FROM PH.D. TO PLA:

HOW VISA POLICIES ENABLE PRC DEFENSE ENTITIES TO TAP U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

Executive Summary

At the beginning of the 119th Congress, the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched an investigation into six U.S. universities—University of Maryland, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Southern California, Purdue University, and Stanford University. These universities—public and private, large and small, and geographically diverse—were asked a series of questions regarding the presence and research activities of Chinese national students on their campuses. Namely, the Select Committee sought information about where these students previously studied, how their education is funded, what type of research they are conducting, and the extent of each university's institutional and faculty-level collaboration with China.

What the Select Committee uncovered was deeply troubling:

1. **The Biden Administration Failed to Enforce Executive Order 10043, a Ban on Chinese Nationals Who Conduct Military-Linked Research**
2. **American Taxpayers Are Funding Ph.D. Programs for Chinese Nationals—Even Those Linked to Chinese Military and Defense Research Universities**
3. **U.S. Universities Admit Thousands of Chinese Nationals with Academic Ties to the Chinese Military and Defense Industrial Base Annually**
4. **American Universities Maintain Close Collaborative Partnerships with Chinese Universities**
5. **The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Leads by Example, Terminates Dozens of Academic Agreements with Chinese Universities**

The sheer scale of the problem—compounded by four years of inaction from the Biden Administration, particularly the Department of State in its role approving visas—is staggering. To begin addressing this urgent threat, the Select Committee recommends the following steps:

1. **Reinforce visa screening laws to deny access to sensitive U.S. research and substantially reduce technology transfer risks.**
2. **Establish clear eligibility restrictions, enhanced vetting criteria, and mandatory reporting requirements to limit PRC access to sensitive technologies.**
3. **Impose restrictions on PRC nationals while residing in the United States to mitigate security risks.**

The CCP does not treat overseas study as an apolitical or purely academic exercise. Under its state-directed technology acquisition strategy, international education is

viewed as a key vector for accessing cutting-edge science, engineering, and defense-related knowledge. The PRC's military-civil fusion (MCF) strategy explicitly calls for leveraging global academic exchanges to enhance its military and industrial capabilities. This strategy dates back all the way to 1950.

Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CCP entered into a landmark agreement with the Soviet Union—the 1950 Sino-Soviet Agreement on Cultural Cooperation—which facilitated extensive academic and technical exchanges between the two nations. Under this agreement, tens of thousands of Chinese students, scientists, and technicians were sent to Soviet universities, research institutes, and defense laboratories, particularly in fields critical to China's modernization such as nuclear physics, aviation, metallurgy, engineering, and military science. These exchanges played a pivotal role in jumpstarting China's technological and defense development. Many of the returnees later became core contributors to China's "Two Bombs, One Satellite" program and other strategic sectors. In return, Soviet experts were stationed in China to assist in building institutions, designing curricula, and establishing early technical infrastructure. These exchanges were not apolitical—they were ideologically framed and strategically engineered to advance the PRC's socialist industrialization. The collapse of the program in the early 1960s, following the Sino-Soviet split, marked a turning point in China's approach to foreign education and talent development, pushing Beijing to eventually reorient its international academic engagement toward the West.[i,ii]

While international academic exchange has long been a pillar of U.S. higher education—bringing diverse perspectives, fostering global collaboration, and advancing science—it must not come at the expense of national security. Welcoming foreign students strengthens America's innovation ecosystem, but only when accompanied by clear, enforceable guardrails to mitigate exploitation by our adversaries. Nowhere is this more urgent than in the case of China. Without enhanced visa screening, institutional transparency, and technology protection measures, the United States risks training the next generation of engineers, scientists, and weapons designers—not for America's benefit, but for the advancement of the People's Liberation Army.

This challenge demands coordinated action from both Congress and the Executive Branch—and the resolve to meaningfully confront Chinese malign influence in academia and protect the integrity of American higher education.

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THE STRATEGIC STAKES OF "FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH"

The U.S. government does not award taxpayer-funded research grants for charity. When a program officer at the Defense Advanced Research Program Agency (DARPA), the Office of Naval Research, the National Science Foundation, or any other federal research agency issues a grant, the mission is clear: to promote scientific and engineering discovery that advances the nation's health, prosperity, and welfare, and secures the national defense. This means pushing the boundaries of scientific understanding while cultivating innovations that can transition into applied technologies that strengthen America's security and global leadership.[iii]

The universities investigated by the Select Committee—University of Maryland, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Southern California, Purdue University, and Stanford University—broadly defended their decisions to allow Chinese nationals to participate in federally funded research, as well as their ongoing partnerships with Chinese institutions.

One university told the Select Committee through counsel that "the research funding it receives from national-security-related departments or agencies (e.g., the Department of Defense) is all tied to research that is deemed fundamental or open." While this framing may offer legal cover, it mischaracterizes the strategic intent behind U.S. government research investments—particularly those from the Department of Defense (DOD). Fundamental research refers only to the intent to publish results without restriction to the maximum extent possible—it does not mean the research is free from national security risk. China's military-civil fusion system actively exploits open-source science, turning even basic findings into weapons advancements. Case studies—numerous are outlined in the Select Committees investigative report *Fox in the Henhouse: The U.S. Department of Defense Research and Engineering's Failures to Protect Taxpayer-Funded Defense Research*—already show DOD-funded "fundamental" research fueling PLA programs in hypersonics, explosives, and AI. In short, labeling research as "fundamental" does not make it harmless — it makes it more easily exploitable.

The Select Committee's September 2025 report, Fox in the Henhouse, revealed how the DOD Research and Engineering has failed to proactively safeguard taxpayer-funded defense research from exploitation by the PRC.

