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## Education Leads Silicon Valley Wish List

By BARNABY J. FEDER

So what do technology executives want from President Bush? And will they have a voice?

Over the decades, with various men in the White House, top executives from information technology heavyweights like I.B.M. , Motorola , Intel and Hewlett-Packard have been well known and sometimes influential figures in Washington.

Robert W. Galvin and other Motorola executives played prominent roles in trade disputes with Japan from the 1970's on, John A. Young of Hewlett-Packard became the business world's most prominent spokesman on American competitiveness in the 1980's and Thomas Watson Jr., after retiring from I.B.M., took on the sensitive post of ambassador to the Soviet Union in the cold war.

The Clinton years, though, featured the passage into political adulthood of younger companies linked to the growth of the Internet, an eclectic group including equipment vendors like Sun Microsystems , EMC and Cisco Systems and software and service providers like Oracle and America Online (now AOL Time Warner ).

Policy makers also gained new respect for Silicon Valley's venture capitalists and entrepreneurs at start-up companies — not to mention a taste for the campaign contributions they generated.

Such newcomers may find themselves in a position to exercise substantial influence with the new Bush administration, according to experts like Barry Rubin, a professor at the George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management in Washington.

Mr. Rubin said the technology sector had matured enough that many more executives recognize Washington's relevance, especially when it comes to the decisions President Bush makes in filling vacancies on regulatory agencies and naming assistant and deputy secretaries in crucial cabinet departments.

"That's where their influence could really be felt," Mr. Rubin said.

Besides sympathetic political appointments, though, what does the technology industry want from Washington?

"Education is the issue that resonates, whatever party they're from," said Rich White, a former congressman who recently became chief executive of TechNet, a nonpartisan political meeting ground for Silicon Valley executives. "They are all concerned with math and science education and getting technology into the classroom. There's a strong sense of the need to do something quickly."

Mr. White says TechNet also sees a strong consensus for pushing Congress to grant President Bush so-called fast-track authority for negotiating trade agreements.

There is a growing awareness that the technology industry could be affected by government policies affecting the general economic climate — but little agreement on what should be done in that sphere, he said. Nor is there a consensus in the high-technology industry on antitrust and many other issues, Mr. White said.

Indeed, some of that diversity is apparent even among the technology executives Mr. Bush invited to Texas earlier this month for a private briefing that was part of his preparation to succeed President Clinton.

Because this silicon cabinet was hand picked to include only people who had backed Mr. Bush in his race with Vice President Al Gore, it was hardly surprising when reports of that meeting recounted their support for Bush initiatives like a broad-based tax cut.

Craig Barrett, president and chief executive of Intel, said in an e-mail message to a reporter after the meeting that a tax cut and "coherent energy strategy" would be the best ways to restore consumer confidence.

But when the 16 executives who visited with Mr. Bush were each asked recently to comment on the most important steps the government could take for high-technology businesses, the half-dozen who chose to respond tended to cite priorities other than a tax cut.

Here are excerpts from the six executives' responses:

Craig Barrett

President and chief executive

Intel

The government needs to provide leadership to help fix the K-12 education system, especially in the areas of math and science.

Science and mathematics drive new technologies, and new technologies drive the standard of living and economic growth. To maintain a competitive edge requires widespread math and science competency. This is a complex issue, and it will not be solved easily. It will require government, industry and educators to cooperate; it will require teaching improvements; and it will require accountability in the system. The National Commission on Math and Science Teaching for the 21st Century recommendations, combined with President Bush's emphasis on reading skills in early school years, is a good place to start.

Gregory W. Slayton

Chairman and chief executive

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Massive gains in private sector productivity -- due in large part to improvements in information technology -- have not been matched in the public sector. If federal government labor productivity grows at even one-half the rate of private sector nonfarm labor productivity over the past four years, this administration could realize \$65 billion to \$85 billion in labor savings over the next four years. President Bush has an opportunity to save billions for use on other initiatives or to pay down the national debt. At the same time, he would be freeing up thousands of younger professionals who might have otherwise taken public sector jobs for work in the private sector, where they are badly needed. More effective utilization of information technology makes this a very real possibility.

James C. Morgan

Chairman and chief executive

Applied Materials

While the Fed rate cut and front-loaded tax cuts are needed as short-term stimulators, nothing will impact America's long-term prosperity more than strong trade policy. Technology is America's enduring competitive advantage in the global economy, and we must leverage this advantage to boost exports and grow high-quality, high-wage jobs and provide tax revenue here at home by opening markets around the world. Trade policy affects the technology community in many ways, from tax policies to export controls to work-force issues. It will be President Bush's job to build a new consensus on Capitol Hill and across America that trade and global commerce are critical to our national well-being.

Michael Dell

Chairman

Dell Computer

Improving the quality of America's education is the single most important impact the federal government can make on business. Education is essential to the development of a competitive work force and the Internet must be integrated into learning environments from the beginning. Access to technology in the classroom challenges children, encourages them to

learn and can put them on equal footing with peers around the world. Government must continue to support programs that will bring technology and the Internet into the hands and minds of children and teachers.

Scott McNealy

Chairman and chief executive

Sun Microsystems

The single most important issue facing America's high-tech sector is also the most important issue for everyone else: keeping the United States economy strong. I have great concern that the Fed has been too obsessed with inflation, and that by continually raising interest rates, considerable damage has been done. With low unemployment, a rising G.D.P., and more people making good wages, you shouldn't have to raise interest rates. Those are all good things. Let's hope the recent rate reversal isn't too little, too late.

Richard J. Egan

Chairman and co-founder

EMC

We need to keep our economy growing smarter by investing in the skills of our children. In spite of the wealth of new opportunities, the number of graduates in computer science and engineering continues to be inadequate. To change this, we need to get students more interested in math and science at an early age. We need to do more than simply bridge the digital divide with technology in classrooms. Gifted teachers in K-12 can make all the difference in the career path of a child. Programs to attract new teachers for science and math and to allow retired technical professionals to teach math and science in the classroom would go a long way in helping to address the unprecedented opportunities ahead of us.