

U.S.-China Academic Engagement and American National Security

Suggested Strategies for American Colleges and Universities

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- To date, there is no reason for university policies to single out PRC institutions, or persons. All policies aimed at securing information and preserving academic freedom, rigor, and integrity should apply equally to all nations and, in many cases, to domestic actors as well.
- Orientation: All new students, graduate and undergraduate, foreign and American, should be thoroughly oriented to the goals and principles of the American university, including critical thinking, free debate, evidence-based argument, practices for respecting diverse and dissenting viewpoints, and the importance of intellectual diversity and openness. Such an orientation will clarify ground rules and procedures when there disputes over, for example, Taiwan, Tibet, or Tiananmen Square.
- Training: Faculty, program directors, laboratory managers, and other university personnel who receive delegations from the PRC (and other nations) should be trained on methods used by foreign actors to gather technical knowledge and other forms of intellectual property during site visits, conferences, campus tours, etc.
- Travel and Tech: University computer centers should require faculty traveling to China and other nations of high strategic concern to leave their personal computers, cell-phones, I-pads, thumb drives, etc. in the United States. Universities should issue clean machines to traveling faculty for use overseas and then scrub all machines when faculty members return. STEM faculty should be particularly vigilant.
- Experience sharing: Administrators should discuss challenges they face working with Chinese universities, and pressures they face from Washington, with colleagues from other American campuses through AAU, APLU, ACE, and state higher educational systems.
- Partnership with Congress and enforcement agencies: Working through the aforementioned national organizations, university leaders should collaborate with the FBI and other security agencies to ensure that colleges and universities do not become vectors for the loss of strategically vital information to China. The academic community should encourage Congress and Washington agencies to provide specific, narrowly-tailored guidance or legislation on which disciplines are most sensitive in Sino-U.S. competition and the level at which foreign students may conduct research in those areas. Ideally, partnership between academia and government will take the form of a structured consultation mechanism which includes national and corporate laboratories and which makes policy recommendations following a review by all stakeholders.

- Advocacy: Even as U.S. academics cooperate with government agencies, they should defend the core values of American higher education. Policymakers must understand that:
 - (1) The U.S. higher educational system is a national asset, essential to American wellbeing & security;
 - (2) The excellence of American higher education depends on openness and the global creation and dissemination of knowledge;
 - (3) Higher educational self-governance is essential to American innovation;
 - (4) Chinese scholars at every level, from freshman to faculty members, have made essential contributions in every discipline since the 1970s and are integral to American innovation. If the U.S. isolates itself from PRC students and scholars, American universities, and the nation as a whole, will be weaker;
- Transparency: American universities should have no unpublished agreements with foreign governments, universities, corporations, or individuals.
- American colleges and universities should pay increased attention to political risk analysis to closely track security concerns and proposed legislation in Washington and the methods by which the PRC attempts to benefit from and influence American universities. Due to the likelihood of long-term, high stakes competition between the United States and China, universities should put institute rigorous due diligence regarding ongoing and proposed programs with China.
- Economic risk analysis also demands ongoing attention. U.S. campuses that have admitted large numbers of Chinese undergraduates since 2008 may be overly dependent on tuition revenues from China. This dependency might create leverage for the Chinese government. Over-exposure of this kind, in an era of declining U.S.-China relations, could result in sudden budgetary shortfalls on American campuses.