



**STATEMENT OF
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President and CEO**

The Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU)

**Submitted to House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies
March 20, 2013**

Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey and Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies (HASSFORA), the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) thanks you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to Congress for the State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Appropriations budget for Fiscal Year 2014.

HACU requests the HASSFORA committee to recommend to Congress funding for a Study Abroad Student Exchange Program for Countries in the Western Hemisphere as a part of the State Department's budget for FY 2014. The student exchange program would be funded as a program component within the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The appropriation would permit the State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to support a **\$40 million competitive grants program for an Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) Study Abroad Program under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (PL 87-256) Section 2451 to support student exchanges among students attending U.S. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and students attending colleges and universities in the Western Hemisphere.**

The United States has a special relationship with countries of the Western Hemisphere based on history, trade, cultural similarities and diversity as well as geographical proximity. A student exchange program will solidify this special relationship in all aspects of life enhancing regional security, trade and economic development within and among the U.S. and Western Hemisphere countries.

Unfortunately, communication and sharing of values between the citizens of the United States and other countries of the Western Hemisphere have not always been as successful and rewarding as they could be. Student exchanges are a proven way of enhancing respect and understanding between nations as students not only learn about the language and culture of the visited country, but experience first-hand the daily life of its people.

Students from the United States who have lived in other Western Hemisphere countries can provide our nation with a more insightful understanding of our nearest neighbors. Foreign students that study in colleges and universities in the United States bring home to their countries a deeper knowledge and clearer vision of the goals and aspirations of our nation. Indeed foreign students who have studied in the U.S., many of whom will become the leaders in their home countries, will serve as spokespersons and ambassadors for the United States to their countrymen.

Few students can afford to travel to a foreign country given the significant travel and housing costs in undertaking this effort. An exchange study experience becomes even more unlikely for students from



modest or economically disadvantaged family backgrounds. Without some form of financial assistance, the opportunity to pursue higher education in a foreign country will be limited to only the very wealthy.

In light of this fact, it is perhaps not surprising that U.S. Hispanic college students are seriously underrepresented in study abroad programs. According to the 2012 Institute of International Education report, only 6.4 percent of participants in U.S. study abroad programs are Hispanic, even though Hispanic students make up 15 percent of the postsecondary population according to the Pew Hispanic Center (2012). Conversely students from Latin America are even more underrepresented among international students in the U.S.

Given the dramatic growth of the U.S. Hispanic population documented in the 2010 Census and the increasing college-going rate among them, it is important to assure that this key component of the 21st century American workforce has adequate opportunity for a global education. Targeting programs at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which collectively enroll more than half of all Hispanic college students, is an efficient way to address this national need.

HACU recommends that the Appropriations Subcommittee for the State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies include an appropriation of \$40 million for a student exchange program between Hispanic-Serving Institutions and select Western Hemisphere colleges or universities with the intent of increasing foreign study opportunities for U.S. Hispanic students and for students from countries from the Western Hemisphere to study at HSIs. The program will be administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs within the U.S. Department of State. The HSI Western Hemisphere Study Abroad Program will assist in enhancing our nation's global understanding and competitiveness, contribute to our national security goals, promote understanding and friendship between nations, and allow U.S. foreign policy agencies to thrive in an increasingly interconnected hemisphere.

Madame Chairwoman, as your subcommittee completes the 2014 Appropriations budget for the House Appropriations Committee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies, HACU recommends the inclusion of this funding for the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs programs to support a western hemisphere study abroad program as a part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program as allowed in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Chapter 33, Section 2462, for transmittal to the full House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

A \$40 million competitive grants program for an HSIs Study Abroad Program under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (PL 87-256) Section 2451 to support student exchanges among:

- *Hispanic students from HSIs to study in countries of the Western Hemisphere for a period of no more than 2 years.*
- *Western Hemisphere college and university students for study at HSIs for a period of no more than 2 years.*