

CHAPTER FOUR

Universities

American universities have long played a leading role in relations between the United States and China. Ever since the Carter administration first explored the possibility with Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese counterparts of sending Chinese students to the United States in 1977–78,¹ PRC government authorities (like their Republican-era predecessors) have seen American universities as integral to China’s economic and scientific development. For the first two decades after normalization, the Chinese government placed a priority on sending students in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). Over time, however, fields of study broadened into the humanities, social sciences, and the arts, a change that has mirrored the shift in educational exchange from primarily a state-directed to a private consumer-driven phenomenon that saw an increasing number of middle-class Chinese parents opting to send their children to the United States for a liberal arts undergraduate education, and even a secondary school education. The net result has been that several million Chinese students have now successfully matriculated through the US higher education system. During the 2017–18 academic year, for instance, a record 350,755 Chinese students were enrolled in American universities (with an additional 80,000 in high schools),² out of a total of 1.5 million Chinese students studying worldwide in the same year.³ (Altogether, since the late 1970s, an estimated 5.2 million Chinese have attended foreign universities.)⁴ Unlike the early years of this epic exchange, the majority of Chinese students

are now able to pay full tuition, creating an extremely significant source of revenue for financially stressed American universities and colleges. (Chinese pay tuition worth an estimated \$12 billion per year, according to the US Department of Commerce.)⁵

US universities and American society have benefited significantly from this exchange, and from the presence of international students generally. Chinese students have helped to diversify the makeup of US student bodies; they often contribute positively in the classroom, and they have made a real contribution in joint research projects with university faculties. Many have remained in the United States postgraduation to pursue professional careers, build their lives, and become American citizens—a sizable contribution to American society, to the US economy, and to technological innovation and the knowledge base in numerous fields. The engineering, medical, and hard sciences have benefited particularly, but so have the humanities and social sciences. Indeed, those who negotiated the initial educational and scientific exchange accords back in 1978–79 could never have envisioned how much of a success story US-China higher educational exchanges would become over the next four decades.

For their part, American universities and US scholars have also engaged in China during this period, although in far fewer—but not insignificant—numbers. (For example, in 2015–16, 11,688 American students and scholars were studying in China.)⁶ For those in the field of Chinese studies, it is *de rigueur* to study and do research in Chinese universities. Professional collaboration among faculty—mainly in the sciences and medicine—has also flourished. Some US universities—notably Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (Hopkins-Nanjing Center), New York University (NYU-Shanghai), and Duke University (Duke-Kunshan)—have gone so far as to establish campuses in China, while others have opened centers (e.g., Stanford, Virginia, Chicago, Yale, Harvard, Columbia). Many more American universities have forged collaborative exchange programs with Chinese counterparts.

While US-China exchanges in higher education have primarily been a success story, as in many other dimensions of the Sino-American relationship, clouds have appeared on the horizon.⁷ American students have

become less keen than in the past to study in China due to concerns about pollution, lack of open internet access, and expanding political controls. American scholars trying to conduct research in China have run into an increasing number of restrictions and impediments since 2010, due to a broad campaign against “foreign hostile forces” and an increasingly draconian political atmosphere that has cast a shadow across Chinese society, especially over higher education. Whole subject areas and regions of the country are now off-limits to American and other foreign scholars for fieldwork; previously normal interactions with Chinese scholars are now often heavily circumscribed; many Chinese scholars have become reluctant to meet with American counterparts; a growing number of libraries are off-limits; central- and provincial-level archives have been closed; municipal archives are increasingly restricted; interviews with government officials (at all levels) are more difficult to arrange; public opinion surveys must be carried out with Chinese partners, if they can be conducted at all; simple eyewitness social research in rural and even some urban areas is considerably more limited than previously. In short, normal scholarly research practices permitted elsewhere in the world are regularly proscribed in China. These restrictions also include the inability to hold open and uncensored public scholarly discussions, conferences, and other kinds of events. Meanwhile, Chinese students and scholars enjoy unimpeded access to all of these activities in the United States, resulting in a severe asymmetry in Sino-American scholarly exchange. This contravenes the spirit of the bilateral US-China educational exchange accords.

