

Foreign Influence in the News

02/19/20: Harvard Professor's Arrest Raises Questions about Scientific Openness

Until late last month, Charles Lieber lived the quiet life of an elite American scientist. His lab at Harvard University researched things like how to meld tiny electronics with the brain. In his spare time, he grew award-winning pumpkins in front of his house. And then, on January 28, the FBI came knocking on his door. Now Lieber faces charges of trading knowledge for money and lying about it. Prosecutors allege he set up a lab in China in exchange for hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments from the Chinese government, and then denied knowledge of those payments to U.S. investigators.

02/13/20: Sharing Academic Research Could be Deadly, as China Develops Bioweapons

The Chinese Communist Party has signed the Biological Weapons Convention, but they don't mean it. The regime is working on bioweapons, and the killer virus emanating from China may prove that, according to Stephen Mosher in an op-ed for The Epoch Times: "The vice president of China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences, He Fuchu, said in 2015 that biomaterials were the new 'strategic commanding heights' of warfare. People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Zhang Shibo went even further in his 2017 book, 'War's New High Land,' claiming that 'modern biotechnology development is gradually showing strong signs characteristic of an offensive capability,' including the potential for 'specific ethnic genetic attacks.'

02/07/20: U.S. Attorneys Warn of Upcoming 'Spike' in Prosecutions Related to China Ties (Science)

Researchers in academia and industry who work with Chinese institutions should expect a "spike" in prosecutions this year as a result of a U.S. government initiative to stop economic espionage, say federal prosecutors leading the effort. And although they say the criminal cases could harm potentially useful U.S. collaborations with China, the prosecutors believe they will help deter future problems. "Some will complain that [the prosecutions] might have a chilling effect on collaboration with the Chinese. The answer to that is—for good and bad reasons—yes, it will," said Andrew Lelling, U.S. attorney for the district of Massachusetts, at an event yesterday in Washington, D.C. "China has launched a massive nationwide effort to pilfer U.S. technology and know-how and transfer it to China for its own uses, so unfortunately this kind of response is needed."

02/06/20: China's Lavish Funds Lured U.S. Scientists. What did it Gain in Return? (New York Times)

More than a decade into his career as an organic chemist, Jon Antilla found a solution to the grinding task of fund-raising that, increasingly, was squeezing out his time in the laboratory. Leaving a tenured position at the University of South Florida, he relocated to Tianjin University in China, where

he was awarded a grant through a Chinese recruitment program, Thousand Talents. He wasn't alone: Colleagues in Tianjin's chemistry department had given up tenured positions at the University of California, San Diego, and Texas A&M, among other prestigious institutions, attracted by China's readily available funding.

02/04/20: Emory Professor Hit with Criminal Charge, Linked to Chinese Government Program (NBC)

A former Emory University neuroscientist who was fired last year after the university alleged he failed to disclose income from China is facing a criminal charge, court records show. The federal charge against Xiojiang Li, alleging theft of grant funds, spotlights a new federal effort to combat Chinese economic espionage on university campuses. Li was a member of the Thousand Talents plan, a Chinese recruitment program that a Senate report last year said was designed to steal sensitive research. The charge was filed in November but not announced. George Washington University's Seamus Hughes, who closely scrutinizes federal court records, unearthed the case Tuesday.

02/02/20: American Universities are a Soft Target for China's Spies, say U.S. Intelligence Officials (NBC)

University of Texas professor Bo Mao is the latest defendant in a string of U.S. criminal cases alleging Chinese spying in the academic world. University of Texas professor Bo Mao, prosecutors say, took proprietary technology from an American Silicon Valley start-up and handed it over to a subsidiary of Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications conglomerate. But what makes the case against Mao particularly noteworthy is how he was accused of carrying out the theft: By using his status as a university researcher to obtain the circuit board under the guise of academic testing.

01/30/20: China's Funding of U.S. Researchers Raises Red Flags (Wall Street Journal)

When officials at the Texas A&M University System sought to determine how much Chinese government funding its faculty members were receiving, they were astounded at the results—more than 100 were involved with a Chinese talent-recruitment program, even though only five had disclosed their participation. A plant pathologist at the Texas system, where the median annual salary for such scientists employed by the state is around \$130,000, told officials that the researcher had been offered \$250,000 in compensation and more than \$1 million in seed money to start a lab in China through one of the talent programs. The researcher ultimately rejected the offer, according to the Texas system's chief research security officer, Kevin Gamache, who led the recent 18-month review that has garnered praise from U.S. officials.

