

Issue Brief



Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act S.1198/H.R.4555

Request

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.

Issue

The challenges and opportunities that U.S. college graduates encounter are increasingly global in nature. From combatting transnational terrorism and epidemics to working in emerging markets and diverse communities, college graduates need 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 have higher GPAs and are more likely to graduate than those students who don't study abroad. Global learning helps U.S. students succeed in their careers, and collectively, these international experiences lead to a more innovative, secure, and prosperous United States. Yet today, fewer than 10% of college students study abroad before they graduate.

Solution

The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act addresses this problem through a competitive grant program for higher education institutions. 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 outside of Europe
- 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 remove the institutional, cultural, and curricular barriers that keep students from studying abroad. The outcome will be a legacy of study abroad at winning institutions that will improve access and equity in international education.

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