

Universities Speak Out Against Dark-Ages Witch Hunt

by Brian Lantz

Aug. 3—In recent weeks, a growing number of U.S. universities have spoken out in defense of the advancement of science and the free exchange of scientific ideas. Their statements and actions have been in defense of Chinese and Chinese-American students and researchers at U.S. institutions, singled out in a new McCarthyite witch hunt.



*Rep. Mikie Sherrill
(D-NJ)*



U.S. Army National Guard/Michelle Gonzalez
Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)



*Rep. Jim Langevin
(D-RI)*

Defending their foreign students, researchers and academics, university officials from Caltech, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Stanford, University of Michigan, University of Pittsburgh, Yale and others have released statements upholding American core ideals. University associations—including the Association of American Universities and the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration—are actively lobbying and, in some cases, joining legal actions.

The broader British Empire-instigated assault, on all forms of mutually beneficial cooperation between the United States and China, continues to rely on a “thin reed” of neocon networks embedded in U.S. think tanks, the Congress, media and White House. This is also the case on university campuses; it is now being challenged.

Not a Moment Too Soon

“Russiagate” move over! A heavy-handed scheme is again afoot promoting fear, led by sophisticated neocons and unscrupulous politicians. Two key congressional bills—the Securing American Science and Technology Act (H.R. 3038) in the House and the Secure American Research Act (S.2133) in the Senate—would

create a White House-led working group to coordinate new federal activities to wall off fundamental research, citing threats of China spies. Representatives from 19 federal agencies would have the job of coming up with common definitions of the scope of the threat and creating a straight-jacket (“best practices”) that universities and government laboratories must adhere to. The academic community is to be allotted a token advisory role. In the process, suspicion and incompetence will prevail as the classrooms and laboratories of scientific discovery go dark.

The “soft ball” version in the House is co-sponsored by representatives Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) and Jim Langevin (D-RI). Its goal, Sherrill says, is “a unified approach to protect research without creating overlapping or contradictory federal requirements.” The Senate bill is much darker. The Senate bill has bipartisan support, as three Democrats joined Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and four other Republicans as initial co-sponsors. A July 17 press release from Cornyn, chair of a Senate Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs, and Global Competitiveness, describes universities as “soft targets . . . for Chinese human espionage.”

nage and cyberattacks.” More on S.2133 below.

One should be reminded of the 1950s efforts in the South to stop the integration of public places, for example by filling in public swimming pools with earth. China is now a leading nation in space science and exploration; Russia and China are leading in hypersonic weapons delivery systems; and China leads in quantum computing research—the list goes on. As university officials are

Noteworthy is the June 13, 2019 *Bloomberg Businessweek* [cover story](#), warning of the disastrous consequences of the FBI-instigated witch hunt to date, with a cover titled, “How *Not* To Cure Cancer: The U.S. is Purging Chinese Scientists in New Red Scare.”

The President of the United States himself has now waded into the debate. On the sidelines of the G-20 summit, President Trump proclaimed his support for Chinese students to continue to attend American universities.



University Associations to Action

The Association of American Universities (AAU), a Washington, D.C.-based organization of top research institutions, is among other institutions engaged in efforts on Capitol Hill. Tobin Smith, Vice President for policy of the AAU, is charging that the proposed new legislation, "... ignores that we have mechanisms already in place to safeguard research," including classification and export controls.

In an [interview](#) with *Science* magazine, Smith stated, "We've had a huge challenge with Congress. ... They don't know all the steps we have already taken" to address the threat. "But we also have to remind them that a core piece of what universities do is sharing information, not

warning, the actual damage will be to science in the United States. The Hungarian-American nuclear physicist Dr. Edward Teller—whom no one ever accused of being a Russian or Chinese spy—famously *warned*:

[E]xaggerated secrecy will drive away the best people. It is where secrecy gets married to general rules, to bureaucracy, to doctrine—that is where secrecy does most of its harm.

Further, these mechanisms can just as well be used against other people and other ideas. For example, on "national security" grounds, a Malthusian green fascist agenda could be so enforced. This selected group of politicized, unelected "representatives" of federal agencies, supported by academics purportedly representing "the overwhelming majority of scientists," could use their powers to arguably end science all together.

walling it off."

Legal actions are also under way to protect students. In December 2018, 65 U.S. colleges and universities filed *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs in a legal challenge to changes in immigration policy. The judge's decision is now awaited in that case. The Federal [case](#), *Guilford College et al v. Nielsen et al* (Case Number



Tobin Smith



Miriam Feldblum
Pomona College

1:18-cv-00891), was filed in North Carolina by four smaller colleges. The immigration policy changes would back-date “unlawful presence” definitions regarding holders of F, J, or M visas. These are student and research-related visas.

