

International University Students Bring a Global Dimension to American Campuses

The [Center for International Education at Nazareth College](#) in Rochester, NY has hosted the [Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders](#) from Turkey since the summer of 2007. After two successful years, Nazareth College also hosted a group of [15 Afghan undergraduate students](#) for three weeks in the winter of 2009.

The Afghan students came from the faculties of Journalism, Literature, Political Science, Law, and Economics from [Kabul University](#) in Afghanistan. Each young Afghan demonstrated academic excellence, English fluency, extensive community involvement, and a marked interest in foreign cultures. Candidates were chosen with the expectation they will be future leaders in their respective fields.

The Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders include four major components: (1) an examination of U.S. history, government, and institutions; (2) leadership development training; (3) community service; and, (4) cross-cultural exchanges with Americans.

Nazareth College saw this hosting experience as a unique opportunity to engage not only the Center for International Education but also the entire campus and surrounding Rochester community. According to Dr. George Eisen, Director of the Center for International Education at Nazareth, "Everyone was involved with the planning from the University President, to the cafeteria chef, to the College Imam." Prior to the students' arrival, the cafeteria chef met with local Afghan community members to familiarize himself with traditional dishes. Not only did this American chef cater halal meals three times a day, but he also catered Afghan dishes, which the students remarked were quite authentic. The campus Imam, Dr. Mohammad Shafiq, Director of the Center for Interfaith Dialogue, led discussions on interfaith understanding along with another college professor, a nun. The University President, Daan Braveman, Professor of Law, led a session on the new Afghan constitution and debated its pros and cons with the group.

Nazareth College also arranged for the delegation to participate in several regular classes. For example, the students were guests in an English class whose students were reading *Three Cups of Tea*, a recent book about education in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The American students were eager to compare the descriptions in the book to the experiences of the Afghan students. To their surprise and delight, one of the Afghan students had worked with the author, Greg Mortenson, as a guide and translator during his time in Afghanistan.

Nazareth College worked diligently to foster an integrated environment to promote dialogue and understanding. American undergraduates whose roommates were traveling on study abroad were recruited to host an Afghan undergraduate in their dorm room for the three weeks. These young Americans received cross-cultural training prior to the Afghans' arrival. The American undergraduates served as cultural ambassadors to their new friends – showing them around campus, sharing meals in the cafeteria, and staying up late to share personal life stories. The Afghans were overjoyed to have a direct window into American youth culture. They also had the opportunity to spend a weekend in the home of an American family. In this way, Nazareth was able to involve the greater Rochester community. The program culminated in a cross-cultural fair for the entire campus and the local Afghan community.

To find out how your college or university can apply to host a Study of the U.S. Institute, contact studyu@state.gov.

To hear from a former student in the U.S. Summer Institute at Nazareth College, visit <http://www.studentleaderssummer2008.blogspot.com/>