

# FINDING FIRMER GROUND

Issue III

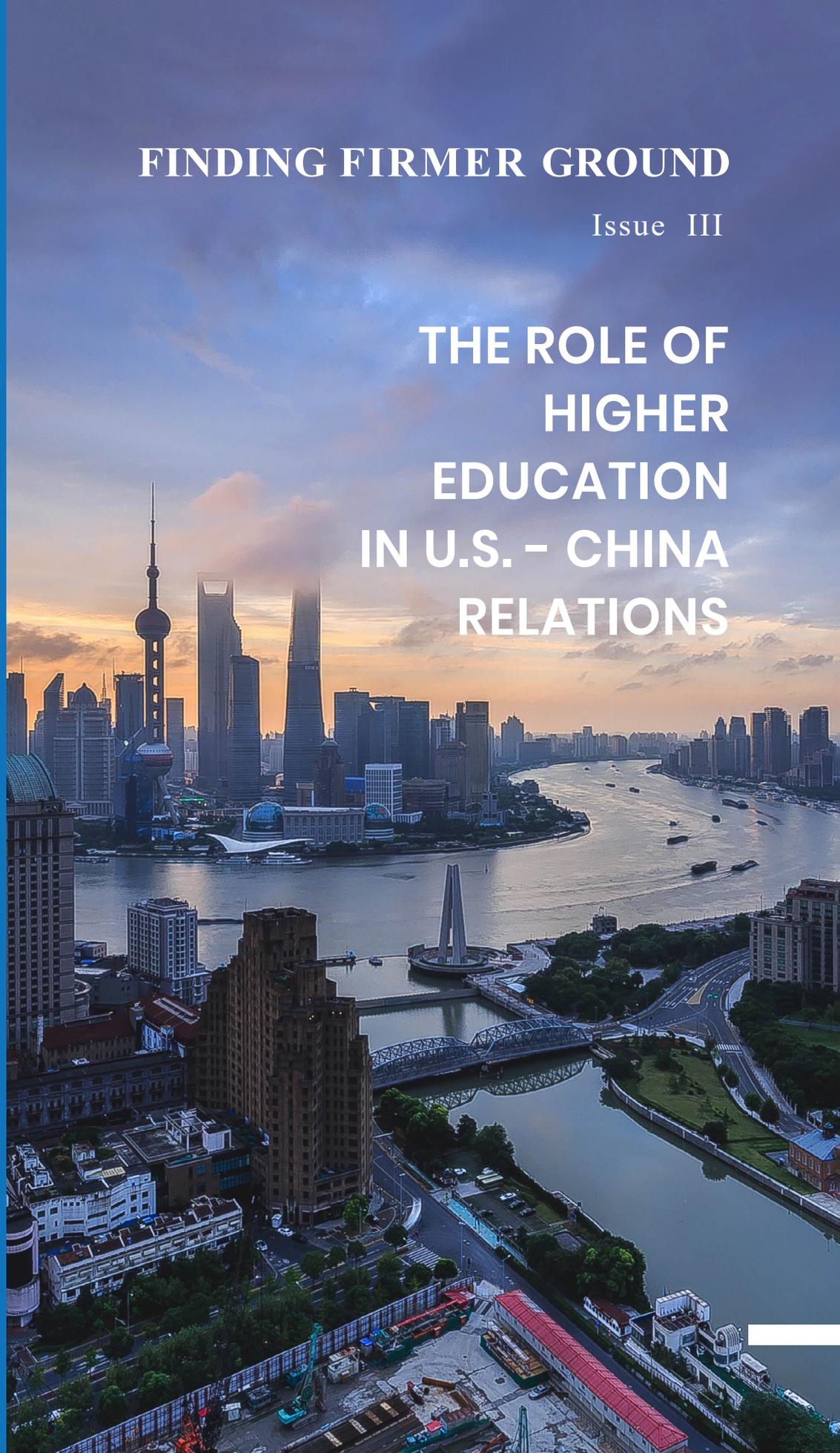
## THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN U.S. – CHINA RELATIONS

Edited by

Yawei Liu  
The Carter Center

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University of Oxford

THE  
CARTER CENTER



# Finding Firmer Ground: The Role of Higher Education in U.S.-China Relations

A Report on U.S.-China Relations  
Produced by The Carter Center

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## **Finding Firmer Ground:**

### **The Role of Higher Education in U.S. - China Relations**

*A Report on U.S.-China Relations Produced by The Carter Center*

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Yawei Liu

*The Carter Center*

Michael Cerny

*University of Oxford*

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**The Committee of 100** is a non-partisan leadership organization of prominent Chinese Americans in business, government, academia, and the arts.



# PREFACE

*Elizabeth Knup is the Ford Foundation's regional director in China.*

Today we find ourselves in a world beset by existential challenges that can only be solved through collective global action, including fundamental questions of war and peace, human migration and displacement, climate change, and pandemic response and preparedness. As we seek to solve these challenges, distinct national interests that are mutually misunderstood or insufficiently articulated drive greater global divergence and undermine the power of diplomacy and compromise to achieve solutions in the interest of the greater good.

In the face of such enormous challenges, the act of studying abroad may seem small and inconsequential. But, as the papers collected in this report, “Finding Firmer Ground: The Role of Higher Education in U.S.-China Relations,” conclude, the awareness, knowledge, and empathy gained through the act of studying abroad are critical underpinnings of stable international relations and contribute to reducing misunderstanding, enhancing clear interest articulation, and strengthening the power of formal and informal diplomacy in the pursuit of global peace and security. While these papers focus on educational exchange aimed at deepening American and Chinese understanding of each other, the lessons drawn can, and should, be applied more broadly.

The clear, well-researched, and comprehensive analysis in this collection spans nearly two centuries. Chronologically, the papers begin with Li Hongshan's exploration of the history and legacy of U.S. missionaries and higher education in China in the 1830s. Tom Gold provides a detailed history and analysis of American investment in centers for the study of Chinese language and culture in Taiwan and Hong Kong beginning in the early 1960s. And a set of papers by Paul Bell, Julia Chang Bloch, Robert Daly, Cheng Li, and the Committee of 100, examine the rise of academic exchange between the United States and the People's Republic of China, beginning with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1979. Yongling Gorke's analysis of the history, role, and impact of Confucius Institutes in the United States provides an antidote to dominant narratives on this topic and reveals the complexity of implementing educational exchange models. Kathryn Johnson and Amy Hebert Knopf explore the merits of educational exchange with China for

those with disabilities. And, finally, Ma Yingyi, along with Miao Lu and Mei Qu, elucidate the diverse motivations for study abroad that help explain what drives students on both sides.

An exploration of educational exchange focused on the United States and China cannot avoid a recognition of the political dimensions of this exchange across the centuries, and these papers do not shy away from this reality. At the same time, the authors in this volume resoundingly conclude that the tendency toward politicization of academic exchange should be resisted and that the clear benefits to both societies far outweigh any perceived risk that could accompany increased openness.

Mutual understanding is never as easy as it sounds. And some may believe that the era for pursuing mutual understanding between the United States and China has passed. What these papers reveal is that consistent efforts to create knowledge and engender empathy have long been part of the U.S.-China relationship and that these efforts have resulted in a long period of peace and stability for both countries. Now is the time to strengthen this critical dimension of the U.S.-China relationship.

# INTRODUCTION

*Julia Chang Bloch is the founder and Executive Chair of the U.S.-China Education Trust (USCET), a longtime leader in education programs and exchanges that promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and China. She is the first Asian American in US history to attain the rank of ambassador.*

U.S.-China educational exchange began auspiciously after a 30-year hiatus in 1978 when Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping announced his strategic decision to send 5,000 students and scholars from China each year to further their education.<sup>1</sup> Then-U.S. President Jimmy Carter famously responded, “Tell him to send 100,000.” This was the launch of educational exchange as a core pillar of the U.S.-China relationship.

Until the 40th anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-China relations and U.S.-China educational exchange in 2019, there was general agreement that the exchange of students and scholars benefited both countries. There was recognition that the enormous increase in personal interaction and friendships — and knowledge about each other’s society, culture, economy, and government — strengthened understanding, trust, and cooperation.

At a time when U.S.-China relations are at its lowest point since the normalization of relations, the benefits of educational exchange are being questioned, if not under assault. In a recent interview with the George H. W. Bush Foundation, President Carter pointed to the fact that The Carter Center was the “only U.S.-based organization to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary” as a “stark indication of how the bilateral landscape has changed in recent years.”<sup>2</sup>

Few could have predicted that Chinese students would be weaponized by both sides, caught up in the political and security disputes between the two governments. A trade war, political tensions,

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1 Dong Leshuo, “Educational exchange has long enriched US-China relations,” China Daily, 22 November 2019, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201911/22/WS5dd6c738a310cf3e355791e1.html>

2 “The Past, Present, and Future of U.S.-China Relations: A Bush China Foundation Conversation with President Jimmy Carter,” Bush China Foundation, Annual Report 2019/2020, page no. 14-17. <https://bushchinafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Bush-China-Foundation-20192020-Annual-Report.pdf>

concerns about academic espionage and influence operations, rising incidents of anti-Asian hate, and a global pandemic have created a perfect storm to stir up distrust as well as retaliatory measures that restrict student mobility on both sides of the Pacific. After years of fast growth, the number of Chinese students and researchers coming to the U.S. has slowed. China is still the largest source of international students in the U.S., accounting for about one-third of the total, but America's appeal is weakening.

Is this shift toward declining numbers an overdue correction to better protect America against academic espionage and influence operations and prevent China from capitalizing on American know-how to accelerate its own progress? Or is this decline in numbers an unnecessary and damaging hit on American universities' preeminent position in global higher education and its open science model, leading to loss of U.S. competitiveness and international prestige?

This introduction, and report more broadly, is an attempt to discern the benefits, risks, and challenges of U.S.-China educational exchange and determine how educational exchange can advance the interests of both the U.S. and China going forward.

### **The State of U.S.-China Educational exchange in 2021**

American higher education is world-renowned, attracting a million international students per year, and is one of the country's top service exports. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, stringent travel restrictions and increasingly negative perceptions of safety, the total number of international students at U.S. universities dropped by 15% for the first time to under a million (914,095) in the 2020–21 academic year.<sup>3</sup> Seventy-four percent of the international student population comes from Asia, with China being the number-one source with 35% of all international students in the United States coming from the country.<sup>4</sup> Significant reductions in first-time students coming from abroad drove the decrease in foreign student enrollment in 2020–21.<sup>5</sup>

Although China sent nearly 92,000 fewer students in 2020 compared to 2019, U.S. Department of State data from 2021 shows that student-visa issuance is returning to pre-pandemic levels. In May through August, the busiest months for student-visa applications, over 85,000 F-1 student visas were approved for Chinese students, which is roughly the same number of visas issued in the same months

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3 "2020 SEVIS by the Numbers Report," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security, March 22, 2021. <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevisBTN2020.pdf>.

4 Ibid.

5 Laura Silver, "Amid pandemic, international student enrollment at U.S. universities fell 15% in the 2020-21 school year," Pew Research Center, 6 December 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/12/06/amid-pandemic-international-student-enrollment-at-u-s-universities-fell-15-in-the-2020-21-school-year>.

of 2019.<sup>6</sup> The demand, however, is in many ways already built in. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, students were already in the pipeline for overseas study; in China, students planning to go abroad often opt out of the national college entrance examination in high school, a decision that makes them ineligible for admission to local universities and leaves them with little choice but to continue with their overseas study plans. The real picture of Chinese student admissions will only become clear in two or three years when the next groups of students graduate from high school.

Even before the pandemic, however, the increase of Chinese students studying in the U.S. had already slowed considerably, going from a 23.1% year-on-year growth in 2011–12 to only 1.7% in 2018–19.<sup>7</sup> The high cost of American higher education, especially for international students, compared to other Western countries is one of the most important reasons for the slowdown in the U.S. International students are opting to study abroad increasingly in other Western countries such as the U.K., which saw 20% growth in Chinese student enrollments in 2020.<sup>8</sup> Over the past decade there has also been a growing movement within China to encourage students to study at domestic universities. Moreover, the return on investment for foreign degrees among Chinese students is steadily decreasing, with returnees reporting little if any salary premiums when they began working in China after graduation in 2013. Today, there is presumably even less of a premium.<sup>9</sup>

Examining the numbers of American students studying in China, it is clear that there is a large imbalance. In the 2018–2019 academic year, only 11,639 Americans studied in China, which then sharply decreased by 78.7% to only 2,481 during 2019–2020 due to the onset of COVID-19 in China.<sup>10</sup> During the 2020–2021 academic year, virtually zero student visas have been issued by Chinese authorities to American students as the country continues its zero-case COVID-19 containment strategy. The Chinese Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Education have yet to announce when China will begin issuing X1/X2 visas to allow foreign students to enter the country again.

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6 “Mission China Has Issued More Than 85,000 Student Visas Since May 2021,” US Embassy & Consulates In China, 25 August 2021, <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/85000-student-visas-mission-china-has-issued-since-may-2021>; Fischer, Karen and Dan Bauman, “New Student-Visa Data Paint an Optimistic Picture for Fall Enrollments,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 July 2021, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/new-student-visa-data-paint-an-optimistic-picture-for-fall-enrollments>

7 “2021 Fact Sheet: China; Open Doors Report,” Institute for International Education, [https://opendoorsdata.org/fact\\_sheets/china](https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/china).

8 “Where do HE students come from?” Higher Education Statistics Agency (UK), 9 February 2021, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>

9 Patti Waldemir, “China parents count cost of sending children to overseas universities,” *Financial Times*, 29 December, 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/98c4a5ac-63c1-11e3-b70d-00144feabdc0>.

10 “2021 Fact Sheet: China; Open Doors Report,” Institute for International Education, [https://opendoorsdata.org/fact\\_sheets/china](https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/china).

## **Benefits of U.S.-China Educational exchange**

Long the preferred destination of international students, the United States has benefited immeasurably from educational exchange by attracting the best and brightest from China and around the world. For decades, the U.S. valued educational exchange as a powerful soft-power tool to create understanding and influence with other nations. It has long been enshrined as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, promoting mutual understanding, fostering trust, encouraging research and innovation and, in the process, preventing conflict.

U.S.-China educational exchange today, however, has become enmeshed in the bitter state of relations between the two countries. China's new geopolitical aggressiveness and America's alarm about the potential of China to out-compete it economically and technologically has led to bipartisan legislation introduced in the United States Congress to address the China threat. A web of suspicion has been thrown over Chinese exchange students and scholars as well as Chinese scientists and entrepreneurs. What were once considered benefits of educational exchange have become suspect as criminal acts under the FBI's China Initiative, launched under the Trump administration to counter potential academic espionage and intellectual property theft. FBI Director Christopher Wray stated in February 2020 that there were "a thousand investigations involving theft of U.S.-based technology underway."<sup>11</sup>

As more and more cases are dropped or dismissed, civil rights and Chinese American groups have called on the government to end the China Initiative, which has raised serious concerns about racial profiling adding heat to rising anti-Asian sentiment across the country. Recognizing that the general national security threat from China cannot be discounted, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, a civil rights organization, however, said, "We believe that the U.S. government has at times overreached under the China Initiative and is surveilling, targeting, and over-criminalizing scientists of Asian descent." The group's analysis of 83 Department of Justice press releases tied to the China Initiative found that "almost 90% of the defendants are of Asian descent and roughly 48% of the cases include no charge of economic espionage or trade secrets theft."<sup>12</sup>

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11 "China Initiative Conference Transcript: Opening Remarks," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 6 February 2020, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/200206\\_Wray\\_transcript.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/200206_Wray_transcript.pdf)

12 "Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC Submits Comment to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Raising Concerns of Profiling and Criminalization of Asian Americans and Asian Immigrants," Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 9 November 2021, <https://advancingjustice-aajc.org/press-release/asian-americans-advancing-justice-aajc-submits-comment-white-house-office-science-and>

The practical impact of the China Initiative has been the creation of a hostile environment in the U.S. that has destroyed the individual lives of ethnic Chinese scientists, who have been wrongfully charged. At the same time, China is luring back these scientists with ample funding, impressive titles, and appeal to national pride. China has started to experience a reverse brain drain, as a growing number of Chinese scientists have returned “home.” China gained a Nobel Laureate when 94-year-old physicist Yang Chen Ning renounced his American citizenship and returned to China to join the Chinese Academy of Sciences.<sup>13</sup>

**Training a New Generation Abroad.** Deng Xiaoping dismissed fears of a brain drain when he sent Chinese students abroad to rebuild China’s scientific community, which was decimated during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). He was prescient in predicting that, as China developed and opportunities opened up, the students would return. In the 1980s to the mid-1990s, it became clear that a major brain drain was under way, as tens of thousands of Chinese with graduate degrees left and did not go back, particularly after the Tiananmen crackdown of June 1989. China’s strategy, however, was best summed up by the then-general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang, who said that it would be farsighted for China to “store brain power overseas.” China was right to be patient, as an increasing number of Chinese students (83 percent) are returning to China after their studies (based on the five years prior to 2017).<sup>14</sup>

China’s educational exchange strategy, moreover, has paid off, as it managed to pass the cost of training its next generation of scientists onto the West. China invested heavily in the first cohorts of Chinese students sent abroad. However, by the mid-1980s it had shifted many of these costs to Western institutions. In 1979, the government supplied 54% of the financial support for scholars holding American “cultural exchange” (or J-1) visas. This had shrunk to 17% in 1985.<sup>15</sup> Today, the majority of Chinese students studying abroad are self-financed.