It is neither speculative nor controversial to say that research supported by U.S. national security agencies is intended to preserve and expand U.S. defense capabilities. Consequently, when universities admit students who previously

studied at—or concurrently hold faculty positions with—Chinese military universities, and when they allow research collaborations with entities tied to the Chinese military, including those already designated on U.S. government blacklists, they risk directly advancing Beijing's military and technological ambitions.

While such collaborations may fall within the legal definition of "fundamental research," legality is not the same as sound strategic judgment. The real value in research partnerships lies not just in what is eventually published in open journals but in everything that happens behind the scenes: raw data exchange, joint lab access, iterative experiments and prototyping, pre-patent discoveries, and early insight into emerging capabilities. These are the intangible advantages that can accelerate an adversary's military development—particularly when the collaborating entity is aligned with China's defense industrial base.

Finally, the Committee recognizes that the U.S. Department of State (State) is the lead federal agency responsible for issuing visas to foreign nationals seeking to enter the United States. State is responsible for the first and most important vetting of any foreign national attempting to study in the United States by conducting visa interviews, background checks, and making eligibility determinations in accordance with U.S. immigration laws and national security directives. During the course of the Committee's research security investigations, university officials told the Committee that they rely on State's determination of granting a visa to assess if there are any national security risks.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The Biden Administration Failed to Enforce President Trump's Executive Order 10043, a Ban on Chinese Nationals Who Conduct Military-linked Research

On May 29, 2020, President Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 10043, titled the Suspension of Entry as Nonimmigrants of Certain Students and Researchers from the People's Republic of China. The EO cited national security concerns stemming from the CCP's "wide-ranging and heavily resourced campaign to acquire sensitive United States technologies and intellectual property, in part to bolster the modernization and capability of its military, the People's Liberation Army."

EO 10043 specifically suspended the entry of any Chinese national applying for an F or J visa to pursue graduate-level research in the United States, who "either receives funding from or who currently is employed by, studies at, or conducts research at or on behalf of, or has been employed by, studied at, or conducted research at or on behalf of, an entity in the PRC that implements or supports the PRC's 'military-civil fusion strategy.'"

…Chinese authorities use a subset of students—primarily postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers—as "non-traditional collectors" of sensitive information, embedding them in U.S. academic institutions …

The EO's rationale was that Chinese authorities use a subset of students—primarily postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers—as "non-traditional collectors" of sensitive information, embedding them in U.S. academic institutions and research centers to gain access to critical technologies with potential military applications. These activities were seen as central to China's Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) policy, which seeks to systematically blur the line between civilian innovation and military advancement.

The EO from President Trump's first term targeted individuals affiliated with China's "Seven Sons of National Defense"—a group of elite Chinese universities known for their deep ties to the PLA and central role in military research and development. As one China expert observed, "it would be more accurate to describe [these universities] as defense universities than as civilian universities," noting that the universities regard themselves "parts of the defense system."[iv]

Shortly following the EO, the Trump Administration revoked over 1,000 Chinese student visas due to the individuals' links to the Chinese military. Upon taking office, the Biden Administration never rescinded the policy.

The Select Committee's investigation revealed, however, that the Biden Administration failed to enforce the policy. In its review of just six U.S. universities, the Committee identified Chinese graduate students who had previously attended a "Seven Sons of National Defense" university—precisely the category of individuals the EO was intended to block. In addition, the investigation uncovered thousands of Chinese nationals affiliated with other PRC universities that are either explicitly Entity-Listed by the U.S. government or have well-documented ties to China's military and defense-industrial base.

2. American Taxpayer Dollars Fund Ph.D. Programs for Chinese Nationals

The Select Committee's investigation revealed that thousands of Chinese nationals pursuing doctoral degrees at U.S. universities are being funded—directly or indirectly—by the American taxpayer.

One university disclosed that "of these 1,139 [Chinese] graduate staff appointments, it is the case that 515 were paid via sponsored programs from federal, state or private grants or contracts. Of these 515 Chinese students, 402 were paid from federal grants or contracts."

Over 400 Chinese nationals—enough to crew two Arleigh Burke-class U.S. Navy destroyers—are conducting sensitive research at just one U.S. university, all funded by hardworking American taxpayers.

- Of these 402 Chinese nationals funded by American taxpayer dollars, 205 were in the College of Engineering and 107 were in the College of Science, including disciplines like Aeronautics, Nuclear Engineering, and Computer Science. Over 400 Chinese nationals—enough to crew two Arleigh Burke-class U.S. Navy destroyers—are conducting sensitive research at just one U.S. university, all at the expense of hardworking American taxpayers.

Another university told the Select Committee that the primary source of funding for 1,115 of its 2,580 Chinese graduate students is through an assistantship. According to the National Science Foundation, "[m]any full time-graduate [research assistantships], fellowships, and postdoc appointments are supported with funding from research grants and contracts awarded by federal agencies."

At another university, information provided to the Select Committee revealed that half of the Chinese nationals pursuing PhDs are actively involved in federally funded research projects. And despite the fact that Chinese nationals make up over 20 percent of the university's PhD population, the university told the Committee that only "0.2% of [our] PhD degree programs' net tuition revenue comes from Chinese national students." At this university, Chinese nationals are benefiting from taxpayer-funded research opportunities while contributing virtually nothing in tuition revenue.

American taxpayers are footing the bill to provide STEM education, hands-on lab access, and cutting-edge research opportunities to Chinese nationals—who in many cases are directly linked to Chinese military institutions.

Universities often defend the admission of large numbers of graduate students from foreign adversaries, particularly China, by claiming that these students pay higher tuition and thereby subsidize opportunities for Americans. But the data provided to the Committee demonstrates the opposite. In reality, many of these students are not paying full freight. Instead, their studies are financed through a mix of federal research grants, state and institutional subsidies, and university-backed assistantships—all funded, directly or indirectly, by the American taxpayer.