At the same time, storm clouds are also gathering on American campuses with respect to another aspect of this important relationship, namely, growing concerns about unfair Chinese “influence-seeking activities” in the United States.

Confucius Institutes

One of the most controversial aspects of the whole US-China educational exchange is the Confucius Institutes (CIs), of which there are now 110 (plus 501 Confucius Classrooms in secondary schools) across the United

States.⁸ For secondary schools and colleges that have no or little other coverage of China on campus, CIs are an important resource. Sponsored by the Hanban, an organization directly under the purview of the Ministry of Education in Beijing, but also with ties to the External Propaganda Leading Group of the CCP Central Committee, the primary mission of CIs is to teach Chinese language and culture abroad. However, faculty and other watchdogs have warned that they may present risks to intellectual freedom by using American universities as vehicles through which to advance Chinese Communist Party propaganda. Accusations leveled at CIs revolve mainly around the exclusive use of PRC materials that promote PRC Chinese viewpoints, terminology, and simplified characters; the avoidance of discussion in American classrooms and programs on controversial topics such as Tibet, Tiananmen, Xinjiang, the Falun Gong, and human rights; and potential infringement on theoretically independent studies curricula on American campuses.

Although proponents of CIs like to compare them with branches of France's L'Alliance Francaise, Germany's Goethe Instituts, and Spain's Cervantes Institute, they are different in important ways. Unlike these other institutions, CIs are joint operations located inside—and cofunded by—a host university or secondary school for which the Hanban arranges a Chinese university to supply teachers, textbooks, and other materials. The teachers are paid by the Chinese university (and hence do not hold green cards or pay US taxes). Typically, the Hanban provides a \$150,000 start-up grant with \$100,000–\$200,000 per year follow-on funding (depending on the institution) directly to the American university. Secondary schools normally receive \$50,000 in initial funding and \$15,000 subsequently per annum. Most troublesome are two provisions in the Hanban contracts with US host institutions: One forbids the CIs from conducting any activities that contravene Chinese law while the other requires that the enabling contract remain confidential, making oversight by the academic community difficult.

Some participating American institutions have belatedly had second thoughts about their partnerships. In 2014, the University of Chicago terminated its CI contract with the Hanban after months of controversy among faculty, spurred by a high-profile critical article by an emeritus

member.⁹ Since that time, at least two additional American universities have also closed their branches (Pennsylvania State University and University of West Florida),¹⁰ and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), a leading critic of alleged Chinese “influence activities,” has written letters to a number of other Florida institutions hosting CIs requesting that they also be closed.¹¹ Representatives Michael McCaul (R-TX) and Henry Cuellar (D-TX) called for the same termination in their own state, stating in a letter addressed to their state’s universities that these organizations “are a threat to our nation’s security by serving as a platform for China’s intelligence collection and political agenda.” They added that “we have a responsibility to uphold our American values of free expression, and to do whatever is necessary to counter any behavior that poses a threat to our democracy.” The Texas A&M system complied with this request by ordering the closure of all CIs.¹² Then, in August 2018, the University of North Florida announced the closure of its CI.¹³

Similar calls have been made in other states, and the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act restricts Department of Defense language study funding if a university hosts a Confucius Institute.¹⁴ Several other universities (including Dickinson State University in Pennsylvania, the University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton University) that had contemplated opening CIs have now decided not to do so. At the same time, Columbia University (and elsewhere) has come under criticism, more for lack of transparency than for its specific violative activities.¹⁵ That said, the majority of CIs have so far carried out their mission of language and cultural education without controversy.

