



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Waltz

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 Obernolte. I am very pleased we are holding this hearing to examine the scale and scope of undue foreign influence on America’s research enterprise. I look forward to a constructive discussion about how we ensure a balance of maintaining the spirit of open, academic collaboration while also protecting proprietary technology and scientific discoveries from undue foreign influence and theft.

Through my service on both the House Armed Services Committee and this Committee, I have been highly engaged on this issue. In 2019 I worked with my colleagues to get the Securing American Science and Technology Act included in that year’s National Defense Authorization Act, which authorized the Office of Science and Technology Policy’s Joint Committee on Research Security (JCORE), giving it the mission of standardizing federal agencies’ approaches to research security.

It also established the National Academies’ National Science, Technology, and Security Roundtable, which Dr. Zuber co-chairs.

In last year’s NDAA, I was again proud to have a provision included to ensure all Federal Research Agencies require applicants to disclose foreign funding when receiving federal research awards. By requiring grant applicants to disclose all sources of research support they receive, this provision helps address a problem the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found regarding inconsistent conflict of interest policies across agencies.

This year we are working to get researchers the tools and information they need to understand how to identify and address research security threats. Working from a provision included in the NSF For the Future Act, I was able to add language to the House-passed NDAA to develop online security training modules for the research community, focused on international collaboration and international travel, foreign interference, and the rules for proper use of funds, disclosure, conflict of commitment and conflict of interest.

These training modules will ensure that individual researchers understand what makes an appropriate partnership and the importance of accurate disclosures, setting a baseline for what is acceptable and unacceptable for future applicants.

Working with Rep. Feenstra, we also ensured this year's House-passed NDAA included a ban on any federally-funded researcher participating in any malign foreign talent program. We know that most of these talent program contracts already violate federal grant terms and conditions, but now there will be no question left for faculty members about whether or not participation is allowed. We carefully crafted the provision with stakeholders to ensure that legitimate international exchanges are still permitted.

The open exchange of scientific ideas has long supported scientific progress. But some countries seek to exploit America's openness to advance their national interests. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has been the most aggressive, primarily through the use of talent recruitment programs. Of the 214 scientists the National Institutes of Health (NIH) contacted between 2018 and 2021 regarding undue foreign interference cases, 90 percent of those cases involve activities based in the PRC.

Chinese communist leadership is targeting American scientists – that is clear. But that does not mean that racial profiling should ever be utilized to address this threat.

We are not here to target researchers based on their race but based on the actions they have taken and their transparency with their federal funding agencies and sponsoring institutions. The U.S. has benefitted greatly from international scientific collaboration and the contributions of foreign-born scientists.

I want the U.S. to remain a desirable place for brilliant minds to come and share their ideas.

I want to thank the leadership of this Committee, Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas, for working with me on a bipartisan basis on these important issues. We must strike the correct balance between keeping our research enterprise open, but also protecting it from adversaries who seek to take advantage of our open system.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for taking the time to join us today their share their expertise. I look forward to your testimonies. And I yield back the balance of my time.