Additionally, every funded position filled by a Chinese national student represents a potential opportunity denied to an American student who could be contributing to the nation's workforce and innovation base. Rather than

subsidizing American talent, universities are displacing it—while simultaneously advancing the ambitions of a foreign government openly hostile to U.S. interests.

In effect, American taxpayers are footing the bill to provide STEM education, hands-on lab access, and cutting-edge research opportunities to Chinese nationals—who in many cases are directly linked to Chinese military institutions. This is not a case of foreign students helping to underwrite the education of Americans—it is quite the opposite: U.S. taxpayers and research institutions are underwriting the training of young men and women from our greatest adversary.

3. U.S. Universities Admit Thousands of Chinese Nationals with Direct Ties to the Chinese Military Annually

In a review of the six American universities the Committee requested "a list of all universities that Chinese national students at your university previously attended." Each university provided a list of hundreds of Chinese universities that their current students—some of them in federally-funded research programs today—had previously attended.

At every U.S. university the Select Committee surveyed, students from China's top military and defense research universities—including institutions tied to the People's Liberation Army—were currently part of the student body.

At every university the Select Committee surveyed, students from China's top military and defense research universities—including institutions tied to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and China's defense industrial base—were currently part of the student body. Many of these Chinese universities are on U.S. government blacklists, and their students are studying advanced fields like artificial intelligence and quantum science, often funded by American taxpayers.

Bringing in foreign students can enrich our campuses with diversity of ideas and perspectives. But we cannot allow our universities to become training pipelines for individuals already connected to foreign militaries. When those students return home armed with knowledge and expertise gained from America's world-leading institutions—and gaiing valuable insights into the direction of technological development working on U.S. government-fuded research—they often apply it to develop technologies that are ultimately used against U.S. interests.

The Select Committee identified three high-risk categories of Chinese universities with direct or indirect ties to the PLA and China's defense industrial base. These categories were used to cross-reference Chinese universities listed in the records provided by the six U.S. universities.

THE "SEVEN SONS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE"

The "Seven Sons of National Defense" (国防七子) are China's leading defense-focused universities, whose primary mission is to advance defense research and

development and drive state-directed military-civil fusion efforts. Most maintain partnerships with state-owned defense conglomerates and operate as training grounds for future military leaders, engineers, and technicians working on weapons systems and defense programs. China's "Seven Sons of National Defense" universities play a central role in developing advanced military technologies, including hypersonic weapons, unmanned systems, cyber warfare tools, and aerospace engineering, often in direct coordination with the PLA and its affiliates. Graduates from these institutions frequently enter roles within China's military, intelligence, or state-owed defense enterprises.

Below is a breakdown of each of these institutions:

Beihang University (北京航空航天大学), also known as Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (BUAA): Beihang University was created from the merging of aeronautical departments from several leading Chinese universities, including Tsinghua University (Xi Jinping's alma mater) and the Beijing Institute of Technology (another "Seven Sons of National Defense" university). According to the university, Beihang "adheres to the principle of educating talents for the Party and the nation" and "is guided by the party's leadership."[v] Additionally, Beihang "emphasizes the central role of the Party's political construction and adheres to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as the fundamental guiding principle for running the university."[vi] Beihang was originally added to the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)'s Entity List in 2001. Beihang has nine major defense laboratories, one national key laboratory, nine state key laboratories, four national engineering centers, three Beijing advanced innovation centers, and over 70 provincial or ministry-level key laboratories.

Beihang "adheres to the principle of educating talents for the Party and the nation" and "is guided by the party's leadership." … Beihang is currently represented at every U.S. university the Select Committee surveyed.

Beijing Institute of Technology (北京理工大): Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT) was China's first science and engineering university. It officially became China's first defense industry university in 1952. BIT was added to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Entity List in 2022 for "acquiring and attempting to acquire U.S.-origin items in support of programs for the People's Liberation Army." BIT has 34 designated defense research areas, 10 major defense laboratories, five national key laboratories, six national-defense key laboratories, two Ministry of Science and Technology laboratories, and four municipal key laboratories.

Harbin Institute of Technology (哈尔滨工业大学): Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) is heavily involved in defense research fields, including satellite technology, robotics, advanced materials, and network security. In 2011, HIT established a School of Marxism, which adheres to the education policy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and celebrates Xi Jinping Thought—the

ideological structure of the CCP. HIT was added to the Entity List in 2020, and currently operates 47 designated defense research areas, nine major defense laboratories, 12 national key laboratories, seven state key laboratories, and dozens of municipal key laboratories.

Harbin Engineering University (哈尔滨工程大学): Founded originally as the *PLA Military Engineering Institute*, Harbin Engineering University was called the Harbin Shipbuilding Engineering Institute from 1970 to 1994. According to the university itself: "HEU has significantly advanced technology and technical background including underwater robots, ship stabilization, marine power, integrated navigation, underwater-acoustic position, nuclear power simulation and large ship simulation."[vii] HEU is a leading Chinese university in shipbuilding, advanced maritime technology and weaponry. HEU was added to the Entity List in 2020 and has 19 designated defense research areas, four major defense laboratories, and over 150 other scientific laboratories.

(Harbin Engineering University) is a leading Chinese university in shipbuilding, advanced maritime technology, and weaponry… HEU is currently represented at 83% of U.S. universities the Select Committee surveyed

Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (南京航空航天大学): Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (NUAA) has 16 colleges and 164 science research institutions, including the PLA-linked College of Aerospace Engineering and College of Energy and Power engineering. NUAA "has 98 research institutes, such as unmanned aircraft vehicle research institute and helicopter technology research institute."[viii] Run by a Communist Party Committee that demands complete ideological alignment, the university suspended a lecturer in 2023 for comments it claims sparked "public debate" unaligned with the party line. NUAA was placed on the Entity List in 2020, and maintains one national key laboratory, 12 ministerial key laboratories, and 39 other laboratories.

