

## Homegrown Scientists and Engineers

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### **Body**

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The May 4 lead editorial, "Skilled Masses; Keeping the world's talent in America," said that "The tens of thousands of H-1B [visa] rejects will constitute some of the world's best and brightest, and America is foolish to block them from the U.S. economy. After all, according to the National Science Foundation, a third of all science and engineering doctorates awarded in the United States go to foreign students (whose numbers are not limited)."

The suggestion seems to be that the large percentage of foreigners earning doctorates is an argument for larger H-1B visa quotas. But policymakers -- including the National Science Board, which oversees the National Science Foundation -- have made it clear that increasing the number of native-born scientists and engineers is a priority. The only way to accomplish that is to raise

salaries and improve working

conditions for scientists. A large influx of immigrant labor has the opposite effect.

This is a difficult issue, and it boils down to competing national priorities: Do we favor cheaper and more abundant skilled labor -- in which case increased quotas make sense -- or a healthier domestic supply?

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