



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Jay Obernolte

As Prepared for the Record

Joint Investigations & Oversight and Research & Technology Subcommittees Hearing –
“Balancing Open Science and Security in the U.S. Research Enterprise”

October 5, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Foster, Chairwoman Stevens, and Ranking Member Waltz – thank you for convening today’s joint subcommittee hearing to examine the changing landscape of research security. It has been over three years since this Committee’s first hearing on this topic.

Academic institutions in the U.S. are valued for their openness, innovation, and collaboration with domestic and international scientists. Our nation has long been a leader in science and technology, and consequently, a destination for foreign scholars and scientists seeking to learn from and collaborate with the best.

Unfortunately, not every government upholds these values of openness, transparency, and reciprocal collaboration. Over the past three years, this Committee has seen numerous examples of how adversaries have sought to exploit the openness of our research enterprise to steal American ingenuity and undermine our system.

China has publicly proven itself to be the most aggressive country in targeting U.S. research over the past decade, particularly through talent recruitment programs that encourage dishonesty and incentivize behaviors that are inconsistent with scientific values.

Between July 2018 and July 2021, the National Institutes of Health contacted 93 institutions about 214 scientists who have failed to be transparent with the agency, including through non-disclosure of financial support, conflicts of interests, and violations of peer review integrity rules. Over 90% of these cases involved activities based in the People’s Republic of China.

While much of the discussion in today’s hearing may focus on the People’s Republic of China, I want to be clear that this Committee is very concerned about all foreign nationals, American scientists, and agencies that inappropriately attempt to take advantage of taxpayer-funded research and development.

I would also be remiss if I didn't clearly state that racial profiling is wrong and should never be utilized to identify malign foreign influence. Instead, enforcement must be based purely on a researcher's actions and transparency with their home institution and sponsoring agencies.

We know the solution is not to shutter the doors of American universities and colleges to students, researchers, and professors from foreign nations. The vast majority of scholars who come to the U.S. do so to work with our citizens on scientific discoveries and breakthroughs based on an open exchange of ideas to benefit the world.

But we must also do all we can to protect the investment that American taxpayers are making in academic research and development.

The most recent data shows that the federal government spends nearly \$45 billion in research and development at academic institutions.

Finding an appropriate balance between scientific openness and security concerns is not new, nor is it easy. But a key to this is ensuring there is transparency and clear guidance for our researchers.

I look forward to hearing the insights of our witnesses today so we may find the balance between open scientific collaboration and protecting America's research and development.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.