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## *How to foster Boston's next generation of innovators*

**B**oston has been on a winning streak lately. From General Electric selecting the city for its world headquarters, to the explosive growth of the Innovation District, and the success of HubWeek in convening the best creative and inventive minds, it is clear that innovators see Boston as the place to pursue their dreams.

While we want to continue to be a global magnet for innovators, we also need to focus on developing the next generation of innovation leaders right here at home – those studying in our public school classrooms. Many of these students are immigrants who aspire to be the first in their family to graduate from college – dreaming about a future of opportunities their parents may never have imagined.

Their opportunities cannot be limited to seizing a finite piece of the proverbial “economic pie.” Rather, we must work together to grow that pie, creating more opportunities through innovation. This will take a strong public-private-nonprofit partnership, joining together to ensure our local students can obtain the high-quality education necessary to spark innovation and help them realize their full potential.

Boston is already working to foster this environment. At a time when the national political debate is creating anxiety and even fear among many new Americans, Boston is embracing these communities and working to ensure that first-generation American students are given the opportunity to play a starring role in our vibrant new economy.

That opportunity starts with the city of Boston and its focus on

STEM education in schools and jobs programs in the summer that give students real-world work experience. Nonprofits like Bottom Line that are setting the bar for personalized student support use one-on-one guidance and mentoring to help first-generation-to-college students get into and graduate from school. Businesses donate time and resources to the effort, such as Vertex Pharmaceuticals' Learning Lab at its Seaport headquarters where they teach hands-on science to Boston students.

The impact of these efforts is already evident in the success of students like Cankang Wu of Chinatown, who emigrated with his family from China. He attended Excel High School with its STEM focus. He studied at Vertex's Learning Lab, obtained a summer job in Vertex's robotics department and earned a Vertex Science Leaders full four-year college scholarship. Bottom Line's trained counselors helped him prepare for and get into the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and will continue to provide support while he studies engineering as the first in his family to attend college.

Boston students like Cankang are the future of our innovation economy, but we need to do more to realize that future. We need to make sure our young people have the education they need to compete and innovate in this changing world.

*Martin Walsh is mayor of Boston; Mike Wasserman is executive director of Bottom Line Massachusetts; and Dr. Jeffrey Leiden is president and CEO of Vertex Pharmaceuticals*