

NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD
STATEMENT ON OPEN COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS
IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
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In Federal laboratories over the past year, due to heightened security concerns, there are indications of growing difficulty in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of foreign-born scientists and engineers and native-born minorities because of perceptions based on nationality, ethnicity, or other characteristics.

American science and technology have greatly benefited from international exchange and cooperation and from the contributions of foreign-born scientists and engineers who migrated to the U.S. and worked in our universities and Federal research facilities. In the future, there is a risk that such benefits could be curtailed by generic restrictions – defined by nationality or ethnicity – on access of personnel to U.S. laboratories, supercomputers, and intellectual “exports” in the form of scientific meetings and other modes of communication.

U.S. leadership in both defense and civilian arenas and our national well-being depend on employing the best talent, research facilities, and equipment and on maximizing the open exchange of ideas to foster advances in science and engineering knowledge. Discouraging scientists and engineers from working in world-class research facilities for reasons of national origin, ethnicity, or citizenship would curb the flow of ideas, preclude collaboration with peers, and inhibit critical knowledge transfer that could undermine our long-term security interests in areas such as nuclear nonproliferation and waste cleanup.

The National Science Board affirms the prime importance of protecting U.S. defense science and technology and safeguarding national security while maintaining openness in scientific communication. Rather than contribute to more effective security, policies that restrict such open communication and exchanges squander human talent and deny American science and engineering the benefits of openness and excellence. Our long term national interest underscores the importance of having policy makers recognize the substantial benefits our Nation receives from international scientific exchange and cooperation.

To sustain the health and preeminence of the U.S. science and engineering enterprise, the full utilization of talent and open international exchange – across sectors, institutional settings, and disciplines – are essential wherever research is conducted.

The National Science Board is the governing board of the National Science Foundation and provides advice to the President and Congress on matters of science and engineering policy.