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Who's got the right stuff? Immigrant entrepreneurs

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If you're concerned about the U.S.'s competitive advantage, then you might find the results of a new study from **The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation** on June 11 of interest.

The report tracked the educational backgrounds of immigrant entrepreneurs who were key founders of technology and engineering companies from 1995 to 2005. It shows a strong correlation between educational attainment (especially in science, technology, engineering and math) and entrepreneurship. It also showed that 96 percent of immigrant founders of technology and engineering companies held bachelor's degrees and 74 percent held graduate or postgraduate degrees. The study was conducted by researchers at **Duke University** and the **University of California, Berkeley**, and is a follow-up to a **report released in January** that showed that 25.3 percent of technology and engineering companies started in the U.S. from 1995 to 2005 had at least one key founder who was foreign born. (The majority of the immigrant entrepreneurs came from India, the UK, China, Taiwan, Japan and Germany.)

I think one take-away from this study is that it confirms that advanced education in science, technology, engineering and math is correlated with "high rates of entrepreneurship and innovation," as lead researcher Vivek Wadhawa of Duke University said. The study also presents a picture of immigrant entrepreneurs who initially came to the U.S. as students or employees of companies that sponsored their visas, who eventually created new businesses.

I hate to sound like a broken record, but I think we need to make a concerted effort in encouraging the new generations here to pick careers in technology before we lose our edge. But instead, many people read studies like this and say, "hey, here's the reason why we need to encourage foreign students to stay in the U.S. after they finish their degrees."

How about this: As Wadhwa of Duke says, "We need to do both."