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## New policy makes study abroad affordable for more students

**By CHRISTINA SATKOWSKI '07**

*News Staff*

In an effort to expand the study abroad opportunities for students on financial aid, the College is preparing to implement a new financial aid policy that will allow students to carry their financial aid to any approved foreign institution.

Currently, a student's financial aid only transfers if she attends a Wellesley-affiliated program where she pays Wellesley tuition, such as PRESHCO in Cordoba, Spain, or the University of Manchester in England.

If a student attends an institution that is not affiliated with Wellesley, but needs financial aid, she must apply for an independent scholarship from the College. The funds for these scholarships are limited, so students who apply are not guaranteed funding.

The new "Home School Fee" policy will affect students studying abroad in the 2006-2007 academic year. All students who go abroad, regardless of whether they attend a Wellesley-affiliated program or receive financial aid, will pay their normal Wellesley tuition-financial aid included-to Wellesley for that term.

The controller's office will then write checks to the foreign school for the amount required by that institution, even if it is more than Wellesley tuition, which is just under \$15,000 per semester.

"The main goal of the new Home School Fee policy is to make the range of study abroad opportunities accessible to all students, regardless of their financial situation," said Jennifer Thomas-Stark, director of International Studies.

"Until now, students with significant financial aid packages have been limited essentially to Wellesley-sponsored programs. While these programs are excellent and have broad appeal, they are not an ideal match for every student," said Thomas-Stark.

She continued, "Under the new policy, students will be able to select programs based on academic and personal reasons rather than financial constraints."

Since all students will be paying the same fee under the Home School Fee system, students who choose to study at an institution that costs less than Wellesley- most often found in Latin America, Africa and Asia- will end up paying more than they would under the current system.

Caroline Hendryx '07, who plans to study next year at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, is glad that she will not fall under the new policy.

"It would be much more expensive," she said. Under the Home School Fee system, her Wellesley tuition would be double that which she'll pay at Auckland.

However, more students are likely to benefit from the new program, as a majority of Wellesley students choose to attend European institutions, whose tuitions tend to be similar

or more expensive than Wellesley's.

Mahnaz Islam '07, who will spend next fall at University College London (UCL), welcomed the new policy. She applied to UCL through an independent program, but said that because right now her Wellesley financial aid does not transfer to UCL, she was uncertain if she could go.

"My going depended on whether I got the scholarship," she said. "I got it, but I was one of the luckier ones."

Islam said that she knows many people like her who will benefit from the new policy. "It will be a simpler process for students in my situation. I feel that more students in my position would be able to go abroad."

In making the switch to the Home School Fee policy, Wellesley joins a growing number of small private colleges that require students to pay home tuition fees when they go abroad.

Some of these other schools, such as Vassar College, cover only the tuition fees while other schools, such as Smith College, also cover the costs of room and board.

Wellesley will decide in the next few weeks if and how it, too, will cover room and board costs .

Financial aid for room and board is difficult to arrange, because housing and food costs at foreign institutions are not always uniform. For example, it may cost more to live in one dorm over another.

The expanded financial aid will receive funding from numerous sources, including the Capital Campaign and other endowed funds, said Director of Student Financial Services Kathy Osmond.

The extra funds received from students whose program costs less than Wellesley and the current independent study abroad financial aid fund will also be incorporated into the new funding system.

The International Study program plans to have all of the details of the Home School Fee policy in place before next fall, when the class of 2008 will begin thinking about study abroad plans.

The new system will also require additional organization on the part of the College's financial offices, but Osmond does not anticipate any problems. "The goal is to really have a seamless process for the students," she said.

Thomas-Stark expects that the opportunities afforded by the Home School Fee policy will encourage more students to study abroad.

"This academic year, I have met numerous students who have been shut out of study abroad because of financial reasons," she said.

"With the new fee structure in place, I think it will be realistic to expect closer to 50 percent of [class of 2008] juniors to study abroad for a semester or a year."