For decades(十年), Americans have taken for granted(认为… 是理所当然) the United States’ leadership in the development of new technologies.The innovations that resulted from research and development during World War Ⅱ and afterward were \_\_36\_\_ to the prosperity of the nation in the second half of the 20th century.Those innovations, upon which virtually all aspects of \_\_37\_\_ society now depend, were possible because the United States then \_\_38\_ the world in mathematics and science education.Today, however, despite increasing demand for workers with strong skills in mathematics and science, the \_\_39\_\_ of degrees awarded in science, math, and engineering are decreasing.

The decline in degree production in what are called the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and math) seems to be \_\_40\_\_\_ related to the comparatively weak performance by U.S schoolchildren on international assessments of math and science.Many students entering college have weak skills in mathematics. According to the 2005 reports of the Business-Higher Education Forum, 22 percent of college freshmen must take remedial math \_\_41\_\_, and less than half of the students who plan to major in science or engineering \_\_42\_\_ complete a major in those field.

The result has been a decrease in the number of American college graduates who have the skills, \_\_43\_\_ in mathematics, to power a workforce that can keep the country at the forefront of innovation and maintain its standard of living.

With the \_\_44\_\_ performance of American students in math has come increased competition from students from other countries that have strongly supported education in these areas. Many more students earn \_\_45\_\_\_ in the STEM discipline in developing countries than in the United States.

A. accelerating

B. actually

C. closely

D. contemporary

E. courses

F. critical

G. declining

H. degrees

I. especially

J. future

K. led

L. met

M. procedures

N. proportions

O. spheres