

The Power of Foreign Influence and Interference in U.S. Academic Institutions

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April 22, 2022

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Agenda

- History
- Methodology
- Foreign Threats: Influence and Interference
- Why Care?
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Future Studies
- Conclusion

History



- U.S.-China relations are complex
- Xi Jinping openly encouraged the CCP to “pick flowers in foreign lands to make honey in China”
- Trends show a drastic increase in China’s student enrollment in U.S. universities
- CCP’s goal is to achieve global ambitions as a superpower by 2049
 - Play a leading role in international affairs and move to the forefront of global technological innovation and development
 - China’s 14th Five-Year Plan, published in 2021 is a strategic blueprint for short and long-term goals

Statistics

Table 1: “Top Ten Origin Countries of International Students” that sought education in the U.S., from 1949–50, 1979–80, and 2019–20

1949-50			1979-80			2019-20		
Country	Number	Share (%)	Country	Number	Share (%)	Country	Number	Share (%)
Total	26,400	100.0	Total	286,000	100.0	Total	1,075,000	100.0
Canada	4,400	16.5	Iran	51,000	17.9	China	373,000	34.6
Taiwan	3,600	13.8	Taiwan	18,000	6.1	India	193,000	18.0
India	1,400	5.1	Nigeria	16,000	5.7	South Korea	50,000	4.6
United Kingdom	800	3.1	Canada	15,000	5.3	Saudi Arabia	31,000	2.9
Mexico	800	3.1	Japan	12,000	4.3	Canada	26,000	2.4
Cuba	700	2.8	Hong Kong	10,000	3.5	Vietnam	24,000	2.2
Philippines	700	2.7	Venezuela	10,000	3.4	Taiwan	24,000	2.2
Germany	700	2.5	Saudi Arabia	10,000	3.3	Japan	18,000	1.6
Colombia	600	2.2	India	9,000	3.1	Brazil	17,000	1.6
Iran	600	2.2	Thailand	7,000	2.3	Mexico	14,000	1.3
Other Countries	12,100	46.0	Other Countries	129,000	45.1	Other Countries	307,000	28.5

According to the U.S. Department of State, in 2020, the top three countries with the highest number of applicants for U.S. entry were:

Country	F1 Visa	J1 Visa	Border Crossing Card
India	16,717.00	6,291.00	499,213.00
Mainland China	15,028.00	11,380.00	316,450.00
South Korea	10,911.00	7,645.00	-
Philippines	-	-	121,687.00

Source: IIE, “All Places of Origin: International Student Data from the 2020 Open Doors Report.” Open Doors is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by IIE

Methodology

Sources:

- Volunteers: Face-to-face discussions with a diverse group of volunteers that shared personal testimonials (Anonymous)
- Publications: Reports, newspapers, journals, books, international publications, and a variety of online documents
- Data: Universities, Think Tanks, U.S. Government, Commercial Organizations (Both Private and Public)

Foreign Threats Influence and Interference in Academia

Some foreign governments exhibit sophisticated efforts to exploit, influence, interfere, and undermine U.S. academic institutions with intent to negatively impact America's strategic advantage

Threat	Description
<p>United Front (Targeting)</p>	<p>Valuable tool to strengthen support for the CCP both inside and outside China by exploiting individuals to work on behalf of the CCP abroad.</p>
<p>Confucius Institutes (CI) Li Changchun, the head of propaganda for the CCP, confirmed that CIs were “an important part of China’s overseas propaganda setup.”</p>	<p>Founded in 2004. Enrolled + 9M students at 525 institutes in 146 countries and regions. Criticized for being Chinese-state propaganda in various countries. Serve as PRC propaganda hubs on American college and university campuses since 2004 (France and Canada).</p>
<p>Undisclosed Financial Gifting American Universities Accept CCP Funding</p>	<p>The CCP’s ‘financial-gifting’ in exchange for research and/or influence to affect U.S. research to benefit the PRC pose a threat to the U.S. research enterprise. Some universities receive funding from foreign entities for academic programs in exchange for confidential/secretive contracts, or financial ‘gifts.’ When universities and staff do not disclose foreign funding, it may pose risk for potential malign foreign influence or interference in academics.</p>
<p>Talent Programs “The west is the largest treasure trove of technological talent.”</p>	<p>The CCP Talent Programs pose a threat to the U.S. research enterprise. There are more than 200 CCP directed Talent Programs, and recently the CCP removed references to Talent Programs from their websites. The CCP has over six hundred stations that aggressively targets and recruits U.S.-based researchers and scientists, regardless of ethnicity or citizenship, who focus on or have access to cutting-edge research and technology. While not illegal, disclosure and transparency is necessary.</p>