The U.S., however, benefited as well. America’s supremacy in science and technology, including the fact that half of the top 10 highest grossing technology companies are American, has been fueled by Chinese students. China is the lead source of talent worldwide. Twenty-nine percent of top-tier researchers receive their undergraduate degree in China, but 56% of those researchers then

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13 “Nobel laureate courts controversy over decision to come back to China,” *Global Times*, 23 February 2017, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1034613.shtml>

14 Ethan Morales, “The U.S.-China Brain Drain,” *Berkeley Political Review*, 1 February 2021, <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2021/02/01/the-u-s-china-brain-drain>

15 Zweig, David and Stanley Rosen, “How China trained a new generation abroad,” *SciDev*, 5 August 2003, <https://www.scidev.net/global/features/how-china-trained-a-new-generation-abroad>

move to the U.S.; in short, a full half of Chinese-originated talent moves to the U.S. In addition, 88% of Chinese PhDs in artificial intelligence end up working in the U.S.<sup>16</sup>

The massive “brain drain” from China to the U.S., however, has stalled. Restrictive U.S. immigration and visa policies, threatening FBI investigations, and the continuing hostile environment permeating U.S. society against Asian Americans are driving ethnic Chinese scientists to leave the U.S., boosting Chinese competitiveness in science and technology.

**Economic Benefits.** Moreover, the economic benefits that Chinese students contribute to the U.S. economy and to universities, specifically, cannot be dismissed. According to data from NAFSA, international students contributed \$41 billion toward the U.S. economy — of which more than \$12 billion came from Chinese students — and were responsible for more than 458,290 jobs in the 2018 academic year.<sup>17</sup> On average, domestic students at American universities pay only 40–50% of the sticker price tuition due to subsidies and financial aid, while international students pay the full price, helping public research universities to have a buffer when state appropriations decline.<sup>18</sup> Aside from tuition funds, the \$41 billion also includes research and workforce contributions as well as indirect spending as a result of these students’ spending while in the U.S. The loss of Chinese students would severely compromise the revenue streams of many American colleges and universities. In turn, this would impact the quality of American higher education institutions, damage their global standing, and have a direct effect on American students.

**Scientific Collaboration.** American universities are able to remain on the cutting edge of high technology and scientific and medical research because of international students, who serve as researchers and lab assistants at universities, national labs, and companies across the country. In fact, it is estimated that nearly 75% of America’s science and engineering research articles were written in universities with the key involvement of international students.<sup>19</sup> Chinese students, unlike their American counterparts, largely major in STEM fields and contribute their talent in high-demand science and technology fields to American universities and industries.

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16 Morales, 2021.

17 “New NAFSA Data: Despite Stagnant Enrollment, International Students Contribute Nearly \$41 Billion to the U.S. Economy,” NAFSA, 18 November 2019, <https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-nafsa/new-nafsa-data-despite-stagnant-enrollment>.

18 Giovanni Peri, Kevin Shih, et. al., “The Devastating Economic Consequences of Pushing Foreign Students out of the country,” UC Davis Global Migration Center, July 2020, [https://globalmigration.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk8181/files/inline-files/Policy%20Brief\\_Economic%20Consequences%20of%20Pushing%20Foreign%20Students%20out%20of%20the%20Country.pdf](https://globalmigration.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk8181/files/inline-files/Policy%20Brief_Economic%20Consequences%20of%20Pushing%20Foreign%20Students%20out%20of%20the%20Country.pdf)

19 Ibid.

There is grudging but increasing acknowledgment by Americans of this country's dependence on international students, particularly in STEM fields. Campaigns by academic and scientific institutions as well as business and manufacturers have gained traction, as the numbers make their case. Mary Bullock, president emerita of Agnes Scott College and founding vice chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, made clear that science in the U.S. is built on immigrants. In an address at Nanjing University in 2017, she caught everyone's attention by noting that, "Since 1980 more than 90,000 Chinese have received Ph.D. degrees in the United States, approximately 70 percent in the STEM fields, and approximately 80% have stayed in the United States, contributing significantly to U.S. human capital needs."<sup>20</sup> She also cited Richard P. Suttmeier, an expert on U.S.-China scientific relations, that "China and the United States have become each other's main partner in scientific collaboration." According to Suttmeier, "Measured by co-authored scientific research papers, U.S. collaboration with China now exceeds that with traditional partners, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan."<sup>21</sup>

Professor William Kerr of Harvard Business School in a recent book, "The Gift of Global Talent," underscored the case, "Almost any way you look at it—percentages of patents, Nobel Prize winners, citations, entrepreneurs—immigrants match or exceed native U.S. workers. Currently, immigrants make up around 25% of all U.S. science and technology workers and around 50% of the doctoral-level science workforce nationwide. And about 9% of U.S. innovation is attributed to scientists of Chinese ethnicity."<sup>22</sup>

The U.S. government under the Biden administration may be catching on. The Optional Practical Training program, which allows international students to stay and work in the U.S. after they graduate in a field related to their area of study (up to three years for STEM students), is no longer under threat as it was under the Trump administration. There is relief in the American scientific community that this program popular with international students in STEM fields will continue.

**Institutional Partnerships.** Benefits of U.S.-China educational exchange goes beyond student exchanges. Many argue that institutional partnerships may be more significant, citing the fact that for both countries, their institutional partnerships with each other greatly outnumber those with other countries. In her 2017 Nanjing University address, Dr. Bullock estimated that "80 colleges and

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20 Mary Brown Bullock, "U.S.-China Education Relations: Past, Present, and Future," China Research Center, 19 June 2017, [https://www.chinacenter.net/2017/china\\_currents/16-2/u-s-china-education-relations-past-present-future/#fn-4947-2](https://www.chinacenter.net/2017/china_currents/16-2/u-s-china-education-relations-past-present-future/#fn-4947-2)

21 Bullock, 2017

22 Andrea Widener, "Science in the US is built on immigrants. Will they keep coming?" Chemical & Engineering News, 4 March 2019, <https://cen.acs.org/careers/diversity/Science-US-built-immigrants-keep/97/i9>

universities from 36 states are operating undergraduate degree programs in China, while 30 offer graduate degrees. All Chinese provinces and autonomous regions have educational agreements with American universities, and all but Xinjiang, Tibet, and Qinghai have joint degree programs. Most of the Ivy League schools are sponsoring stand-alone research centers in China, while three American universities (NYU, Duke, and Kean) have established comprehensive, joint venture, independent Chinese universities. The Schwarzman College, a fully American-funded graduate school, has opened at Tsinghua University.

In 2018, however, Chinese regulators closed more than one-fifth of the partnerships between local and foreign universities, affecting 234 partnerships, including slightly more than two dozen with U.S. universities, several of which had never gotten off the ground. The Chinese Ministry of Education cited various reasons for the closures, including poor quality, lack of enrollment, and financial mismanagement. These partnerships were once seen as a beneficial way for China to gain educational know-how while giving foreign universities access to the Chinese market. But China is now looking inward, giving priority to its own universities. Observers also point to growing Chinese suspicions regarding foreign programs, foreign curriculums, and ideology.<sup>23</sup>

As Beijing puts the brakes on Sino-foreign educational partnerships, American universities are responding in kind. The University of Notre Dame canceled its plans for a partnership with Zhejiang University; Cornell University severed its ties with Renmin University; and Wesleyan University decided not to pursue a joint campus in China.<sup>24</sup> However, many U.S. institutional partnerships remain. Duke Kunshan, NYU Shanghai, and Schwarzman College have announced normal instruction for the spring semester 2022. Wenzhou-Kean University is reopening, but predominantly with remote work and classes. China's attraction to U.S. academic institutions remains strong despite the risks of moral hazard that may confront American institutions operating on the mainland today.

### **Risks for Both Countries**

At a time when U.S.-China relations are moving in the wrong direction, educational exchange is needed more to provide stability to the relationship and prevent rising tensions from getting out of hand. Educational exchange forms a fundamental pillar in foreign policy for many countries to build mutual understanding and long-term relationships. Usually, this pillar is insulated, meaning that

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23 Emily Feng, "China closes a fifth of foreign university partnerships," *Financial Times*, 17 July 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/794b77e8-8976-11e8-bf9e-8771d5404543>

24 Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "The Moral Hazard of Dealing with China," *The Atlantic*, 11 January 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/01/stephen-schwarzman-china-surveillance-scholars-colleges/604675>

government-to-government relations can fracture, but educational exchange is beyond politics and protected. In 2021, this is no longer the case.

By placing educational exchange in the crosshairs of political and security disputes, both countries lose, as noted in the earlier sections of this article. The biggest risk, as I see it, is the prospect that the detangling of mutually beneficial connections built over 40 years of engagement will become permanent, and we will increasingly lose all ties. The U.S. needs to recognize that overreacting to the threat of academic espionage by targeting Chinese students and researchers not only sends the wrong signals to the Chinese, but it is also self-defeating. The Chinese need, at the same time, to rethink their restrictive border controls. Its zero-case COVID-19 containment strategy, which amounts to an academic lockdown, has made it an impossible study abroad destination for all international students. In addition, its movement against Western influence and “reversing gear” on the use of English will inevitably lead to a dangerous narrowing of mutual understanding and create even greater strategic mistrust and possible miscalculation that will make war not unthinkable.

### **A Lost Generation in American China Experts**

As China is turning away American students, the traditional American student imbalance in educational exchange with China is expanding. When the Obama administration announced the 100,000 Strong Initiative in 2009 to send 100,000 American students to study in China in the next four years, The US-China Education Trust (USCET) responded by unveiling its Student Leaders Exchange Program, the first program to be launched under the Obama Initiative. USCET awarded grants to the University of Arkansas, Boston University, University of North Alabama, and San Francisco State University. All four universities used the funding to provide travel subsidies to increase the number of their students participating in China study abroad programs and to leverage the grant into university-wide support for study abroad in China.

What I said at the launch of the program remains true today: “USCET has long believed that well-crafted education and exchange programs are the best long-term investment in U.S.-China relations, and this program — USCET’s first to support U.S. students’ study abroad in China — represents an investment in the American next-generation leaders whose deeper understanding of China will bear returns for decades to come.”

Unfortunately, 100,000 Strong did not achieve its goals before the program ended. USCET’s program, while successful in the short-term, also ran out of funds and ended. Today, the imbalance has grown. In 2009, eight times more Chinese students came to the United States for educational programs than Americans who studied in China, but in 2020, 30 times more Chinese students studied

in the U.S. than Americans who studied in China.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that in the 10 years prior to the pandemic, the number of Americans studying abroad in China increased by over 500%, in 2019, there were only 12,000 Americans studying in China.<sup>26</sup> Given China's zero-case COVID-19 border controls, as noted in the Overview, there are almost no American students left in China in 2021.

Even during the peak of American student interest in China, unlike Chinese students who got degrees in the U.S., American students went for short-term study or to learn the language, Mandarin. The imbalance in language learning is even more daunting. Four hundred million Chinese are reportedly learning English today, 2,000 times more than the 200,000 Americans learning Chinese. The huge gap in language proficiency may be getting worse, as by all accounts, enrollment in all foreign language courses at U.S. higher education institutions is falling, and the U.S. lags far behind other countries in speaking and learning foreign languages.<sup>27</sup>

Faced with the reality of virtual study in China and its opaque visa process, many American students are opting out of China or Mandarin studies, including a USCET staff member who has decided not to return to Tsinghua. With the closure of Confucius Institutes across the country, American students still interested in learning Mandarin have lost access to Confucius Institutes' low-cost courses, tutoring, books and study materials, as well as study abroad scholarship opportunities. Many Chinese study abroad programs have experienced a substantial drop in enrollment over the last few years and face an uncertain future. American students' loss of interest in China has been exacerbated by China stopping the issuance of X1/X2 student visas, preventing American students from returning to China even if they want to. The arrest and detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, as well as the treatment of Hong Kong protesters, have heightened unease among American students still interested in studying in China. Increasing attacks in China against Western books, movies and values add to the unease, leading many, instead, to change their areas of study or opt for Taipei or Tokyo as study destinations.

The bottom line is that American students no longer see a payoff to spending the time or money to study China or the Chinese language. The risks outweigh the benefits. Unfavorable views of China

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25 "2020 SEVIS by the Numbers Report," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevisBTN2020.pdf>

26 "Educational Exchange Between the United States and China," Institute of International Education, July 2008, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/Educational-Exchange-between-US-and-China>; "2021 Fact Sheet: China; Open Doors Report," Institute for International Education, [https://opendoorsdata.org/fact\\_sheets/china](https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/china)

27 Carola McGiffert, "Mandarin language learning critical to US national interests," *The Hill*, 21 October 2015, <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/257497-mandarin-language-learning-critical-to-us-national-interests>; Li, Zhenyu, "English education in China: An evolutionary perspective," *People's Daily Online*, 27 April 2020, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0427/c90000-9684652.html>

reached historic highs, according to a recent Pew 14-country survey, and 2020 is the first year in which more than half of young Americans expressed negative views toward China.<sup>28</sup> If these ominous trends are not addressed, there will be a generational gap in American Ph.D. students studying China and the loss of a generation of American China experts. Both countries should consider the consequences of a future without Americans who understand China to manage the U.S.-China relationship

When then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton officially launched 100,000 Strong in May 2010 in Beijing, she made the case for why America needed China experts. She said, “The need for Americans to gain greater exposure to and understanding of China is clear: there is perhaps no more important or complex relationship in the world than that between the United States and China in terms of securing global peace and security. Virtually no major international issue — whether global economic recovery or climate change or nuclear non-proliferation — can be solved without the active engagement of both the United States and China, working in concert.” While U.S. engagement policy with China is now dead, American China experts are still needed.

### **Maintaining the United States’ Competitive Edge in Educational exchange**

Given the imbalance, America has a larger problem in losing Chinese students than China in losing American students in the short term. The biggest challenge for U.S. universities now is how to maintain their competitive edge in international educational exchange. Foreign students were already turning away from the U.S. when the Trump administration – with its America First policies, visa restrictions, and anti-China rhetoric – made the situation worse. Early in his presidency, Trump went so far as to consider banning all Chinese students. In his last year, he placed restrictions on Chinese graduate students and closed down the Peace Corps and Fulbright exchanges to mainland China and Hong Kong. As the U.S. turns Chinese students away, other nations are throwing out the welcome mat. As a result, between 2015 and 2021, Chinese student enrollment in the U.S. declined by almost 20%, while in Britain it has risen 12% and Canada by 7%.<sup>29</sup> According to Institute of International Education estimates, in 2020 the export value of U.S. higher education fell by almost \$10 billion, a 20% drop. Educational exchange is competitive. Fewer Chinese students are choosing to study in the

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28 Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, “Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries,” Pew Research Center, 6 October 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries>

29 “China Students Preferred Destinations for Study Abroad,” Statista, 2022. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1108708/china-students-preferred-destinations-for-study-abroad>

U.S. because other countries offer high-quality degree programs for lower costs, and other countries have established national strategies to recruit international students that are paying off.

Luring Chinese students back to the U.S. in the long term will be a hard sell. The Biden administration has essentially continued Trump's China policies, including those affecting educational exchange. America's attractions have dimmed, as the U.S. earned low marks for its handling of the pandemic, the January 6 Capitol riots showed America in chaos, and safety has become a big concern. Chinese students have been caught in the pandemic-led rise of anti-Asian racism and crime, and Chinese parents are losing confidence that their children will be safe in America. With deteriorating U.S.-China relations, Chinese students are also caught in the crosshairs of academic espionage concerns in Washington. In August this year, nine Chinese students attempting to return to Arizona State University were denied entry by immigration officers at Los Angeles International Airport. Such cases have hit home with Chinese students, who do not see the future that they used to see in America.

Looking toward the future, beyond COVID-19, the U.S. will have to be much more competitive to keep Chinese students interested in studying in the U.S. China is experiencing rapid population decline, and the size of its traditional college age population — those aged 18 to 24 — is shrinking. This demographic is slated to decrease by more than 40% between 2010 and 2025, according to multiple data sources.<sup>30</sup> It is not only politics but also systemic issues that need to be addressed if the U.S. aims to be competitive in educational exchange.

### **Back in History**

American universities might look back to the Boxer Indemnity Scholarships for reshaping U.S.-China educational exchange to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Boxer rebellion was an important event in modern Chinese history. China was on its knees, forced to pay 450 million taels of silver (\$333 million USD at the time) as reparation to 14 countries for losses incurred by the Boxer Uprising against foreign legations in Beijing in 1900. In 1908, the U.S. Congress authorized a scholarship program for Chinese students to be educated in the U.S., using excess funds from the Boxer Indemnity paid by China. The program would send 2,000 of China's best and brightest to America's premier universities. The scholarships became known as "The most important scheme for

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30 "Does China have an aging problem?" China Power Project, CSIS, n.d., <https://chinapower.csis.org/aging-problem>; Morris, Deirde Wang, "China's Aging Populations Threatens Its Manufacturing Might," CNBC, 24 October 2012, <https://www.cnbc.com/id/49498720>

educating Chinese students in America and arguably the most consequential and successful in the entire foreign-study movement of twentieth century China."<sup>31</sup>

My father, Chang Fu-Yun, was proud to be a Boxer Scholar. He became the first Boxer Chinese scholar to graduate from Harvard Law school. Returning to China, he became the first Chinese to oversee the China Maritime Customs Service, reforming and nationalizing its foreign administration as well as returning tariff autonomy to China. My father exemplified how Boxer Scholar returnees contributed to China's modernization transformation.

