Summary of *The Race for U.S. Technical Talent*

Attracting highly mobile technical talent is critical to staying on the cutting-edge of the technological frontier. Conventional wisdom holds that the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and defense industrial base (DIB)—collectively referred to as the defense community—generally struggle to access this talent, but little data is available to put these claims into perspective.

This policy brief uses LinkedIn data to examine the movement of technical talent across industry sectors and major metro areas over time, with the goal of informing future workforce development efforts across the DOD, DIB, and the United States more broadly. Our analysis validated much of the conventional wisdom regarding the defense community's technical workforce:

1. **The defense community is not replacing or expanding its technical workforce at the same rate as other industry sectors.**
2. **The defense community remains relatively isolated from other sectors in terms of talent cross-flow and geographical distribution, which can potentially slow technological adoption.**
3. **The DOD recruits a relatively small share of its technical workforce from top-ranked computer science schools.**

While none of these trends is necessarily a problem in and of itself, when taken together, they can produce an environment that is not adequately equipped to recruit and retain talent, drive innovation, and adopt emerging technologies across the enterprise. We propose four recommendations for how the defense community can begin addressing these challenges and better access technical talent:

1. **Collaborate and partner as needed with the commercial software sector to promote sectoral crossover and industry exchanges.**
2. **Invest in the human capital of the existing talent pool.**
3. **Investigate how to encourage the defense community to become more integrated with the larger U.S. technical workforce.**
4. **Cultivate a future civil-service-minded technical workforce.**

Ultimately our findings suggest that the DOD's current strategies for accessing technical talent may not be appropriately targeted or reflect the reality of today's labor market dynamics. Without a shift in mindset and strategy, the defense community may continue to struggle to recruit and retain the necessary technical talent.

For more information:

- Download the report: https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/the-race-for-us-technical-talent
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