

The Genius Issue

Esquire

DECEMBER 2005

MAN AT HIS BEST

America's Best & Brightest

Also:

THE WORLD'S HARDEST QUIZ (PG. 174)

GENE JOCKEYS
FLU GURUS
NUCLEAR MAVERICKS
ROGUE PIANISTS
THE NEXT GREAT BLOND
& 25 OTHERS WHO ARE SAVING OUR WORLD

✓ FLYING WINDMILLS & THE OTHER INVENTIONS OF THE YEAR

+ 47 GENIUS GIFT IDEAS



Bull

Clinton

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MAN IN THE WORLD STARTS GETTING HIS HANDS DIRTY

↑
And... THE VANDAL OF THE YEAR (PG. 198)



The U.S. Brain Drain

RICHARD FLORIDA'S PLAN FOR SAVING AMERICA

F

orget the war on terrorism. According to Richard Florida, America confronts a more dangerous long-term threat: losing the competition for foreign talent. A forty-nine-year-old professor of social policy at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, and the author of two widely influential books about the relationship between creativity and competitiveness, Florida argues that there are six facts we need to face to preserve American cultural and scientific leadership.

- 1. America has always been dependent on foreign talent.** Even more so today. Foreign-born scientists and engineers made up 22 percent of our workforce in 2000. Foreign-born entrepreneurs cofounded Google, Sun Microsystems, and Intel.
- 2. Our domestic pipeline can't fill this talent gap.** Turning out only eighteen thousand science and engineering Ph.D.'s per year, our university system simply isn't big enough to accommodate the millions of science and engineering jobs we need to fill each year.
- 3. The rest of the world is not smarter than us; it just has more people.** With only 4.5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. simply can't produce enough innovators to corner the market.
- 4. We need to reopen our borders.** The U.S. turned down nearly 30 percent of all student-visa applications between 2001 and 2003 (the most recent available figures) from an application pool that shrank by nearly 20 percent. Our visa restrictions—and growing xenophobia—are the equivalent of a costly tariff on talent.
- 5. We need to compete for people.** China and India are beginning to retain their best and brightest, while smaller nations like the UK, Canada, and Australia are offering the scientists who typically would have come here larger labs, more funding, and fewer research restrictions.
- 6. We have to make America look more like America.** We need to do what we do best—offer opportunities that can't be found elsewhere. And we need to think big. Florida argues that we ought to adopt a new GI Bill for the postindustrial economy, build significantly more top-notch research universities, and commit ourselves to not just educating our population but educating the world's.

—TYLER CABOT