In 2014, both the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) called on universities to terminate CIs unless their agreements with Hanban were renegotiated to provide for total transparency and compliance with norms of academic freedom.¹⁶ In 2017, the National Association of Scholars (NAS), a politically conservative nonprofit advocacy group,¹⁷ undertook an exhaustive study of CIs in the United States and produced a 183-page report.¹⁸ Echoing the AAUP’s recommendations, the NAS urged closing all CIs on the basis of four areas of concern: a restriction of intellectual freedom; lack of transparency; “entanglement” (with

Chinese party-controlled institutions); and worries about them being used for Chinese “soft power” or pro-PRC propaganda.

In addition to the above concerns, some have argued that the fact that CI language programs exclusively use PRC textbooks with “simplified” (or mainland-style) Chinese characters biases the contribution CIs make to Chinese language instruction on American campuses. In our view, this is not a serious problem, since students should learn this vocabulary and this form of written characters, so long as the university also provides the opportunity for students to learn traditional “complex” characters (used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and many diaspora communities) and to learn non-mainland vocabulary. A review of the entire set of Hanban textbooks used by CIs undertaken for this report finds they contain no overt political content. Only in one of six levels of textbooks was there a single lesson on US-China relations, and it was a speech by former president Barack Obama in which he asserted that the United States does not seek to “contain” China. Nor have we found *any* evidence of interference by CIs in the mainstream Chinese studies curricula on US campuses to date. (See below for our recommendations concerning CIs.)

Chinese Students and Scholars Associations

Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSA) on American campuses maintain regular contact with China’s diplomatic missions in the United States. Even when these contacts are purely for cultural purposes, the CSSA provides a ready channel or entry point for the political departments of China’s embassy and consulates in the United States to gather information and coordinate action, which in some cases includes pressuring the behavior of Chinese students. Sometimes pressure is even applied by China’s security services on the family members, back in China, of those students it finds speaking out in unacceptable ways. What is more, Chinese scholars and diplomats have sought to influence on-campus debates in China’s favor and have even protested when American universities have exercised their right to invite speakers whom China identifies as unfriendly. Finally, some Chinese students and scholars have exploited the collaborative research environment on US campuses to obtain sensitive American technologies.

Chinese Students and Scholars Associations now exist on more than 150 US campuses.¹⁹ A second type of on-campus association has also recently started up, the China Development Student Think Tank (CDSTT), with chapters at Syracuse University, Boston University, and George Washington University. As voluntary associations of Chinese citizens on campus, these groups perform many appropriate social functions, such as orienting new students to life in the United States and arranging networking get-togethers. Nonetheless, their links with Chinese diplomatic missions and some of their activities, because of their attempts to interfere with other campus activities and broader political discourse and debate, present cause for concern. CSSAs at Washington, DC, universities make no secret of their ties to the Chinese embassy and receive small amounts of operating funds directly from it. CSSAs elsewhere have similar ties to nearby Chinese consulates, which also provide them with funding, other kinds of support, and surveillance. It has also been reported that Chinese Communist Party cells have been established on several US campuses.²⁰

CSSAs often alert PRC diplomatic missions about events on campus that offend official PRC political sensitivities, e.g., speeches or discussions on Tibet, Taiwan, Xinjiang, human rights, and Chinese elite politics. Once notified, the local PRC mission has sometimes contacted university faculty or staff members to prevent such events from proceeding. In some instances, it is difficult to know whether opposition to events originates with a CSSA or the local PRC mission. In 2017, the CSSA at the University of California–San Diego (UCSD) mobilized opposition to the chancellor’s invitation to the Dalai Lama to be the commencement speaker, which at least some CSSA members ultimately coordinated with the PRC consulate in Los Angeles.²¹ After the event finally took place anyway as planned, the Chinese government retaliated by banning students and scholars with funding from the Chinese government’s China Scholarship Council from attending UCSD. Other US universities have come under similar pressure when they have contemplated inviting the Dalai Lama or his associates to campus. Academic authorities at one Washington, DC, university were even warned by the Chinese embassy that if an event concerning Xinjiang went ahead, they risked losing their Confucius Institute.

