



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2012

www.RenewOurEconomy.org

**NEW STUDY REVEALS IMMIGRANTS ARE BEHIND MORE THAN THREE
QUARTERS OF PATENTS FROM TOP TEN PATENT-PRODUCING
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES**

*90 Presidents of Leading U.S. Universities Call on the White House and Congress to Pass
Legislation to Keep Top International Graduates in America to Create Jobs*

*New Poll Shows Support Across the Political Spectrum for Providing Green Cards to
International STEM Graduate Students of American Universities*

The Partnership for a New American Economy – a group of more than 450 Republican, Democratic, and Independent mayors and business leaders who support immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans – released a new study today, [Patent Pending: How Immigrants Are Reinventing The American Economy](#), showing that 76 percent of patents from America’s top 10 patent-generating universities in 2011 had a foreign-born inventor. The study further highlights the clear value foreign-born graduates bring to the U.S. economy. Ninety-nine percent of the patents by these foreign-born inventors were in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), an area where the U.S. is projected to face a shortfall of 230,000 qualified advanced-degree workers by 2018. Under current immigration law, when many of these student inventors graduate, they are unable to get a visa that would allow them to stay in the U.S. and potentially help create jobs. In conjunction with the release of the report, the Partnership demonstrated further support for immigration reform that would keep foreign-born STEM graduates in the U.S. with the release of:

- A letter from 90 presidents of leading American universities to President Obama and Congress calling for a bipartisan solution that ensures top international graduates have a clear path to a green card that will allow them to stay in the U.S. and create new American jobs; and
- A nationwide poll, done in conjunction with Compete America, showing overwhelming bipartisan support for the creation of a green card for STEM graduates from U.S. universities with 76 percent of voters in support.

“This is indisputable proof of the enormous contribution of immigrants in developing the new technologies and ideas needed to renew the U.S. economy and create American jobs,” said Partnership for a New American Economy Co-Chair and New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. “American universities are doing their part in attracting and educating the world’s

top minds, but our broken immigration laws continue to push them to our competitors. We simply cannot continue to force these innovators out if we want to remain the world's leading economy.”

Accessing the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's public online database, the study reviewed 1,466 patents from the top ten patent-producing universities in 2011: the University of California system, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Wisconsin, the University of Texas system, California Institute of Technology, the University of Illinois system, University of Michigan, Cornell University and Georgia Institute of Technology. The review of patents from these leading research universities found the following:

- 76 percent of the patents had a foreign-born inventor.
- 54 percent of the patents were awarded to the group of foreign inventors most likely to face visa hurdles: students, postdoctoral fellows, or staff researchers.
- Foreign-born inventors played significant roles in the fields of semiconductor device manufacturing (87 percent), information technology (84 percent), pulse or digital communications (83 percent), pharmaceutical drugs or drug compounds (79 percent) and optics (77 percent).
- The nearly 1,500 patents represented inventors from 88 different countries.

University research is responsible for 53 percent of all basic research in the U.S. and patents represent the first stage in the creation of new products, technologies and companies that create American jobs. Research and innovation are essential to a country's economic prosperity – according to Nobel-Prize winning economist Robert Solow, as much as half of a country's economic growth was attributable not to capital or labor, but to actual “technical change.” A few examples of the patents studied include a state-of-the-art camera that lets users change the focus long after taking the photograph, a unique method for quickly detecting cell death – a key sign of a biochemical attack – and a tiny, foldable automobile.

“The simple fact is that foreign-born STEM graduates of U.S. universities are job creators,” said Nick Schulz of the American Enterprise Institute. “Every graduate with an advanced degree working in a STEM-related field in the United States has been shown to create on average 2.62 additional jobs for native-born workers. Sending those people away doesn't protect American jobs, it jeopardizes them.”

90 University Presidents Stand Up for Foreign-Born Graduates

Demonstrating the significant role played by foreign-born faculty, researchers and students at American universities, 90 university presidents sent a letter to the White House and Congress calling for a bipartisan solution to keep graduates with advanced STEM degrees educated at their universities. University presidents know the plight of their foreign-born students as they see their alumni leave the U.S. to join competing economies. The total U.S. allotment of economic-based green cards would not even be sufficient to grant permanent residency to every graduate student or postdoctoral researcher in the science, engineering, and healthcare fields in the U.S. on a temporary visa – a group that numbered close to 190,000 in 2009. Each year, more than half the employment-based green cards are actually used to bring in the spouses and children of workers, leaving fewer than 70,000 green cards for the actual workers educated in the U.S. in addition to the thousands of highly-skilled workers educated and trained overseas brought in by American employers.

