

# Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act

*S. 1198; H.R. 4555*

**The Challenge:** In today's global society, an undergraduate education that includes a meaningful study abroad experience is more important than ever. Study abroad provides students the opportunity to engage with other cultures, enhance foreign language skills, and expand international knowledge.

Unfortunately, **less than 10%** of all enrolled post-secondary students in the United States study abroad. In addition, minority students, first generation college students, and community college students are underrepresented in study abroad participation.

In 2004, Congress authorized the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program to provide recommendations to Congress and the President on expanding opportunities for United States undergraduate students to study abroad, with a special emphasis on study abroad in developing countries. This bill seeks to implement those recommendations.

**The Solution:** the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act establishes a competitive grant program, run by the Department of Education, for institutions of higher education to encourage the sustainable expansion of study abroad opportunities for undergraduate students in the United States.

Named after the late Illinois Senator, Paul Simon, who encouraged Congress to come together to prepare the next generation of Americans with the global knowledge and skills needed for success in an increasingly interconnected world, higher education institutions would apply for competitive grants, individually or in consortium, to help them institute highly-effective programs that would move the country toward the achievement of these objectives. The institutional grants would create a legacy of study abroad at the winning institutions by removing the institutional, cultural, and curricular barriers that keep students from studying abroad.

## **OVERARCHING GOALS:**

- Increase the overall number of undergraduate students studying abroad annually to ONE MILLION within TEN YEARS;
- Increase the number of nontraditional and minority students studying abroad so that the demographics of study abroad participation reflect the demographics of the undergraduate population; and
- Increase the number of students who study abroad in nontraditional destinations, with an emphasis on study abroad in developing countries.

This bill is supported by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Partners of the Americas, American Council on Education, American Association of Community Colleges, the Forum on Education Abroad, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the Association of American Universities, the Fund for Education Abroad, American Councils for

International Education, the Joint National Committee for Languages, and the National Council for Languages and International Studies.

We urge members of Congress to cosponsor the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act to significantly increase the number and diversity of American students studying abroad, especially to non-traditional locations.

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