CSSAs also serve as a channel of political “peer monitoring” of Chinese students, constraining the academic freedom of Chinese students on campus—and thereby also undermining core principles of free speech and academic freedom. This issue has become more serious over the past several years, as the political environment in China has tightened and Chinese students widely fear that things they say on campus (even in class, at other campus activities, or in private conversations) that contradict official PRC policies are liable to be reported to the Chinese authorities and risk putting their families into jeopardy back home.

A very public example of this kind took place during the commencement ceremonies at the University of Maryland in May 2017, after a Chinese student was selected as the commencement speaker. When Yang Shuping praised the “fresh air of free speech” and contrasted what she had found in the United States with China—and her comments went viral on the internet and social media in China—she received an avalanche of email threats, and her family in China was harassed.²² Another well-reported incident occurred at Duke University in 2008 when a twenty-year-old female undergraduate student became caught up in a pro-Tibetan independence demonstration. She was vilified online, and her parents were harassed back in China.²³ In other cases, Chinese government authorities have visited students’ families in China and warned them about their children’s allegedly subversive statements abroad.

In Australia, another kind of disturbing phenomenon has occurred: Several instances have occurred in which Chinese students have recorded professors’ lectures that were deemed critical of the PRC and then uploaded them onto the internet, thereby prompting harassment of the lecturers on social media.²⁴ There is no evidence that this has occurred on American campuses to date. But the presence on campus of a student organization linked to the Chinese government creates an understandable concern that faculty lecturing on politically sensitive topics might fear that their lectures are being monitored and thus self-censor themselves. This prospect is especially concerning when it involves a faculty member who, because he or she needs to travel to China for research or other professional purposes, feels under duress.

Gifts and Grants

Thanks to growing wealth accumulation in China, prosperous Chinese are beginning to develop the practice of philanthropy and to exercise giving both at home and abroad.²⁵ This is potentially a good thing for American universities. Indeed, since 2011, Chinese sources have participated in at least 1,186 donations or contracts worth more than \$426 million to seventy-seven American universities, according to disclosures made to the US Department of Education, making China the fifth most active country by number of gifts, and fourth, behind Qatar, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia, in total monetary value of gifts. (These disclosures are only required of universities that accept federal aid, and the figures also include funds from Taiwanese sources.)²⁶

All US institutions of higher education cultivate lifetime giving from both graduates and their families. Given the numbers of Chinese students matriculating from American universities and the wealth of many of their families back in China as well as their own potential career earnings, Chinese students have become a growing priority for university development officers. Indeed, some Chinese families also seem to believe that they can ensure, or at least enhance, their children's chances of acceptance into top colleges through charitable gifts.²⁷

Given the government's extensive role in China's economy, acceptance of all Chinese gifts and grants requires due diligence that should be above and beyond the standard practices currently employed by universities for other charitable giving. This is obviously the case when funding comes from the Chinese government itself, for example via the Hanban (the oversight body of the Confucius Institutes), which doles out research grants via its Confucius China Studies Program,²⁸ the "Young Sinologists" program of the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,²⁹ and, in one instance, the endowing of a faculty position at Stanford University.

Chinese corporate and private donors are now also starting to pour millions of dollars into the US educational system, think tanks, and non-profit organizations. Given that privately owned companies in China exist and prosper at the sufferance of political authorities there, even

seemingly independent actors are often likely to act at government direction or in ways that they believe will please the government. Major mainland Chinese and Hong Kong companies and individuals with active business ventures in China have now pledged or donated substantial funds to US universities.

This is also the case with some Hong Kong-based or US-based foundations that are linked directly or indirectly to the Chinese government or to enterprises and families that have prospered with the help of the Beijing government. The most notable case is the China-United States Exchange Foundation.³⁰ CUSEF was established in 2008 on the initiative of former Hong Kong chief executive and shipping magnate Tung Chee Hwa (C. H. Tung) who continues to be the chairman of the foundation. Tung is also the vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's highest-level united front organization,³¹ and he attended the Communist Party's 19th National Congress in October 2017. Moreover, the number of mainland-based members of the foundation's official advisors and the foundation's easy connections with Chinese government organs belie the foundation's assertion that it is independent of the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC government.