Cases / Statistics

United Front:



CI: As of February 22, 2022, a total of nineteen CIs remain in the U.S., are funded by the CCP, and several are in process of closure.

CLOSED

Homeland Security News Wire

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PUBLIC SAFETY PUBLIC HEALTH REGIONAL SCI/TECH

China Watch

Even on U.S. Campuses, China Cracks Down on Students Who Speak Out

By Sebastian Rotella

Published 9 December 2021

Share

Students and scholars from China who criticize the regime in Beijing can face quick retaliation from fellow students and Chinese officials who harass their families back home. U.S. universities rarely intervene.

NEWS | 11 March 2020

Universities are forging ties with the FBI as US cracks down on foreign influence

Public institutes are responding to allegations of interference in research by foreign governments, especially China.

Neil Subramaniam

Even on U.S. Campuses, China Cracks Down on Students Who Speak Out

Students and scholars from China who criticize the regime in Beijing can face quick retaliation from fellow students and Chinese officials who harass their families back home. U.S. universities rarely intervene.

STAFF REPORTS Dec 15, 2021

December 15, 2021

Dear Purdue students, staff and faculty,

Purdue learned from a [national news account last week](#) that one of our students, after speaking out on behalf of freedom and others martyred for advocating it, was harassed and threatened by other students from his own home country. Worse still, his family back home, in this case China, was visited and threatened by agents of that nation's secret police.

We regret that we were unaware at the time of these events and had to learn of them from national sources. That reflects the atmosphere of intimidation that we have discovered surrounds this specific sort of speech.

Any such intimidation is unacceptable and unwelcome on our campus. Purdue has punished less personal, direct and threatening conduct. Anyone taking exception to the speech in question had their own right to express their disagreement, but not to engage in the actions of harassment which occurred here. If those students who issued the threats can be identified, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Likewise, any student found to have reported another student to any foreign entity for exercising their freedom of speech or belief will be subject to significant sanction.

International students are nothing new at Purdue University, which welcomed its first Asian admittees well over a century ago. We are proud that several hundred international students, nearly 200 of them Chinese, enrolled again this fall.

But joining the Purdue community requires acceptance of its rules and values, and no value is more central to our institution or to higher education generally than the freedom of inquiry and expression. Those seeking to deny those rights to others, let alone to collude with foreign governments in repressing them, will need to pursue their education elsewhere.

Sincerely,

Mitch

Purdue President Mitch Daniels sent an email to the university criticizing the harassment against Purdue student Zhihao Kong, whose experience was documented in an article on ProPublica, an investigative journalism outlet based in New York City.

Screenshot

Purdue University

Nineteen Remaining Confucius Institutes in the United States As of February 2022

Created by National Association of Scholars

Source: https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states

Number	American Institution	Chinese Partner Institution	State
1	Troy University	Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology	AL
2	Alabama A&M University (will close, date unclear)	Nanjing Forestry University	AL
3	San Diego Global Knowledge University (transferred in June 2019 from San Diego State University)	Xiamen University	CA
4	Stanford University	Peking University	CA
5	Wesleyan College	Guangzhou University	GA
6	Valparaiso University (will close March 1, 2022)	Zhejiang University of Technology	IN
7	St. Cloud State University (CI is "paused" while the university conducts a review)	The Education Department of Jilin Province	MN
8	Webster University	Beijing Language and Culture University	MO
9	Alfred University	China University of Geosciences, Wuhan	NY
10	University of Akron (will close June 30, 2022)	Henan University	OH
11	University of Toledo	Yanshan University	OH
12	Bryant University (will not reapply for funding, possibly will close)	China University of Geosciences, Wuhan	RI
13	University of Utah	Sichuan University	UT
14	Southern Utah University	Hunan Normal University	UT
15	Pacific Lutheran University	Sichuan University, Chongqing Education Commission	WA
16	China Institute	East China Normal University	NY
17	East Central Ohio Educational Service Center		OH
18	Davis School District		UT
19	Simpson County Schools		KY