The Boxer Scholars enjoyed a critical mass to allow them to make outstanding contributions to broad sections of the Chinese society, including engineering, industry, banking, the military, diplomacy, and civil service. Their impact on China's higher education institutions, however, is considered their crowning achievement. Sixty-one percent of the Boxer Scholars chose careers in higher education. Among them, 597 out of 707 held professorships. Seventy-five percent of Taiwan's Academia Sinica members in 1948 were Boxer Scholars, and 25% of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing in 1955 were Boxer Scholars. The Boxer Indemnity Fund also created two Tsinghua Universities, one in Beijing and another in Taiwan. Also, the Boxer Indemnity scholarships would later serve as a model for the Fulbright Program, America's flagship educational exchange program.<sup>32</sup>

Two Boxer scholars who became presidents of Peking University — and one Chinese American linguist, educator, poet, and composer — illustrate the power of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarships:

Hu Shi is probably the best known of the three in the West. As a Boxer Scholar, he got his degrees from Cornell University and Columbia University, where he studied with John Dewey. He became a leading liberal intellectual of the New Culture Movement, which advocated saving China through cultural transformation. Also, a Nationalist diplomat who served as ambassador to the U.S. (1938 to 1942) and a scholar, who became president of Peking University, his most important contribution was to establish the vernacular (*bai hua*) as China's official written language (1922), making reading accessible to the ordinary people. As the great Sinologist John Fairbank put it, he broke "the tyranny of the classics," which "democratized" China more than any political act.

Zhou Peiyuan, senior scientist-educator and president of Peking University, led a delegation to Washington to negotiate a new era in U.S.-China education relations in 1978. The Boxer Indemnity scholarship gave him the opportunity to receive three degrees — from the University of Chicago and

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31 Ye Weili. *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

32 Zhou, Xiaojuan, *The Influences of the American Boxer Indemnity Reparations Remissions on Chinese Higher Education*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Spring 5 – 2014.

California Institute of Technology as well as Princeton University, where he studied with Albert Einstein. When American negotiators in 1978 offered him a limited, centralized Soviet-type program, he rejected it outright and was determined to recreate for a new generation of young Chinese the educational experiences he had experienced as a Boxer Scholar. He got what he wished, setting the norm for U.S.-China educational exchange that has lasted to this day.

Chao Yuan Ren was one of the most famous Chinese intellectuals of the 20th century. His daughter was my father's goddaughter, and his granddaughter my friend. As a Boxer Scholar, Chao got his degrees from Cornell University and Harvard University. Chao is known primarily for his founding of modern Chinese linguistics. He developed what came to be known as the National Romanization, which the Chinese government adopted as the official phonetic alphabet in 1927. He also became an expert on cybernetics, influenced not only by the rise of information science in mid-century America but also by the movement to modernize the Chinese language. Chao demonstrated the value of an immigrant scientist's intellectual biography for studies of transnational science. Chao published over 100 articles and books in Chinese and English over the course of his lifetime as well as several original musical compositions. His "Mandarin Primer" was one of the most widely used Chinese textbooks in the 20th century.

### **Looking to the Future**

The legacy of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarships lives on through my father to me to the US-China Education Trust. Today, USCET works with over 70 Chinese universities, plus a variety of Chinese research institutions and think tanks, to advance the study of the U.S. in China — to build bridges between the two countries and help China's next-generation leaders understand America. For me, the intrinsic value of educational exchange is that its effects are enduring. Its benefits flow over decades and centuries and are remembered by generations. Government-to-government relations may fracture, but the people-to-people relations nurtured by educational exchange can help put the pieces back together.

USCET has established deep connections with our Chinese partners, working with them now for over two decades. There is strong support for rebuilding a U.S.-China educational exchange. We know this from our discussions with our many Chinese university partners and from the webinars we have jointly co-hosted with Chinese institutions such as Peking University, the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), and the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA).

USCET is working from the basis that both countries have benefited from educational exchange, that the benefits of educational exchange must be weighed against any risks and that, in most cases, the benefits will outweigh the risks. In working with our Chinese partners to sustain U.S.-China

educational exchange, USCET would like to suggest we do it peer to peer. The world has changed, and educational exchange needs to change with it. Since 1854 when Yung Wing became the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university, until now, influence in educational exchange has flowed almost entirely from the United States to China. But China no longer needs a teacher-student relationship with its American counterparts. China no longer needs American educational assistance; it can more than pay its way; it is, in fact, offering Americans scholarships to study in China. China also is subsidizing new joint venture universities and research establishments in China and building its own world-class universities. There is increasing parity in the education relationship, and both countries have much to gain to build a more collaborative educational exchange framework.

As the world prepares to emerge from the global pandemic, Omicron notwithstanding, now is also the time for the U.S. government and universities to reinvest and reinvigorate the prominence of U.S. educational exchange programs. Renewing the Fulbright program to mainland China and Hong Kong would be a good start. We have the opportunity to right our course as a country of innovation, entrepreneurship, democratic values, and ideals, and we need to let the world know that America is again a country that welcomes bright young minds from everywhere.

# THE HISTORY, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF U.S.-CHINA EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

## The Qing Dynasty and Republican Period

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The exchange in higher education between the United States and China began with the arrival of American missionaries in Guangzhou in the 1830s. As the pioneers of Sino-American educational exchange, these missionaries were the first American students of Chinese language, became devoted founders of modern schools and colleges in China, and were the earliest sponsors for Chinese students attending colleges in the United States. Many other individual Americans and Chinese, along with various religious, educational, philanthropic, and government institutions also were involved in Sino-American educational exchange and became active participants, strong supporters, and generous facilitators. It was because of their strenuous effort that U.S.-China educational exchange expanded continuously for over a century despite frequent wars, recessions, and political upheavals. By the end of the 1940s, educational exchange between the two nations had become the most constructive and consequential dimension of U.S.-China relations, with more American colleges in China than in any other country and with Chinese students representing the largest foreign student body in the United States.

Although American merchants and sailors arrived in China much earlier, meaningful educational contact and exchange only took place after Elijah C. Bridgman and David Abeel, the first American missionaries, landed in Guangzhou in 1830, sent by the Seamen's Friends Society and the

Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, respectively. Abeel started to serve as the seamen's chaplain immediately and Bridgman, a seminary student from Belchertown, Massachusetts, wasted no time in returning to his education by taking language lessons from a Chinese teacher. Since there were no modern schools or colleges in China at the time (it was, in fact, illegal for foreigners to learn Chinese language at that time), Bridgeman had to take his lessons from private instructors in secret.<sup>1</sup> After gaining a rudimentary grasp of Guangdong dialect and Mandarin, Bridgeman started to teach the Gospel and English to the Chinese close to him. In 1839, he opened the Morrison Education Society School in Macao and hired Samuel Brown, a Yale graduate, as its principal. The school was moved to Hong Kong, the new British colony, at the end of 1842 and became the largest missionary school in China when its enrollment grew to 32 students in 1844.<sup>2</sup> When Brown was forced to return to his home because of his poor health in 1847, he took three students with him so that they could complete their education in the United States. After a meeting with Jeremiah Day, President of Yale College in New Haven, all three students entered the Monson Academy in Massachusetts. After graduating from the Academy in 1850, one of these students, Yung Wing, entered Yale College and graduated with honors in 1854, becoming the first Chinese to receive an undergraduate degree from a college in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Thus, missionaries were not only the first American students and teachers in China but also pioneering facilitators of educational exchange between the two nations.

Missionaries also played a key role involving government in protecting and facilitating Sino-American educational exchange. Frustrated by the Qing Court's strict restrictions on foreigners in China, missionaries began to seek assistance from Washington in the mid-1830s. With the approval from Congress, President John Tyler sent Caleb Cushing to China in 1843 as the first United States commissioner. Arriving in Macao on the *USS Brandywine*, a warship that carried over 500 soldiers and 64 cannons, Cushing successfully forced the Qing Court to negotiate with him and sign the first treaty between the two nations in Wangxia, a small village near Macao, on July 3, 1844. Ignorant of Chinese language and culture, Cushing depended on his missionary assistants to negotiate with Chinese officials and to draft the treaty. As a result, the Treaty of Wangxia allowed Americans to enjoy not only all the commercial privileges obtained by the British but also many new rights, including the right to obtain, rent, and construct houses, hospitals, churches, and cemeteries; to employ Chinese to teach any of the languages of the empire; and to purchase any kind of books in

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- 1 Hongshan Li, *U.S.-China Educational Exchange: State, Society, and Intercultural Relations*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1908), p. 10; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 217-219.
  - 2 Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1909), pp. 13-16; Xiong Yuezhi, *Xixue Dongjian Yu WanQing Shehui* (The Dissemination of Western Learning and the Late Qing Society), (Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), pp. 126-129.
  - 3 Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*, pp. 18-41.

China.<sup>4</sup> Cushing was happy to include these new rights in the treaty because he wanted Americans to “become the teachers of our teachers” and to see a refluxing tide of letters and knowledge “roll back from the west to the east.”<sup>5</sup> Signed in 1868, government protection for educational exchange was further expanded with the Burlingame Treaty, which had a special article stipulating that the Americans and the Chinese “shall enjoy all the privileges of public educational institutions under the control” of each other’s government and “may freely establish and maintain schools” in each other’s country.<sup>6</sup>

Taking full advantage of these new treaty rights, American missionaries immediately moved into the newly opened ports to establish schools and, eventually, colleges. Troubled by their inability to attract a large number of Chinese to their churches, missionaries had to depend on the schools to penetrate the Chinese community. As the number of elementary school students increased, missionaries began to put greater emphasis on offering secondary and even higher education for the Chinese in the 1880s. The first college was established by Calvin Mateer, a member of the Methodist Mission, in Dengzhou in 1882, which later became part of the Shantung Christian University, or Cheeloo University.<sup>7</sup> The Methodist Mission opened another university, Peking University, in 1888. In 1889, the American Congregationalists founded North China College in Tongzhou near Beijing. Around the same time, the American Episcopalians established St. John’s College in Shanghai and the Presbyterians turned their boys’ school in Hangzhou into the Hangchow Presbyterian College. In the next couple of decades, a few more colleges were established by various American religious organizations, including Ginling College and the University of Nanking in Nanjing, Lingnan University and Hwa Nan University in Guangzhou, Fukien Christian University in Fuzhou, Huachung University in Wuhan, Yenching University in Beijing, Shanghai University in Shanghai, Soochow University in Suzhou, and West China Union University in Chengdu. Several missionary societies also worked together in founding the Peking Union Medical College in 1906, which was taken over by the newly established Rockefeller Foundation in 1915.<sup>8</sup> By the 1920s, these Christian colleges, which were established, managed, and financed by various American religious and philanthropic organizations, became an essential part of higher education in China.

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4 *The Maritime Customs, Treaties, Conventions, etc, between China and the Foreign States*, (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1917), vol.1, pp. 677-690.

5 Claude Fuess, *The Life of Cale Cushing*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923), pp. 414-415.

6 *The Maritime Customs, Treaties, Conventions, etc, between China and the Foreign States*, (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1917), vol.1, pp. 727-729.

7 Jessie Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 28-29.

8 William Fenn, *Christian Higher Education in Changing China, 1880-1950*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1976), pp. 24-36.

In addition to their indispensable role in the development of modern higher education in China, the missionary schools and colleges also contributed tremendously to educational exchange between the U.S. and China. Hundreds of missionary schools sent their students not only to Christian colleges in China but also to institutions of higher learning in the United States. After Yung Wing, more Chinese students from missionary schools, including women, traveled to the United States to attend colleges and universities. Besides sending students to the United States, missionary schools and colleges also recruited most of their faculty members, especially in their early years, from the United States as well. Even though most American instructors were fresh or recent graduates from colleges, some missionary colleges, like Peking Union Medical College and the Yenching University, also hired well-known American scholars to enhance the quality of education. These two institutes of higher education, along with many other missionary colleges, also established and maintained close working relations with leading colleges in the United States that helped them improve their teaching and research. For example, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, established in 1928 by John Leighton Stuart, the President of Yenching University, with funding from Charles Martin Hall, was known for offering generous financial assistance for teaching and research in humanities at Yenching as well as other Christian colleges in China, while also supporting the development of the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University.<sup>9</sup>

Having suffered humiliating defeats in two opium wars, the Qing Court nonetheless became deeply involved in educational exchange, approving plans drafted by Yung Wing and supported by several reform-minded Chinese officials to send China's first educational mission to the United States. Beginning in 1872, 120 Chinese students, averaging 12-and-a-half years old, were sent to the United States in four groups.<sup>10</sup> Although the original plan was to keep the students in the United States for 15 years so that they could finish their college education, the Qing Court recalled them in 1881, primarily because of its concern over the students' Americanization, rising anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States, and Washington's refusal to admit Chinese students to its military and naval academies.<sup>11</sup> Despite the unexpected early termination of the mission, two of the students managed to graduate from college and more than 60 of them were at different stages of their college degree program. Benefiting from the education received in the United States, these students quickly rose as

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9 Shuhua Fan, *The Harvard-Yenching Institute and Cultural Engineering: Remaking the Humanities in China, 1924-1951*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 37-80; Arthur Lewis Rosenbaum, "Yenching University and Sino-American Interactions, 1919-1952," *The Journal of American East Asian Relations*, vol. 17, January 2007, pp. 11-60.

10 Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, "Xuansong Youtong Liuxue (Selecting and Sending Young Student Studying Abroad), in Liu Zhen, ed., *Liuxue Jiaoyu: Zhongguo Liuxue Jiaoyu Shiliao* (Study Abroad: Historical Records of China's Study Abroad), (Taipei: Guoli Bianyi Guan, 1977), vol. 1, p. 16.

11 Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America*, pp. 207-209.

leaders in various fields after their return to China. Yung Wing, while busy supervising all the Chinese students, donated all his Chinese books, more than 1,200 volumes in total, to the Yale Library. In return, Yale hired Samuel Wells Williams, a well-known missionary and leading scholar on China, as the Chair Professor of Chinese Language and Literature in 1878. As a result, Yale not only established the first chair professorship for Chinese studies but also obtained the “nucleus of a respectable Chinese library.”<sup>12</sup>

Educational exchange between the two nations gained momentum in the early 20th century when the Chinese and American governments took steps to remove or lower some major barriers to deepened exchange. After its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing Court founded its first national university in 1898, the Capital University, which marked the beginning of China’s shift to modern higher education. In the wake of another humiliating defeat from the allied forces sent by eight major foreign powers in 1900, the Qing Court finally terminated civil service examinations in 1905. As new Western-style schools and universities sprang up throughout the nation, China began to send more students to attend colleges in foreign countries, especially the United States, in order to meet its desperate need for talent with modern higher education. At the same time, students attending modern schools and colleges organized the first national boycott against American products in protest of the mistreatment of Chinese immigrants in the United States. In response, President Theodore Roosevelt issued strict executive orders that put an effective check on “the harsh treatment of and unwarranted discrimination against the Chinese in or seeking admission” to the United States.<sup>13</sup> Taking advantage of the more amicable conditions, more than 100 self-sponsored students reported to the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., by the end of 1906. By 1908, about 400 students were sent to the United States for college education by the Chinese central and provincial governments.<sup>14</sup>

The influx of Chinese students was further fueled by Washington’s return of the excessive share of the Boxer Indemnity to China in 1909. As an ally of the Chinese Relief Expedition of 1900, Washington demanded and received \$25 million from the Qing Court as indemnity in 1901. Having realized the U.S. had asked too much from China, John Hay, the Secretary of State, proposed to return half of the indemnity in late 1904 as part of his effort to keep the Qing Court in negotiations on the Gresham-Yang Treaty and to prevent an anti-American boycott from taking place in China. After

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12 Gao Zhonglu, “Yung Wing (1828-1912 and the Chinese Young Students in the United States,” Li Youning, ed., *Huazu LiuMei Shi: 150 Nian de Xuesi Yu Chengjiu* (The History of Chinese Studying in the United States: Education and Achievements on 150 Years), (Bronxville, New York: Outer Sky Press, 1999), pp. 66-67.

13 John Foster, “The Chinese Boycott,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 97, January 1906, p. 128.

14 Chen Qiongying, *Qingji Liuxue Zhengce Chutan* (The Exploration of the Study Abroad Policy of the Qing Dynasty), (Taipei: Wen Shi Zhe Chubanshe, 1989), pp. 187-196; C.S. Walker, “The Army of Chinese Students Abroad,” *World’s Work*, vol. 13, January 1907, pp. 8471-8474.

long and difficult negotiations, Congress passed a resolution in 1908, approving the return of \$10 million of the Boxer Indemnity to China, withholding an additional \$2 million for possible future complaints. Washington initiated the transfers in January 1909 after the Qing Court provided a clear plan to send a large number of Chinese students to the United States each year for the following three decades and by allowing the American Legation in Beijing to participate in the selection and distribution process.<sup>15</sup> After rigorous nationwide examinations, only 46 applicants passed each round of exams and became the first group of students receiving the Indemnity Scholarship for education in the United States. In order to ensure that they could enter the United States without any trouble, Washington proposed, and Beijing subsequently agreed, to send these students to the United States as diplomats and consular officials. Having missed much of the fall semester when they arrived in Washington D.C., on Nov. 13, they had to wait for a few months before they could enroll in colleges and universities. The vast majority of them followed the government order and chose to study science, engineering, agriculture, and mining. All the students, except one who died of disease, completed their educational programs and received academic degrees from major American colleges and universities, including Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton, Columbia, Cornell, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Illinois.<sup>16</sup>

To ensure that enough well qualified Chinese students could be sent to the United States for higher education each year, the Qing Court also opened Qinghua Academy (*Qinghua Xuetaang*), a preparatory school, in April 1911 after the arrival of 16 American teachers. Funded with the Boxer Indemnity remission, the Qinghua Academy immediately took over the responsibility in selecting and sending students to the United States for college education. After closing its door briefly during the Revolution of 1911, Qinghua reopened with a new name, Qinghua School or Qinghua College in English, in spring 1912. With drastic improvements in its faculty and facility, Qinghua morphed from a preparatory school to a national university in the second half of the 1920s to meet China's changing needs.<sup>17</sup> By 1929, when the responsibility for selecting and sending students to the United States with the Boxer Indemnity remission was shifted to the Chinese Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture (CFPEC), Qinghua had sent 1,289 students to the United States for college education and provided scholarships for another 1,876 private students studying in the United States to help them

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15 According to the plan, the Qing Court would send 100 Chinese students to the U.S. each year in the first four years and 50 students each year in the following years until 1940 when the indemnity was paid off. "Proposed Regulations for the Students to Be Sent to America," enclosure in Rockhill to Root, October 31, 1908, United States Department of State, Papers Relating to the *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1908*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), pp. 71–73.