Most of the institutions filing *amicus curiae* briefs are members of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. Miriam Feldblum, Executive Director of the Presidents’ Alliance, which represents 420 presidents and chancellors of public and private colleges and universities, spoke to EIR emphasizing that, “a focus on security, and maintaining openness, are not mutually exclusive.” She stressed, “It is important to support international students and scholars to promote intellectual innovation.” She added that “It is also important to ensure that all domestic and international students get a full education.” The association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a particular focus “on the legal landscape,” is concerned, she said, that “on campus, in communities, in the public sphere, and in legislation—all of these are areas where we can make contributions.”

Witch Hunt Is Ongoing

While recent attention has been given to the scandals surrounding noted Chinese-American researchers at the Houston Medical Center, the assault on university students and scientists is ongoing across the country. In May, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia fired a husband-wife team of noted researchers, neuroscientists Li Xiao-Jiang and Li Shihua, 23-year veterans of the University. Both are American citizens, and their work has been on Huntington’s disease. To raise additional grants for their research they openly applied to China’s “1000 Talents” program, to finance the use of larger animals (pigs) in their highly regarded research. Despite being completely open and documenting their multiple sources of funds, Emory University—under the gun of the FBI and National Institutes of Health (NIH)—summarily fired the Li’s and closed their research laboratory. Said

Dr. Li in a statement:

I was shocked that Emory University would terminate a tenured professor in such an unusual and abrupt fashion and close our combined lab consisting of a number of graduates and postdoctoral trainees without giving me specific details for the reasons behind my termination.

Many more such FBI/NIH investigations are ongoing, with undisclosed firings and disbarment from future NIH funding.

Meanwhile, Song Xianzhong, President of Jinan University in Guangzhou, China, has [announced](#) that the university would welcome Li Xiao-Jiang and Li Shihua, as well as their research team, if they wish to return to China. The Li’s have been visiting professors at Jinan University’s Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Institute for CNS Regeneration since 2017. The United States would lose; China would gain.

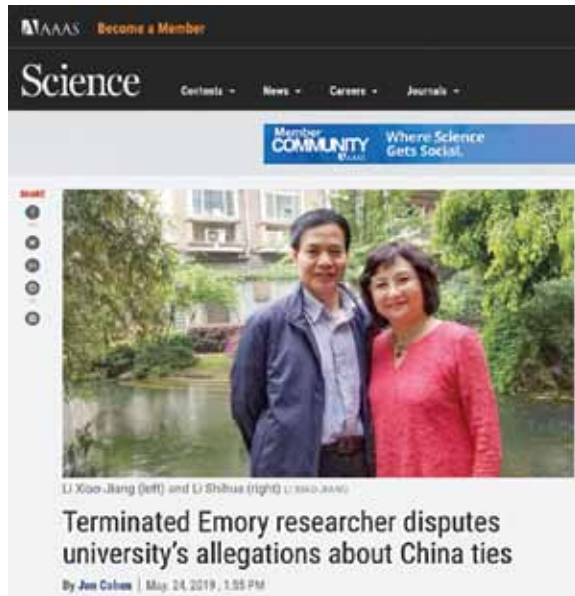
University Leaders Speak Out

In response, University leaders are now speaking out. Here are quotes from some of the more significant statements of university presidents and chancellors. Their ideas should become contagious and are certainly very much needed.

- From a [statement](#) titled, “In Support of Global Engagement,” by University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher:

Our very mission—to leverage knowledge for society’s gain—demands a global perspective. We seek to tackle the world’s greatest challenges. We welcome the most talented faculty, students, staff and visitors from near and far. And we collaborate with the most distinguished scholars, universities and research institutions from around the world. . . .

Yet, this long-standing tradition of global academic engagement is increasingly under attack.



Rising geopolitical tensions over economic competitiveness, trade and national security have begun to erode support for the robust global academic engagement. . . .

National and economic security are based, to a large extent, on access to the latest knowledge and technology. This linkage places research-intensive universities like Pitt at the front lines of these issues. As a result—and for the first time since the end of the Cold War—university-based research and scholarship are facing calls to restrict global engagement. A rising tide of fear is fueling uncertainty, confusion and rapidly changing responses by our federal agencies, and the effects of government policies on research universities have been especially striking.

Collaborations between scientists across national boundaries have been subject to unprecedented scrutiny. Established practices have been prohibited on technicalities. And researchers, particularly immigrants and visitors from China, have been the target of aggressive investigations and public sanctions.

At Pitt, our mission demands better—and so does our University community. . . .

- From a [memo](#) “To the Members of the MIT Community,” by Massachusetts Institute of Technology President L. Rafael Reif:

MIT has flourished, like the United States itself, because it has been a magnet for the world’s finest talent, a global laboratory where people from every culture and background inspire each other and invent the future, together.