Cases / Statistics (Continued)

Financial Gifting




Talent Programs



Institutional Compliance with Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the General Counsel


October 2020



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NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL



GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL SECURITY PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM 33 (NSPM-33) ON NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

A Report by the
Subcommittee on Research Security
Joint Committee on the Research Environment

January 2022

THE CONVERSATION

Academics | Arts | Politics | Tech

COVID-19 | Arts | Culture | Economy | Business | Education | Environment | Energy | Ethics | Religion | Health | Politics | Society | Science | Tech



The Thousand Talents Plan is part of China's long quest to become the global scientific leader

Published August 31, 2020 11:17pm EDT

Zheng Yu | AP

The Thousand Talents Plan is a Chinese government program to attract scientists and engineers from overseas. Since the plan began in 2008, it has recruited thousands of researchers from countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Singapore, Canada, Japan, France and Australia.

China's efforts to lure top international research talent, the US, Canada and other countries warn that the Thousand Talents Plan may facilitate technology transfer.

The CCP uses the plan to obtain technologies and expertise from overseas, and arguably, Intellectual Properties and means to build their power by leveraging those technologies with minimal costs. According to a US Senate committee report, the **Thousand Talents Plan** is one of more than 200 CCP talent recruitment programs.



Last year, a US Senate committee report, the **Thousand Talents Plan** is one of more than 200 CCP talent recruitment programs.

In Australia, foreign policy think tank the Australian Strategic Policy Institute recently published a detailed report on Australian involvement in the plan, the parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security is set to launch an inquiry into foreign interference in universities.

Why Care?

WHY IT ALL MATTERS:

In 2020, the estimated economic loss from the theft of intellectual property and trade secrets, JUST from the CCP, and JUST from known and identified efforts, is estimated between \$300 Billion and \$600 Billion per year (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative). To make it more relevant to Americans reading this, it is approximately \$4,000 to \$6,000 per American family of four...after taxes.

Source: <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov>

- U.S. National and Economic Security at Stake
 - Competition and Critical Emerging Technologies (CETs)
- Accountability
 - Protect People and Federally Funded Research
 - DoJ China Initiative (Ended 2022) / National Security Presidential Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33)
 - Taxpayers (Public Trust)
 - Openness is the foundation for U.S. Institutes of Higher Learning
- U.S. Institutes of Higher Learning Academic Reputation
 - Accreditation, Funding, and Compliance

Findings

- Academic Institutions do not disclose foreign funding
- Academic Institutions continue to support the PRC
- Academic staff and students participate in Talent Programs

* These actions were undetected, which demonstrates a lack of internal controls to include lax local oversight, (such as a lack of robust internal local audits, lax compliance with policies, standards, and training).

Colleges and Universities Fail to Report Billions in Foreign Donations

An Education Department investigation triggered schools to report \$6.5 billion in previously undisclosed gifts from foreign countries.

By Lauren Camera | Feb. 13, 2020, at 11:10 a.m.



Cornell University is one of 10 schools being investigated by the Education Department and Trump administration. (GETTY IMAGES)

Colleges and universities previously failed to report upward of \$6.5 billion in gifts from China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and other foreign countries, an ongoing

investigation. Schools, including Cornell University, Yale University, the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, Boston University, Texas A&M University, and Carnegie Mellon University, accounted for half of that figure, disclosing \$3.6 billion in previously unreported foreign gifts.

Harvard professor found guilty of lying about Chinese government ties

By Paul Lefler, CNN
Updated 12:52 PM ET, Tue December 22, 2021



Charles Lieber of Harvard University is seen in this undated file photo.

WASHINGTON (CNN) — A Harvard University professor was convicted by a federal jury on Tuesday of lying to the U.S. about his involvement with China's government, the Justice Department announced.