16 Li Mingsu, "Remembering Schoolmates Who Were Selected and Sent to the United States in 1909," Liu Zhen, e.d., *Liuxue Jiaoyu*, vol.1, pp. 179-186.

17 Hongshan Li, *U.S.-China Educational Exchange*, pp. 85-87.

complete their education. This impressive total of 3,000 plus students not only far exceeded the original goal set by the Qing government for 32 years but also greatly outnumbered those who sought college education in the United States in the previous six decades. Counting about 60% of all the Chinese students in the United States during the period, Qinghua students, including scholarship students, helped make the United States the top choice for Chinese students seeking higher education overseas.<sup>18</sup>

The World War II years witnessed deeper and wider government intervention in U.S.-China educational exchange. With little influence on the deployment of troops or allocation of military supplies, the State Department turned to the expansion of educational and cultural ties to maintain friendly relations with China as an ally. It adopted a China cultural relations program in early 1942 with initial funding of \$150,000 from the President's Emergency Fund. One of the first actions taken by the State Department was to offer financial assistance to Chinese students and scholars stranded in the United States. By May 1, 1944, a total of 376 Chinese students received monthly stipend of \$75 from the United States government to cover their living expenses.<sup>19</sup> Such a massive direct aid to Chinese students by the United States government was unprecedented in history. At the same time, the Chinese government offered financial assistance to about 200 students.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to assisting Chinese students in the United States, Washington also offered financial aid to Chinese universities and faculties during the war. Since neither the Chinese government nor Chinese faculties wanted to accept direct aid from a foreign government, the State Department had to work with United China Relief (UCR) and other nongovernmental organizations to disseminate aid. Beginning in 1942, the State Department provided, through the UCR, \$1.5 million for medical schools, another \$1.5 million for Christian colleges, and \$200,000 for faculties at other ordinary universities in China. The UCR also donated 1 million Chinese yuan to the CFPEC in fall 1943 to subsidize 80 professors and researchers working in national universities and research institutes in Kunming. These subsidies were expanded to cover 936 scholars in 1945 from all universities and research institutions throughout the unoccupied China as the funding from the UCR increased to 70

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18 China Institute in America, *A Survey of Chinese Students in American Universities and Colleges in the Past One Hundred Years* (New York: China Institute in America, 1954), 26–27; Wang Shuhuai, *Gengzi Peikuan* (The Boxer Indemnity), (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, 1985), pp. 316–317.

19 The Department of State, *The Cultural Cooperation Programs, 1938-1943*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 12-13.

20 Wilma Fairbank, *America's Cultural Experiment in China, 1942-1949*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 115.

million Chinese yuan.<sup>21</sup> As part of its wartime program, the State Department invited 26 Chinese professors, administrators, and artists in four groups to visit the United States between 1943 and 1946, sent movie projectors, microfilm readers, microfilmed leading journals to major Chinese universities, funded research projects on various wartime issues conducted by Chinese scholars, and subsidized the translation of Chinese scholarly manuscripts into English.<sup>22</sup> All these were designed to help improve the work and life of Chinese professors.

Both the Chinese and the United States governments also took steps to further expand educational exchange between the two countries after World War II. The State Department awarded 44 scholarships to Chinese students in China on competitive basis in 1946, turning a new page in U.S.-China educational exchange. At the same time, the Nationalist government, following its plan drafted during the war, sent more than 1,000 technical students to the United States in late 1945. Although it was unable to keep its promise to send 1,000 students to the United States each year, it did hold another round of national examinations and sent 33 government-sponsored students to the United States in early 1948. The Nationalist government also managed to send a number of college students who had joined the military forces or served as interpreters during the war to the United States to further their education. Additionally, it helped about 2,000 self-sponsored students come to America for higher education by allowing each of them to exchange \$2,000 at the official rate which was only a fraction of the black-market rate at the time.<sup>23</sup> Alongside its assistance to students, the Nationalist government sent 10 well-known professors across the Pacific to conduct research or teach at American universities as soon as the war came to an end. When funding became tight, the Ministry of Education continued to support Chinese professors who received fellowships or appointments from American colleges and universities by allowing them to exchange foreign currencies at the official rate to cover unpaid travel or living expenses. As a result, hundreds of Chinese scholars went to the United States in the following few years.<sup>24</sup>

Then, in the postwar period, U.S.-China educational exchange received another boost when the first Fulbright Agreement was signed by the Chinese and United States governments in November 1947. Based on the Agreement, the United States Educational Foundation in China (USEFC), established to handle the program and its proposed exchange projects, was approved by the State Department in December 1947. According to its 1948 plan, grants would be offered to 20 American

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21 "A Letter from the China Foundation to Mei Yiqi," September 21, 1943, Beijing Daxue et al., eds., *Guoli Xinan Daxue Shiliao* (The Historical Records of the National Southwestern Associate University), (Kunming: Yunnan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1998), vol. 3, p. 743.

22 Wilma Fairbank, *America's Cultural Experiment in China*, pp. 67-68.

23 Liu Zhen, *Liuxue Jiaoyu*, vol. 4, pp. 2138-2139, 2189-2191.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 2192-2195.

professors teaching at Chinese universities, 20 American students studying in China, 100 Chinese students attending American colleges and universities in China, 10 American scholars conducting research in China, and 30 Chinese students and scholars coming to study in the United States.<sup>25</sup> Although 41 Americans were awarded Fulbright grants, only 27 were able to accept them, including four visiting professors, seven research scholars, and 16 graduate students. However, as Communist forces approached Beijing where most of the Fulbright fellows stayed, the USEFC sent a chartered plane to the city to evacuate those who desired to leave the country. At the same time, it paid those Fulbright fellows who decided to stay in China their grants in full in American dollars so that they would not be cut off from their financial resources. The USEFC was forced to suspend its operation in China in August 1949 when its funding was exhausted.<sup>26</sup> The most ambitious educational exchange program directly funded by the United States government by that time came to an end.

With strong support from both the Chinese and United States governments, about 10,000 Chinese students, professors, technical trainees, and researchers nonetheless arrived in the United States between 1945 and 1949, almost doubling the prewar total. While many returned to China, most remained in the United States through 1949 faced with financial difficulties caused by the civil war in China and the mismanagement of the Nationalist government. When colleges and universities were no longer able to help Chinese students, they turned to Washington. In collaboration with the Chinese government, the State Department managed to reallocate \$500,000 from the funds originally appropriated for economic aid to China to start the Program of Emergency Aid to Chinese Students in the United States in early 1949. Having quickly exhausted the whole amount in helping about 300 applicants in August, the State Department sought and received \$4 million for the Emergency Aid Program in October with the help from a few staunch supporters for the Nationalist government in Congress. The new appropriation allowed the State Department to offer grants to students in all fields of study instead of just technical students, drastically increasing the number of recipients to 2,146 in 1949–1950 fiscal year.<sup>27</sup> With generous emergency aid from the State Department, thousands of Chinese students were able to continue their education in the United States despite the collapsing of the Nationalist government.

While thousands of Chinese students were pursuing their educational dreams in the United States, the Christian colleges in China became moribund as the Communists emerged as a victor in the civil war. Having identified the United States as their worst enemy and the Christian colleges as part of

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25 “Secretary of State to the American Embassy in Nanking,” January 19, 1948, Decimal Files, 811.42793/1-1948.

26 Wilma Fairbank, *America’s Cultural Experiment in China*, pp. 193-200.

27 The Department of State, *The Program of Emergency Aid to Chinese Students, 1949-1955*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), p. 24.

the American cultural aggression, the Chinese Communists began to impose strict restrictions on missionary schools and colleges in early 1949, forcing them to appoint Chinese as their principals, report their financial sources, and set their curriculums by following government regulations.<sup>28</sup> Only months after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a set of more comprehensive and restrictive regulations were adopted, giving the new Ministry of Education the power to require private universities, including Christian colleges, to change their board of directors, replace their presidents, reorganize them, and shut them down.<sup>29</sup> When the Catholic Church tried to defend its control over Fu Jen (Furen), the Catholic University in Beijing, by withholding its subsidies to the university until its demands for the control over personnel and ownership of church buildings were met, the Ministry of Education provided the needed funding and turned Fu Jen into a national university. Once the U.S. government prohibited the transfer of funds to mainland China after the so-called Chinese Voluntary Army launched attacks at American forces in Korea, Beijing decided to provide the funding for all the Christian colleges and then took them over in early 1951. These institutions were soon dismantled and absorbed by various state universities in the next year or two. With the demise of missionary colleges in mainland China, the termination of all cultural as well as educational ties by Beijing, and the travel ban imposed by Washington against Communist China, the century-long exchange in higher education between the two nations came to a stop.

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28 “Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Waijiao Gongzuo De Zhishi (Instructions from the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee on Diplomatic Work),” January 19, 1949, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiu Shi, Jiandang Yilai Zhongyao Wenxian Xuanbian* (The Selected Important Documents Since the Founding of the Party), (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2011), vol. 26, pp. 55-58.

29 “Sili Gaoden Xuexiao Guanli Zanxing Banfa (Temporary Regulations on the Management of Private Higher Education Institutions),” July 27, 1950, *ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

## The Taiwan Connection: 1960s–1980s and Beyond

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Taiwan's role in the history and present of U.S.-China educational exchange has been primarily to serve as a backup location when access to mainland China is severely restricted if not completely out of the question. Writing this as 2021 bleeds into 2022, the combination of deteriorated U.S.-China relations at the state level, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, has rendered China virtually off-limits to students and scholars who wish to study the Chinese language or to conduct research, either fieldwork broadly construed or archival. This represents a reemergence of the situation that prevailed in mainland China during the Cold War between 1950 and 1979, a significant reversal after more than four decades of increasingly open access. The freezing of educational exchange between the U.S. and mainland China has consequently provided an unexpected bonanza for Taiwan as a locus for study, research, and experience of life in a Chinese language environment. In the intervening years between these two periods, Taiwan itself underwent a fundamental transformation of its social structure, culture, identity, and perhaps most importantly, politics. Rather than a mere second-rate simulacrum of China, more students and scholars are discovering, often to their surprise, that Taiwan is a phenomenally interesting place in its own right, offering a wide range of subjects for research and a delightful lifestyle. The new discovery of Taiwan coincides with the emergence of a burgeoning field of "Taiwan Studies," which is distinct from China Studies (though some people look to Taiwan as a harbinger of what China might become). The research environment in Taiwan is replete with scholars, many of whom returned to the island after receiving advanced degrees from top ranked universities abroad and who eagerly welcome foreign scholars and students into their community. Taiwan's world-class universities and think tanks have offered positions to people, including foreigners who more than likely never considered careers on the island.

This chapter examines Taiwan's emergence as the prime location for the study of Mandarin Chinese *in situ* during the Cold War. It particularly examines the role of the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies (IUP). After China opened up to foreign students and scholars in the

1980s and IUP moved to Beijing in 1997, it looked as though Taiwan's unique status had disappeared. Due in large part to political democratization in Taiwan and the mainland's authoritarian revival, a distinct field of Taiwan Studies has taken shape, breathing new life into its position in educational exchange with the U.S. and beyond.

### **Taiwan: The Only Place To Learn Mandarin Chinese *In Situ***

When I began studying Chinese, on a dare in 1967, it had no apparent practical value. The Cold War, along with the Cultural Revolution, meant there was zero chance that I would be able to travel to China to immerse myself in the language and then use it for something utilitarian like business, to say nothing of conducting research. Along with some likeminded classmates at Oberlin College inspired by an Asian History class, I took the great leap of learning Chinese because it seemed like an interesting challenge. In reality, I was working toward an English major, had no particular career plans, and was simply shopping around for courses. At that time, Oberlin was a rare case of a small liberal arts college that even offered Chinese, which was taught almost exclusively by R-1 research universities. People who studied Chinese — primarily graduate students — seemed destined for careers in academia and possibly the missionary or diplomatic corps.

In 1967, the only place one could go to study and live in a Mandarin-speaking environment was Taiwan. Officially, Taiwan was a province of the Republic of China (ROC) and the temporary home of the ROC government, having ruled since 1949 under Martial Law by President Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist) Party. As the KMT was losing the civil war against the Communists led by Mao Zedong, Chiang retreated with much of his government and military apparatus to Taiwan to regroup and plan a counterattack to retake the mainland. As with much of China, the language spoken by the people of Taiwan was not Mandarin, which the ROC government called *guoyu* (literally, “national language”),<sup>1</sup> but a local language, often debatably referred to as a “dialect” of Mandarin. Like Cantonese, Shanghainese, and so on, Taiwanese (or Hoklo)<sup>2</sup> used the same written characters as Mandarin but pronounced most of these characters differently, such that people from different parts of China often could not understand what the other was saying without writing characters down or sketching them on their palms. To make things even more complicated, Taiwan had been a Japanese colony from 1895 until their defeat during World War II in 1945, and the people of the island had been taught to use Japanese as their primary language and even consider themselves Japanese, if second class ones. Even if one went to Taiwan to study Mandarin, chances

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1 In China, Mandarin is also the official language, but is called *Putonghua*, or “the common language.”

2 There is also a sizable population of people who speak Hakka, a Chinese language common in many parts of the mainland without a single geographical center.

were that people on the street, especially outside of the main city of Taipei, did not comprehend *guoyu* very well and spoke it with a very heavy Taiwanese accent.

### **The Republic of China on Taiwan**

The U.S. had supported the KMT, which it had allied with during World War II against Japan, and for much of the civil war in China that exploded shortly after Japan's surrender. However, the U.S. had more or less given up on the KMT as hopelessly incompetent and corrupt while the Communists marched relentlessly across the mainland and finally established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. After North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung sent troops into South Korea to unify the peninsula in July 1950, however, the Americans undertook a dramatic policy shift to support Chiang with military, economic, technological, and spiritual aid. After a few years, the situation stabilized, but this had come at the cost of untold thousands of lives during the period referred to as the "White Terror" for much of the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the development of Chinese language teaching in the U.S. proceeded slowly, sparked initially by the need for Chinese language speakers after the U.S. entered the Pacific War in Asia.<sup>4</sup> The Institute of Far Eastern Languages at Yale played a central role in this effort by training military officers, academics, missionaries and Yale's own "bachelors," along with the Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association's "representatives," in preparation for teaching assignments in China. After the Communist takeover of the mainland, some foreigners, especially missionaries, evacuated to Taiwan with the ROC government and needed to develop their Chinese language skills, as did diplomats. The Foreign Service Institute opened a school in Taipei in 1955, along with a "missionary language institute" that later became the secular Taipei Language Institute.<sup>5</sup> I should note that Yale also founded the Yale-China Chinese Language Center at New Asia College in Hong Kong (later part of Chinese University of Hong Kong), but the common language outside the school was Cantonese, so it was not as conducive to the mastery of Mandarin, which at least was the official language on Taiwan by that point.

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3 The classic study of this period, in English, is George Kerr (1965), *Formosa Betrayed*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin). See also, Thomas B. Gold (2016), "Retrosession and Authoritarian KMT Rule (1945-1986), in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Taiwan*, ed. Gunter Schubert. (London and New York: Routledge) pp. 36-50).

4 Vivian Ling (2018), "The Institute of Far Eastern Languages at Yale University" in *The Field of Chinese Language Education in the U.S.: A Retrospective of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Vivian Ling. (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 67-80.

5 Vivian Ling (2018), "The Cornell Program of 1965-63 and the founding of IUP" in *ibid*, pp. 124-139. The Taipei Language Institute also offered classes in Taiwanese.

These schools taught Mandarin to foreigners in Taiwan, and the ROC government subsequently established the National Language Promotion Commission tasked with teaching *guoyu* to the people of the island.<sup>6</sup> This was part of a larger project of “converting” them from thinking of themselves as (at least partially) Japanese and as those who had fought a brutal war against the ROC — many of them actively as soldiers — to identifying as citizens of the Republic of China, whose enemy now was Communist Party-led mainland China. Children were physically punished for speaking Taiwanese in school and needed to remember to speak Mandarin outside despite speaking Taiwanese, or even Japanese, with their families at home behind closed doors. Taiwanese language radio and television broadcasts were strictly limited. In the ROC government’s eyes, it would be necessary for the people of Taiwan to speak the same language as the rest of China (where its fluency was still quite spotty) so they could blend in after the KMT recovered the mainland from the Communists.