Nanjing University of Science and Technology (南京理工大学): Founded originally as the Harbin Military Academy of Engineering, Nanjing University of Science and Technology (NJUST) is China's leading weaponry and arms university. It maintains a "relationship with a PLA signals intelligence research institute, involving cooperation on unmanned combat platforms and information secruity."[ix] NJUST was added to the Entity List in 2020, and has three major defense laboratories and 16 designated research areas.

Run by a Communist Party Committee that demands complete ideological alignment, (Nanjing University of Science and Technology) suspended a lecturer in 2023 for comments they claim sparked "public debate" unaligned with the party line.

Northwestern Polytechnical University (西北工业大学): Northwestern Polytechnical University (NPU) was created by the merging of several

Engineering universities and insititutions—including the Air Force Engineering Dperatment of the PLA Military Engineering Institute. NPU is China's "top [unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)] research and development base."[x] It "once claimed to produce 90% of China's drones."[xi] Initially added to the Entity List in 2001, NPU hosts 13 major defense laboratories and 44 deisgnated defense research areas.

U.S. Universities Train Graduates from China's Seven Sons of National Defense

	Harbin Inst. of Technology	Beijing Inst. of Technology	Northwestern Polytechnical U.	Harbin Engineering U.	Beihang U.	Nanjing U. of Aeronautics and Astronautics	Nanjing U. of Science and Technology
Stanford U.	☭	☭		☭	☭		
U. of Maryland	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭
Carnegie Mellon U.	☭	☭			☭	☭	☭
U. of Southern California	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭
U. of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭		
Purdue U.	☭	☭	☭	☭	☭		☭

THE SEVEN SONS OF ORDNANCE/ARMS INDUSTRY

The **"Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry" (兵工七子)** are a group of Chinese universities affiliated with China's state-owned weapons manufacturers and defense conglomerates. These institutions specialize in disciplines essential to weapons development and production, including ballistics, explosives, and manufacturing technologies critical to China's military-industrial complex. Many of these universities maintain complex research collaborations with China's leading defense contractors and play a direct role in advancing the CCP's Military-Civil Fusion strategy.

The "Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry" include:

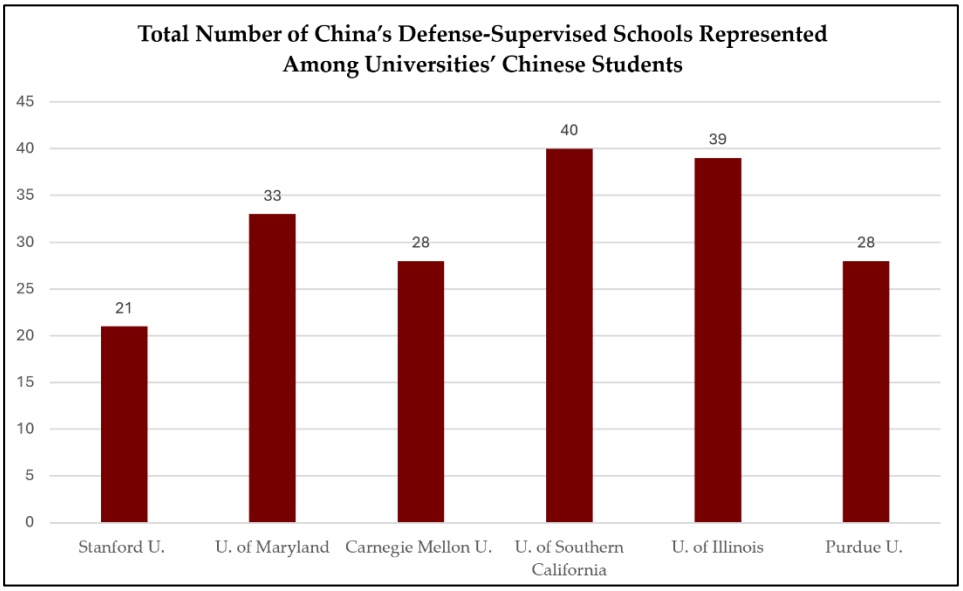
- Beijing Institute of Technology
- Changchun University of Science and Technology
- Chongqing University of Technology
- Nanjing University of Science and Technology
- North University of China
- Shenyang Ligong University
- Xi'an Technological University

U.S. Universities Train Graduates from China's Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry Universities

	Beijing Inst. of Technology	Changchun U. of Science and Technology	Chongqing U. of Technology	Nanjing U. of Science and Technology	North U. of China	Shenyang Ligong U.	Xi'an Technological U.
Stanford U.	☭						
U. of Maryland	☭			☭			
Carnegie Mellon U.	☭	☭		☭			
U. of Southern California	☭	☭	☭	☭			
U. of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)	☭	☭					
Purdue U.	☭	☭		☭			

UNIVERSITIES CO-ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE ADMINISTRATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INDUSTRY FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE

The State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND) co-administers 58 Chinese universities—out of over 3,000 Chinese universities—engaged in military-civil fusion research. SASTIND-affiliated universities maintain specialized labs, programs, and departments dedicated to military research. SASTIND plays a critical role in managing China's defense R&D outside the PLA, coordinating weapons development, setting technical standards for defense industries, and integrating efforts across provincial and national levels. Subordinate to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), SASTIND also shares personnel and functions with the China Atomic Energy Authority and the China National Space Administration.