Dr. Charles Lieber, 82, the former chair of Harvard's Chemistry and Chemical Biology Department, was found guilty of two counts of making false statements to federal authorities, two counts of making and submitting a false income tax return, and two counts of failing to file reports of foreign bank and financial accounts with the Internal Revenue Service.

Lieber's research group at Harvard had received over \$25 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense, which requires disclosing foreign financial conflicts of interests. The jury found that Lieber had lied about his affiliation with the Wuhan University of Technology, in China, and a contract he had with a Chinese talent recruitment plan to attract high-level scientists to the country.

Source: CNN.com, December 2021

Source: US News, February 13, 2020

Twenty-Two U.S. Universities and Colleges that Contribute to the PRC's Military-Civilian Fusion Strategy (as of February 2022)

Rutgers University	Portland State University
The University of Washington	The College of William and Mary
Arizona State University	The University of Toledo
The University of Utah	Xavier University of Louisiana
Emory University	The University of Tennessee at Knoxville
San Francisco State University	Bryant University
The University of Central Arkansas	The University of Delaware
Alfred University	San Diego Global Knowledge University
The University of Texas at Dallas	Stanford University
Texas A&M University	Tufts University
Pacific Lutheran University	The University of Oregon

Source: Senator Marco Rubio Calls for an End to U.S-China University Partnerships that Support the Development of China's Military Technologies 10

Stakeholders



- Congress
 - USG
 - U.S. Allies
 - Academia
 - Educators, Researchers, Scholars, and Students
 - Corporations
 - Taxpayers
- Every stakeholder involved in academia and the research enterprise, to include but is not limited to, U.S. lawmakers, the USG, research organizations and researchers, all of whom has a role in both protecting research security and maintaining the core values that drive American leadership in science, technology, and innovation, openness, transparency, honesty, equity, fair competition, objectivity, and democratic values.
 - These values are critical to America’s success. Stakeholders must also continue to engage with taxpayers—the American people. These threats to will not vanish, so vigilance is required along with flexibility to adjust laws, policies, and perceptions until America gets it right.

Recommendations

- Implement NSPM-33 “National Security Strategy for U.S. Government-Supported Research and Development” (Disclosure Policy, Oversight and Enforcement, and Research Security Programs)
 - Tie compliance to accreditation and funding
- Seek Continuous Improvement to protect research
- Develop and share best practices across the research community
- Develop next generation of researchers (International Collaboration)
- Repair U.S.-China relationship using new rules coupled with accountability
- Stakeholders’ commitment to address current and emerging threats
 - Statutes, legislation, USG policies, corporate policies, universities local policies, and taxpayers’ awareness

Future Studies

- In one year, study the results of the National Security Presidential Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33) and Implementation guidelines and identify impacts and areas for improvement.
- The CCP's Operation Fox Hunt and the United Front Department both terrorize Chinese nationals and others. What laws, and university actions may be established to combat this terror?
- U.S. lawmakers are heavily investing in enhanced STEM education and recruiting certain professions to grow talent. CETs will change over time, so additional studies are needed to determine the next STEM focus areas to promote innovation and competition in civilian and military capabilities. Compare and contrast U.S. CETs to China's CETs in the next 5-year plan.
- Study the impacts of U.S. legislation and implementation on CCP's economics, technology, and innovation strategies. Specifically assess changes in CCP tactics, influence, and interference activities as U.S. policies change over time.

Conclusion

- Stakeholders must partner to ensure that open science and academic freedom remain the hallmark of U.S. universities and at the same time, protects America's national and economic security
- Partnerships and stakeholder commitment is necessary to achieve functional solutions. This requires a whole-of-societal approach, and each stakeholder has a role to play in response to mitigate legitimate security concerns in academia's engagement with China's government
- U.S. must continue attracting global talent to conduct research and promote free thought through innovation
- Stakeholders must implement NSPM-33 and adjust as necessary to mitigate threats
- Stakeholders must make risk-based decisions while protecting America's research enterprise to ensure the U.S. remains the world's science and technology leader for decades to come

Works Cited

- See Bibliography in corresponding research paper.