



WASHINGTON IDEAS FORUM

OCTOBER 4-6, 2011 | WASHINGTON, D.C.

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION WORKING SUMMIT OVERVIEW

Prepared By: Lara Seligman, *The Atlantic*

THE CONVERSATION

Leaders in the fields of technology and innovation met at the Washington Ideas Forum to discuss the dynamics of the next generation of America's high technology advances. The session began with a general discussion about the state of American research in science, technology, engineering, and math. The participants agreed that while the training of young engineers, scientists, and mathematicians is essential, the value of university research is not as clear. Increasingly, innovation takes place in independent laboratories, rather than in a university setting.

"We believe that science and math education is valuable to everyone," said Kevin Finneran, Editor-in-Chief of *Issues in Science & Technology*. "But it is not clear that we understand what skills we really need to be competitive."

Participants agreed that the United States has fallen behind the rest of the world in science and technology. Several of the professors at the table pointed out that, where thirty years ago the majority of students were Americans, now their classes are increasingly full of foreign faces – from China, India, and Korea. Our social culture fundamentally does not value research in math and sciences, participants argued – it is no longer "cool" to be an engineer. Several participants bemoaned the fact that the younger generation is accustomed to an immediate, easy lifestyle, where making money is the ultimate goal. Increasingly, young people are going into the financial services sector, rather than a career in the sciences, in order to make money.

Some disagreed. "The nerds are king right now, frankly," said Charlie Firestone, Executive Director of The Aspen Institute, referring to the eager reception that awaited *The Social Network's* Mark Zuckerberg.

The moderator then turned the discussion to more specific territory, particularly developments in solar energy. However, participants overwhelmingly dismissed any innovation in this area, saying that if the United States is going to innovate, it is going to be in a totally new field. They pointed to social networking as an area that we still have not figured out how to harness to its full potential, and the health care system as one that we can use advancements in information technology to improve. Finneran said that he





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remembers, “Thirty years ago, was the last time solar energy was the greatest thing since sliced bread,” and that he has been disappointed time and time again by the field.

Participants agreed that collaboration and keeping an open mind are key to finding a solution to the current stagnation of innovation in the country. Several at the table pointed to Silicon Valley’s environment of openness and exchange of ideas as critical to its success. In contrast, major universities like Harvard and MIT are characterized by strict hierarchy, regulation, and a risk-averse attitudes that hinder innovation.

“We can’t dictate what the innovation will be,” said Edward Amoroso, Senior Vice President and Chief Security Officer of AT&T Inc. “We have to foster an environment where it can happen.”

5 BIG IDEAS

1. America has fallen behind the rest of the world in science, technology, engineering, and math.
2. Silicon Valley vs. Harvard University. Sharing and collaboration are key.
3. What is the link between investing in science and investing in the economy? Right now there is a tension between innovation and creating jobs.
4. We need to make math and science “cool” again so that the younger generation will want to go into these fields.
5. Innovation is going to be fundamentally new and different, in areas like social networking and the new Internet culture.



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ATTENDEE LIST

Moderator: Alexis Madrigal *Senior Editor* **The Atlantic**

Host: Jay Lauf *Publisher* **The Atlantic**

Edward Amoroso, Ph.D. *Senior Vice President and Chief Security Officer* **AT&T Inc.**

Rebecca Arbogast *Vice President, Global Public Policy* **Comcast**

Robert Atkinson, Ph.D. *President* **Information Technology & Innovation Foundation**

John Bailey *Director* **Dutko Worldwide, Inc.**

Michael Calabrese *Director, Wireless Future Program* **New America Foundation**

Peter Clowney *Director, Content Development* **American Public Media**

James Dougherty *Senior Fellow* **Council on Foreign Relations**

Kevin Finneran *Editor-in-Chief* **Issues in Science & Technology**

Charlie Firestone *Executive Director* **The Aspen Institute**

Dean Garfield *President and Chief Executive Officer* **Information Technology Industry Council**

Jim Harper *Director of Information Policy Studies* **Cato Institute**

Tom Hayes *Vice President of Corporate Marketing* **Marvell Technology Group**

Bobbie Kilberg *President and Chief Executive Officer* **Northern Virginia Technology Council**

Todd Klein *Founder and Managing Partner* **Legend Ventures**

Gregg Melinson *Vice President and Deputy General Counsel, Global Government Affairs* **Hewlett-Packard Company**

William Morin *Director, Government Affairs* **Applied Materials**

Daniel O'Connor *Director of Competition and Telecommunications Policy* **Computer & Communications Industry Association**

Dorothy Robyn, Ph.D. *Deputy Under Secretary, Installations and Environment* **Department of Defense**

Nilmini Gunaratne Rubin *Director of Government Relations* **Information Technology Industry Council**

Vaughan Turekian, Ph.D. *Chief International Officer* **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**

Larry Weber *Chairman* **W2 Group, Inc.**

Irene Wu, Ph.D. *Director of Research* **Federal Communications Commission**

