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## **Editorial: More international education needed**

A semester abroad is great, but no longer enough.

At a hushed auditorium in a building that bears her father's name, Marilyn Carlson Nelson spoke last Thursday about the European parents she meets as CEO of Carlson Companies. Invariably, she said, they ask about opportunities for their teenage children to study in the United States.

"Our kids go to hockey camps and tennis camps. European kids spend their summers in other countries, learning new languages and cultures," Nelson said.

Her bottom line: The United States is at risk of losing its competitive advantage in the global economy unless it broadens and deepens the international education of the next generation. Employers are increasingly able to shop the world for talent. They seek employees who are multi-culturally aware and adaptable. American colleges and universities ought to step up international education.

That message was cheered at a forum sponsored by NAFSA: the Association of International Educators and the Minnesota International Center, and echoed by panelists that included University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks and MnSCU Vice President Linda Baer.

Minnesota colleges and universities, public and private, have long been among the nation's leaders in sending students abroad. But a foreign semester "add-on" isn't enough to produce the global competency employers now demand. Baer and Bruininks acknowledged as much, and said their systems are striving to integrate international education throughout their curricula.

As they do, they'll find support at the Capitol, where Gov. Tim Pawlenty and legislators are also increasingly conscious of the need for more and better global education. Last week, state Rep. Erik Paulsen, R-Eden Prairie, introduced legislation to create an India Center at the University of Minnesota, to parallel its almost 30-year-old China Center. It would both foster an understanding of India and provide a springboard for collaborative Minnesota-India ventures. That's the kind of thinking the new world economy will reward -- and the Legislature should fund.

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