

Research Integrity & Undue Foreign Influence

Why Foreign Influence Matters

As tensions between the U.S. and various foreign governments increase, accusations of academic espionage by foreign-supported researchers at U.S.-based research institutions are on the rise. The NIH, NSF, DOE, and other agencies are increasingly warning institutions of researchers who have not disclosed foreign associations in compliance with grant funding regulations and other laws. The government continues to initiate enforcement actions and we expect this to increase in frequency and scope during the coming months.

As a result, research and academic institutions in the U.S. need to be ever more vigilant to mitigate brand risk, the loss of federal funds, intellectual property assets and exposure to enforcement actions.

Alphabet Soup of Involved Agencies

Many federal agencies are involved in coordinated efforts to limit undue foreign influence in government-funded research as well as economic and academic espionage. By way of example only, here are some of the agencies working on these issues:

Agency	Examples of Recent Actions
National Institutes of Health (NIH)	Investigating at least 180 scientists at more than 65 institutions for potentially undisclosed or unapproved foreign ties
National Science Foundation (NSF)	NSF personnel barred from participating in foreign talent recruitment programs
Department of Energy (DOE)	Researchers barred from participating in certain foreign talent recruitment programs
Department of Defense (DOD, including AFOSR, ONR, DARPA)	Inspector General opened an inquiry into foreign influence in research and development programs
Department of Justice (DOJ/FBI)	FBI investigating and USAOs prosecuting cases
Department of Commerce	Added Huawei and 68 affiliates to the Bureau of Industry and Security Entity List
Department of Education	Launched investigations into foreign funding at major research universities
Department of State	Required members of Chinese diplomatic corps to notify State when visiting educational, research, and other institutions
Customs and Border Protection (CBP)	Stopped foreign researchers at U.S. airports attempting to export research materials
NASA	Restricting awardees from collaborating with China and Chinese-owned companies at the prime or sub-recipient level
Department of Agriculture	Assisting in investigations involving unauthorized shipments of animal specimens