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The Associated Press

4th Afghan exchange student reported missing in US

3/11/2011

A fourth Afghan student who was enrolled in a month-long cultural exchange program at a western New York college has gone missing without explanation.

Sayed Sultan Sadat, 19, was reported missing March 2 from Nazareth College in suburban Rochester, police and college officials confirmed Friday. Three other students taking part in the Department of State-sponsored program at Nazareth vanished in February, soon after arriving at the school.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security told college officials last week that those three students — two 21-year-old women and a 20-year-old man — are safe, college spokeswoman Julie Long said.

The Monroe County Sheriff's office said investigations have determined the students left the program to defect. Nazareth College officials do not know where the four students are located, nor have they been notified about Sadat's well-being, Long said.

The other 16 students in the student leadership program, a four-week session focusing on religious tolerance, returned to Afghanistan on Sunday.

The exchange program is hosted by institutions throughout the United States. Since it began in 2009, six of the previous 40 Afghan participants who have come to the U.S. have not returned home, Department of State officials have said.

Students are warned at the start of the program that their failure to comply with the rules could jeopardize future U.S. visa applications.

Nazareth College said that after a student went missing from a past Nazareth session, it curtailed the program's off-campus activities. Founded in 1924, the school sits on 150 scenic acres in Pittsford, a town of about 30,000 residents near Rochester. It has about 3,200 undergraduate and graduate students.