

Director's Foreword

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The Hoover Institution is currently engaged in nine focused public policy research initiatives, the most ambitious of which is titled *American Public Education*. As Americans, we are increasingly concerned about the academic performance of our children and the structure and organization of our elementary and secondary school systems. The purpose of this Hoover initiative is to examine issues on education policy, offering *ideas defining a free society*—in this instance, recommendations on education policy designed to bring about positive improvement in K–12 education consistent with the founding principles of our free society.

We at Hoover are grateful to Hoover fellow Edward Lazear for organizing this volume and to the team of scholars who contributed their thoughts; they are an august group to weigh in on this subject. This effort serves not only as part of a number of offerings on education policy but also as the first of a projected series that will address major themes associated with long-term trends and public policy formation. Such a series is conceived as collecting thoughts on the big picture associated with trends and concerns that will impact Americans. We must begin a

dialogue sooner rather than later, but the dissemination ideas about long-term trends and the formation of long-term policy are perhaps the most difficult tasks we face as a society. Whereas much attention is brought to bear on the short-term crisis, we seek to alter the balance by introducing a “big idea” series.

The investment of society’s resources in quality human-capital accumulation is the subject of this volume. We hope that the contributors to this volume will set the course for effective ideas that will positively impact the value of our human resources and, in so doing, raise the quality of life for all citizens.