

## COMMENTARY

**STEM Education: A Race to the Top**

By Edward E. Kaufman

In a recent speech, former President Bill Clinton compared the United States today to the European Union in the 1990s. During that period, he said, many EU countries were creating “a slew of new jobs in energy.” Notably ahead of the green-revolution curve, they now have the strong, growing employment in green jobs we hope to launch with new initiatives and much innovation.

If America is to rebuild its economy, it must develop new opportunities with room for growth.

This means creating green jobs to produce safe water, clean, renewable energy, and other aids to environmental sustainability. It means producing biomedical jobs that help us discover life-saving cures for diseases, jobs in science and technology that lead to creative new ways to deliver old products and services more efficiently—and to communicate with and educate people across the globe.

Training the next generation of young people to pursue these important careers begins with graduating more students skilled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or the STEM subjects.

STEM fields are absolutely critical to the nation’s continued economic recovery, and to our economic competitiveness well into the future. Engineers and scientists have always been, and always will be, the world’s problem-solvers. They are the professionals who will help us innovate, and create the new products and industries that bring with them the jobs of the future.

As a former engineer, I’ve taken great pride in the fact that I have the opportunity to advocate in the U.S. Senate for a renewed educational emphasis on science and innovation. I’ve been able to introduce legislation to coordinate federal STEM education programming, and help secure much-needed funding to help women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas pursue STEM careers. But the task will take more from all of us.

According to a [recent article](#) in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, just 4 percent of American college graduates have a major in engineering, compared with 13 percent of European

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