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4. American Universities Maintain Close Collaborative Partnerships with Chinese Universities

Collaboration between American universities and Chinese universities takes many different forms. In some cases—such as at the University of Maryland—it involves direct faculty collaboration and formal academic agreements. In other cases—such as at Purdue University—it involves hosting visiting faculty from Chinese institutions and sending U.S. professors to China on sabbatical. Most troubling were the partnerships at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which has established (and since terminated) joint research institutes and dual-degree programs with Chinese universities directly overseen by the Chinese government's defense and security apparatus. All three of the following examples reveal how U.S. institutions are channeling talent and cutting-edge research directly to the Chinese government, while allowing Beijing to embed itself in the heart of America's top universities.

University of Maryland's Collaboration With Chinese Universities

Cases of Faculty Collaboration	89
Formal Exchange Agreements	15
Formal Research Agreements	3

The University of Maryland maintains extensive and deeply rooted ties to Chinese institutions—both at the university level and faculty level. According to university-provided data, Maryland has at least 89 known cases of faculty collaboration with Chinese entities, 15 formal exchange agreements, and three formal research agreements. These partnerships open the door to activities such as joint research, faculty exchanges, and sponsored travel, all of which provide Chinese institutions with considerable access to an American university located just outside Washington, D.C.

As Maryland explained to the Select Committee, "faculty collaboration can range from agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for a former colleague now located [in China], to a years-long research partnership." Maryland also stated that these collaborations are often informal or part of faculty members' outside professional activities, which do not directly involve the university. Maryland may not fully

differentiate between casual academic contact and long-term research relationships with individuals at Chinese institutions.

When Chinese nationals come to study at Maryland, the university does not maintain complete insight into what, exactly, they are researching. Indeed, while the University of Maryland "maintains payroll data reflecting the department in which employees and paid students work, including Chinese national students," it admits that its records "do[] not include a data element to identify the specific 'laboratories' or 'research initiatives' where employees and paid students work." Maryland "does not comprehensively track the type of research students are conducting." Yet, over a quarter of Chinese national graduate students--who comprised approximately 2% of the university's graduate student population—in the Fall 2024 semester were involved in federally funded research.

Faculty Collaboration at Purdue University

Purdue Faculty in China	6
Visiting Chinese Faculty	16

While Purdue University has taken the prudent step of avoiding formal, institution-level collaborations with China-based universities or research laboratories, it nonetheless maintains considerable faculty-level engagement with Chinese institutions. Currently, Purdue employs 16 visiting faculty from Chinese universities and has six of its own professors on sabbatical in China. These visiting Chinese scholars are embedded in critical research departments across Purdue University, including but not limited to the Departments of Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, and Astronomy.

Several of these visiting faculty members are affiliated with institutions overseen by SASTIND—the Chinese government agency responsible for coordinating the development of military technologies, weapons systems, and dual-use scientific research. According to university records, SASTIND-affiliated scholars are currently working in Purdue's Departments of Biomedical Engineering, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Computer Science, and Mathematics.

Additionally, of the six Purdue professors currently on sabbatical in China, two are stationed at SASTIND-co-administered universities—each housing at least three major defense key laboratories—and one is conducting research at a State Key Laboratory. All three of these institutions are central nodes in China's

military-civil fusion apparatus and directly advance China's defense technology base.

Finally, regarding a recent engagement with Purdue University, the Committee commends Purdue for taking seriously the foreign influence and national security concerns outlined in the Select Committee's letter. Purdue has proactively reviewed its policies regarding foreign students and research collaboration and has already implemented new safeguards. This forward-leaning approach should serve as an example to other institutions of higher education, underscoring the need for universities to take proactive measures to protect their campuses from malign foreign influence and the exploitation of critical and emerging technology research by foreign adversaries. Purdue has implemented the following new policies:

- A prohibition on foreign adversary funding, including visiting scholars from foreign adversary nations;
- Clear guidelines pertaining to research security and export controls to safeguard information and technologies from exploitation;
- Intellectual property protection, including prohibitions on transfers to foreign adversaries; and
- Travel restrictions, including sabbaticals and other engagements with foreign adversaries.[xii]

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Joint Institutes and Programs

Zhejiang University - University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Joint Engineering Institute

Donghua University – Grainger College of Engineering Joint 3 + 2 Bachelor's and Master's Program

Nanjing University – Grainger College of Engineering Joint 3 + 2 Bachelor's and Master's Program

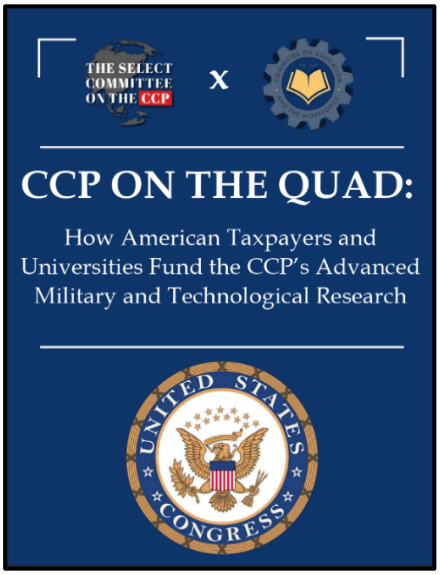
Shanghai Jiao Tong University – Grainger College of Engineering Joint 3 + 2 Bachelor's and Master's Program

Huazhong University of Science and Technology – Grainger College of Engineering Joint 3 + 2 Bachelor's and Master's Program

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's (UIUC) Joint Engineering Institute with Zhejiang University was a troubling example of U.S.-China academic collaboration. Zhejiang University is not just any Chinese academic institution—it is co-administered by SASTIND, holds classified PRC research credentials, and operates several defense laboratories. It has a documented history of involvement in Military-Civil Fusion projects and has conducted cybersecurity research funded by the Ministry of State Security—China's internal security and intelligence agency.

