Academic Freedom and Engaging Faculty on Campus

The Asian American Perspective

Presentation to
Senior Research Officers
Association of American Universities

Steven Pei, Co-organizer, APA Justice
Jeremy Wu, Co-organizer, APA Justice

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Asian Pacific American (APA) Task Force

Before “China Initiative,” there were Sherry Chen, Xiaoxing Xi, and others

• APA Justice was formed in the Fall of 2015 after a series of wrongful prosecutions affecting Chinese American scientists in academia, government, and private industry

• Response to CAPAC Chair Judy Chu’s call for a shared platform to address racial profiling and related justice and fairness issues
Probable Roles of APA Justice

• Work with other organizations to jointly raise awareness, share platform, bridge gaps, and advocate for effective and productive policies and practices

• Together and separately, we can work with
  ▪ APA community and civil rights groups of American born Chinese and first generation of immigrants from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, East and Southeast Asia.
  ▪ Asian American scientific groups
  ▪ American and international professional organizations
  ▪ Congressional members and their staffs, White House officials, and Executive Branch officers and their staffs
  ▪ English and Chinese-language media in the U.S.
Seeking Common Ground While Respecting Differences

- What do Asian American faculty want?
- How can SROs help?
- What are the common grounds and fundamental differences?
On “Racial Profiling”
Perspective of a Non-Asian, Non-Immigrant
Senior Academic Leader and Former Federal Officer

• Clearly there is bias in the peer review system - ethnicity, gender, age, stature of university, geography location, etc.

• The federal government has a very hard time coordinating anything - common message, standard, regs, etc. - it’s inherent in our system

• Similarly, universities have their own practices, policies, cultures - some reflecting geography and local/state politics

• Bias, even ethnic bias, is not always about racism; and it’s difficult, in analyzing data, to control for other causes of bias

• Might be worth mentioning that bias is also prevalent in election to the National Academies and other honorary organizations, including underrepresentation of Asians

• Racism exists in the U.S. society and most of the rest of the world, and some scientists and other academics may well be racists - but few I believe
The (Asian American) Faculty Perspective

• Need a **safe/secure, supportive/protected, welcoming/trusted** environment that allows them to be productive, attract and retain talent, and contribute to American leadership in science

• Personal experiences, historical discrimination and bias, recent events, and anecdotal stories contribute to the current environment

• Growing number of studies, surveys, and statistics support the concerns and fears that are both broad and deep

• Faculty recognize that SROs have to implement federal “research integrity” requirements, especially with new laws coming down

• A fundamental value of higher education in America is the ability of faculty to exercise academic freedom without fear of retaliation, regardless of our race and national origin
Summaries of Academic Climate Surveys

- High risk of losing & failing to attract talent of Asian descent, especially young researchers and grant awardees.
- High risk of losing talent in federal sponsored research & open science, especially for public university & computer science and engineering faculty.
- Widespread fear of conducting normal academic activities, federal grant applications, and research dissemination.
- A vast majority of Asian American scholars would like to contribute to the US leadership in science and technology, but felt unsafe in staying.
- Both Asian and non-Asian scientists overwhelmingly recognize the value of Chinese scientists and support U.S. collaboration with China.
- Overall there is high level of scientific engagement with Chinese scholars and students.
- A consistent pattern of racial profiling as perceived by Chinese scientists.
- Concerns about racial profiling and surveillance are significantly related to limiting research collaborations with China.
- Non-Chinese scientists possess a more negative view about China and a more favorable view about the FBI compared to Chinese scientists.
- “We need a secure, open, and supportive environment for science.”
- Academic researchers are frightened.
- Their fears are grounded in federal policy, and in the university response.
- “Brain drain” is a serious potential consequence.

https://bit.ly/2ZBvlwA

9/9/2022
APA Justice
Impact on Innovation and Productivity

American Physical Society

- Impact on collaborations
- Impact on workforce
- New approach required


Wall Street Journal

In the first six months of 2022, the U.S. issued 31,055 F-1 visas to Chinese nationals, down from 64,261 for the same period in 2019, according to data from the U.S. State Department.

https://on.wsj.com/3Po3Boc

University of California San Diego

- Considering the research output during 2015-2018 vs. the output during 2019-2020, the positive correlation suggests both the U.S. and China suffer from the political tensions.
- The larger slope for the U.S. suggests the loss of the U.S. appears to be more sensitive to the impacts of the NIH investigations.

Intended and Unintended Consequences

• **Activism.** Asian American, scientific and professional organizations along with students, become more active in standing up and speaking out, conducting surveys and studies, advocating for policy changes, bringing lawsuits, and opposing the nomination of a U.S. Attorney. New organizations were formed in the aftermath of the “We Are All Gang Chen” moment, including the Asian American Scholar Forum, Federation of Associations of Chinese Professors, an emerging Asian American current and retired senior administrator group, and more.

• **Passivism.** Some faculty and students become more passive and pessimistic by avoiding legitimate international collaborations, federal grant applications, and other means to avoid being a target of an investigation.

• **Brain Drain.** Some faculty and students leave the U.S. for China or other countries; some faculty and students become less inclined to come to the U.S., leading to a brain drain situation and threatening the future U.S. leadership in science and technology.
Wishes of Faculty

1. Engage faculty in the development and implementation of NSPM-33 and similar policies on campus to make sure clear instruction, sufficient support, and proper training are provided to faculty, researchers, and administrative staff.

2. “Establish (an independent or joint with faculty senate) committee (preferably led by a Chinese American faculty) to evaluate, define and protect the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of faculty and administration in cases involving the investigation of faculty by outside agencies.”

3. Offer and publicize first response followed by independent legal assistance. Consider legal insurance in the long term.

4. Help faculty, staffs, and students to resolve visa, border entry, and related issues.