



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing
Assessing the Threat to U.S. Funded Research
March 5, 2025

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today to discuss a very serious and relevant topic: the security threats to our federal research enterprise.

America's leadership in science and technology was built on the foundation of federal investment in basic research. These investments have enhanced our national security, strengthened our economy, and improved the lives of our citizens.

Our unique research ecosystem, which combines federal, academic, and private R&D efforts, drives America's advancement in science and technology.

However, for this system to work, we need a degree of open science that facilitates collaboration and transparency. The challenge is ensuring this openness does not compromise our research security.

Although the U.S. has greatly profited from international scientific collaboration and the contributions of foreign-born scientists, other countries – both friend and foe – are also benefiting from U.S. investments.

While our goal is to ensure that all federally funded scientists adhere to U.S. principles of scientific fairness and integrity, regardless of race or citizenship status, it is important to recognize that not all nations share these values.

As this Committee is well aware, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is determined to surpass the U.S. as the global leader in science and technology by 2050 by any means necessary, including espionage, theft, or forced acquisition.

The theft of our basic research poses a significant risk to our global competitiveness, handing our cutting-edge innovations to adversaries and undermining both our economy and our ability to lead in discovery.

This is no idle threat and creates a serious strategic challenge. The CCP has been explicit about its efforts to steal our research results to further its technological progress.

A 2023 survey by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found 224 reported instances of Chinese espionage directed at the U.S., and more than 1,200 lawsuits were filed by U.S. companies against Chinese entities for intellectual property theft since 2000.

For the instances of espionage where the actor and intent were known, 49% of incidents directly involved Chinese military or government employees, 46% involved cyber espionage, 29% sought to acquire military technology and 54% targeted commercial technologies.

This Committee has passed multiple bills to protect American research.

Some of this legislation directed the Office of Science and Technology Policy to coordinate efforts and standardize requirements across all federal science agencies to provide a strong framework for research security.

However, the previous Administration failed to execute this framework within the directed timeline – missing deadlines by over a year in some cases – and provided little to no coordination and community engagement.

The government needs clear and uniform guidance for our agencies and researchers. I am confident this second Trump Administration will continue the good work of its previous term and reopen communication channels.

Effective communication between law enforcement agencies and universities is paramount to securing our research enterprise.

Universities need to know when researchers are targeted by nefarious actors, and law enforcement should be aware of the participants and conflicts of interest within our academic research ecosystem.

This collaboration should also extend to our technology transfer systems. Startups are an important part of our S&T enterprise and present a vulnerability that our global competitors are exploiting.

While universities can track licenses derived from on-campus research, they lack transparency about the startup's investors.

For instance, a foreign entity could access sensitive research through early investment in a startup before the technology license is granted, thereby avoiding a review by the federal Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Clearly, this is a complex task that requires thoughtful consideration, but I believe we are up to the challenge.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can assess and monitor the threats to our scientific research enterprise.