

Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act

Request

We urge members of Congress to cosponsor *the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act* (S. 601; H.R. 4379) to significantly increase the number and diversity of American students studying abroad, especially to non-traditional locations.

Issue

The challenges and opportunities that our college graduates face are increasingly global in nature. From transnational terrorism and epidemics to emerging markets and scientific discoveries, college graduates need to be able to work with citizens and understand cultures from around the world. Studying abroad is a unique educational experience that provides college students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to tackle global challenges and take advantage of the international opportunities of a global marketplace. Furthermore, studies have shown that students who study abroad are more likely to complete their degree, transfer from a community college to a 4-year institution, and have a higher GPA than those students who don't study abroad. Yet today, less than 10% of college students are able to study abroad before they graduate.

Solution

The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act would create the momentum needed to ensure college students can pursue a meaningful study abroad experience and gain the necessary global competencies to thrive in the 21st Century. The bill advances four goals:

- One million U.S. college students will study abroad annually for academic credit within 10 years
- The diversity of study abroad participants will reflect the U.S. undergraduate population
- A significantly greater proportion of study abroad will occur in non-traditional destinations so that our students will have knowledge of far more regions and cultures than has traditionally been the case
- Higher education institutions will make study abroad a critical component of a quality higher education

Under the cost-effective Simon model, higher education institutions would apply for competitive grants, individually or in consortium, to help them institute 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.

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