In September 2024, the Select Committee and the House Committee on Education and Workforce released a report titled *CCP on the Quad*, which detailed the national security threats posed by such joint institutes. The report warned:

[Joint institutes] pair prestigious U.S. universities with Chinese counterparts under the guise of academic cooperation, but in practice, they serve as sophisticated conduits for transferring critical U.S. technologies and expertise to the PRC, including to entities linked to China's defense and security apparatus… Participating American academics—some receiving DOD research funding—spend significant time at a joint institute in the PRC. There, they conduct research, advise PRC scholars, teach and train students, and collaborate with PRC companies on their areas of expertise—frequently, critical and emerging technologies with national security implications… This creates a direct pipeline for the transfer of sensitive research, applied knowledge, and technologies to the PRC.



The Select Committee's landmark September 2024 report, "CCP on the Quad," exposed the true nature of U.S.-China joint institutes as vehicles for technology transfer and influence by the Chinese Communist Party.

While Illinois' joint engineering institute with Zhejiang University is perhaps the most alarming example of how U.S. institutions facilitate China's access to sensitive knowledge and defense-relevant expertise, Illinois also maintains five joint degree programs with Chinese universities. Three of the five joint degree programs are with institutions administered by the Chinese defense agency SASTIND.

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Together, these three case studies reveal a deeply troubling pattern: American universities are providing Chinese universities and students—many of which are tied to the Chinese military and defense research apparatus—with considerable access to U.S. research, talent, and federally funded innovation. Whether through joint institutes, visiting scholar programs, or loosely monitored research collaborations, China has successfully embedded itself within some of the most prestigious corners of American academia. And while the specifics vary from campus to campus, the outcome is the same: American taxpayer-funded research and highly sensitive innovations are being funneled into the hands of China.

5. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Leads by Example, Terminates Dozens of Academic Agreements with Chinese Universities

In July 2025, the UIUC informed the Select Committee that it is terminating a wide range of partnerships with Chinese universities—marking the most significant institutional course correction to date in response to the Select Committee's investigation.

In a letter to Select Committee Chairman John Moolenaar, UIUC outlined a series of decisions the university has made in response to the Select Committee's investigative work:

- **UIUC is ending its flagship joint engineering institute with Zhejiang University.** The Zhejiang University-University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Institute (ZJUI) will be terminated. UIUC will not renew the agreement when it expires on January 31, 2026, and is entering into a formal wind-down process.
- **UIUC is terminating 3+2, 4+2, and all other joint degree programs with PRC universities.** During the university's review of its formal joint degree programs with Chinese universities, UIUC identified twenty Chinese universities with which it partners on joint institutes and programs. These include over a dozen programs with UIUC's Grainger College of Engineering. No new students will be admitted to these programs.
- **Six "priority admission" agreements with PRC universities are being canceled**. UIUC identified six arrangements with Chinese universities that afforded those Chinese students "priority admission and/or a priority application process for certain UIUC master's programs." UIUC has terminated all six agreements.
- **UIUC's Short-term teacher training program with Chinese university faculty will end**. UIUC identified a summer teacher training program with Sanda University of Shanghai, China and the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. In all, there are currently 16 Chinese faculty members in the training program. That program—which ran from June 29, 2025 to August 9, 2025—expired on the last day of the program, August 9, 2025, and has been terminated.

UIUC's decision to terminate these partnerships marks a significant shift in how the university approaches its engagement with Chinese institutions, and we commend UIUC for its leadership. By unwinding these high-risk programs, UIUC is setting an important precedent for other American universities to follow. While

this is a major win for both UIUC and U.S. national security, the Select Committee's work will continue, with the goal of ensuring that other American universities follow UIUC's example.

* * * * *

The Select Committee's recent investigations make clear that the CCP is systematically exploiting the openness of the U.S. academic and research enterprise to gain strategic advantage—particularly in the development of military technologies.

Through detailed case studies and data-driven analysis, this report demonstrates how Chinese nationals with direct links to Chinese military universities, defense state-owned enterprises, and talent recruitment programs continue to access critical and cutting-edge technology research and training opportunities at U.S. institutions. In many cases, these individuals are not even self-funded; rather, their education and research are subsidized through federal grants, state programs, and university assistantships—resources meant to bolster the American innovation base and workforce.

This is not merely an issue of visa screening or institutional compliance—it is a matter of national security. The failure to establish effective guardrails and due diligence standards has created a pipeline through which the CCP can accelerate its military-industrial ambitions using American science, American systems, and American openness.

If left unaddressed, the PRC will continue to convert U.S.-funded research into military capabilities that threaten American service members, our foreign allies, and our democratic values. This report underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive recalibration of how the United States manages foreign student access to its university and scientific ecosystems.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Reinforce visa screening laws to deny access to sensitive U.S. research and substantially reduce technology transfer risks.

a. Utilize existing statutory and presidential authorities such as the Immigration and Nationality Act § 212(a)(3), the Export Control Reform Act, and Executive Order 10043, which should be codified in statute, as the basis for targeted visa denials to foreign adversary nationals who present a national security risk, especially from the PRC.

b. Impose limits that establish reciprocity in academic exchange programs with foreign adversary countries, especially in STEM graduate programs, while prioritizing graduate students from allied and partner nations.

