To ensure that significantly more students graduate college with the international knowledge and experience essential for success in today’s global economy through the establishment of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program in the Department of State.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. WICKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To ensure that significantly more students graduate college with the international knowledge and experience essential for success in today’s global economy through the establishment of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program in the Department of State.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Senator Paul Simon

Study Abroad Program Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:
(1) To prepare students for success in the modern global economy, opportunities for study abroad should be included as part of a well-rounded education.

(2) Study abroad programs provide students with unparalleled access to international knowledge, an unmatched opportunity to learn world languages, and a unique environment for developing cultural understanding, all of which are knowledge and skills needed in today’s global economy.

(3) Only 10 percent of United States college students study abroad before they graduate, leaving 90 percent of graduates entering the workforce without the global skills, knowledge, and experiences afforded by study abroad programs that will position them for success in the global economy. Minority students, first-generation college students, community college students, and students with disabilities are also significantly underrepresented in study abroad participation.

(4) Congress authorized the establishment of the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (referred to in this section as the “Lincoln Commission”) under section 104 of the Miscellaneous Appropriations and Offsets
Act, 2004 (division H of Public Law 108–199). Pursuant to its mandate, the Lincoln Commission submitted a report to Congress and to the President containing its recommendations for greatly expanding the opportunity for students at institutions of higher education in the United States to study abroad, with special emphasis on studying in developing nations.

(5) According to the Lincoln Commission, “[e]xperience shows that leadership from administrators and faculty will drive the number of study abroad participants higher and improve the quality of programs. Such leadership is the only way that study abroad will become an integral part of the undergraduate experience.” A competitive grant program is necessary to encourage and support such leadership.

(6) Student health, safety, and security while studying abroad is, and must continue to be, a priority for institutions of higher education and study abroad programs.

(7) The COVID–19 pandemic prevented students from participating in study abroad due to travel restrictions and reduced budgets. According to Open Doors 2022, published by the Institute of
International Education in partnership with the Department of State, study abroad participation at colleges and universities in the United States plummeted by 91 percent during the 2020-2021 academic year. In the post-pandemic world, increasing access to study abroad for students at institutions of higher education across the United States is critical to ensuring that those students gain the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to maintain the leadership of the United States in tackling global challenges, such as pandemics, and succeeding in a global economy.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to ensure that significantly more students have access to quality study abroad opportunities, especially among low-income students and students of color;

(2) to ensure that the diversity of students studying abroad reflects the diversity of students and institutions of higher education in the United States;

(3) to encourage greater diversity in study abroad destinations by increasing the portion of study abroad that takes place in nontraditional
study abroad destinations, especially in developing
countries; and
(4) to encourage a greater commitment by
United States institutions of higher education to ex-
pand study abroad opportunities.

SEC. 4. SENATOR PAUL SIMON STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM.

(a) Definitions.—In this section:

(1) Consortium.—The term “consortium”
means a group that—
(A) includes at least 1 institution of higher
education; and
(B) may include nongovernmental organi-
zations that provide and promote study abroad
opportunities for students.

(2) Institution of Higher Education.—The
term “institution of higher education” has the
meaning given such term in section 101(a) of the
Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

(3) Nontraditional Study Abroad Destination.—The term “nontraditional study abroad des-
tination” means a location that is determined by the
Secretary of State to be a less common destination
for students who study abroad.

(4) Student.—The term “student” means—
(A) an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States or a national of the United States or (as such terms are defined in paragraphs (20) and (22) of section 101(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (8 U.S.C. 1101(a))) who is enrolled at an institution of higher education located within the United States; or

(B) an individual who is an eligible noncitizen for Federal student aid, as determined by the Secretary of Education for purposes of the Federal student loan program under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.).

(5) STUDY ABROAD.—The term “study abroad” means an educational program of study, work, service learning, research, internship, or combination of such activities that—

(A) is conducted outside of the United States; and

(B) carries academic credit.

(6) WORLD LANGUAGE.—The term “world language” means any natural language other than English, including—
(A) languages determined by the Secretary of State to be critical to the national security interests of the United States;

(B) classical languages;

(C) American sign language; and

(D) Native American languages.

(b) Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program.—

(1) Establishment.—Subject to the availability of appropriations and under the authority of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2451 et seq.), the Secretary of State shall—

(A) rename the Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students Program (commonly known as “IDEAS”) as the “Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program” (referred to in this section as the “Program”); and

(B) enhance the program in accordance with this subsection.

(2) Objectives.—The objectives of the Program are that not later than 10 years after the date of enactment of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act of 2023—
(A) not fewer than 1,000,000 undergraduate students from the United States will study abroad annually;

(B) the demographics of study abroad participation will reflect the demographics of the United States undergraduate population by increasing the participation rate of underrepresented groups; and

(C) an increasing portion of study abroad will take place in nontraditional study abroad destinations, with a substantial portion of such increases in developing countries.

(3) COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In order to accomplish the objectives described in paragraph (2), the Secretary of State shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to institutions of higher education, either individually or as part of a consortium, based on applications by such institutions that—

(i) set forth detailed plans for using grant funds to further such objectives;

(ii) include an institutional commitment to expanding access to study abroad;
(iii) include plans for evaluating progress made in increasing access to study abroad;

(iv) describe how increases in study abroad participation achieved through the grant will be sustained in subsequent years; and

(v) demonstrate that the study abroad programs have established health, safety, and security guidelines and procedures, informed by Department of State travel advisories and other appropriate Federal agencies and resources, including the Overseas Security Advisory Council and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

(B) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under subparagraph (A), the Secretary may give priority to—

(i) minority-serving institutions listed under section 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a));

(ii) eligible institutions (as defined in section 312(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1058(b)) that
qualify for the Strengthening Institutions
Program of the Department of Education;
and

(iii) institutions that offer study abroad programs with a significant world language learning component, as applicable.

(4) IMPLEMENTATION OF LINCOLN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.—In administering the Program, the Secretary of State shall take fully into account the recommendations of the Lincoln Commission, including—

(A) institutions of higher education applying for grants described in paragraph (3) shall use Program funds to support direct student costs;

(B) diversity shall be a defining characteristic of the Program; and

(C) quality control shall be a defining characteristic of the Program.

(5) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary of State shall consult with representatives of diverse institutions of higher education and educational policy organizations and other individuals with appropriate expertise.
(c) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—Not later than December 31 of each year, the Secretary of State shall submit an annual report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives that details the implementation of the Program during the most recently concluded fiscal year.

(d) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the Program for fiscal year 2024 and for each subsequent fiscal year.