

THE ECONOMIC CLUB

O F W A S H I N G T O N, D. C.

**Excerpts from the Signature Event featuring 2015 Education Panel:
Dr. Ángel Cabrera, George Mason University; Dr. John Degioia,
Georgetown University; and Dr. Steve Knapp, The George
Washington University**

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"We don't have the best system in the world, as we once did. And that has to be very clear to everybody. . . . It is true, we have some of the best universities in the world in this country. But when you look at the system as a whole, there are some serious issues that we're facing. We're no longer leading the world in terms of percentage of graduates in the economy, at a time when our economy needs more graduates. We're not leading the world in terms of learning outcomes and standardized tests and how well people can do math and so forth. And we're having serious issues around access with the skyrocketing tuition." ~ *Dr. Ángel Cabrera, President, George Mason University*

"Follow your passion. A liberal arts education is of incalculable worth. A STEM preparation is an immediate roadmap to the economy." ~ *Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*

"More than 80 percent of higher education in the United States takes place in public institutions. . . . We regarded education and research as public goods. In 1975, more than 60 percent of the budgets for state universities came from the states. Today it's under 35 percent. That is unsustainable for us if we want to ensure the next generation are going to have the kinds of opportunities that we had." ~ *Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*

"The most important thing that happens during an undergraduate's career is they engage in the work of formation – the formation of their intellect, the formation of their heart, the formation of their soul. . . . There are lots of different ways to engage in formation in our world. You can become a part of the military. You can join a religious order. You can be involved in an entrepreneurial venture. The idea of the university, formation takes place built around knowledge. And in recognizing that, finding that passion that we were talking about earlier and enabling yourself to discover the conditions that enable you to be your very best self, your most authentic self, is the most important work you can engage in during those years." ~ *Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*

"Our challenge is to balance the need to preserve the core academic disciplines on which the whole progress of knowledge over centuries has relied, and really has been the major driver of economic progress and even progress in things like the improvement of human health and our lifespan. We have to balance that with a more market-oriented, more nimble, more flexible way of approaching our resource questions. And that means developing courses that are market-oriented that really address the needs of multiple constituents that they bring to us, but not doing that at the expense of preserving those core academic disciplines that are the basis of knowledge." ~ *Dr. Steve Knapp, President, The George Washington University*

"The irony when people talk about how you need to get some kind of vocational training and higher education is they're missing out on what employers themselves will tell us they really need to succeed, which is the ability to think critically, the ability to work in teams, the ability to analyze, the ability to communicate and to have effective communication skills. They can acquire that in any field they can enter into in any of our colleges and universities if they work hard in those fields. . . . It does not matter what a student majors in. The most important thing for them to do is to get connected to faculty who will inspire them, will open doors for them, and really show them a path forward into that acquisition of skills that will make a difference for the rest of their lives." ~ *Dr. Steve Knapp, President, The George Washington University*

"What's happened is, within less than a generation, we basically changed the deal on students. When most people in this room went to college, if you wanted to go to a public school the deal was: You're going to have to pay a little bit of the cost of your education, maybe 20 percent of it. The rest is going to be provided to you by the state. In less than one generation, we flipped that around and we've said, sorry, the state cannot be as generous as it once was with you. You are on the hook for most of it. So in other words, there's been a constant decline of state appropriations per student in all the public universities across the country. When you look at the curve of how appropriations have gone and how tuition has evolved, they are the mirror image. That is the single-most important factor that has affected this *[rising tuition costs]*." ~ *Dr. Ángel Cabrera, President, George Mason University*

"Our economy produces far more jobs that require post-secondary education than post-secondary education provides people for those jobs. Eleven million more jobs in the next decade will be created than we'll be able to provide people for those jobs." ~ *Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*

"Obviously, you have to do what makes you happy, what you're passionate about. But . . . if you're open to a number of choices, computer science, STEM degrees, that's where the jobs are today." ~ *Dr. Ángel Cabrera, President, George Mason University*

"There would be no Silicon Valley without Stanford and Berkeley up the road. And there is no way to build a competitive hub in the 21st century if it's not around world-class research universities." ~ *Dr. Ángel Cabrera, President, George Mason University*

"The level of R&D spending in Silicon Valley is roughly equivalent to what it is here. The difference is the level of commercialization of the research and the development that comes out of our two respective regions. We're more siloed here." ~ *Dr. John DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*