Although it did not plan to stay on Taiwan indefinitely, the central ROC government, located in Taipei,<sup>7</sup> renamed many of the city’s streets after provinces and cities to resemble Shanghai, the origin of many KMT elite.<sup>8</sup> Statues of the Founding Father of the ROC, Sun Yat-sen, and of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek were placed in many public spaces. Offices and classrooms frequently posted photos of this duo as well. Although society was governed under martial law during this period of Communist rebellion, the ROC, with American help, presented itself to its people and the outside world as “Free China” and as distinct from Communist China. More than that, and especially during the Cultural Revolution on the mainland (1966–1976) when the Communists attempted to destroy much of traditional Chinese culture, the KMT underwent a Cultural Renaissance, presenting itself as the last repository of China’s glorious traditions. All writings, for example, used full traditional Chinese characters instead of the simplified ones propagated by Communists on the mainland to address mass illiteracy. The ROC government built the Palace Museum to house many of the priceless art objects it had brought over the Taiwan Strait for safekeeping. Television broadcast traditional costumed Chinese operas as well as popular music from Shanghai of the ’20s and ’30s. Since refugees

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6 Henning Kloter (2004), “Language Policy in the KMT and DPP eras,” *China Perspectives*, November-December, pp. 1-12. The style of speaking and writing in print media reflected an antiquated version of the modern language, quite different from spoken Chinese.

7 The separate governmental bodies of Taiwan province were located down island near Taichung, although the two bureaucracies pretty much governed the same real estate.

8 The ROC’s capital was in Nanjing, not too far from the commercial and industrial heartland dominated by Shanghai.

came from all over the mainland, restaurants featuring mainland China's various regional cuisines were plentiful and offered an authentic taste of home, reinforcing nostalgia for a sugar-coated past.<sup>9</sup>

The KMT had also brought many party and government archives to Taiwan. Schools taught the history, geography, and culture of China, neglecting Taiwan, which had no separate standing in their eyes, especially given its background as only weakly integrated into China during the dynastic period followed by five decades of Japanese imperial colonization. Questioning these policies, or Taiwan's commitment to counter-attack the Chinese Communist Party, was considered seditious and invited severe punishment.<sup>10</sup> Still, for foreigners wanting a "taste of the real China," Taipei was a good place to start. Expatriates could live quite comfortably, especially if they avoided dissident politics, and the mountainous landscape provided countless opportunities for outdoor activity.

### **Establishing the Inter-University Program**

The establishment of the Inter-University Program (IUP) played an important role conferring upon Taiwan its unique status for Mandarin-language learning before the late 1990s, emerging from an agglomeration of different Mandarin-language learning institutions established in the 1950s and 1960s. With a six-year grant from the Ford Foundation supporting the study of non-Western areas of the world, Professor Harold Shadick of Cornell University assumed administrative duties over the Inter-University Fellowship Program for Field Training in Chinese, based in Taipei, in 1956. It was referred to as "The Cornell Program" and was housed at National Taiwan Normal University. In 1959, Professor James "Jimmy" Wrenn of Brown University was appointed field director of the "Cornell Center" in Taipei as an independent unit.<sup>11</sup> Later, in 1962, Professor Albert Dien of Stanford University had established a "Stanford Center" at the island's premier institution of higher learning, National Taiwan University (NTU, *Taida*) that then merged with the Cornell Center. With continued support from the Ford Foundation, this center became the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies (IUP) in 1963. Dien served as Field Director for the 1963–1964 academic year.

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9 The stories in the collection by Pai Hsien-yung, *Taipeiren* (English: *Wandering in the Garden: Waking From a Dream*) (1982) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) capture this wistful psychology of mainlander exiles on Taiwan.

10 They also tried to expunge as much of the residue of Japanese culture as possible, but not as brutally as what happened in South Korea.

11 This section draws largely from Thomas B. Gold (2013), "Complex Characters: Relearning Taiwan," in *Mobile Horizons: Dynamics across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Wenhsin Yeh. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies), pp. 235-258, esp. pp. 243-245. Additionally: Vivian Ling (2018), "The Cornell Program of 1956-63 and the founding of IUP" in Ling, ed. *Op. cit.*, pp. 125-139; James E. Dew and Vivian Ling (2018), "The Inter-University Program (IUP): the thirty-four years in Taipei," in *ibid.*, p. 140-161; and Vivian Ling (2018), "My six years with IUP: a time of transition from Taipei to Beijing," in *ibid.*, pp. 162-172. These chapters also go into depth about IUP's pedagogy.

Professor Lyman Van Slyke, upon assuming his post as assistant professor of history at Stanford, simultaneously became executive secretary of IUP.<sup>12</sup> The executive office was at Stanford until 1997 and the program was unofficially referred to as “The Stanford Center,” even after the office moved to Berkeley in 1997 and the program was supposed to be called only “IUP.”<sup>13</sup> The program was housed in a Japanese-era building on the Taida campus, dating from the school’s origin as Imperial Taipei (Taihoku) University. There was always an “American field director” in residence at Taida, who, as a rule, only stayed for a year, concurrent with sabbatical or leave of absence from their home institution. Initially targeting only advanced doctoral students, IUP began to admit undergraduates as well as professionals desiring true competence in the language. These included journalists, lawyers, businesspeople, government officials, and so on. Somewhat controversially, IUP also started to offer Taiwanese classes in the 1970s.

IUP enjoyed authoritative and financial backing from the highest officials in the ROC and Taida, particularly the Ministry of Education (MOE). It did not, however, have an official agreement with NTU. Clearly, having links with so many elite U.S. research universities was a boost for Taida’s global prestige and for the MOE. It helped legitimize the ROC government’s claim to Taiwan as the repository of authentic Chinese culture and as the sole Mandarin training ground for future China experts.<sup>14</sup> Principally, IUP was a language program, not a research center,<sup>15</sup> and did not offer beginning or even intermediate-level Chinese. The teaching materials used traditional non-simplified characters and taught a *patois* characteristic of the oral language used in China in the 1920s to 1940s.

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12 In 1995 his title was changed to executive director. He served in this capacity until 1997.

13 The original members of the IUP Board were: University of California, Berkeley; Columbia; Cornell; Harvard; University of Michigan; Princeton; Stanford; University of Washington; and Yale. Board membership changed over the years. Students attending IUP did not need to come from a Board member institution.

14 Political scientist Richard Baum presents a lively description of life at IUP and Taiwan more broadly in his memoir, (2010) *China Watcher: Confessions of a Peking Tom*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press). See also reminiscences of learning Chinese in Taiwan by Irwin J. Schulman, Donald J. Munro and Paul A. Cohen (2018), “Learning Chinese language and culture in Taiwan in the early days, a trilogy” pp. 332-342; William M. Speidel, (2018), “Learning Chinese shaped my career,” pp. 343-349; and Paul S. Ropp (2018), “My serendipitous Chinese journey,” pp. 350-361” all in Ling, op. cit.

15 Nonetheless, it had a “dirty books room” with material banned by the ROC government that IUP students could gain access to but not remove. The premier center for research on Communist China was the Universities Service Centre in Hong Kong, founded in 1963, which had an unparalleled collection of material from throughout China and also arranged interviews with people who had left the PRC. It did not offer language training. It moved from an old house on Argyle Street under the flight path to the late lamented Kai Tak Airport to the campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1988.

The instructors were basically all mainlander refugees who spoke and taught very standard, Beijing-inflected Mandarin, which stood out in Taiwan.<sup>16</sup>

Enrollment at IUP required a minimum of two years of Chinese or the equivalent, a statement of purpose, recommendation letters, and passing an oral and listening proficiency test. Classes and time for preparation were all-consuming, and students pledged to speak only Chinese. Many lived with Chinese families, ensuring that Mandarin was their *lingua franca* and, perhaps not surprisingly, many IUP students took local romantic partners. An important part of the IUP curriculum was field trips around the island to better understand Taiwan's society and political economy as well as to enjoy the natural endowments of the island. Over time, other locally run programs developed that did teach Chinese from scratch, such as the Mandarin Training Center (*guoyu zhongxin*) at National Taiwan Normal University, *Guoyu Ribao* (Mandarin Daily), and the purely commercial Taipei Language Institute. Additionally, Oberlin College and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst established programs at Tunghai University in Taichung.<sup>17</sup>

From 1963 through the 1994–1995 academic year, 1,303 students attended IUP for varying lengths of time. The top five sending institutions were the University of Michigan; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Chicago; Stanford University; and Princeton University. The students were nearly all postgraduates in Ph.D. or professional programs, and they came from all fields: history and literature, sociology, political science, law, and anthropology, in particular. Given the small number of students of Chinese over those decades and the elite status of IUP, it played a major role in training scholars who shaped the field of Chinese Studies in the decades to come. This is the major point to emphasize: Hardly any students at IUP or other language programs on the island intended to go into “Taiwan Studies,” a field that did not exist at that time. To claim there should be such a distinct area of scholarly inquiry risked being tarred as an advocate of Taiwanese independence and skeptical of the ROC government's claim to be the legitimate government of China.

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16 Although I personally never attended IUP, on my first visit to Taiwan for a trial Oberlin program in the summer of 1969, I was shocked at my inability to understand most of the spoken “Chinese” I encountered and being mocked for trying to sound like a radio announcer from Peiping (the government's name for Beijing, signifying that it did not recognize that city as the legitimate capital, which was Nanjing). I realized there is such a thing as “Taiwan *guoyu*.”

17 Tunghai was founded in 1955 by a dozen of the former missionary programs on the mainland, as a private Christian university, largely funded by the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. Oberlin Shansi representatives (myself included, 1970-1972) and Princeton-in-Asia fellows held their teaching positions there. Then Vice President Richard Nixon lay the cornerstone of the school whose landmark is a soaring chapel designed by I.M. Pei. In addition to these designated instructors, the Tunghai Foreign Languages Department also hired numerous native English speaking B.A. holders who more or less just showed up looking for work.

## The Move to China

As the Chinese mainland opened up to international students and researchers during the 1980s, Taiwan's attraction as a place to study Mandarin waned. During this period, people wanted the "authentic China experience," which they perceived could only happen on the mainland. In fact, the board of IUP was considering opening another program on the mainland and many board members' institutions were already setting up separate programs in China at the same time.<sup>18</sup> In a turn from decades prior, Taiwan was no longer seen as necessary, since the *real* China was now open for business. What happened next is still debated, but in essence, the Taida College of Liberal Arts (COLA) that owned the new building where IUP had moved in 1985 asserted its rights and need for more space on the crowded campus. Students even demonstrated against an American institution occupying space needed by Taida faculty and students. In reality, IUP had no real identity on the Taida campus — the campus community didn't think IUP made much of a contribution to Taida's prestige or intellectual life and it was revealed that the program wasn't even paying rent.

IUP responded by trying to integrate into campus life and by paying rent. After all, Taiwan was still an important site for studying Mandarin. However, new conflicts emerged between IUP and the MOE's Office of International Exchange and Taida's International Programs Liaison Office. The IUP board proposed that COLA take over and rename it the International Chinese Language Program (ICLP), and the two sides came to agreement. To COLA's benefit, the increasingly unfriendly environment led IUP to pull up its stakes in Taiwan and move to Tsinghua University in Beijing in 1997, and the facility at Taida became ICLP. The university operated its own language program in the same building, offering Chinese from scratch. ICLP continued to attract students from around the world who, for various reasons, chose to study in Taiwan rather than the mainland. These reasons included the existence of political freedom, Taiwan's unique lifestyle, and because the island's environment was far less polluted than Beijing. In 2017, ICLP hosted a large-scale celebration of 55 years of IUP-ICLP, though IUP never acknowledged ICLP as its "successor" despite the fact it used the same pedagogy and textbooks and many of the same instructors.<sup>19</sup> There had, indeed, been some bad blood, but this retrospective get-together proceeded with an excellent atmosphere of reconciliation and friendship.

I became executive director of IUP in 1997 and, soon after, was approached by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a top administrator at National Cheng-chih University (NCCU) imploring me to move IUP back to Taiwan, saying it had been a terrible mistake to let it go. I knew the board was not about to agree to this. However, with the assistance of John Thomson, then the

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18 This section draws mainly from Gold (2013), "Complex Characters," op. cit.

19 A video of this event is online at: <http://www.history.iclp.ntu.edu.tw>

American field director in Beijing who had spent many years in Taiwan in the Foreign Service, we worked out the Taiwan Familiarization Program in partnership with NCCU. The idea was that anyone who intended to embark on a career involving China writ large should have some familiarity with Taiwan, and this program would provide an introduction. This involved selecting American students at IUP Beijing who had never been to Taiwan to spend a week there learning about the island's history, culture, politics, and so on, and then arranging an individualized program tailored to their particular interest and expertise. These included journalism, religion, art, civil society, business, law, political science, history, environmentalism, and so on. Eight groups went from 2005 to 2012. The reports were all very positive, and many participants returned to Taiwan for extended research.

### **The Field of Taiwan Studies**

While China was continuing to open up to foreign students and scholars, Taiwan's own transformations began to attract attention as well, and the first decade of the 21st century saw the emergence of a distinct field of "Taiwan Studies" separate from "Chinese Studies." This was aided by the divergent political trajectories of Taiwan and mainland China. The violent crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and across the country on June 4, 1989, was a boon to Taiwan, as a number of students determined to go to the mainland became quite wary and opted for Taiwan instead. Furthermore, after the KMT government under Chiang Ching-kuo terminated martial law as of July 1, 1987, the taint of Taiwan as an authoritarian dictatorship vanished and study in Taiwan lost its stigma. The events of 1989 only proved that Taiwan had undergone an astounding and fundamental transformation while the mainland, which seemed to be on a course of irreversible openness and possible political democratization, was backsliding in a violent way. Along with political democratization, the 1980s in Taiwan also witnessed a dramatic rise in the "discovery" of Taiwan consciousness, the idea that Taiwan's historical experience had created in its people a sense of shared identity quite different from that of the people on the mainland under CCP control. This involved a new appreciation of Taiwanese as the authentic local language, along with Hakka, and a questioning of why Taiwan was seen as a place to study Mandarin (or, Beijing language) and learn about China, while neglecting Taiwanese language, history, and culture, to say nothing of the social and political transformation that had occurred.

While anthropologists had conducted research for many years, now political scientists, sociologists, and scholars of many disciplines started to go to the island to learn about it not as a stand-in for China but as an extremely interesting subject of research in its own right.<sup>20</sup> With financial

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20 See, inter alia, Jonathan Sullivan and Gudrun Seiler-Holmer, "Mapping the Taiwan Studies Field," (2011), *Issues and Studies* 47(3), September, pp. 1-28; Dafydd Fell, et. al., (2018), "The State of the Field

support from Taiwan government agencies and foundations as well as private donations, dedicated Taiwan Studies programs began to appear in places such as London, Nottingham, Prague, Tuebingen, Ljubljana, and Seattle. A World Congress of Taiwan Studies held biannual meetings in Taipei and abroad, and the European Association of Taiwan Studies, North American Taiwan Studies Association, and Japanese Association of Taiwan Studies also convened regular conferences and published papers from them. Scholars from China residing abroad participated in these meetings. Most scholars who would identify as members of the Taiwan Studies Field were also involved with Chinese Studies, and it appeared that one could have a foot in each with no serious repercussions. Finding a job as a “Taiwan specialist” was unlikely, but several “China specialists” did manage to teach courses on Taiwan.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

While it seemed that China’s opening to the outside world was irreversible, the third decade of the 21st century caught everyone short. The proximate cause was the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic: China has opted for a complete shutdown to eradicate the disease entirely. The language programs for foreigners on the mainland have gone online as students could not get visas. The situation was worse for scholars whose research requires access to archives, field sites, and partnerships with universities and think tanks. A potential sign of the times: Harvard Summer School relocated its immersion program from Beijing to Taiwan, even renaming it the Harvard Taipei Academy. More than the pandemic, the deterioration of relations between China and the U.S. as well as an overall crackdown on intellectual life and heightened nationalistic xenophobia under the Xi Jinping government has made China increasingly unwelcome to foreigners for the foreseeable future. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, however, signals out of China indicated that the welcome mat for foreigners had nonetheless been pulled in. This is true of Hong Kong as well, where the crackdown on universities following the 2019 protests and Hong Kong National Security Law has been particularly harsh. Although Taiwan also largely locked down during the pandemic, some people have managed to get visas and conduct research after a 14-day quarantine. Indications are that, when conditions permit, foreign students and scholars will be more than welcome back. Taiwan has become increasingly proactive in enlarging its presence abroad as the premier site for Mandarin instruction. In December 2020 it launched the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative and intends to expand this initiative to Europe and elsewhere. Perhaps surprisingly, the Taiwan connection, which seemed doomed to irrelevance, has gained renewed vitality.

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of Global Taiwan Studies Institutions: A Time for Optimism or Pessimism?”, *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 1(2), pp. 371-394.

21 See the forums on Taiwan Studies in *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*, (2018), 1(1), pp. 193-227.

## Reform and Opening Up: 1979–2016

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Deng Xiaoping’s decision in 1978 to send a large number of Chinese students to study overseas, particularly to the United States, was understood at the time to be the first astonishing sign of Communist China’s opening to the outside world and the strategic “prelude” (*xumu*) to China’s reform and opening-up.<sup>1</sup> Later that year, the first group of 52 Chinese students and scholars traveled to the United States to pursue academic studies.<sup>2</sup> Their arrival in America occurred just a few days after the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Party Congress in December 1978 — an important meeting that marked the beginning of China’s economic reform and opening up — and a few days before the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). At the vanguard of Sino-U.S. educational exchange, these students and scholars were regarded as “political missionaries” or “goodwill ambassadors” rather than students or academics.<sup>3</sup>

From a strategic objective, both Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter explicitly linked the launch of these educational exchanges in 1978 to the broader aspirations of promoting “many more areas of bilateral cooperation” and contributing to world peace and regional stability.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Asia-Pacific region has generally remained peaceful over the past four decades, despite some disturbing crises in the bilateral relationship such as the 1989 Tiananmen tragedy, the 1996 Taiwan Strait Missile Crisis resulting from Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui’s visit to the United States, the 1999 U.S. bombing

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1 See, for example, Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000); David M. Lampton, Joyce A. Madancy, and Kristen M. Williams, *A Relationship Restored: Trends in U.S.-China Educational Exchanges, 1978–1984* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986), and *Shenzhou xueren* [China scholars abroad], July 2003. A significant part of this discussion appeared in Cheng Li, *Middle Class Shanghai: Reshaping US-China Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021).

