

**Why Change?** By Victoria M. Young, posted 2009 on [www.amissingingredient.com](http://www.amissingingredient.com)

For many years now in the veterinary profession, we have been discussing the need to import veterinarians to fill certain positions if we could not recruit more students for those spots. In my mind, the veterinary profession should be regarded as a sentinel for other professions. What we see happening within our ranks could potentially happen in other professions.

If public education is truly in a state of decline, how long would it be before we would find ourselves in the position where skilled jobs in our schools needed to be filled by non-Americans?

Attending a science teaching institute in 2002, the emphasis of the group was to promote science education in our K-8 classrooms. These institutes were sponsored in part by corporations. Many corporations were finding it difficult to acquire the trained scientist they needed. And after 9/11, visa restrictions were tight and travel was down.

At that moment, corporations were looking down the road at the possibility that they would need to use the American pool of workers if visa restrictions remained tight. But of course, there is outsourcing and it doesn't appear that obtaining a worker visa did remain restricted.

On September 14, 2008, an Associated Press article by Garry Mitchell caught my eye. The headline read *States hire foreign teachers to ease shortages*. That should have been a moment for a national reality check because, folks, "We are here." This is what I feared would happen. Even though it is something I have thought about and anticipated it still gives me chills because I didn't think we would get here so soon.

The article focused on Baldwin County in Alabama and its' shortage of teachers, "especially in courses such as math and science." They also mentioned foreign languages and special education. We are talking about good bread and butter-type jobs that we didn't prepare our students to be ready to fill.

Your reaction may be different. You may think this is one place, an isolated incident. But the article mentioned three companies that are placing foreign teachers in our schools: Avenida International Consultants, Visiting International Faculty, and Intalage, Inc.. The states included in this discussion were Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and California.

There is much debate occurring behind the scenes as to whether or not we are producing sufficient numbers of students in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. That supply/ demand/ immigration/ economic debate will continue while our doctoral degree programs in the U.S. are awarding 50% of those doctorates in Engineering and 45% in the Natural Sciences to non-U.S. citizens. Have we educated enough of the world yet to Leave US Behind?

Our educational leaders have led us down this road, to this point. Why change our U.S. education system? "There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction."

— Winston Churchill