



Dear Colleagues,

I want you to be aware of legislation that is currently receiving bipartisan consideration in the U.S. Congress. This legislation would create sanctions for faculty at U.S. universities who are associated with Chinese, Russian and Iranian "Talent Programs". The foremost of the Chinese Talent Programs is called the "Thousand Talents Program".

The Thousand Talents Program was created by the Chinese government to develop capacity for research in critical technology areas within various Chinese universities. Typically, faculty from around the world apply or are invited to apply for an award that asks them to spend two months per year at a Chinese host university for the purpose of setting up an institute related to their area of expertise. In addition to a stipend for the two months, the Chinese government provides funding for the institute. In some instances, faculty are recruited directly into full time positions, but part time appointments appear to be more common.

The Chinese government has very carefully identified the technology areas funded under the program. Though most of the institutes seem focused on basic research, the programs target high technology sectors that can have military or intelligence relevance. However, programs focused primarily on manufacturing, agriculture, and other areas with high potential economic benefit are also well represented in the mix. The goal is to seed highly competitive research programs in Chinese universities that will allow the nation to overtake the traditional technological lead held by the U.S. and other nations worldwide. Government investment in these initiatives has been heavy.

The U.S. Congress is extremely concerned by this development and has begun to view the program as part of a broader strategy to build technological superiority. The FBI has been investigating a continuing program of scientific and industrial espionage designed to meet this same goal over the past decade. To complicate matters, the State Department and the FBI believe elements of the Thousand Talents Program are closely allied to the Chinese military. We recently worked with a TTU faculty member who had applied to the program intending to work at one of the premier research institutions in China. He was subsequently advised that his application would be viewed more favorably if he collaborated with another, less prestigious institution. That institution turned out to be on the U.S. State Department's list of restricted Chinese institutions due to its ties to the mission of the Chinese military.

The TTU faculty member was asked to reciprocate by inviting faculty from the listed Chinese university to visit TTU. The visiting faculty member from the Chinese university would have required monitoring while on the TTU campus, because of restrictions on sensitive research he could not be allowed to access. After consultations with the FBI, our office advised the faculty member to suspend his application to the program and cancel the offer to host visiting faculty from that specific university. We are aware of other TTU faculty being targeted for participation in these programs. Congress is hearing similar examples from across the country.

Legislation currently under consideration in Washington would permanently BAR individuals who have participated in Chinese, Russian, or Iranian Talent programs from receiving any Federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Defense. There is some concern this could be broadened to include other Federal granting agencies. We want to advise all TTU faculty to be very circumspect about participation in Talent programs. Prior to submitting applications to any of these programs, please consult with our office (please contact [Jennifer Horn](#)) so we can screen them with the Federal authorities.

Also, for faculty who already are participating in such relationships with Chinese, Iranian or Russian universities, it is very important that you disclose these relationships to TTU OVPR as soon as possible. We want to understand the nature of these interactions so we can assist and advise our faculty should punitive legislation be put in place by the Federal government.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Heppert

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