Today, I feel compelled to share my dismay about some circumstances painfully relevant to our fellow MIT community members of Chinese descent. And I believe that because we treasure them as friends and colleagues, their situation and its larger national context should concern us all. . . .

Protracted visa delays. Harsh rhetoric against most immigrants and a range of other groups, because of religion, race, ethnicity or national origin. Together, such actions and policies have turned the volume all the way up on the message that the U.S. is closing the door—that we no longer seek to be a magnet for the world’s most driven and creative individuals. I believe this message is not



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Qian Xuesen (Tsien Hsue-shen), in 2007.

consistent with how America has succeeded. I am certain it is not how the Institute has succeeded. And we should expect it to have serious long-term costs for the nation and for MIT. . . .

- From a [memo](#) dated July 11, 2019 to the Caltech Community, titled, “Our International Community of Scholars,” by Caltech President Thomas F. Rosenbaum and Provost David A. Tirrell:

The strength of the United States as a scientific, technological, and economic power has depended crucially on the contributions of scholars and entrepreneurs from all over the world. Our universities, in particular, have long opened their doors to foreign talent, seeking to become destinations for the most creative, original minds, irrespective of heritage or national origin. At Caltech, 45% of our faculty were born outside the United States, and roughly the same percentage of our graduate student body is international. Approximately 35% of American Nobel Prizes in the sciences have been awarded to individuals born outside the United States. . . .

The Case of Qian Xuesen

The statement from Caltech should be seen in the light of Caltech’s important role in founding what is now NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and specifically the role of the late Qian Xuesen (Hsue-Shen Tsien, 1911-2009). Dr. Qian emigrated to the United States in 1936 and worked at Caltech under Theodore von Kármán, who referred to him as an “undisputed genius.” He was a co-founder of Caltech’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, now part of NASA. During World War II, Qian worked on the

Manhattan Project and served in the U.S. Army.

Yet in 1949 Qian was denied citizenship, declared a communist sympathizer during the “Red Scare,” and lost his security clearance. He was kept under house arrest for five years until he was finally allowed to return to China in 1955. In China, he became the father of China’s rocket program, among many other scientific accomplishments. In 1979, Dr. Qian Xuesen was awarded Caltech’s Distinguished Alumni Award for his lifetime of achievements.

National Security Run by Medieval Idiots?

Contrary to the claims of hand-waving neocons and unscrupulous politicians, U.S. universities and research centers have long operated under established rules governing research. For example, National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 189, signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1985, during the Cold War. NSDD 189 spelled out that, “where the national security requires control, the mechanism for control of information generated during federally funded fundamental research in science, technology and engineering at colleges, universities and laboratories is classification.” NSDD 189 also firmly stated, “It is the policy of this Administration that, to the maximum extent possible, the products of fundamental research remain unrestricted.” “Fundamental research” here includes both basic and applied research. Laws, more than sufficient, already exist.

Now, rather than well-conceived, limited classification procedures, a whole set of Kafkaesque procedures are proposed for imposition on universities. For instance, John Cornyn’s Senate Bill S.2133 would require any institution receiving federal research dollars to follow tough cybersecurity procedures, issued in 2016 for far more limited purposes.

These CUI (Controlled Unclassified Information) cybersecurity rules would burden institutions and researchers with more than 100 additional security-related requirements. The rules cover everything from multifactor log-on authentication and more stringent auditing procedures to additional training and heightened physical security.

Mary Millsaps, Director of Research Information Assurance for Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, as [reported](#) in *Science* magazine, said:

We already have firewalls, [referring to cybersecurity provisions that are standard for most research projects]. They generally involve what I



Christopher Wray, FBI Director.

call passive monitoring, that is, systems to ensure that we’re following the rules. But controlled [unclassified information] research imposes an additional layer of institutional oversight that requires active monitoring by somebody at all times. And I would be concerned if they want to put those additional levels of control on everything.

The Fight Is Not Over

The outcome of this fight to defend America’s soul is not yet determined. FBI Director Christopher Wray, in an appearance before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington, D.C. on July 23, again described China as the “greatest national security threat,” and said that it is seeking “economic dominance” over the U.S. He praised the Texas A&M University System for its work to help other academic institutions with their cybersecurity efforts, and for its collaboration with the FBI. U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), archly stated at those hearings that he harbors concerns about universities protecting vital information.

It were better to investigate the investigators.

The message coming from Wray and Cruz is not the message coming from the President of the United States. On the sidelines of the G20 Summit on June 29—once again breaking with his pro-British Empire, neocon advisers—President Trump stated, “We want to have Chinese students to attend our great schools and great universities. They are great students and tremendous assets.” Someone, Trump said, had claimed it was harder for Chinese students to enter the United States under his immigration policies. “If it were, that somebody viewed it that way, I don’t,” Trump said.