

## The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (S. 2261/H.R. 4588)

**Ask:** 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.

In today's global society, a U.S. undergraduate education that includes a meaningful study abroad experience is more important than ever. Study abroad gives students the opportunity to engage with other cultures, enhance foreign language skills, and expand international knowledge. Unfortunately, only 10 percent of American college students graduate with a study abroad experience on their transcript, and minority students, first-generation college students, community college students, and students with disabilities are less likely than their peers to participate in study abroad. **At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-21 academic year, U.S. study abroad participation plummeted 91 percent.** While there is optimism on the horizon, as a [Spring 2023 snapshot survey](#) showed that 98% of U.S. higher education institutions are offering either in-person or a combination of online and in-person programs, it is not enough to just get back to pre-pandemic levels. In a post-pandemic world, increasing access to study abroad will be critical to ensuring that U.S. students gain the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to succeed in tackling global challenges and succeeding in a global economy.

The bill seeks to expand access to study abroad for U.S. college students by **enhancing the State Department's Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) program and formally renaming it as the "Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program."** Inspired by the vision of the late Senator Paul Simon of Illinois and the recommendations of the congressionally-appointed Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, the legislation would advance four national goals:

- One million U.S. college students will study abroad annually for credit;
- Study abroad participants will more closely represent the demographics of the undergraduate population in terms of gender, ethnicity, students with disabilities, income level, and field of study;
- A significantly greater proportion of study abroad will occur in nontraditional destinations outside Western Europe; and
- Higher education institutions will make study abroad a critical component of a quality higher education.

More information: [www.nafsa.org/simon](http://www.nafsa.org/simon)

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