest clothing and presents a clean, fresh image, for she knows that cleanliness is half of deen. By not having to worry about fixing her hair and wearing tons of makeup, she saves valuable time that she uses to study or just rest. She has a healthy self-image of herself because beauty and fashion is not as important to her as most of the other young college women. Thus, she is not part of the 10% of college women who suffer from a clinical or nearly clinical eating disorder. (http://women-sissues.about.com/cs/eatingdisorders/a/edstats.htm) Women, who place a strong emphasis on physical appearance, are usually the ones who will succumb to an eating disorder. Many of my friends were victims of anorexia and bulimia, and with them, it resulted from a constant fixation on their bodies. Hijab helps us to take control over our bodies, by limiting access. When we cover our bodies day in and day out, we devalue the importance that society has placed on image and physical appearance.

5. Hijab helps to protect her from the horrible fate of rape that occurs so commonly on college campuses, because she attempts, as best as possible, to not place herself in risky situations. This is very important because rape is the most common violent crime on American college campuses today; an estimated 25 percent of college women have been victims of rape or attempted rape. (http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/e03021472.pdf) According to researchers, high rape rates among college women exist due to the environment of the campus (the frequent unsupervised parties, the easy access to alcohol, single students living on their own, and the availability of private rooms). Also, research indicates that in over three-quarters of college rapes, the offender, the victim or both had been drinking and that fewer than 5% of victims report the crime to the police. Alhamdulillah, the benefits of hijab are numerous. As Muslims, we know that when our Creator decrees something for us, it is in our best interest. Obviously, the One who created us knows us much better than we. We should be thankful that Allah has given us this beautiful gift of hijab and that we have the right to wear it freely in the US, whereas so many of our sisters do not have this same right. Whether it is a Muslim-majority country like Turkey, or a non-Muslim one like France, young Muslim women all over the world are struggling to have the right to wear hijab. May Allah help them in their noble cause and easy their difficulties, as well as guide all of our sisters to don the hijab.

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Straight Talk

Why would anyone be offended by someone who wants to dress modestly and conservatively? …In what way could the headscarf be considered provocative? It is certainly no more provocative than any other article of clothing that is allowed in public schools.

How about if the situation was turned around and Muslim women were allowed to speak up about how they are offended by women who expose all parts of their bodies in public and in front of their husbands? Who is legislating this behavior as provocative?

Rukaiyah Hill Abdulsalam
Women’s Ideal Liberation, p.80