The letter states: “As leaders of universities educating the creators of tomorrow’s scientific breakthroughs, we call on you to address a critical threat to America’s preeminence as a global center of innovation and prosperity: our inability under current United States immigration policy to retain and benefit from many of the top minds educated at our universities...We ask you to work together to develop a bipartisan solution that ensures our top international graduates have a clear path to a green card, so they can stay and create new American jobs. Now is the time to do so and ensure that the US remains the world’s leading home for innovators.” The full letter can be found [here](#).

The university presidents – including the heads of Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Cornell, CalTech, Georgia Tech, Carnegie Mellon, University of Chicago, UT-Austin and more – represent 33 different states and Washington, D.C., a combined student population of more than 2.3 million and a combined endowment of more than \$180 billion.

“Cornell University has benefited from the talents and intellect of international students and scholars from our first classes nearly 150 years ago,” said Cornell University President David J. Skorton. “Today these talented colleagues make enormous contributions to the innovative and forward-thinking technological and scientific endeavors at Cornell – including activities that result in new companies, new products and new jobs – in addition to adding immeasurably to the cultural fabric of our community.”

Polling Shows Strong Public Support for Immigration Reform for STEM Graduates

Despite congressional inaction, there is strong support from political leaders for immigration reform for STEM graduates – from President Obama’s call for action in his last State of the Union and GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney in his immigration platform released at the annual meeting of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) in June 2012. There also is broad support from the American public – the Partnership also released a new national poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies in May 2012, done in conjunction with Compete America, showing strong bipartisan public support for immigration reform for STEM graduates. The findings of the poll include:

- 76 percent of voters nationally support a proposal to create a new category of green cards for highly-skilled foreign students in STEM fields;
- 87 percent of Democrats, 65 percent of Independents and 72 percent of Republicans – including 69 percent of those who identify themselves as Conservatives and 68 percent of those who self-identify as Tea Party supporters also support the proposal; and
- In addition, two of the most watched voter groups in the 2012 presidential election strongly support the proposal to keep STEM graduates – with 90 percent of voters under 35 and 90 percent of Hispanics supporting the reform proposal.

The poll is available [here](#).

Recommendations to Fix U.S. Immigration System And Keep Foreign-Born STEM Graduates

The U.S. is working under the same basic immigration system designed in 1965, but the world has changed and other countries are recognizing that a smart immigration system is part of smart economic plan, and updating their immigration strategies to attract the highly-skilled

workers needed to help their economies grow. As noted in the Partnership's last report, "[Not Coming to America: Why the U.S. is Falling Behind in the Global Race for Talent](#)," the U.S. admits only seven percent of immigrants based on economic needs while South Korea, Switzerland and Spain all issue around 80 percent of their visas for economic reasons and Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom issue around 60 percent with economic interests in mind. Chile, Singapore, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom all have or are creating visas for entrepreneurs and countries like China and Israel are luring back expatriate scientists with cash, laboratory resources, free housing, tax breaks and other incentives.

For students, graduates of Canadian colleges and universities can receive a work permit for up to three years – even without a job offer and recently Canada began allowing up to 1,000 students who have completed two years of a PhD in a STEM field to become permanent residents while still enrolled in school. In contrast, the U.S. has no program for granting permanent residency to current students.

The report makes three recommendations for the U.S. to fix its immigration system and compete in the global talent rush:

- **Green cards for STEM graduates:** Since 99 percent of the patents in this report were from the STEM fields, the U.S. should grant permanent residency, or green cards, to foreign students who earn graduate degrees in STEM fields;
- **A Startup Visa:** Create a visa for foreign-born entrepreneurs who have American investors and want to start companies that employ American workers. This would allow more of the inventions coming out of our universities to turn into companies and jobs in the U.S.; and
- **Raise or Remove H-1B Caps:** As the H-1B temporary high-skilled visa is often the only option for foreign-born STEM graduates to stay in the U.S., the Partnership for a New American Economy recommends raising or removing the arbitrary cap on visas, currently set at 65,000 per year, that are typically exhausted far before the end of the year. For 2012, the visas were used in 10 weeks, meaning that for more than nine months, American companies will not be able to hire the highly-skilled foreign-born workers they need.

About the Partnership for a New American Economy

The Partnership for a New American Economy brings together more than 450 Republican, Democratic, and Independent mayors and business leaders who support immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans today. The Partnership's members include mayors of more than 35 million people nationwide and business leaders of companies that generate more than \$1.5 trillion and employ more than 4 million people across all sectors of the economy, from Agriculture to Aerospace, Hospitality to High Tech, and Media to Manufacturing. Partnership members understand that immigration is essential to maintaining the productive, diverse, and flexible workforce that America needs to ensure prosperity over the coming generations. Learn more at: www.renewoureconomy.org.