2 Karl Li and Richard Elwell, “Chatting with the Chinese,” *American Education* (May 1979): 17–19; and *Beijing Review* 42, no. 5 (February 1-7, 1999): 17.

3 *Beijing Review* 32, no. 5 (30 Jan. 1989): 39.

4 Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. and China Sign Agreements; Carter Sees an ‘Irreversible’ Trend.” *New York Times*, February 1, 1979, A16.

of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, and the 2001 Hainan Island incident. Consequently, students of Sino-U.S. relations and policymakers in Washington must comprehensively evaluate the impact of China's study abroad movement and its implications for the bilateral relationship.

### **China's Study Abroad Movement and Its Prominence in International Educational Exchange**

The depth and breadth of educational exchange between these two countries over the past four decades has been truly remarkable considering their vastly different political systems and ideologies. The sheer number of Chinese nationals who studied abroad and the tidal wave of Chinese students and scholars who returned home after completing their overseas education was perhaps beyond anyone's imagination in 1978. Between 1978 and 2019, 5,857,100 PRC citizens studied abroad, with a significant percentage going to the United States.<sup>5</sup> In 2018 alone, approximately 703,500 Chinese students studied overseas, making China the primary source of international students in other countries.<sup>6</sup> As a result, China was the country that sent the most students to study overseas for 10 consecutive years.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, 363,341 PRC students enrolled in schools during the 2017–2018 academic year, marking the ninth consecutive year that China sent the most foreign students to study in American schools.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, PRC students accounted for 33% of the total number of international students in the United States that year.

By 2018, approximately 3,651,400 Chinese students and scholars who studied abroad had returned to China, representing 85% of all Chinese students and scholars who had completed a program abroad.<sup>9</sup> In 2017 alone, approximately 480,900 Chinese students and scholars returned to their native country after finishing studies overseas.<sup>10</sup> Among them, 227,400 received advanced degrees (master's or doctoral degrees) or postdoctoral training. They now play important roles in

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5 Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China website, "2018 niandu woguo chuguo liuxue renyuan qingkuang tongji" [Statistics on Chinese students studying abroad in 2018], March 27, 2019, [www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/gzdt\\_gzdt/s5987/201903/t20190327\\_375704.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201903/t20190327_375704.html); and "Zhongguo qunian chuguo liuxue renshu shou po 60 wan" [The number of Chinese students studying abroad last year exceeded 600,000], *Renmin ribao* (overseas edition), April 1, 2018, [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/01/content\\_5278951.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/01/content_5278951.htm).

6 Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China website, "2019 niandu woguo chuguo liuxue renyuan qingkuang tongji," [www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/gzdt\\_gzdt/s5987/202012/t20201214\\_505447.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/202012/t20201214_505447.html)

7 Ibid.

8 "Zhongguo fu mei liuxuesheng renshu diaocha baogao."

9 A total of 4,323,200 students completed their degrees or programs. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China website, "2018 niandu woguo chuguo liuxue renyuan qingkuang tongji."

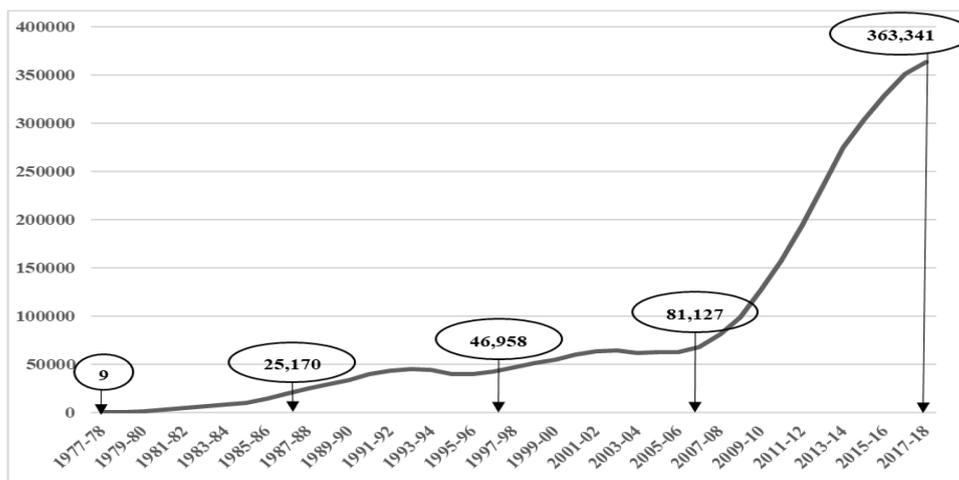
10 "Zhongguo qunian chuguo liuxue renshu shou po 60 wan."

many walks of life in China, such as in educational institutions, research centers, central and local governments, state and private enterprises, foreign or joint venture companies, law firms, hospitals and clinics, media networks, and nongovernmental organizations. A new Chinese term, *haiguipai* (returnees from study abroad), has been coined to describe this rapidly growing elite group.

### Flourishing Growth of Educational Exchanges Under the Obama Administration

Since the beginning of the study abroad movement in the reform era, the United States has remained the most popular destination for Chinese students and scholars. Figure 1 provides an overview of the astonishing increase in the number of PRC students and scholars studying in the United States — from nine in 1978 to 25,170 in 1988; 46,958 in 1998; 81,127 in 2008; and finally to 363,341 in 2018. According to statistics provided by Duke Kunshan University, from 1978–2018, more than 1.6 million PRC students studied in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 1: The Rapid Growth of PRC Students Studying in the United States, 1978–2018**

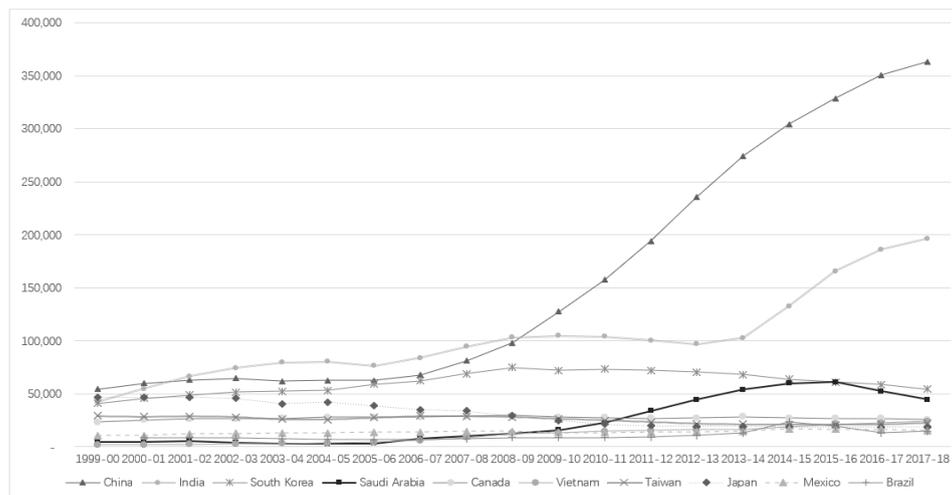


Sources and notes: Institute of International Education, “Fast Facts from 2001 to 2018.” *Open Doors Website*, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts>; and Todd M. Davis, “Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange,” *ResearchGate Website*, January 2000, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234761604\\_Open\\_Doors\\_Report\\_on\\_International\\_Educational\\_Exchange](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234761604_Open_Doors_Report_on_International_Educational_Exchange); and Yuan Qing and Yue Tingting, “Xin shiqi Zhongguo liumei jiaoyu de fazhan licheng he qushi” [The history and trends in the development of Chinese student study abroad in the United States in the new era]. *Zhongguo shehui kexue wang [Chinese social science net]*, May 6, 2015, [http://hprc.cssn.cn/gsyj/whs/jys/201505/t20150506\\_4111942.html](http://hprc.cssn.cn/gsyj/whs/jys/201505/t20150506_4111942.html). These figures include students attending middle/high school, undergraduate and graduate programs. Cheng Li, *Middle Class Shanghai: Reshaping US-China Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> “A New Age of Sino-U.S. Higher Education Cooperation,” A 2019 Duke International Forum held at the Duke Kunshan University in Kunshan, China, December 16-18, 2019.

Figure 1 shows that the number of Chinese students coming to the United States grew rapidly following the 2007–2008 academic year, surpassing 100,000 people in the 2009–2010 academic year; 200,000 in the 2012–2013 academic year; and 300,000 in the 2014–2015 academic year. This surge of Chinese students in the United States can be attributed to the November 2009 Sino-U.S. Joint Statement signed in Beijing by U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao. The U.S. government promised to accept more Chinese students to study in the United States, and it provided a more convenient visa application process for Chinese applicants. Over the following two years, the approval rate for visas to the United States exceeded 95%.<sup>12</sup> For the 2016–2017 academic year, the total number of Chinese students and scholars in the United States surpassed 350,000. The annual growth rate of Chinese students in the U.S. between 2007 and 2009 was around 20%, increasing to 30% after the 2009–2010 academic year. During the same period, the United States launched the 100,000 Strong Program, an initiative proposed by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to encourage and support more American students to study in China.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 2: The Top Ten Countries of Origin of Students Studying in the United States, 2000–2018**



Sources and notes: Institute of International Education, “Fast Facts from 2001 to 2018.” *Open Doors Website*, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts>; and Todd M. Davis, “Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange,” *ResearchGate Website*, January 2000, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234761604\\_Open\\_Doors\\_Report\\_on\\_International\\_Educational\\_Exchange](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234761604_Open_Doors_Report_on_International_Educational_Exchange). Data on Vietnamese students studying in the US are from: <https://wenr.wes.org/>

12 Yuan Qing and Yue Tingting, “*Xin shiqi Zhongguo liumei jiaoyu de fazhan licheng he qushi*” [The history and trends in the development of Chinese student study abroad in the United States in the new era]. *Zhongguo shehui kexue wang* [Chinese social science net], May 6, 2015, [http://hprc.cssn.cn/gsyj/whs/jys/201505/t20150506\\_4111942.html](http://hprc.cssn.cn/gsyj/whs/jys/201505/t20150506_4111942.html).

13 For example, see Northeastern University’s grant for such a program. <https://provost.northeastern.edu/northeastern-help-expand-study-abroad-americas/>.

2014/05/higher-education-in-vietnam. Data on Saudi Arabian students studying in the US (2004) are from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304830704577492450467667154>; and <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1161830.pdf>. Cheng Li, *Middle Class Shanghai: Reshaping US-China Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), p. 203.

Figure 2 shows that the total number of Chinese students and scholars studying in the United States has significantly outnumbered that of other countries since 2009. For example, in 2017 the number of Chinese students and scholars in the U.S. surpassed 350,000 (363,341 to be exact, or 33% of all international students in the United States) while India, the number-two country on the list, sent fewer than 200,000 students and scholars (196,271; 18%) to the United States.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of academic fields, over the past decade there have been fewer Chinese students in the U.S. majoring in the natural sciences and engineering — which were popular during the first couple of decades of educational exchange — and more students concentrating in business and management. In the 2013–2014 academic year, for example, the top five majors for Chinese students in the United States were business and management (28%), engineering (20%), mathematics and computer science (12%), physics and life sciences (9%), and the social sciences (8%).<sup>15</sup>

### **Educational Decoupling Under the Trump Administration**

Under the Trump administration, especially in its final two-to-three years, comprehensive decoupling, including in the area of bilateral educational exchanges, dominated the already hawkish discourse on China among American policymakers. While the prevailing view was once that bilateral educational and cultural exchanges would induce positive change in U.S.-China relations through engagement, this view transitioned to an acute fear that scholars and students from the PRC attending American educational and research institutions are “weapons” of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) who will hasten China’s ascent to superpower status in science and technology at the expense of the United States.

One can reasonably argue that some of Beijing’s political and policy moves also contributed to educational decoupling with the rise in political control over international educational exchanges. For example, the 2017 Foreign NGO Law created extensive restrictions on foreign educational institutions and civil society organizations that engage in educational, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. Nonetheless, opposition to bilateral educational exchanges was apparently much stronger in Washington. In the fall of 2018, the White House considered banning student visas for Chinese

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14 “*Chuguo liuxue wushi nian shuju huizong.*”

15 Zhang Shuo, “*Zhang Shuo: Zhongguo qunian chuguo liuxue renyuan shou po 60 wan*” [China’s overseas students last year broke 600,000], *Renmin ribao* website, April 1, 2018, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/01/content\\_5278951.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-04/01/content_5278951.htm).

nationals, which would have ended 40 years of educational exchanges with the PRC.<sup>16</sup> The hawkish proposal eventually failed because of “concerns about its economic and diplomatic impact.”<sup>17</sup> However, amid the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020, the administration tried yet again to expel international post-secondary students engaged in full online course loads from the United States — which would have an outsized impact on Chinese national students — only to retract the policy after significant outcry and a legal challenge. On numerous occasions between 2018 and 2020, FBI director Christopher Wray also made very strong remarks about the “China threat” in terms of educational and cultural exchange, reaffirming the 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy report’s statement that “part of China’s military modernization and economic expansion is due to its access to the U.S. innovation economy, including America’s world-class universities.”<sup>18</sup>

Further, American media has reported widely on CCP influence within U.S. educational institutions. Most notable are reports that alleged CCP agents have been embedded among Chinese students and visiting scholars at some universities in the United States.<sup>19</sup> A number of Chinese Students and Scholars Associations have been reported for acting as extensions of Chinese embassies in the United States and other countries.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Confucius Institutes have become some of the most controversial entities facilitating U.S.-China educational exchanges and are key targets of criticism. In 2017, there were altogether 512 Confucius Institutes and 1,074 Confucius Classrooms in 131 countries, of which 103 Confucius Institutes (20%) and 501 Confucius Classrooms (47%) were located in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Critics have levied a number of accusations against the practices of Confucius Institutes: (1) The Institutes, run by an agency of the Chinese government called the Hanban (which has been renamed the Center for Language Education and Cooperation), tend to compromise academic freedom and jeopardize the autonomy and integrity of their host American

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16 Demetri Sevastopulo and Tom Mitchell, “US Considered Ban on Student Visas for Chinese Nationals,” *Financial Times*, October 2, 2018.

17 Ibid.

18 National Security Strategy. For Wray’s briefings and speeches, see, for example, CNN Transcripts, February 13, 2018, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1802/13/cnr.04.html>. Christopher Wray, “The Threat Posed by the Chinese Government and the Chinese Communist Party to the Economic and National Security of the United States,” Lecture, Hudson Institute, July 7, 2020, [www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-threat-posed-by-the-chinese-government-and-the-chinese-communist-party-to-the-economic-and-national-security-of-the-united-states](http://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-threat-posed-by-the-chinese-government-and-the-chinese-communist-party-to-the-economic-and-national-security-of-the-united-states).

19 Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “The Chinese Communist Party Is Setting Up Cells at Universities across America,” *Foreign Policy*, April 18, 2018.

20 Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “China’s Long Arm Reaches into American Campuses,” *Foreign Policy*, March 7, 2018; see also Stephanie Saul, “On Campuses Far from China, Still Under Beijing’s Watchful Eye,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2017.

21 Rachele Peterson, “Outsourced to China,” National Association of Scholars, July 12, 2017, [https://nas.org/blogs/dicta/outsourced\\_to\\_china](https://nas.org/blogs/dicta/outsourced_to_china).

educational institutions; (2) The Institutes were described as “an important part of China’s overseas propaganda set-up” by Li Changchun in 2009, who was then a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in charge of party propaganda; (3) Confucius Institute contracts are often inaccessible to the public, pledge adherence to Chinese law, and give Hanban the right to vet all curriculum and course plans; and (4) Confucius Institutes have fostered a generation of American students with “selective knowledge and imbalanced information” about China’s history and present-day life.<sup>22</sup>

In August 2018, President Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act, which included a provision that “required universities to choose between hosting Chinese language programs funded by the Pentagon or China’s Confucius Institute.”<sup>23</sup> By July 2020, 45 Confucius Institutes in the United States had closed or were in the process of closing.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, two reports by the National Endowment for Democracy and the Hoover Institution accused China of increasing its use of “sharp power” to penetrate American universities and think tanks with the goal of influencing American attitudes toward China.<sup>25</sup> To address these perceived problems, South Carolina Representative Joe Wilson, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, and Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton co-sponsored a bill, titled the Foreign Influence Transparency Act of 2018, that would amend the Foreign Agents Registration Act, a 1938 law requiring agents of foreign governments and political parties to register with the Department of Justice.<sup>26</sup> This new bill re-enforces that educational and scholastic organizations would be exempt “only if the activities do not promote the political agenda of a government of a foreign country.”

### **Critics of Decoupling: Fear of the Return of McCarthyism in the United States**

The Trump administration’s position on educational exchanges stoked fears among many American university administrators about the return of McCarthyism in the United States. In an open

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22 Ibid.

23 John Hayward, “Defense Bill Makes Universities Choose Between Pentagon Programs and China’s Confucius Institute,” *Breitbart*, August 15, 2018, [www.breitbart.com/national-security/2018/08/15/defense-bill-makes-universities-choose-between-pentagon-programs-and-chinas-confucius-institute](http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2018/08/15/defense-bill-makes-universities-choose-between-pentagon-programs-and-chinas-confucius-institute).

24 “How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?” National Association of Scholars website, July 1, 2020, [www.nas.org/blogs/article/how\\_many\\_confucius\\_institutes\\_are\\_in\\_the\\_united\\_states](http://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states).

