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# U.S. House passes study abroad bill

## New foundation would provide millions to reduce costs for students going abroad

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The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill Tuesday to establish the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation, which aims to make studying abroad much more affordable and accessible for students.

The bill was written in response to a report that found that American students generally lack the "global literacy" of their foreign counterparts and that about one percent of college students each year study abroad. One of the foundation's goals will be to make these experiences, deemed essential to the nation's security, more affordable. Starting in 2008, \$80 million will be made available to the foundation, along with funds from other scholarships, to help reduce the cost of study abroad programs.

Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, D-Texas, a co-sponsor of the bill, said the establishment of the foundation provides a great chance for American students to not only learn about the world, but also to represent the United States to people the world over.

"We need students to be our goodwill ambassadors," he said. "We really can help countries reach their full potential, but it's up to the students to find and recognize the opportunities."

John Sunnygard, director of the Center for Global Educational Opportunities at UT, said many students don't look into study abroad programs, because they think they are too costly. But by bypassing study abroad opportunities, Sunnygard said, students may actually be losing money by missing out on scholarships.

"There's this perception of high cost," he said. "But for a student with a Pell Grant and a GPA above 3.5, you're losing money if you aren't studying abroad."

Sunnygard also said that when the bill goes into effect, it might end up being easier on students' wallets to study abroad than to attend UT as a Texas resident.

The foundation will also help establish study abroad programs at smaller schools or universities, creating more opportunities at a greatly reduced cost.

The more students who participate, the more likely the new foundation will meet its goal of sending one million students abroad by 2017. That's about half the number of all degrees universities across the country hand out yearly, and about five times the number of students who currently study abroad.

Students interested in studying abroad can visit the study abroad office at 600 W. 24th St. to see an adviser.

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