01/28/20: Top Harvard Professor Arrested, Charged With Lying About Income to Feds (NBC)

Chair of Harvard's Chemistry and Chemical Biology department is charged with lying to the Department of Defense for alleged failure to report participation in and funding tied to a Chinese research organization. Follow up stories [here](#) and [here](#).

01/24/20: Ex-LANL Scientist Pleads Guilty to Lying to Government (Santa Fe New Mexican)

A former Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist accused of lying about his contact with a Chinese recruitment program pleaded guilty to one count of making a false statement to the U.S. government. Turab Lookman of Santa Fe accepted the plea as part of an agreement with federal prosecutors that includes dismissal of two other charges. Lookman will be sentenced at a later date, probably within 60 to 90 days, federal prosecutor George C. Kraehe said. He could face up to five years in federal prison and be fined as much as \$250,000.

01/21/20 U.S. Turns Up the Spotlight on Chinese Universities (Wall Street Journal)

U.S. officials are subjecting Chinese academic institutions to greater scrutiny over fears they are exploiting ties to U.S. businesses and universities to promote China's economic and military goals. Universities have become a focal point in a tense relationship between Washington and Beijing, with U.S. officials examining American academia's Chinese partnerships over concerns about academic integrity and intellectual-property threat.

01/15/20: Four UF Faculty Members are Jobless after Investigation into U.S. Research and China (ABC)

Four faculty members have left The University of Florida after an investigation exploring Chinese government influence on US research. The University of Florida says the employees failed to disclose their involvement with foreign talent programs. This comes after the National Institutes of Health expressed concerns that foreign governments were trying to influence US research. Follow up story [here](#).

12/20/19: Foreign Influence on Science Has DOJ Flexing False Claims Act (Bloomberg Law)

An unusual settlement over undisclosed Chinese payments to NIH-funded scientists indicates U.S. authorities are willing to use the muscle of the False Claims Act to clamp down on foreign threats to taxpayer-funded innovation.

12/20/19: U.S. takes aim at foreign influence (Science)

Congress has created two new panels to wrestle with the topic and an influential panel has recommended steps that the National Science Foundation (NSF) should take. But there is no consensus on the core issue of whether protecting national security and U.S. innovation requires new restrictions on basic research.

12/19/19: Van Andel Institute to pay \$5.5 million for not disclosing Chinese grants by Eric Tucker (Associated Press)

The Grand Rapids-based Van Andel Research Institute, which was accused of failing to disclose Chinese government grants to two of its researchers, has reached a \$5.5 million settlement, the Justice Department announced.

12/12/19: [Moffitt turmoil began with national concern over China, stolen research](#) (Tampa Bay Times)

Feds say they are just beginning to understand the scope of foreign involvement in U. S.-based research, at Tampa's Moffitt Cancer Center and beyond.

11/20/19: [Colleges, officials try to thaw effects of the US-China chill](#) (The Christian Science Monitor)

The Trump administration has emphasized that Chinese students enrich U.S. universities, but the trade war and other tensions may trickle down to campuses. Schools are struggling to figure out: What now?

11/17/19: [U.S. Struggles to Stem Chinese Efforts to Recruit Scientists](#) (The Wall Street Journal)

National security officials say universities are at the leading edge of a plan by Beijing to illicitly gain scientific expertise and leapfrog the technology gap with the West, but prosecutors face challenges proving wrongdoing in court, as new allegations in a criminal case in Kansas underscore.

11/13/19: [The Science Security Threat](#) (Inside Higher Ed)

At gathering of university research officers, federal agency officials document foreign governments' efforts to persuade scientists to engage in academic espionage.

10/23/19: [Trump Officials Battle Over Plan to Keep Technology Out of Chinese Hands](#) (New York Times)

The Trump administration is divided over how aggressively to restrict China's access to United States technology as it looks for ways to protect national security without undercutting American industry.

10/6/19: [U.S. Researchers on Front Line of Battle Against Chinese Theft](#) (Associated Press)

The FBI inspects how universities are taking steps to protect research and monitor suspicious behavior.