CUSEF undertakes a range of programs aimed at Americans that can accurately be described as influence-seeking activities; as such, it has registered in the United States under the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA). Its lobbying activities include sponsoring all-expenses-paid tours of China for delegations composed of what the foundation's website refers to as "thought leaders," including journalists and editors, think-tank specialists, and city and state officials.³² CUSEF has not often collaborated with American universities and think tanks, but it recently offered funding to the University of Texas at Austin for its China Public Policy Center. However, after receiving criticism from Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) and others, the university declined the grant.³³ CUSEF grants have generally gone to leading US think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Asia Society.

There have not yet been many offers by Chinese donors—private, corporate, or government—to fund faculty positions or centers for Chinese studies on US campuses, although many universities are believed to be seeking such gifts. In one instance in 2014, a leading Washington, DC, university was approached by a Chinese university with a proposal for a \$500,000 *annual* grant to establish a center for Chinese studies in partnership with the Chinese university.³⁴ The Chinese side had three main conditions for the grant: (1) that a series of Chinese officials and other visitors would be given public platforms for frequent speeches; (2) that faculty from the Chinese partner university could teach China courses on the US university campus; and (3) that new Chinese studies courses would be added to the university curriculum. The Washington-based university turned down the lucrative offer, on the advice of its Chinese studies faculty.

In August 2017, the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) announced that it had received a substantial gift from CUSEF for an endowed junior faculty position, as well as program funding for a Pacific Community Initiative. SAIS administrators stated that there were no political or other strings attached to these grants, despite media insinuations to the contrary.³⁵ At Yale Law School, the China Law Center founded in 1999 was renamed the Paul Tsai China Center after receiving a \$30 million endowment from Joseph C. Tsai, a Taiwanese Canadian billionaire who is a cofounder and executive vice chairman of the China-based Alibaba Group.³⁶ Tsai, an alumnus of Yale College and Yale Law School, made the gift in honor of his father, also an alumnus of Yale Law School.

China is not the only authoritarian government that has given or facilitated gifts to American academic institutions or think tanks, but it is the wealthiest. There is no evidence so far that any of these gifts has compromised the independence of the recipient institution. But the trend toward large gifts from Chinese sources, many with some kind of government linkage, underscores the need for vigilance in enforcing a stricter code of due diligence and transparency on the part of university administrations and faculties.

Pressure on University Administrations

There is a large number of successful exchange programs between American and Chinese universities. Three US universities have developed campuses in China (Johns Hopkins, Duke, NYU); more than one hundred universities participate in cooperative-education programs in China; and countless US faculty members participate in collaborative projects with Chinese colleagues (principally in the sciences). These relationships have not been easy to establish or maintain, but they have generally been successful. A 2016 report by the Government Accounting Office, which reviewed the cooperative programs of twelve American universities, found that the universities “generally indicated that they experienced academic freedom,” while noting that self- and internet censorship remain a problem.

In recent years, the outlook for these collaborations has deteriorated in line with broader restrictions on academic freedom on Chinese campuses. In 2013, commensurate with CCP Central Committee Document No. 9, universities were reportedly instructed to avoid discussing topics including “universal values” and civil rights,³⁷ and admonitions against the teaching of Western values have continued. Since 2017, foreign university collaborative institutions have been required to institute Communist Party committees and place a party secretary on their management boards.³⁸ In July 2018, the Ministry of Education ended 234, or one-fifth, of its international university partnerships. More than twenty-five programs with American universities were among them.³⁹

The Chinese government has demonstrated a penchant for turning to these collaborations as points of leverage when US universities have hosted the Dalai Lama or held other events deemed politically sensitive or offensive to the Chinese government. In such instances, existing collaborative exchange programs have been suspended or put on hold, planned visits of university administrators have been canceled, programs between university institutes and centers have been suspended, and Chinese students wishing to study at these US institutions have been counseled to go elsewhere. Such punitive actions resulting from campus visits by the Dalai Lama have been taken against Emory University, the Uni-

versity of Maryland, the University of California–San Diego, and others. In the case of the University of Maryland, which hosted the Dalai Lama in 2013, there was temporary fallout, and then following the 2017 graduation incident the Chinese government again halted cooperation, seriously damaging one of the most extensive exchange programs with China.

