

## An Alliance for Tomorrow's Workforce

**T**HE TUG OF WAR FOR THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST MINDS has been under way for centuries and shows no signs of ending any time soon. But there's more to the struggle than just vying for the top-shelf talent: business leaders and experts alike don't mince words when attesting to the upcoming worker shortage that is on the horizon. And, what's more, if you're not taking steps to retain, attract, or develop capable workers now, you're already in the loser's seat.

"We will be fighting for labor in the next five or six years," said Bob Nardelli, chairman and CEO of Atlanta-based Home Depot, in a March 6 *Miami Herald* article. "I think anybody that doesn't realize there is a war on for attracting labor is going to come up short."

The labor crunch in the United States is being brought on as the baby-boomer generation hits retirement age, but adding to the complexity is the inner workings of target marketing: matching demographics of the buyers and sellers is good for sales. In Home Depot's case, the company has indicated it will hire older workers in proportion to their overall percentage of the population. But when looking at the increasingly international face of doing business, the matching of demographics is much broader than an age group, and intercultural competency takes center stage.

Boeing, a leading international aerospace giant, is among those companies that is seemingly in tune with the type of employees it needs in today's and tomorrow's world. But more than simply an "international" example, Boeing is a company that is straddling the manufacturing-based and knowledge-based economies of recent years and the twenty-first century, respectively. While Boeing is an old hand at succeeding in the former, it knows that to succeed in the latter, it must invest in the human capital that underpins the knowledge-based economy "It's not enough for our employees to just have the technical skills to design and build sophisticated products that connect people and economies of the world," explained Bob Watt, vice president of government and community relations for Boeing Commercial Airlines, while speaking at an education and business leaders roundtable in February hosted by NAFSA and the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle. Watt, in describing the main attributes Boeing seeks in its employees, emphasized that employees need to be able to:

- Work in teams, creatively solve problems, communicate effectively in a variety of settings, and be committed to lifelong learning.
- Be fully aware of the conscious and unconscious elements of the culture they grew up in.
- Understand how to learn other cultures and respect other cultures for the strengths they bring to the world and the company's work.

To international educators, those attributes are familiar as important qualities, but in today's economy their value is being appreciated by more and more businesses. The onus is equally obvious. Students coming into the workforce must first be properly



prepared and equipped with intercultural savvy. U.S. institutes of higher education are taking steps in the right direction, with some leading the way for others. But even with properly educated students entering the workforce, the demand for workers in the United States is still set to outpace the supply, so warns a February report from the U.S. General Accounting Office. The report, "21st Century Challenges: Reexamining the Base of the Federal Government," indicates that the shortage—brought on by the aging U.S. population—could be mitigated by increased immigration. And therein lies the rub. Recent U.S. government efforts to bolster homeland security have hampered the issuance of visas to international students, scholars, and workers—all of which are components of the workforce in the knowledge-based economy. The report, which was submitted to the Senate Com-

mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, asks but does not answer the question that is on many minds: "How can the United States balance immigration policies, such as worker and student visa programs, to address the need for workers with technical skills and the nation's need to maintain global preeminence in higher education, science, and emerging homeland security requirements?"

While proponents of international education have offered many practical solutions for resolving the visa problem, it is just one component of the bigger picture of how changing economic trends will affect U.S. federal policies and procedures. It is a picture so big and with such far-reaching societal implications that the report anticipates it could require a generation before the United States can "restore a sustainable fiscal path" and modernize the government.

In the meantime, the war for workers wages on, and business leaders and educators have much to talk about. The good news is that, more and more, they're talking the same language. "You can't see boundaries from the window in an airplane. People create boundaries, and we're both in the business of eliminating artificial boundaries," observed Boeing's Watt, in respect to the common goals of business and education. "The more we understand each other, the healthier our economies will become. Vibrant economies are good for our business, and the world. And the work you do with students is so important to breaking down barriers and helping us create one world."

**IE**

**ERIC KRONENWETTER** is managing editor of *International Educator*. Additional information about the NAFSA/Trade Alliance program and panel can be found at [www.nafsa.org/GWD](http://www.nafsa.org/GWD).



# Spain at NAFSA

## Seattle (Washington), May 31 - June 3, 2005

Exhibitor	Web	Booth
Don Quijote	<a href="http://www.donquijote.org">www.donquijote.org</a>	1021
Barcelona Business School	<a href="http://www.bba-edu.org">www.bba-edu.org</a>	1010
Campus Virtual	<a href="http://www.entvalencia.com">www.entvalencia.com</a>	1006
EAE - Business School	<a href="http://www.eae.es">www.eae.es</a>	1007
EDUESPAÑA	<a href="http://www.eduespa.org">www.eduespa.org</a>	1004
ENFOREX - Spanish in the Spanish World	<a href="http://www.enforex.com">www.enforex.com</a>	1012
ESADE - Executive Language Center	<a href="http://www.esade.edu">www.esade.edu</a>	1020
Escuela CF Idiomas	<a href="http://www.escuelacf.com">www.escuelacf.com</a>	1118
EXCAL - Junta de Castilla y León	<a href="http://www.spanishcyl.com">www.spanishcyl.com</a>	1122
Funiversal Travel	<a href="http://www.funiversal.com">www.funiversal.com</a>	1011
Mester Batilo	<a href="http://www.mester.com">www.mester.com</a>	1120
Universidad de Alcalá - Alcalíngua	<a href="http://www.alcalinguaweb.com">www.alcalinguaweb.com</a>	1013
Universidad de Alicante	<a href="http://www.sri.ua.es">www.sri.ua.es</a>	1016
Universidad de Granada - Centro de Lenguas Modernas	<a href="http://www.ugr.es">www.ugr.es</a> / <a href="http://www.clm-granada.com">www.clm-granada.com</a>	1015
Universidad de León	<a href="http://www.unileon.es/spanish">www.unileon.es/spanish</a>	1116
Universidad de Navarra	<a href="http://www.unav.es">www.unav.es</a>	1022
Universidad de Salamanca - Cursos Internacionales	<a href="http://www.usal.es/cursosinternacionales">www.usal.es/cursosinternacionales</a>	1019
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela	<a href="http://www.usc.es/spanish">www.usc.es/spanish</a>	1005
Universidad de Valencia	<a href="http://www.uv.es/relint">www.uv.es/relint</a>	1008
Universidad Nebrija, Madrid	<a href="http://www.nebrija.es">www.nebrija.es</a>	1009
Universidad Pontificia Comillas de Madrid	<a href="http://www.upco.es">www.upco.es</a>	1017
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos	<a href="http://www.urjc.es">www.urjc.es</a>	1018



EMBASSY OF SPAIN | 2655 Le Jeune Road, Suite 1114 | Coral Gables, FL 33134  
 TRADE COMMISSION | Phone: (305) 446 43 87 | Fax: (305) 446 26 02 | [buzonomiami@mcx.es](mailto:buzonomiami@mcx.es)