

Timothy J. Gianotti, Ph.D.

Higher Ed. Executive | Interfaith & Intercultural Consultant | Islamic / Religious Studies Scholar

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Academic executive and public (government, industry, community)-facing scholar with nearly thirty years of progressive leadership across higher education, nonprofit governance, and cross-cultural policy advisory work, paired with a research and publication record in Islamic Studies and interreligious relations. Former President of the American Islamic College (AIC) in Chicago (2020-2026), where responsibilities included public relations, strategic planning, academic accreditation, fundraising, recruitment, board relations, inter-institutional collaboration, degree and non-degree program design, asset management (real estate), and community partnerships. Scholarly expertise in Islamic philosophical, theological, and spiritual thought. Proven capacity to build mission-driven institutions, foster diversity and inclusion, and lead through challenging circumstances and complex organizational changes. Led AIC through a pandemic and prolonged fiscal crisis to and through Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation and a campus relocation. Philanthropic support and student enrolments increased at AIC over 1000% during my tenure as president.

CORE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

▪ Institutional Renewal & Strategic Planning	▪ Fundraising & Development
▪ Academic Accreditation & Compliance	▪ Nonprofit Governance & Board Relations
▪ Curriculum & Program Design, Micro-credentials	▪ Faculty Affairs, Faculty Governance
▪ Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Leadership	▪ Intercultural & Interreligious Engagement
▪ Academic Assessment, Outcomes, Student Success, Student Recruitment & Retention	▪ Asset Management (real estate), Budget Development & Management
▪ Executive-Level Stakeholder Communication	▪ Inter-Institutional Agreements (domestic and international) & Community Partnerships

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

President Aug 2020 – June 2026
American Islamic College — Chicago, IL

- President/CEO of an accredited, faith-based, minority-serving institution of higher education serving culturally and religiously diverse students and stakeholders
- Led comprehensive strategic planning processes, including multi-year academic and operational road-maps aligned to institutional mission and envisioned for growth
- Oversaw accreditation activities with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), including site visits, self-studies, ongoing compliance, and quality improvement initiatives (academic & administrative)
- Developed and Directed fundraising strategies and donor cultivation, thus expanding the institution's philanthropic base and grant portfolio
- Collaborated with the Board of Trustees on governance, strategic planning, crisis management, fiduciary oversight, policy development, and asset management (a commercial real estate sale)
- Recruited, supervised, and mentored both faculty and staff; established shared governance structures
- Designed and launched new undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as professional development and continuing education offerings
- Oversaw staff recruitment and performance reviews as well as student recruitment and retention initiatives within ethnically and socio-economically diverse student and staff populations
- Served simultaneously as Acting Provost (Aug 2020 – July 2024), providing direct academic leadership and oversight of all instructional programs and faculty while serving as president throughout the COVID pandemic and then through accreditation and a campus relocation

Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost)*Jan 2020 – Jul 2024**American Islamic College — Chicago, IL*

- Provided executive-level academic leadership during a period of significant institutional transition
- Oversaw accreditation, faculty affairs, curriculum review, and academic policy development

Independent Consultant - selected projects*August 1997 - Present*

- Established *Caravansera Consulting* (caravanseraconsulting.com) in August 2026 to offer intercultural and interreligious expertise to public and private sector clients.
- Advised Muhammad Ali and his inner circle of advisors in planning the Champ's final statement to the world in the form of his funeral & memorial (2006-2016). This included playing an active role in logistics and PR management on the ground in Louisville during the week of his funeral.
- Served as an academic expert (for religious literacy and cultural competence training) and informal advisor to both the US and Canadian governments. This includes chaplaincy support within US prisons and for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Chaplains' Corps.
- Guided and negotiated a major commercial real estate development/sale effort in Chicago for AIC between 2020 and 2026. This involved extensive collaboration with real estate attorneys, commercial real estate brokers, developers and contractors, local government officials, the wider community, and even crypto-currency experts.
- Advised US companies in the concrete products machinery industry as they explored expanding sales in the Middle East
- Designed and delivered workshops on Islamophobia for educational and corporate clients, including JP Morgan Chase in Chicago and Toronto's Catholic ("separate") school board.

Director & Principal Teacher*Sept 2012 – Present**Islamic Institute for Spiritual Formation — Toronto, ON*

- Founded an educational, non-denominational nonprofit focused on spiritually-integrated psychology, spiritual/contemplative practice, classical learning, and transformative education

Director of Islamic Studies / Assoc. Professor*Aug 2013 – Jul 2015**American Islamic College — Chicago, IL*

- Served as chief academic officer, overseeing curriculum development, faculty recruitment & oversight, establishing shared governance practices, and initiating the College's accreditation application
- Taught a wide range of Islamic Studies courses and Arabic at the undergraduate and graduate levels

Associate Professor, Studies in Islam*Jul 2015 – Jun 2018**Renison University College, University of Waterloo — Canada*

- special appointment to the Graduate Faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University (Psychotherapy & Spiritual Care)
- Taught across undergraduate and graduate programs in Islamic Studies, Arabic, Arab culture, and cross-cultural human development

York-Noor Chair / Fellow & Resident Scholar in Islamic Studies*Jul 2007 – Jun 2012**York University & Noor Cultural Centre — Toronto, ON*

- Served as the principal in-house scholar at the Noor Cultural Centre. Responsibilities included pastoral leadership, community education, interreligious engagement, and other activities while simultaneously teaching undergraduate and graduate courses for York University
- Built bridges between scholarly communities and the broader public through lectures, symposia, and community programming