Such cases establish a worrying precedent of Chinese intrusion into American academic life. The message from China to US universities is clear: do not transgress the political no-go zones of the Chinese Communist Party or government, or you will pay a price. Sometimes the pressure is overt; other times it is more subtle and indirect, but no less alarming. Some American faculty members report troubling conversations with university administrators who continue to view Chinese students as such a lucrative revenue stream that it should not be endangered by “needlessly irritating Chinese authorities.”

Censorship and Self-Censorship

The final category of troubling Chinese influence on American campuses involves the vexing issue of self-censorship among faculty and students in Chinese studies.⁴⁰ In a much-quoted essay, Perry Link described censorship within China as the use of vague threats to induce academics, writers, and others to self-limit what they say; he called this “the anaconda in the chandelier” syndrome.⁴¹ More recently, the phenomenon has begun to loom over scholars working outside China, and the Chinese government has started deploying a variety of techniques to also encourage self-censorship beyond China’s borders, including in the United States. In some cases, this syndrome has led to outright self-censorship of academic work. Here are some of the most egregious examples:

- Denial of visas to qualified scholars and students seeking access to China for research or training purposes. The State Department estimates that fifteen to twenty individuals are on an outright “blacklist,” while scores of others appear to be on a “gray” list, where denials are less absolute and sometimes temporary or limited only to certain categories of visa. But being cast into the “gray”

status helps create exactly the kind of uncertainty about what behavior might lead to visa denial, thus inducing self-censorship in the hopes of not offending anyone further, much less turning one's status from "gray" to "black." In other words, the power to withhold or deny access through the issuance of visas affords the Chinese government a full spectrum of powerful control mechanisms over scholars.

- Denial of access to interviewees, archives, libraries, and research institutes, even when visas are granted.
- Restriction of visiting scholar status for American researchers to a few institutes under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and some universities. Other think tanks and research institutes do not permit foreign resident researchers. At the same time, it should be noted, Chinese researchers from a wide variety of institutes are free to regularly come to US universities and think tanks for short- and long-term stays.
- Attempts to control the agendas, participant name lists, what is written, and what is said at joint scholarly conferences held in China, and now sometimes even in the United States. (A recent technique is to require that a talk or paper by an American participant in a Chinese-organized event be handed over to the organizing group for vetting well before the event itself, so that a participant can be disinvited, if necessary.)
- Restriction of internet and email communications when in China.
- Monitoring, even following, some American scholars by security services while in China.
- Demands for censorship by foreign publishers of their digital content as a condition for allowing it to be made available online in China.
- Insistence on censorship of Chinese-language editions of foreign books by the State Press and Publishing Administration. This places foreign authors in the difficult position of having to acquiesce to such censorship in order to have translations of their books published in China.
- Censorship of online archives of PRC journals and publications, such as the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database. American universities each pay tens of thousands of dol-

lars annually for access to these electronic databases. However, recent research has shown that CNKI in particular is now “curating” its catalogs and holdings by deleting articles the current government appears not to wish to see remaining in the historical record.⁴² Since American universities have started to dispose of paper copies of many of the journals carried in CNKI periodical index, this amounts to PRC distorting the historical record, not just for China but for the entire world.

