



## **Immigration reinforces STEM fields**

By Matt Dragonette

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Monday's guest column, "Is there a STEM worker shortage?," which purports to discuss the reason behind STEM workers' "modest levels of wage growth," is both misleading and dangerous. The column, which was published simultaneously in the University of Iowa's school newspaper, masks the author's fear of immigration and seeks to strike fear in the hearts of a strong STEM university. Though neither a first-generation American nor a STEM major, I will dismantle the author's writing and explain why a legal, reasonable immigration policy is a positive, just and wholly American thing to support.

The writer first cites the Center for Immigration Studies analysis of the National Bureau of Economic Research's study of STEM wages. It claims STEM wages have barely increased over the past decade. The author's source, CIS, is unapologetically opposed to most immigration, and has no problem cherry-picking data to meet its needs.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, demonstrates that there is more than meets the eye. As it turns out, the overall real median wage has declined since 2001, while STEM fields such as architecture and engineering have seen real wage growth of as much as 5.77 percent. Not 50 percent to be sure, but that's with the rapid immigration the author complained about. And the idea of a "STEM worker" shortage is a hotly debated topic and far from settled. I personally believe we should never stop innovating in a highly competitive global market.

The author really displays his nativist fears by dividing the STEM workforce into native and immigrant employees. He views the STEM workforce not as a collection of diverse majors and occupations who could work in a variety of fields but as a collective body whose sole purpose should be to work in-field. Therefore, the author sees the excess legal STEM immigrants as

people who take American jobs and — I infer — should be deported, with all future STEM immigrants banned.

This is ignorance. Have legal immigrants not contributed? Were the likes of Thomas Paine and Andrew Carnegie not useful to our country? Would the author deny Albert Einstein citizenship? The university's own Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, was an immigrant. What of the millions that immigrated in search of freedom and a better life? Immigrants have built and will continue to build this country.

If that explanation does not suffice, maybe economic data will. More than 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were started by immigrants or children of immigrants. Immigrant-owned small business provide 4.7 million jobs and \$776 billion in revenue each year. A higher percentage of immigrants (10.5 percent) than native-born Americans (9.3 percent) own a business. The percentage of doctorate holders who are immigrants is staggering – 57 percent of all engineering doctoral degrees are held by immigrants.

I am by no means advocating an open-border policy that would endanger national security, legitimate economic interests and put an undue burden on taxpayers and the government. We need to know who enters the country and we cannot support masses of unemployed, uneducated or dependent immigrants.

But it seems foolish to me to seal the border in a dynamic global economy, where far-away countries are already competing with us economically and politically. It would be even more foolish to deny those who believe in the freedoms we enjoy and believe in the American Dream. The ideas of industriousness and individual freedom, community and equality are what make Americans truly American. If the world is a competitive place, then it makes sense to recruit the best talent for our “team” so we can continue to innovate.

The author fails to grasp the essence of America. We're defined by our actions, not our birth.

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