25 Juan Pablo Cardenal, Jacek Kucharczyk, Grigorij Mesežnikov, and Gabriela Pleschová, “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence,” The National Endowment for Democracy, December 5, 2017, Washington, DC; and Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, eds., “China’s Influence and American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance,” Hoover Institution, November 29, 2018, Stanford University, [www.hoover.org/research/chinas-influence-american-interests-promoting-constructive-vigilance](http://www.hoover.org/research/chinas-influence-american-interests-promoting-constructive-vigilance).

26 U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Influence Transparency Act, S. 2583, 115th Cong., introduced on March 21, 2018, [www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-115s2583is/pdf/BILLS-115s2583is.pdf](http://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-115s2583is/pdf/BILLS-115s2583is.pdf).

letter to affirm support for the international community at the University of California at Berkeley, Chancellor Carol Christ and other senior administrators addressed negative comments that implied, without basis, that the university's Chinese American faculty, as well as researchers collaborating with Chinese companies and institutions, could be acting as spies. The letter pointedly affirmed, "As California's own dark history teaches us, an automatic suspicion of people based on their national origin can lead to terrible injustices."<sup>27</sup> Yale University president Peter Salovey also joined administrators from the University of California school system, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia University, and other higher education institutions in issuing an open letter to express "steadfast commitment" to international educational exchanges, even as tensions rise between the United States and China.<sup>28</sup> Since an increasing number of Chinese students and scholars were delayed or denied visas to pursue academic studies in the United States, Salovey urged federal agencies to clarify "concerns they have about international academic exchanges."<sup>29</sup>

Notably, some accusations against China on this front lack supporting evidence — even critics of U.S.-China educational exchange have acknowledged this fact. For example, in a 2017 report on the problems posed by Confucius Institutes, the U.S. National Association of Scholars offered the unusual remark: "There is no positive proof that the Institutes are also centers for Chinese espionage against the United States, but virtually every independent observer who has looked into them believes that to be the case."<sup>30</sup> This sort of witch-hunt paranoia particularly harms members of the Chinese American community who are concerned about being perceived as a "cultural threat" and fear becoming targets in this new wave of McCarthyism.

Race-based rhetoric about a Chinese threat serves to hurt, rather than protect, American interests and security. These ideas and words run completely against American values. In a congressional hearing in May 2019, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence chair, Adam Schiff, offered the following judicious statement:

*There must be no place for racial profiling or ethnic targeting in meeting the rise of China. In America, one of our enduring strengths is welcoming and celebrating diversity. Chinese Americans have made countless contributions to our society. Chinese Americans are Grammy-winning producers, Olympic medalists, cutting-edge scientists, successful*

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27 Carol Christ, "Reaffirming Our Support for Berkeley's International Community," *Berkeley News*, February 21, 2019, <https://news.berkeley.edu/2019/02/21/reaffirming-our-support-for-berkeley-international-community/?from=timeline&isappinstalled=0>.

28 Minnie Chan, "Yale University Chief Stakes Support for International Students Amid China-US Academic Visa Turmoil," *South China Morning Post*, May 25, 2019.

29 Ibid.

30 Peterson, "Outsourced to China."

*entrepreneurs, academics, acclaimed artists, and some of our most successful intelligence officers and national security professionals. We would all be wise to view Chinese Americans as one source of our great strength and not with pernicious suspicion.*<sup>31</sup>

### **The Benefits of Educational Exchanges for the United States**

Shared emphasis on cross-national educational exchanges is also based on the belief that, to a large extent, peaceful international relations depend on the personal relationships between the leaders of these nations. Thus, it is notable that a significant number of Western-educated returnees have already ascended into the Chinese leadership. The Hopkins-Nanjing Center, a joint program established in 1986 by the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and Nanjing University, has produced over 3,000 graduates, many of whom serve as leaders in government, academia, industry, media, and nongovernmental organizations in both countries.<sup>32</sup>

PRC-born scholars and students educated in American universities have also greatly contributed to academic fields in the United States. According to a recent study, around 320 tenured professors in the eight American Ivy League universities were born in the PRC, and almost all of them attended graduate programs in the United States or other Western countries after their undergraduate education in China.<sup>33</sup> In almost every academic discipline in the natural sciences and engineering (and to a lesser extent the social sciences and humanities) at leading American universities, one can find PRC-born faculty members. There are more than 300 PRC-born academicians in the four prestigious academies in the United States (i.e., the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Medicine, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences).<sup>34</sup>

During the past two decades, hundreds of Chinese universities have established joint research initiatives and exchange programs with American academic institutions. By 2017, more than 80 U.S. universities had established joint undergraduate programs and more than 30 schools offered joint graduate degrees with Chinese institutions.<sup>35</sup> Since the mid-1990s, American Ivy League universities

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31 "Congressional Statements," APA Justice website, [www.apajustice.org/congressional-statements.html/](http://www.apajustice.org/congressional-statements.html/).

32 Based on Vice President for International Affairs of Nanjing University Wang Zhenlin's remarks at the 2019 Duke International Forum, "A New Age of Sino-US Higher Education Cooperation," held in Kunshan, China, December 16–18, 2019.

33 See <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/148860475>. Accessed on August 2020.

34 See <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/148860475>. Accessed on August 2020.

35 Yuan and Yue, "*Xin shiqi Zhongguo liumei jiaoyu de fazhan licheng he qushi.*"

and other prestigious schools have also sent their admissions teams to top high schools in China to recruit top-notch undergraduates in the most populous country in the world.<sup>36</sup>

In the 2017–2018 academic year, 20,996 American students were registered in schools in China.<sup>37</sup> Several U.S. universities established a campus or jointly run colleges in China. In Shanghai, for example, they include the joint institute co-founded by the University of Michigan and Shanghai Jiaotong University in 2006<sup>38</sup> and New York University Shanghai co-founded by New York University (NYU) and East China Normal University in 2011 — the first international university jointly established by the PRC and the United States.<sup>39</sup> Two years later in 2013, Duke University and Wuhan University cofounded Duke Kunshan University, another joint international university in Kunshan, near Shanghai.<sup>40</sup>

According to a recent study of the country distribution of the college graduates who continued graduate studies at top universities in China, only 34% of undergraduates continued their graduate study in China, and nearly 56% went to foreign countries, especially the United States, for further education.<sup>41</sup> Another recent study of the employment of doctoral degree graduates in American universities shows that from 2014 to 2020, 80.7% of the 40,277 PRC-born students who obtained Ph.D. degrees in American universities chose to work in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

However, the deterioration of U.S.-China relations in recent years may change the educational and career choices of Chinese scholars and students. Top Chinese students have increasingly chosen China's own top universities.<sup>43</sup> According to a report released in September 2021 by Tsinghua University, only about 14% of its graduates in the past decade went abroad for further studies.<sup>44</sup> The report also found that, as of April this year, more than half of Tsinghua alumni who went abroad between 2002 and 2011 returned to work in China, and the proportion continues to expand. A recent

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36 Yale, Duke, the University of Chicago, and Dartmouth jointly formed a team to travel to Shanghai, recruiting high school students in the city. These four schools had joint recruitment efforts overseas for over ten years. [www.chinesenewsnet.com](http://www.chinesenewsnet.com) (April 23, 2004).

37 Ministry of Education, “2018 nian laihua liuxue tongji” [Statistics on foreign students studying in China in 2018], PRC Ministry of Education website, April 12, 2019, [www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/gzdt\\_gzdt/s5987/201904/t20190412\\_377692.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201904/t20190412_377692.html).

38 See website: <http://umji.sjtu.edu.cn/about/>, last accessed August 2019.

39 See website: <https://shanghai.nyu.edu>, last accessed August 2019.

40 See website: <https://dukekunshan.edu.cn/zh>, last accessed August 2019.

41 <https://www.kunlunce.com/ssjj/ssjjhuanqiu/2021-11-26/156889.html>.

42 [https://www.sohu.com/a/500424518\\_121124010](https://www.sohu.com/a/500424518_121124010).

43 Li, *Middle Class Shanghai: Reshaping US-China Engagement*.

44 <https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2021-09-07/doc-iktzqtyt4559763.shtml>.

article in *The New York Times* observed that if the U.S. no longer welcomes top Chinese students and researchers, “Beijing would welcome them back with open arms.”<sup>45</sup>

Racially charged undertakings such as the China Initiative, launched by the FBI during the Trump administration, continue to undermine American interests. Annually, China now awards degrees to 1.8 million STEM workers (scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians), while the U.S. produces only about 650,000 STEM graduates.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, more than one-third of these U.S. university graduates are foreigners and, in the field of computer science, more than half are foreigners. Currently, about one-fourth of the world’s STEM workers reside in China, and this technological workforce is eight times larger than that of the United States.<sup>47</sup> As Massachusetts Institute of Technology president Rafael Reif recently noted, “No other nation has as large a pool of first-rate scientific and technical talent as China.”<sup>48</sup>

Accusations that many PRC nationals are systemically committing espionage and other wrongdoings in American universities and research institutions have severely damaged American competitiveness on the educational and science and technology fronts. According to David Ho, a Taiwan-born American scientist who serves as professor and director of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center at Rockefeller University, threats of unfounded FBI investigations have pushed some top scientists to return to China, which has “actually doubled China’s top talents.”<sup>49</sup> Ironically, this American policy has been much more effective at encouraging talent to return to China than any prior efforts of the Chinese government. As other sections of this report describe in detail, it is an ethical and strategic imperative that the United States end the Department of Justice’s China Initiative and continue to embrace educational exchange between the U.S. and China.

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45 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/technology/china-ai-research-education.html>.

46 Chas W. Freeman, Jr. “On Hostile Coexistence with China.” Remarks to the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies China Program, Stanford University, May 3, 2019, <https://chasfreeman.net/on-hostile-coexistence-with-china/>.

47 Ibid.

48 Rafael Reif, Speech delivered at the MIT China Summit, Beijing, China, November 13, 2018, <http://president.mit.edu/speeches-writing/mit-china-summit>.

49 David Ho, Keynote Remarks at the SupChina’s “Next China Conference,” New York, November 21, 2019.

## **The Post-Reform Period: Educational Exchange and Sino-U.S. Rivalry**

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Over its 150-year history, scholarly exchange between China and the United States has been a bargain in which China attained knowledge of the natural, applied, and social sciences to support its modernization and the United States gained access to a large talent pool.<sup>1</sup> It was not merely a transmission of expertise from master to apprentice, however; from the outset, Chinese who studied in America (and Japan and Europe) became leaders in their disciplines and contributed to American innovation and the advancement of global knowledge. Many of these scholars built successful careers while accurately perceiving themselves as both American and Chinese — culturally, professionally, and politically. This essay asks whether they can still work in the same spirit now that China and the United States are long-term rivals.

### **The Twilight of Engagement**

When President Carter and Deng Xiaoping normalized relations in 1979, they gave implicit permission for ordinary Chinese and Americans to view each other through nonpolitical lenses for the first time in 30 years. The U.S. and China had been estranged since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and especially after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. American educators, missionaries, executives, and adventurers who had been scattered across China went home in 1949. Some Chinese academics who had trained in the U.S. traveled back across the Pacific to build the New China. Security concerns — politics — were the sum total of the relationship for most of the Cold War. Then, in 1979, Chinese and Americans were suddenly free to treat each other as scholars, philanthropists, and entrepreneurs again, rather than as pasteboard representatives

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<sup>1</sup> The author recounts this history in detail in “Thinkers. Builders. Symbols. Spies? Sino-U.S. Higher Educational Relations in the Engagement Era,” a chapter in *Engaging China: Fifty Years of Sino-American Relations*, Edited by Anne F. Thurston, Columbia University Press, July 2021.

of enemy states. Politics did not vanish in the Engagement Era,<sup>2</sup> especially on the Chinese side, but its effective scope in U.S.-China relations was greatly reduced. In this environment, academic exchanges flourished, to the benefit of both nations.

In the first decades of Engagement, Beijing and Washington encouraged the two-way flow of scholars. In the 1980s, the University Affiliations program of the Reagan administration's United States Information Agency funded Chinese academics whose visits to the United States might spur the creation of joint institutes and laboratories. Chinese scholars who became professors, chairs, deans, and presidents in U.S. universities were rewarded for promoting joint research with Chinese counterparts. Until recently, the U.S. higher educational system's ability to attract Chinese students was seen in Washington as an index of American soft power and a clear win for the home side.

Beginning from a lower economic baseline, China naturally gained more from Engagement than the United States. Nonetheless, America's dividend — the influx of a new generation of Chinese American talent — was immeasurable. The Economist Intelligence Unit and the Committee of 100 teamed up in 2020 to document the impact of Chinese-Americans on American arts and culture, civil rights, public service, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, national security affairs, public health, and science and technology.<sup>3</sup> The Economist report "From Foundations to Frontiers" provides strong validation of U.S. educational exchange policy during the Engagement Era and serves as a warning about what might be lost now that the era is over.

The cause of Engagement's demise is widely debated. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) claim is that the U.S. killed Engagement due to hostility toward a risen China and doomed adherence to the illusion of American primacy. Great power rivalry and America's fear of decline are part of the story, but there is another explanation for American concerns: Engagement became untenable because China changed.

Since 2013, Xi Jinping's radical repoliticization of Chinese institutions has required that China's foreign partners either accept the CCP's benign self-assessments at face value or weigh the implications of engaging with China in light of Beijing's domestic repression and aggression abroad. Under Engagement, the United States helped build China's academic and scientific capacity for the sake of its modernization, but it has no interest in building China's global power. Because the CCP now treats education and technology — and reform and openness more generally — as instruments

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2 The Engagement Era in bilateral relations ran from the Nixon visit in 1972 through the launch of the U.S.-China Trade War in 2018. It was not called *Engagement* at the time; it was referred to simply as *U.S.-China Relations*. While its core theory was that Sino-U.S. co-evolution benefitted both countries, Engagement was beset with suspicion, ideological conflict, and competitive friction from the beginning.

3 The Economist Intelligence Unit. "From Foundations to Frontiers: Chinese American Contributions to the Fabric of America." Vol 68, Issue 9. October 12, 2020 <https://contributingacrossamerica.economist.com/>

of power, other nations must base their engagement with China on judgments about the implications of Chinese power for themselves.<sup>4</sup> Politics is again at the fore.

### **Chinese Higher Education in the Xi Era**

In America, repoliticization of U.S.-China relations has resulted in a wave of prosecutions under the Department of Justice's China Initiative. The effort has snared a few bad actors but also harmed the careers of a growing number of innocent academics. The China Initiative's missteps, including a propensity for racial profiling, are the fault of its American administrators. The core rationale for the program, however, is neither racist nor unreasonable. Like the death of Engagement, the origins of the China Initiative lie in China's changes under Xi Jinping

On Oct. 18, 2017, in a speech to the 19th Party Congress, Xi proclaimed "In Party, political, military, civil, and academic affairs; north, south, east, west, and center, the Party leads everything." The line has become the iconic expression of Xi's insistence that the Party control all aspects of Chinese life. It makes clear that education is an existential issue for the CCP, on a par with, and inseparable from, national security.

The centrality of education to Xi's agenda was evident early in his tenure. On Jan. 19, 2015, after the Seven Proscribed Topics (七不准) of Document 9 made combatting liberalism a Chinese national security priority,<sup>5</sup> the Party issued Document 30, "Opinions Concerning Further Strengthening and Improving Propaganda and Ideology Work in Higher Education Under New Circumstances." Document 30 contained the text of speeches given by Xi in 2014, in which he demanded, "strengthened party control and the cleansing of Western-inspired liberal ideas from universities."<sup>6</sup> For Chinese academics, who had created a surprising amount of space for critical thinking and open discussion during the 25 years since Tiananmen, Document 30 marked the end of an era.

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4 Critics of Engagement argue, with some force, that Reform and Opening were always instrumental to Chinese power and that engagers should have known it. During the Engagement period, however, most of China's foreign interactions were aimed primarily at development, not power—and improving the welfare of one fifth of humankind. That was the basis on which the world engaged with China. It should also be noted that, throughout the Engagement Era, China was liberalizing, albeit slowly and frustratingly, along nearly every axis. The impetus to Reform and Openness was real. The Chinese people became more free and globally integrated under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

5 Chris Buckley, "China takes Aim at Western Ideas". August 19, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?searchResultPosition=3>

6 Suisheng Zhao, "The Ideological Campaign in Xi's China, Asian Survey, Vol. 56, No. 6. University of California Press, November/December 2016. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26364408>,pp.1184

On Jan. 20, 2015, China’s Minister of Education, Yuan Guiren, met with university leaders to give them guidance for propaganda work under the “New Circumstances.” He urged them to “strengthen management of the use of original Western teaching materials” — meaning they should eschew Western texts — and to “by no means allow teaching materials that disseminate Western values in our classrooms.” He told academic administrators to “never allow teachers to grumble and vent in the classroom, passing on their unhealthy emotions to students,” and to make sure that the ideas of Chairman Xi “enter teaching materials, enter classrooms, and enter minds” of students.”<sup>7</sup>

A few scholars pushed back, briefly. Shen Kui (沈岢), of the Peking University Law School, wrote a “Frontiers of Law” blog asking Yuan Guiren three questions: How could Western and Chinese values be distinguished when Marxism came from the West? How could academics tell the difference between “attacking and slandering the Party’s leadership and blackening socialism,” which was forbidden, and “reflecting on the bends in the road in the Party’s past and exposing dark facts,” which was encouraged? Under what laws and constitutional provisions would the new rules be implemented?<sup>8</sup> In the Feb. 10, 2015, edition of *People’s Daily*, Gong Ke (龚克), president of Nankai University, wrote, “Recently, I’ve read people on the internet saying that the ranks of academics must be cleansed, purified, and rectified. I cannot agree with this. This was the mentality of 1957 or 1966.” The dates referred to Mao Zedong’s Anti-Rightist Campaign and Cultural Revolution, during which thousands of Chinese academics were persecuted and killed.