In addition to these specific restrictions affecting American scholars, the PRC government also influences the field of Chinese studies in the United States (and elsewhere) via controls over key regions of their country (especially minority areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang) and by creating no-go zones around a wide variety of research subjects within the broader areas of politics, religion, ethnography, and civil society that cannot be researched in-country. As a result, American professors cannot themselves work in these areas, nor can they in good conscience advise their graduate students to work on these subjects either because of risk to the researcher’s career, as well as to the human subjects whom researchers would be observing or interviewing. Such restrictions have real consequences for the open future of Chinese studies around the world.

Conclusion and Recommendations

US-China academic exchanges are valuable to both China and the United States and should be maintained and developed. However, in doing so, universities must be alert to the risks of engaging with the Chinese government, institutions, and funders and be proactive in applying a higher level of due diligence and vigilance as a defense of the core principle of academic freedom, especially when conflicts take place at home in their own universities.

Promote Transparency

- **Manage agreements with Confucius Institutes:** We do not endorse calls for Confucius Institutes to be closed, as long as several

conditions are met. US institutions should make their CI agreements public to facilitate oversight by members of the university community and other concerned parties. Those agreements, in turn, must grant full managerial authority to the host institution (not on a shared basis with the Hanban), so the university has full control over what a CI teaches, the activities it undertakes, the research grants it makes, and whom it employs. The clause in all Hanban contracts that CIs must operate “according to China’s laws” must be deleted.

If these standards cannot be attained, then the CI agreements should be terminated. Furthermore, universities should prevent any intervention by CIs in curricular requirements and course content in their overall Chinese studies curricula or other areas of study by maintaining a clear administrative separation between academic centers and departments on the one hand, and CIs on the other. Finally, universities must ensure that all public programming offered by their CIs conforms to academic standards of balance and diversity and does not cross the line to become a platform for PRC propaganda, or even a circumscribed view of a controversial issue. In fact, this report would suggest that universities should not permit Confucius Institutes to become involved in public programming that goes beyond the CI core mission of education about Chinese language and culture. To go beyond these two categories invites opportunities for politicized propaganda.

- **Apply due diligence:** To minimize the risks just identified, universities must rigorously apply far stricter due-diligence procedures to scrutinize the sources and purposes of gifts and contracts from China to ensure that they do not interfere with academic freedom. Universities accepting gifts from Chinese nationals, corporations, or foundations must insist that there be no restrictions on academic freedom. Foreign donations should continue to be welcomed, but universities must ensure that the conditions of acceptance are reasonable, consonant with their principles, and subject to oversight, and do not allow the program to become a beachhead for inappropriate influence. It is important that all universities exercise high standards of due diligence and not only scrutinize the source of the gift but

consider the implications of such things as naming rights. Above all, they must insist that the terms of each gift impose no restrictions on academic freedom. The activities of all chairs, centers, and projects funded by Chinese support need to be fully transparent and supervised by independent faculty committees and university administrators, who must bear in mind that even when a joint project, research grant, or gift has undergone due diligence and has no explicit or evident strings attached, it can still produce a natural sense of obligation because no institution wants to offend a generous donor. This is a problem not restricted to grants from China, but one that is deeply entrenched in the fund-raising structure on which American institutions of higher education depend for their well-being.

- **Defend the academic freedom of faculty:** Governance is the core technique for protecting academic freedom in American universities and is the key to their leading role in research and teaching. It takes various forms in various institutions, but its key principles must be applied consistently to interactions involving China. Transparency must be maintained in the terms of a university's contracts with all outside actors, whether individuals, foundations, donors, or collaborating institutions such as the Hanban, which funds Confucius Institutes. Such actors must be subject to regular oversight by faculty bodies and by administrators answerable to faculty bodies so that faculty, students, visiting scholars, and others associated with the university in an academic capacity will have uncompromised freedom of speech, research, teaching, and programmatic activities.

Universities and their associated institutions—such as university presses—must refuse all forms of censorship of—or interference in—their publications, conferences, curricula, participants in events, and other academic activities. Some universities have formal rules barring such censorship, but they need to increase awareness, training, and enforcement. Other universities may need to enact or update such rules. While maintaining the openness of US universities to Chinese students, scholars, and researchers, universities should push for reciprocity from Chinese partner institutions with respect to various forms of research access.

