

| BUSINESS VIEW |

## Heading off the brain drain

A report just released by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce contains some alarming news: Not enough Americans are graduating from college.

Best estimates are that by 2018 — when the United States will need 22 million new employees with college degrees — it will find itself short an astonishing 3 million college graduates. Tell that to American business and industry. As technology advances, they will require a labor force able to work with increasingly more complex equipment and communication tools. As the ways in which we do business change, the need for managers and support staff fluent in best business practices and educated to lead, manage, think and make decisions will be critical. As the need goes up and the supply goes down, who will lead America forward in an increasingly global marketplace?

Georgetown Center director Anthony Carnevale explains it succinctly: “When every job is precious, the failure of the American higher education system to produce these graduates or to match these graduates with the needs of the labor force will mean lost opportunities for millions of American workers and the businesses that employ them.”

Those who terminate their schooling with a high school degree or less will find themselves relegated to jobs that pay low wages or are in decline. As their numbers increase, access to the middle and upper class will decline, and a nation that once prided itself on its upward mobility through education will find itself in a

devastating reversal.

Can we prevent this? I believe we can, but first we must find ways to make college accessible to as broad and diverse a range of students as possible. We must, in the face of budget cuts to public education and an economy that requires us to make hard choices, find ways to increase and direct private philanthropy to education. We must make more financial aid available to those whose families are struggling. We must be both frugal and creative in the ways we allocate our resources. We must seek out every means possible to ensure that a college education remains within

reach of all those whose dream it is.

We must also partner with organizations such as The Lumina Foundation that believe, as we do, that our children must have an education beyond high school if they are to succeed. We cannot stand by and allow a brain drain of this magnitude to happen in this country and on our watch.

Dr. Richard Freeland, Massachusetts’ commissioner of higher education, has conveyed the message in no uncertain terms that continued cuts to public colleges and universities are forcing institutions to choose between affordability and quality while “placing the future of the state in jeopardy.” As the Georgetown Center’s most recent report makes abundantly clear, however, it is our entire nation that is in peril.

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