Recommendation 2: Establish clear eligibility restrictions, enhanced vetting criteria, and mandatory reporting requirements to limit PRC access to sensitive technologies.

a. Deny visas to applicants affiliated with the PRC's defense research and industrial base, including but not limited to:

    i. PLA institutions and organs;

    ii. "Seven Sons of National Defense" universities;

    iii. "Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry" universities;

    iv. National defense laboratories and research centers;

    v. State-owned defense conglomerates;

    vi. SASTIND co-administered universities; and

    vii. Chinese public security and surveillance entities (e.g., Huawei, Hikvision, Baidu, Tencent, and the Ministry of Public Security).

b. Prohibit entry for foreign nationals participating in PRC Talent Recruitment Programs or those backed by the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC), and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) United Front system involved in the Chinese overseas professionals and technology transfer ecosystem.

c. Apply enhanced scrutiny to visa applicants to graduate programs intending to study or conduct research in high-risk, dual-use, or emerging technology sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum science, advanced materials, hypersonic, biotechnology, aerospace, nuclear engineering, and semiconductors.

d. Require interagency national security review—led by DOD, DHS, and FBI—for all graduate student visa applications involving controlled fields or technologies.

e. Prohibit or limit foreign nationals of foreign adversary countries from enrolling in graduate academic courses or programs involving export-controlled or sensitive technologies.

f. Mandate that foreign adversary nationals engaged in sensitive STEM programs in U.S. institutions disclose all past and current research affiliations, funding sources (including government funding), and any co-authored publications.

g. Require U.S. universities to submit regular reports to the federal government on foreign adversary country student affiliations, funding

sources, and updates to research roles, and areas of study, to include major or intended major.

Recommendation 3: Impose restrictions on foreign nationals from the PRC while residing in the United States to mitigate security risks.

a. Prohibit foreign adversary nationals affiliated with U.S. government blacklisted entities from participating in federally funded research projects.

b. Prohibit PRC nationals from working in U.S. government-supported laboratories.

c. Institute restrictions on foreign adversary visa holders engaged in sensitive STEM programs in U.S. institutions for eligibility for the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program.

Recommendation 4: Better protect all students from transnational repression.

a. Prohibit institutions of higher education receiving federal funding from recognizing student groups that receive funding from foreign adversary missions or entities.

b. Strengthen criminal penalties against offenses committed in association with transnational repression on behalf of a foreign adversary.

APPENDIX A:

Appendix B is all a list of all 58 Chinese schools co-administered by the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense.

1. Anhui University (安徽大学)
2. Beijing University of Chemical Technology (北京化工大学)

3. Changchun University of Science and Technology (长春理工大学)
4. Dalian University of Technology (大连理工大学)
5. East China University of Technology (东华理工大学)
6. Fuzhou University (福州大学)
7. Guilin University of Electronic Technology (桂林电子科技大学)
8. Hangzhou Dianzi University (杭州电子科技大学)
9. Harbin University of Science and Technology (哈尔滨理工大学)
10. Hebei University (河北大学)
11. Hebei University of Science and Technology (河北科技大学)
12. Hefei University of Technology (合肥工业大学)
13. Heilongjiang Institute of Technology (黑龙江工程学院)
14. Heilongjiang University (黑龙江大学)
15. Henan University of Science and Technology (河南科技大学)
16. Huazhong University of Science and Technology (华中科技大学)
17. Hunan University (湖南大学)
18. Hunan University of Science and Technology (湖南科技大学)
19. Jiangsu University of Science and Technology (江苏科技大学)
20. Jilin University (吉林大学)
21. Kunming University of Science and Technology (昆明理工大学)
22. Lanzhou University (兰州大学)
23. Lanzhou University of Technology (兰州理工大学)
24. Nanchang Hangkong University (南昌航空大学)
25. Nanjing Tech University (南京工业大学)
26. North China University of Science and Technology (华北理工大学
27. North China Institute of Aerospace Engineering 北华航天工业学院
28. North University of China (中北大学)
29. Peking University (北京大学)
30. Shandong University (山东大学)
31. Shandong University of Technology (山东理工大学)
32. Shanghai Jiao Tong University (上海交通大学)
33. Shanghai University (上海大学)

34. Shenyang Aerospace University (沈阳航空航天大学)
35. Shenyang Ligong University (沈阳理工大学)
36. Shijiazhuang Tiedao University (石家庄铁道大学)
37. Sichuan University (四川大学)
38. Soochow University (苏州大学)
39. South China University of Technology (华南理工大学)
40. Southeast University (东南大学)
41. Southwest University of Science and Technology (西南科技大学)
42. Sun Yat-sen University (中山大学
43. Tianjin Polytechnic University (天津工业大学)
44. Tianjin University (天津大学)
45. Tsinghua University (清华大学)
46. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (电子科技大学)
47. University of Science and Technology Beijing (北京科技大学)
48. University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (上海理工大学)
49. University of South China (南华大学)
50. Wuhan University (武汉大学)
51. Wuhan University of Technology (武汉理工大学)
52. Xi'an Jiaotong University (西安交通大学)
53. Xi'an Technological University (西安工业大学)
54. Xiamen University (厦门大学)
55. Xiangtan University (湘潭大学)
56. Xidian University (西安电子科技大学)
57. Yanshan University (燕山大学)
58. Zhejiang University (浙江大学)

APPENDIX B:

Appendix A is a list of Chinese universities represented in the student bodies of six U.S. universities surveyed by the Select Committee. While not exhaustive, the appendix includes institutions most directly tied the PLA and China's defense industrial base, including many that appear on U.S. government blacklists.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY:

Seven Sons of National Defense :

1. Beihang University
2. Beijing Institute of Technology
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. Harbin Engineering University

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
2. Hunan University
3. Jilin University
4. Lanzhou University
5. Peking University
6. Shandong University
7. Shanghai Jiaotong University
8. Shanghai University
9. Sichuan University
10. Soochow University
11. South China University of China
12. Southeast University
13. Sun Yat-sen University
14. Tianjin University
15. Tsinghua University
16. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China
17. Wuhan University
18. Wuhan University of Technology
19. Xi'an Jiaotong University

20. Xiamen University

21. Zhejiang University

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND:

Seven Sons of National Defense (Guofang 7):

