

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Update

December 20, 2013

Latest Research

Skilled immigrants face barriers for credential recognition across borders. A [December 18 post on Immigration Impact](#) highlights a new [report](#) from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). The report explores prospects for international cooperation on the recognition of foreign qualifications. It concludes their [series of reports](#) on improving credential recognition in the transatlantic labor market. [Other reports in the series](#) examined credential recognition in the U.S. for foreign professionals, skills and regulation of the internationally mobile engineering workforce, emerging global trends for recognizing foreign qualifications, and strategies to improve the recognition of immigrants' foreign qualifications.

Immigration red-tape means the U.S. is losing its competitive edge in attracting immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators. A December 12 [segment on The Source on Texas Public Radio](#) spotlights research about the contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.S. and discusses barriers the current U.S. immigration system imposes on potential immigrant business startups. During the segment, Dane Stangler of the [Kauffman Foundation](#), discussed his [research and estimates](#) of the employment impact of a Startup Visa for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Global Talent Retention Initiative charts a pathway to national competitiveness in Michigan. The [Global Talent Retention Initiative](#) (GTRI), a product of the [Global Detroit study](#) about the impact immigrant talent has on Michigan's economy, innovation, and entrepreneurship, is the first program in the U. St specifically designed to retain international student talent as a strategy for economic growth. GTRI recently released a [report](#) studying Michigan's more than 25,000 international students. The report notes the important economic contributions foreign students bring to Michigan, and suggests that an international student retention program is an important step in building Michigan's innovation economy.

National Immigrant Integration Conference showcases ideas and best practices for attracting, welcoming, and integrating immigrants. The sixth annual [National Immigrant Integration Conference](#) was held in Miami, Florida in mid-November. Coordinated by the [National Partnership for New Americans](#), the conference brought together policymakers, practitioners, refugee resettlement professionals, faith leaders, elected officials and government employees, funders, organizers, researchers, business representatives, and other stakeholders from across the country. Attendees were able to hear from immigrant integration experts, share best practice ideas, and discuss successes, challenges and opportunities. Speaking during a session on "[Welcoming Cities and Metropolitan Innovation](#)", Knight Foundation Vice President Carol Coletta noted that [attracting and retaining talent](#)—including immigrant talent—is essential to the economic strategies and success of communities.

Cities aspiring to become globally competitive must open up to new people and new ideas. A November 26 [article](#) in the *Plain Dealer* describes a new [report](#) from Strategic Urban Solutions that examines Cleveland specifically. The report suggests a need for more assertive efforts to welcome newcomers to the area. The report points to existing examples in inner-ring suburbs and urban neighborhoods already attracting new residents as strategies the Cleveland region can build upon. In particular, the report notes that immigrants are the "key part of the success of any attraction strategy." Joy Roller, the President of [Global Cleveland](#), remarked that the study supports the efforts her agency is already planning to implement.

New York City's immigrants play an integral role in boosting the city's economy and revitalizing neighborhoods. A new [report from the City of New York's Department of City Planning](#), released December 18, highlights the characteristics and contributions of the city's immigrant population. In particular, the [report](#) examines the growth and composition of various population groups, neighborhood settlement patterns, socio-demographic profiles, and the past, present, and future impact of immigration. The [report's online version](#) includes an interactive data map showing neighborhood settlement patterns of different immigrant groups, as well as other visuals.

Immigrant business owners contribute to communities and states across America. As part of our [project](#) on immigrant entrepreneurs, innovation, and local welcoming initiatives, the American Immigration Council (AIC) recently published new fact sheets for [Kentucky](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Louisiana](#), [Minnesota](#), [Mississippi](#), and [Utah](#). There are now [34 state fact sheets](#) available in this series (with more on the way). These new state fact sheets highlight the [importance](#) of entrepreneurship and innovation to local economies, and ways in which local leaders recognize this and encourage an inclusive environment through local welcoming and integration initiatives. Additionally, the AIC recently created new [state resource pages](#) for all fifty states, compiling a variety of research reports, fact sheets, commentary, and blog posts for each state. An [interactive clickable map](#) of the U.S. provides easy access to each state's resource page. The AIC has also released over [110 congressional district profiles](#), describing a district's foreign born population, age range, levels of education, English language ability, duration of residence in the U.S. and which industries they work in.