10/4/19: [NIH Reveals its Formula for Tracking Foreign Influences](#) (Science)

NIH has concluded that the Chinese government uses talent recruitment programs to obtain confidential NIH grant applications and to establish so-called shadow labs in China, where NIH-funded research can be replicated.

9/27/19: [NIH could do more to address foreign threats, reports say](#) (STAT)

The National Institutes of Health should do more to ensure that investigators and grant reviewers aren't susceptible to foreign influence, according to a trio of reports from the Health and Human Services inspector general released Friday. [Read the NIH OIG Report Summary, Report in Brief, and Full Report.](#)

9/26/19: [How a Chicago college student ended up in the middle of an FBI investigation into](#)

Chinese spying (Chicago Tribune)

Federal authorities allege that an international student from Illinois Institute of Technology was secretly working for a Chinese spy agency.

9/26/19: Grassley Presses Influential Universities on Academic Freedom Concerns (Senate Committee on Finance)

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) sent letters to the presidents of Duke University, Harvard University, Sarah Lawrence College and Villanova University seeking information on the current culture of academic freedom on their campuses. Grassley also expressed his concerns in an op-ed published today by the Wall Street Journal.

9/25/19: Amid tensions with China, US emphasizes rules around research security (Chemical & Engineering News)

Scientists worry security concerns will taint valuable research collaborations.

9/11/19: U.S. academics, make sure you know the rules about foreign funding and affiliations (Science)

Openness, intellectual freedom, and international collaboration are traditional hallmarks of university science in the United States. Recently, however, federal funding and law enforcement agencies—as well as universities themselves—have been taking steps that some see as counter to these values in the interest of protecting U.S. research and technology from foreign threats, especially from China.

9/11/19: U.S. Border Agents Are Seeking Social-Media Data on International Students (The Chronicle)

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security plans to collect social-media handles of travelers, including students, to the United States. In a notice of a proposed rule published in the Federal Register, the department says such information is needed to validate applicants' identity and to determine whether they pose a law-enforcement or national-security risk.

9/11/19: Peer pressure: 60 science groups call for end to Washington's crackdown on foreign-born researchers (South China Morning Post)

While not naming China, groups' letter to Trump administration officials addresses campaign that has targeted Chinese scientists in the US. The organizations acknowledge national security concerns but seek a 'balanced approach that enables continued scientific collaborations.'

9/9/19: US charges Chinese professor in latest shot at Huawei (CNBC)

U.S. prosecutors have charged a Chinese professor with fraud for allegedly taking technology from a California company to benefit an unidentified Chinese telecommunications conglomerate, which sources say is Huawei.

9/5/19: Balancing National Security and Scientific Collaboration (Inside Higher Ed)

Over 60 science, engineering and education organizations sent a letter to U.S. science agencies

requesting that they consider scientific enterprise when dealing with national security concerns.

9/4/19: Next Up In China Trade War: Biotech Purge? (Forbes)

If it involves scientific patents, the U.S. has increasingly lost trust in China as a good faith partner. Next up in the China trade war: biotech and Chinese cancer researchers are being put on notice. Are biotech companies really that frightened of China? And if China feels its investments in the sector are threatened by Washington, could they retaliate by making it even harder for American firms to do business there?

8/30/19: Universities Face Federal Crackdown Over Foreign Financial Influence (New York Times)

The Education Department has begun cracking down on universities that fail to disclose donations and contracts from foreign governments, hoping to give far more scrutiny to funding that has washed into the United States' higher education institutions from countries often at odds with American policies but eager to tap the country's brightest minds.

8/30/19: Nine Chinese ASU students detained at Los Angeles airport, denied admission to US (AZ Central)

Nine Chinese students who were returning to the U.S. to continue their studies were detained by Customs and Border Protection officials and sent back to China.

8/27/19: How China Uses LinkedIn to Recruit Spies Abroad (New York Times)

Western intelligence officials say Chinese agents are contacting thousands of foreign citizens using LinkedIn, including former government officials.

8/23/19: Professor Indicted for Alleged Undisclosed Chinese Links (Inside Higher Ed)

Kansas professor faces federal fraud charges for allegedly failing to disclose a full-time appointment at a Chinese university held while receiving government research grants. The indictment comes amid rising tension over Chinese scholars and security.