Assistant Professor of Islamic Philosophy, Theology & Mysticism*Aug 2005 – May 2008**University of Virginia — Charlottesville, VA***Assistant Professor of Islamic Thought***Sept 2002 – Jun 2005**University of Oregon — Eugene, OR***Assistant Professor of Religious Studies & History***Jul 1997 – Jun 2002*

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations

1998

University of Toronto

- Dissertation: "The Secrets of the Soul, Death and the Afterlife in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*" — supervised by Prof. Michael E. Marmura
- Major Field: Medieval Islamic Philosophy & Theology; Minor Fields: Islamic Intellectual History, Medieval Latin (Christian) and Jewish Philosophy
- Included several periods of residence and study in the Middle East and coursework at the College of *Shari'a*, University of Jordan (conducted in Arabic), funded by the Mellon Foundation

Master of Arts, Medieval Islamic Philosophy & Theology

1990

University of Toronto

- Minor Fields: Arabic Language & Literature, Islamic Intellectual History

Bachelor of Arts, Program of Liberal Studies (Great Books)

1988

University of Notre Dame

- Minor: Classical Greek Language & Civilization; additional specialization in Middle East & Mediterranean Studies, which included seven semesters of literary Arabic.
- Post-B.A. Fulbright Grant — intensive literary Arabic, University of Jordan (1988/89)
- Senior Thesis awarded the PLS Otto A. Bird Award for best Senior Essay of 1988 ("Intellect and Imagination: the Prophet, the Philosopher and the Political Life in Al-Farabi's *Book of the Principles of the Views of the People of the Virtuous City*")

SELECTED SCHOLARSHIP

Monographs

- *In the Light of a Blessed Tree: Illuminations of Islamic Belief, Practice and History*. Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- *al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Iḥyā'*. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 2001.

Selected Articles, Book Chapters & Translations

- Forthcoming (2026): "The 'Religious Genius' of Al-Ghazālī" in *Religious Geniuses: Case Studies in Religious Exemplarity Across World Traditions*. Wipf & Stock, 2026 (anticipated).
- "Sharing Wisdom: A Muslim Perspective" in *Sharing Wisdom: Benefits and Boundaries of Interreligious Learning*. Lexington Books, 2017.
- "Muslim Leadership: Past, Present, Future" in *The Future of Religious Leadership*. Lexington Books, 2016.
- "Pillars of Islam" in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, 2nd ed. Macmillan, 2016.
- "Beyond Both Law and Theology: al-Ghazālī's 'Science of the Way of the Afterlife'" in *The Muslim World*, vol. 101 (2011).
- "Islamic Knowledge" — translation of al-Ghazālī's introduction to Reviving Religious Knowledge. *Islamic Sciences*, 2013.

SELECTED LEADERSHIP & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

- **Elijah Interfaith Institute Think Tank** — scholar-practitioner participant and author, participating in high-level international interreligious dialogues (Amritsar, Haifa, Oxford) since 2007; steering committee author for a Templeton Foundation-sponsored project on the idea of Religious Genius.

- **Archbishop of Canterbury's "Building Bridges" Symposium** — Invited participant and presenter, Qatar, 2011.
- **"Dealing with Our Darkesses" Symposium** — Creator and Co-Director of a collaborative inter-religious dialogue series exploring religion, violence, and moral responsibility (2016–17).
- **"Struggling for God" Symposium** — Creator, Convener and Managing Director of a scholarly symposium on war and peace in the Abrahamic traditions, University of Oregon (2004–05).
- **"Towards a Contemporary Muslim Theology of World Religions"** — International participant and author, 2007–2010.
- **Religious Diversity & Intercultural Consulting** – See above for examples.

SELECTED ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

- "God has Written Mercy Upon Himself: Toward a Systematic Muslim Theology of Mercy" — International Foundation for Muslim Theology (2021); University of Western Ontario Hassan Lecture (2023).
- "Death in Islamic Theological, Philosophical, and Mystical Traditions" — KCID Conference, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany (2020).
- "Imagining a World in which There are No Religious Others: Al-Fārābī on Prophecy, Religion, and the Relativity of Religious Language" — Queen's University (2018).
- "Al-Ghazālī, the Divine Attributes, and the Revolution of Islamic Ethics" — Zaytuna College Conference on Higher Education, Berkeley (2016); MUIS, Singapore (2017).

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS & RECOGNITION

2017	Senate of Canada 150 Medal — for contributions to interfaith understanding
2007–08	York-Noor Chair of Islamic Studies, York University & Noor Cultural Centre
2003	New Faculty Award, University of Oregon
1995–96	USIA Fellow, American Center for Oriental Research (Amman, Jordan)
1993–95	Open Doctoral Fellowships & Simcoe Fellowships, University of Toronto
1993–94	Junior Fellow, Massey College, University of Toronto
1993	Mellon Foundation Arabic Speaking Academic Immersion Program Fellow
1988–89	Fulbright Grant — Advanced Arabic & Islamic History, University of Jordan
1988	PLS Otto A. Bird Award, Notre Dame — Outstanding Senior Essay of 1988

LANGUAGES

English · Arabic · French · Cantonese (spoken only) · Medieval Latin · Ancient Greek

CITIZENSHIP & LOCATION

U.S. Citizen with Permanent Residence in Canada | Based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

References available upon request. Full publications list and writing samples available