In short, universities should enhance protection for faculty and students—especially international students—from interference in their academic freedom, and campuses with large numbers of international students from authoritarian countries should introduce training for students on their academic rights in the American educational system, and on the proper distance that independent student organizations should maintain from government actors. Finally, universities should provide a confidential complaint procedure for students who feel they have come under pressure that threatens their academic freedom, and university advisors should stand prepared to counsel and assist these students to deal appropriately with such pressures.

Promote Integrity

- Be alert to risks: The primary risk is of inappropriate influence over admissions, course content, and program activities stemming from the influence of Chinese government-linked donors, diplomatic missions, student groups, and institutions. This is not a new challenge for US university administrators and development officers. They have dealt with political quid pro quos from donors from South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Israel, Russia, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the past and currently, and American universities have long learned how to refuse donations with strings attached. This historical experience and the existing safeguards should also help inform and guide US universities when it comes to dealing with this new wave of Chinese money. Faculty and administrators must continue to protect the open debate, diversity of opinion, freedom of expression, faculty autonomy, and transparency on which the health and reputation of their institutions are based. Funding from Chinese sources should be as welcome as funding from other sources, but only to the extent that fundamental academic values can be maintained and protected.

A second risk is of a loss of sensitive or proprietary technology through academic instruction or cooperation. There are indications that the US government is now strengthening measures to prevent

the theft of sensitive technology and intellectual property that is being developed on US campuses. These measures may require heightened screening and, in some cases, outright denials of visas to individuals from certain state-run institutions or even from certain sensitive research fields. Such calls have understandably prompted concern from the academic community fearing that this will undermine the principles of academic freedom, hinder collaboration, and deny American universities access to a rich talent pool. These reservations are merited and require that any tightening of visa categories be as narrow as possible. For their part, universities will of course have to comply with whatever regulations are imposed. They should, additionally, proactively review and update their procedures for protecting both proprietary and classified research. They should also enter into far closer collegial discussions with one another, relevant professional associations, and government agencies to collectively refine solutions to the difficult problem of balancing the pursuit of innovation and academic freedom with preventing the theft of technology and other intellectual property.

To meet these challenges, American universities may need to update their rules and intensify faculty and researcher training and institutional oversight for protection of proprietary research information. Some US universities refuse to accept contracts for classified research. Those that do accept such contracts must comply with government regulations for the protection of research findings. But all research universities conduct research that produces valuable intellectual property, which is proprietary in various proportions to the funder. And so, it is necessary for the university and researchers to intensify efforts to protect their proprietary intellectual property from loss.

Promote Reciprocity

- The academic community nationwide should work toward a common set of principles and practices for protecting academic freedom and promoting greater reciprocity. To prevent influencers from using divide-and-conquer strategies (by rewarding some institutions

while punishing others), it is important for the national academic community as a whole to come together to formulate and implement these principles. US universities should not only work together, but they should also work with other universities around the world to develop a code of conduct for acceptable and unacceptable practices in academic exchanges with Chinese institutions and funders. (The chapter on think tanks in this volume recommends similar measures.) The academic community and government should also monitor instances where Chinese entities may acquire financially challenged American colleges outright. This would ensure that their academic integrity is not compromised.⁴³

Universities can and must continue to play a positive role in the US-China relationship. Indeed, by introducing international students to American life and values, and connecting them to new personal and professional relationships, universities are arguably the important means by which the United States exercises its soft power. Generally—but not always—individuals undergoing such an experience take a more positive view of the country. Unfortunately, as Chinese students contribute much, not least monetarily, to American universities, universities have been too slow to help them integrate themselves more organically into campus life. As a result, Chinese students report unacceptably high levels of depression and isolation, or of simply clubbing up with one another.⁴⁴ While acting to mitigate the risks of improper interference, universities must not forget their obligations to these students nor lose sight of the far greater opportunity to advance cooperation and understanding.