News Updates

CEOs agree that the U.S. needs immigration reform. A December 4 [article](#) in the *Kansas City Star* describes a recent forum of over a hundred CEOs sponsored by the *Wall Street Journal*. During the meeting, the group discussed a range of issues with President Obama and other leaders. Immigration reform ranked as the number one issue of concern. The CEOs define their focus as: "The U.S. needs immigration reform to retain talented foreign workers who have been educated in the U.S., attract talent to the U.S. and allow a freer flow of people into and out of the U.S. Immigration policy should mirror labor needs."

Zoosk CEO and immigrant from Iran: "Bring on more immigrant entrepreneurs like me." In a *Wall Street Journal* [op-ed in November](#), Shayan Zadeh, founder and CEO of the online-dating site Zoosk, describes his own story of emigrating from Iran to the U.S. to pursue a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering and the subsequent immigration system hurdles he faced as he tried to start and grow his company.

U.S. schools educate foreign students but U.S. immigration law extricates them. A [November 20 article](#) highlights the difficulties foreign students have when they seek to use their talents for work in the U.S. after graduating. The article notes that the "bipartisan comprehensive immigration bill the Senate passed earlier this year would begin to address many of the problems that currently prevent international students from staying past graduation."

Cities can play a crucial role in ensuring that the policy environment concerning immigration does not undermine economic growth or erode community cohesion. This was the conclusion reached on December 3 by the [Summit of Gateway Cities](#), which was held in New York at Americas Society/Council of the Americas. The meeting consisted of high-level public officials and other business and community leaders from cities around the country. They discussed and shared best practices and policies for facilitating immigrant integration into local communities, encouraging economic development, financial inclusion, strengthening access to services, growing police and community relationships, and addressing the public discourse around immigration to the U.S. economy nationally and locally.

Charlotte, North Carolina and Tucson, Arizona are latest additions to growing list of cities officially welcoming immigrants. As AIC has written about in previous newsletters and on our blog, [ImmigrationImpact.com](#), there is a growing trend for cities and metropolitan areas to intentionally plan and implement strategies to attract, welcome, and integrate immigrants into their communities. [Tucson](#) recently [dubbed](#) itself an "immigrant welcoming city" and [Charlotte](#) recently appointed the first members to its new inter-agency [task force](#) to maximize immigrants' economic and civic contributions to the city. Both cities have joined Welcoming America's [Welcoming Cities and Counties](#) initiative.

Local groups honored for immigrant integration work, including support for immigrant entrepreneurship and neighborhood small business. On December 4, the Migration Policy Institute awarded the annual [E Pluribus Unum prize](#), recognizing exceptional U.S. immigrant integration initiatives. Among this year's recipients are the [Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition](#) (MIRA),

based in Boston, and the [Neighborhood Development Center](#) (NDC), based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. [NDC](#) helps revitalize neighborhoods by empowering [entrepreneurs](#) and small business owners. [MIRA](#) encourages [integration](#) by working to help newcomers more fully contribute to the civic, economic, and social fabric of their communities.

DREAMer “Hackathon” shines a spotlight on the need for immigration reform. On November 20-21, [FWD.us](#) hosted a DREAMer “[hackathon](#)” at LinkedIn headquarters in Mountain View, California. The purpose of the event was to provide a venue for teams of young undocumented computer programmers to develop products within a 24 hour period and showcase their developments to a panel of tech industry leaders. The panel included Facebook’s Mark [Zuckerberg](#), LinkedIn’s Reid Hoffman, Dropbox’s Drew Houston, and FWD.us’ Joe Green. ” Within the short timeframe of the hackathon, DREAMer teams developed a variety of advocacy tool prototypes to help advance meaningful immigration reform. A [video](#) showcasing the products DREAMers produced during the hackathon is available [here](#) and photos are available [here](#).

While we wait, the cost of inaction on immigration reform rises for states. In a November 22 op-ed in the [Birmingham News](#) (Alabama), Ben Johnson, AIC’s executive director, describes the ways in which immigration impacts those states’ economies and the increasing costs incurred as a result of Congress’ inaction on immigration reform. “Immigrants make up a growing percent of Alabama’s population, and 4.6 percent of all business owners in Alabama are foreign-born,” Johnson [states](#). “The state has everything to gain from a smoothly functioning immigration system and much to lose from a system that is not in tune with current economic and social realities.”

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