

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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## Tech boom forces U.S. schools to seek STEM talent abroad

### Veteran engineering dean says few programs could survive without international students

Why, despite decades of concerted effort, can't university engineering programs attract and retain more women and people of color? Why, on the other hand, have American-born white males all but disappeared from many schools' science and technology graduate programs?

Why have the nation's STEM programs come to rely on foreign graduate students for their very survival, and what, if any, danger might that dependence present long term — for American higher education, for the U.S. economy, and for national security?

Leo Kempel, PhD, dean of the Michigan State University (MSU) College of Engineering since 2013, answers those questions — and many others — in the latest edition of the higher-education podcast *Innovators*. The audio series is presented by Harris Search Associates, a global recruiting firm specializing in academic medicine, engineering, and technology.

Among Kempel's insights:

- On the push for diversity in the STEM fields: “We’re seeing gains, but not the kind of gains that you would have thought we could have over 30-some years. You’ve got to have an expanded pool that includes women. It includes African Americans and Hispanic students. It includes international students.”
- On the relative scarcity of white males in graduate science and engineering programs: “The Caucasian male that was the predominant grad student in the 1950s is still there in 2019, but, to be honest, my perspective is, if you relied upon that, you would never meet the pool that you need.”
- On recruiting STEM grad students in a vibrant economy: “I’m not competing with Ohio State, although we compete with Ohio State. I’m not competing with Purdue, although we compete with Purdue. I’m competing with Apple. I’m competing with Google. I’m competing with Lockheed Martin and Boeing.”

The 30-minute interview was conducted by Richard A. Skinner, PhD, a two-time former university president who now serves as senior consultant at Harris Search Associates.

*Innovators*, which debuted in August 2017, features timely conversations with global thought leaders in the areas of higher education, research, engineering, technology, and the health sciences.

“Our goal is to give listeners the opportunity to learn from national leaders who are changing the landscape of innovation and discovery,” said Jeffrey G. Harris, founder and managing partner of Harris Search Associates. “Now, more than ever, information really is power.”

The conversation with Kempel and an archive of previous *Innovators* segments are available on the web at [harrisandassociates.com](http://harrisandassociates.com) and on leading podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Libsyn, Google Podcasts, Overcast, Stitcher, and Spotify.

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### About Harris Search Associates

Harris Search Associates is a leading global executive search and talent advisory firm. Established in 1997 by Jeffrey G. Harris, the firm focuses on the recruitment of senior leaders to support the growth of the foremost universities, research parks, institutes, national laboratories, academic health centers, hospital enterprises, and organizations driving global innovation and discovery. Based in Dublin, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, Harris Search Associates maintains regional offices in Dallas and San Francisco. The firm is a shareholder member of IIC Partners, one of the largest global retained executive search organizations, with 43 offices in 29 countries.