1. Beihang University
2. Beijing Institute of Technology
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. Harbin Engineering University
5. Northwestern Polytechnical University
6. Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics
7. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology
2. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Anhui University
2. Beijing University of Chemical Technology
3. Dalian University of Technology
4. Hangzhou Dianzi University
5. Hebei University of Technology
6. Hefei University of Technology
7. Henan University of Science and Technology
8. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
9. Hunan University
10. Jilin University
11. Kunming University of Science and Technology
12. Lanzhou University

13. Nanjing Tech University
14. Peking University
15. Shandong University
16. Shanghai Jiaotong
17. Shanghai University
18. Sichuan University
19. Soochow University
20. South China University of Technology
21. Southeast University
22. Sun Yat Sen University
23. Tianjin University
24. Tsinghua University
25. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China
26. Wuhan University
27. Wuhan University of Technology
28. Xi'an Jiaotong University
29. Xiamen University
30. Xiangtan University
31. Xidian University
32. Yanshan University
33. Zhejiang University

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY:

Seven Sons of National Defense (Guofang 7):

1. Beihang University
2. Beijing Institute of Technology
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics
5. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology
2. Changchun University of Science and Technology
3. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Beijing University of Chemical Technology
2. Changchun University of Science and Technology
3. Dalian University of Technology
4. Fuzhou University
5. Hangzhou Dianzi University
6. Hefei University of Technology
7. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
8. Hunan University
9. Jilin University
10. Lanzhou University
11. Nanjing Tech University
12. Peking University
13. Shandong University
14. Shanghai Jiao Tong University
15. Shanghai University
16. Sichuan University
17. Soochow University
18. South China University of Technology
19. Southeast University
20. Southwest University of Science and Technology
21. Sun Yat Sen University
22. Tianjin University
23. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China
24. Wuhan University
25. Wuhan University of Technology

26. Xi'an Jiaotong University

27. Xidian University

28. Zhejiang University

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:

Seven Sons of National Defense (Guofang 7):

1. Beihang University

2. Beijing Institute of Technology

3. Harbin Institute of Technology

4. Harbin Engineering University

5. Northwestern Polytechnical University

6. Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics

7. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology

2. Changchun University of Science and Technology

3. Chongqing University of Technology

4. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Anhui University

2. Beijing University of Chemical Technology

3. Changchun University of Science and Technology

4. Dalian University of Technology

5. Fuzhou University

6. Guilin University of Electronic Technology

7. Hangzhou Dianzi University

8. Harbin University of Science and Technology

9. Hebei University

10. Hefei University of Technology
11. Heilongjiang University
12. Henan University of Science and Technology
13. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
14. Hunan University
15. Hunan University of Science and Technology
16. Jiangsu University of Science and Technology
17. Jilin University
18. Kunming University of Science and Technology
19. Lanzhou University
20. Nanchang Hangkong University
21. Nanjing Tech University
22. North China University of Science and Technology
23. Peking University
24. Shandong University
25. Shanghai Jiao Tong University
26. Shanghai University
27. Soochow University
28. South China University of Technology
29. Sun Yat Sen University
30. Tianjin Polytechnic University
31. Tsinghua University
32. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China
33. University of Shanghai for Science and Technology
34. University of South China
35.Wuhan University of Technology
36. Xi'an Jiaotong University
37. Xiamen University
38. Xiangtan University
39. Xidian University
40. Zhejiang University

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN:

Seven Sons of National Defense (Guofang 7):

1. Beihang University
2. Beijing Institute of Technology
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. Harbin Engineering University
5. Northwestern Polytechnical University

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology
2. Changchun University of Science and Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Anhui University
2. Beijing University of Chemical Technology
3. Changchun University of Science and Technology
4. Dalian University of Technology
5. Fuzhou University
6. Hangzhou Dianzi University
7. Hefei University of Technology
8. Heilongjiang University
9. Heilongjiang University of Technology
10. Henan University of Science and Technology
11. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
12. Hunan University
13. Hunan University of Science and Technology
14. Jilin University
15. Kunming University of Science and Technology
16. Lanzhou University

17. Nanjing Technology University
18. Peking University
19. Shandong University
20. Shanghai Jiao Tong University
21. Shanghai University
22. Shenyang Aerospace University
23. Sichuan University
24. Soochow University
25. South China University of Technology
26. Southeast University
27. Sun Yat Sen University
28. Tianjin Polytechnic University
29. Tianjin University
30. Tsinghua University
31. University of Electronic Science and Technology of China
32. University of Science and Technology Beijing
33. University of Shanghai for Science and Technology
34. Wuhan University
35. Wuhan University of Technology
36. Xi'an Jiaotong University
37. Xiamen University
38. Xidian University
39. Zhejiang University

PURDUE UNIVERSITY:

Seven Sons of National Defense (Guofang 7):

1. Beihang University
2. Beijing Institute of Technology
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. Harbin Engineering University

5. Northwestern Polytechnical University

6. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

Seven Sons of Ordnance/Arms Industry:

1. Beijing Institute of Technology

2. Changchun University of Science and Technology

3. Nanjing University of Science and Technology

SASTIND-affiliated Universities:

1. Anhui University

2. Changchun University of Science and Technology

3. Dalian University of Technology

4. Fuzhou University

5. Huazhong University of Science and Technology

6. Hunan University

7. Jilin University

8. Lanzhou University

9. Peking University

10. Shandong University

11. Shanghai Jiao Tong University

12. Shanghai University

13. Sichuan University

14. Soochow University

15. South China University of Technology

16. Sun Yat Sen University

17. Tianjin University

18. Tsinghua University

19. University of Science and Technology Beijing

20. University of Shanghai for Science and Technology

21. University of South China

22. Wuhan University

23. Wuhan University of Technology
24. Xi'an Jiaotong University
25. Xiamen University
26. Xiangtan University
27. Xidian University
28. Zhejiang University

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