Scholars like Shen and Gong were attacked by the CCP’s theoretical journal *Qiushi* and by Zhu Jidong (朱继东), deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ State Cultural Security and Ideology Construction Research Center, who wrote that, “China’s socialist universities absolutely cannot allow such speech to appear in university classrooms and we cannot allow it to appear in any form anywhere on our campuses.”<sup>9</sup> The state-run *Global Times* wrote: “The transmission of negative political energy on campuses should be despised. Those who speak with positive energy but whose behavior is ugly are in fact ‘extremely black’.”<sup>10</sup> “Positive energy” (正能量) is a Xi-ist slogan connoting enthusiastic support for the Party. Calling faculty “black” associated them with the Five

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7 Chen, Andrea and Pinghui, Zhuang. “China Universities Ordered to Ban Textbooks that Promote Western Values”. January 30, 2015. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1695524/chinese-universities-instructed-ban-textbooks-promote-western-values>

8 Wade, Samuel. “Three Questions on ‘Western Values’ in Education”. February 2, 2015. <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2015/02/shen-kui-three-questions-western-values-education/>

9 Zhu, Jidong. “What’s Wrong with Socialist Universities Not Allowing the Spread of Western Values”. February 9, 2015. [http://myy.cssn.cn/myy/aqyysxt/201504/t20150410\\_1969137.shtml](http://myy.cssn.cn/myy/aqyysxt/201504/t20150410_1969137.shtml)

10 People’s Daily Online. “Editorial: Propaganda and Ideological Work in Colleges and Universities is a tough Nut to Crack”. January 21, 2015. <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2015/0121/c1003-26422857.html>

Black Categories of the Cultural Revolution — people who could be righteously murdered for their beliefs.

By 2016, Xi's control of China's universities was complete. No critiques of his educational policies have been published in China for several years. China's intellectuals, long honored as the conscience of the nation, have been co-opted or cowed into silence. In 2019, Shanghai's Fudan University, one of the top three schools in China, dropped guarantees of "academic independence and freedom of thought" from its charter.<sup>11</sup> China was no longer part of the free and open global system of intellectual exchange.

Xi's insistence that universities serve not only the nation's development, but its comprehensive national power (国家综合实力) as well, did not escape the notice of American security agencies. Americans had already been alarmed by China's rapid military buildup, its buildout and militarization of islands in the South China Sea, and its flouting of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2016 finding that PRC territorial claims in the region had no merit. Against this background, they were not inclined to see the Red educational wave as a harmless development. Washington's suspicion of the role of China's universities and technologists in building China's national power was exacerbated by a series of CCP policies, including the Indigenous Innovation agenda launched in 2006,<sup>12</sup> the Made in China 2025 program announced in 2015, the buttressing of Military-Civil Fusion policies that dated back to the 1990s, and a series of National Intelligence Laws<sup>13</sup> that required Chinese entities, including universities, to give the Chinese state any information it requested.

The strategic logic of these programs was explained to the satisfaction of many American lawmakers, especially on the Republican side of the aisle, by Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. Published in 2015,

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11 Anna Fifield, "In Xi Jinping's China, A Top University Can No Longer Promise Freedom of Thought." December 18, 2019. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/in-xi-jinpings-china-a-top-university-can-no-longer-promise-freedom-of-thought/2019/12/18/59f4d21a-215d-11ea-b034-de7dc2b5199b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-xi-jinpings-china-a-top-university-can-no-longer-promise-freedom-of-thought/2019/12/18/59f4d21a-215d-11ea-b034-de7dc2b5199b_story.html)

12 Heyue Peng, "China's Indigenous Innovation Policy and its Effect on Foreign Intellectual Property Rights Holders". September 9, 2010. <https://www.chinalawinsight.com/2010/09/articles/intellectual-property/chinas-indigenous-innovation-policy-and-its-effect-on-foreign-intellectual-property-rights-holders/>

13 Murray S Tanner, "Beijing's New National Intelligence Law: From Defense to Offense". July 20, 2017. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/beijings-new-national-intelligence-law-defense-offense>

the book claimed that China had a secret plan to eclipse the United States and dominate a new global order.<sup>14</sup> Everything Xi did advanced that agenda.<sup>15</sup>

Beijing's rhetoric added fuel to the fire simmering in Washington, D.C. In 2014, during the Seventh Conference on Friendship with Overseas Chinese Associations, Xi Jinping said, "There are tens of millions of overseas Chinese in the world, and everyone is a member of the Chinese family. For a long time, generation after generation of overseas Chinese have upheld the great traditions of the Chinese nation and have not forgotten the motherland, their ancestral homeland, or the blood of the Chinese nation flowing in their bodies."<sup>16</sup> He has called on ethnic Chinese to contribute to the rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation, regardless of their countries of citizenship, many times since. In the spring of 2017, Premier Li Keqiang said, "It is the duty of all people of Chinese descent to help achieve the investment, technological development, and trade goals of the People's Republic of China."<sup>17</sup>

After Li's speech, the U.S. Congress and national security agencies paid greater attention to Chinese talent re-recruitment efforts such as the Thousand Talents Program.<sup>18</sup> These programs, which had been around for a decade and were not illegal, offered monetary and reputational incentives to American academics, including Chinese Americans, who agreed to lend their expertise to Chinese universities either fulltime or during summer and winter breaks.

The stage was set. Washington's knowledge of Chinese intelligence methods, the hyper-politicization of education under Xi Jinping, and Chinese statements that put a target on the backs of Chinese academics worldwide were about to cause a tempest on U.S. campuses.

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14 The impact of Michael Pillsbury's book would be hard to overstate, whatever its virtues or failings may be. When I visited the offices of a dozen Republican lawmakers in 2015, I was asked in six what I made of the argument in chapter X, paragraph Y of *The Hundred Year Marathon*, as if it were a Biblical work. Pillsbury later became an informal advisor to the Trump Administration.

15 Rush Doshi's *The Long Game* (July 2021) and Elizabeth Economy's *The World According to China* (December 2021) worked with different premises and methodologies, but reached many of the same conclusions as *The Hundred Year Marathon*.

16 The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. "The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation is a Dream Shared by all Chinese", June 6, 2014. <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/c23934/202006/0a154627b1474b0eab0c354af4d2e56e.shtml>

17 Jamil Anderlini, "The Dark Side of China's National Renewal". June 25, 2017, [https://www.realclearworld.com/2017/06/25/the\\_dark\\_side\\_of\\_chinarsquos\\_national\\_renewal\\_186020.html](https://www.realclearworld.com/2017/06/25/the_dark_side_of_chinarsquos_national_renewal_186020.html)

18 David Zweig & Siqin Kang, "America Challenges China's National Talent Programs", CSIS: Chinese Business & Economics. No. 4, May 2020. <https://www.drdauidzweig.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Zweig-Kang-TTP.pdf>

## America Panics

The September 2017 publication of Anne Marie Brady’s “Magic Weapons”<sup>19</sup> raised alarm bells in the U.S. about the means by which Beijing attempted to influence public opinion and overseas Chinese communities. Arriving five years after the ascent of Xi Jinping and one year after the victory of Donald Trump, who campaigned on the claim that China had “raped” the United States, Brady’s warnings about Chinese infiltration fell on ready ears. Had she written “Magic Weapons” 10 years earlier, when her analysis of China’s United Front would have been equally apt, she would have been ignored as a Cassandra. In 2017, she was hailed as Paul Revere.

Brady’s message was amplified by the December 2017 publication of the National Endowment for Democracy’s “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence,” which convinced many readers that Chinese and Russian influence operations were more insidious than traditional soft power campaigns.<sup>20</sup> Later the same month, Donald Trump’s 2017 national security strategy named China and Russia as revisionist powers and China as the United States’ greatest strategic challenge — a threat more concerning than terrorism.<sup>21</sup>

The implications for American universities and the hundreds of thousands of Chinese students, faculty, researchers, and visiting scholars who toiled in them were signaled on February 13, 2018, in FBI director Christopher Wray’s testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee. When Senator Marco Rubio asked him to comment on “the counterintelligence risk posed to U.S. national security from Chinese students, particularly those in advanced programs in the sciences and mathematics,” Wray answered:

*“... the use of nontraditional collectors, especially in the academic setting, whether it’s professors, scientists, students, we see in almost every field office that the FBI has around the country ... And I think the level of naïveté on the part of the*

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19 Anne-Marie Brady, “Magic Weapons: China’s Political Influence Activities Under Xi Jinping”, Wilson Center. September 18, 2017. [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/article/magic\\_weapons.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/article/magic_weapons.pdf). Professor Brady, a former Wilson Fellow, asked me to consider publishing Magic Weapons on the Wilson Center site and, after reading it, I put it on the Kissinger Institute’s website the same day. It is the most influential scholarly work published by the Kissinger Institute in my eight-plus years at Wilson. Professor Brady’s writings, and those of John Garnault in Australia, did much to increase American vigilance over CCP influence in U.S. communities and institutions. See Garnault’s Foreign Affairs essay, *How China Interferes in Australia and How Democracies Can Push Back*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-09/how-china-interferes-australia>

20 National Endowment for Democracy. “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence”. December 5, 2017. <https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-rising-authoritarian-influence-forum-report/>

21 The White House. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. December 2017. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

*academic sector about this creates its own issues. They [the Chinese government] are exploiting the very open research and development environment that we have, which we all revere, but they're taking advantage of it. So, one of the things we're trying to do is view the China threat as not just a whole-of-government threat but a whole-of-society threat on their end, and I think it's going to take a whole-of-society response by us. So, it's not just the intelligence community, but it's raising awareness within our academic sector, within our private sector, as part of the defense."*

Wray's "whole-of-society" phrase was not unjustified. He was referencing Xi's 2017 declaration that the CCP led everything in China, north, south, east, west, and center. He knew about Xi's near-absolute control of Chinese media, think tanks, cultural and entertainment industries, corporations, and universities, and he knew about the national security laws which required all Chinese citizens to work with China's security services. His testimony was probably also influenced by Xi's exhortations to ethnic Chinese outside the PRC to contribute to the rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation as a patriotic duty.

Wray's phrase was also dangerous, as he was deploying the CCP mindset within a free and diverse society. Xi, an efficient totalitarian, can command and orchestrate a whole-of-society approach to the United States, but U.S. leaders cannot compel Americans to participate in a whole-of-society response to China, nor can they control all of the actions and attitudes of Americans who heed their call. Against the background of the 2017 National Security Strategy, which came close to labeling China as an enemy, Wray seemed to be calling on Americans to view all Chinese in the U.S., including Chinese Americans, with suspicion, especially if they were engaged in scientific research.

Academia's concern about the impact of Wray's warnings was heightened by a letter which National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins sent to 10,000 academic recipients on August 23, 2018.<sup>22</sup> Collins wrote:

*"NIH is aware that some foreign entities have mounted systematic programs to influence NIH researchers and peer reviewers and to take advantage of the long tradition of trust, fairness, and excellence of NIH-supported research activities.... Three areas of concern have emerged: 1. Diversion of intellectual property in grant applications or produced by NIH-supported biomedical research to other entities, including other countries; 2. Sharing of confidential information on grant*

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22 Francis S. Collins, "Statement on Protecting the Integrity of U.S. Biomedical Research", August 23, 2018. <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/statement-protecting-integrity-us-biomedical-research>

*applications by NIH peer reviewers with others, including foreign entities, or otherwise attempting to influence funding decisions; 3. Failure by some researchers working at NIH-funded institutions in the U.S. to disclose substantial resources from other organizations, including foreign governments, which threatens to distort decisions about the appropriate use of NIH funds.”*

Collins’s accusation, in a nutshell, was that significant numbers of researchers on U.S. campuses, through stealth or sloppiness, were transmitting commercially valuable or security-relevant knowledge to other nations. One sign that they did so was the filing of incorrect or incomplete grant applications. Collins did not say which countries had mounted influence operations, but there was little doubt that he was focused on China. Two weeks before he sent his letter, a widely discussed Politico story had reported that, at an August 7 dinner, President Trump had said of China, “Almost every student that comes over to this country is a spy.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The China Initiative**

If there were any remaining doubt about the focus of U.S. government concern, it disappeared in November of 2018 when Jeff Sessions’ Department of Justice launched the China Initiative. The DOJ explained that its first-ever program focused on a single, named foreign nation was necessary because “about 80 percent of all economic espionage prosecutions brought by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) allege conduct that would benefit the Chinese state, and there is at least some nexus to China in around 60 percent of all trade secret theft cases.”<sup>24</sup>

There were questions about the initiative from the outset. Why name a special initiative as opposed to simply prosecuting spies and intellectual property thieves under existing statutes? Was it in order to frighten and deter Chinese and Chinese American researchers? American universities were confused by the vague definition and mandate of the new program but, by late 2018, the China Initiative was underway, objections notwithstanding.

American universities did not contest DOJ claims about Beijing’s goals and methods or the vulnerability of U.S. campuses. They worried, however, that (1) the espionage problem was overstated, as most university research was in basic science and all results were published, meaning campuses had few secrets to steal; and (2) policies that reduced campus vulnerabilities might also reduce the ability of American schools to attract the world’s top talent. The American system of

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23 Annie Karni, “Trump Rants Behind Closed Doors with CEOs”. August 8, 2018.  
<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/08/08/trump-executive-dinner-bedminster-china-766609>

24 The United States Department of Justice Archives. “Information About the Department of Justice’s China Initiative and a Compilation of China-Related Prosecutions Since 2018”. November 19, 2021.  
<https://www.justice.gov/nsd/information-about-department-justice-s-china-initiative-and-compilation-china-related>

higher education, they argued, was the finest in the world precisely because of the openness and internationalization that the DOJ viewed as threats. If the United States surrendered its openness in the name of security, American innovation and the global knowledge system would suffer. If Washington treated international students, especially Chinese students, as criminal suspects, it would be telling members of the world's biggest talent pool that they were a despised class in the United States.

To date, the China Initiative has launched roughly 77 investigations against 148 suspects. Ninety percent of the people it has charged are of Chinese heritage.<sup>25</sup> The precise number of cases is impossible to gauge because (1) the China Initiative has revised its case list to omit failed prosecutions; and (2) the website seems to give the China Initiative credit for any DOJ activity that captures Chinese criminals. Even so, the initiative's published record suggests that the intelligence threat on American campuses has been overstated. According to Eileen Guo, Jess Aloe, and Karen Hao of the MIT Technology Review, who have built a database of cases brought under the Initiative,<sup>26</sup> only 19 of the 77 cases allege violations of the Economic Espionage Act (EEA), only 3% percent of EEA cases allege theft of trade secrets from academic institutions, and no China Initiative indictments involve university faculty committing espionage. In other words, according to DOJ data, roughly two China Initiative intellectual property theft cases and zero of its espionage cases involve activity on American campuses. What, then, are China Initiative cases against academics about?

Most cases concern crimes related to research integrity, such as program fraud, or failure to disclose conflicts of interest on applications for federal funding. As Vivian Qiang of Asian Americans Advancing Justice put it, "Federal prosecutors are charging Asian Americans and Asian immigrants with federal crimes based on administrative errors or minor offenses... such as making an error on a conflict of interest form that can lead to an end in careers and [leave] lives in shambles."<sup>27</sup> Program fraud — lying about or omitting information on connections to China — may mask more serious crimes, but in itself it hardly constitutes a threat to American national security. Federal grant forms are complicated, and individual university reporting requirements are often vague and honored in the breach. So why launch the China Initiative with arrests? Why not begin by offering training sessions for grant applicants rather than perp-walking them out of their houses?

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25 Eileen Guo, Jess Aloe & Karen Hao, "We Built a Database to Understand the China Initiative. Then the Government Changed its Records", December 2, 2021.  
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/12/02/1039397/china-initiative-database-doj/>

26 Ibid.

27 Owen Churchill, "Senators Warn US Justice Department Not to Give Amnesty to Academics who didn't Disclose Foreign Funding", May 7, 2021.  
<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3132554/senators-warn-us-justice-department-not-give-amnesty-academics>

National attention to the China Initiative increased with the case of Anming Hu, professor of nanotechnology at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. His is the only research integrity case the China Initiative has brought to trial to date. Hu was charged with six counts of wire fraud and false statements for failing to disclose lecture fees he had earned in China on his application for NASA funding. His first trial ended in a hung jury, after which Representative Ted Lieu of California and 90 other members of Congress sent a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland requesting a DOJ investigation into the China Initiative's alleged racial profiling. Lieu also accused the DOJ of racism on Twitter, writing: "You should stop discriminating against Asians ... If Hu's last name was Smith, you would not have brought this case."<sup>28</sup> A mistrial was declared at Hu's second trial, and he was acquitted of all charges. The sense that the DOJ was pursuing bad cases — or pursuing cases badly — was reinforced on January 19, 2022, when one of the most high-profile scientists charged under the China Initiative, MIT professor of mechanical engineering Gang Chen, had all charges against him dismissed due to lack of evidence.

Two recent studies sponsored by the Committee of 100 — which presents its findings in detail in this report — accused the DOJ of bias against Asians. Andrew Chongseh Kim's "Racial Disparities in Economic Espionage Act Prosecutions" examined 190 EEA prosecutions carried out by the DOJ between 1996 and 2020 and found that it was primarily a program for the indictment of Asian Americans.<sup>29</sup> Jenny J. Lee's "Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent and Consequences for the U.S. Scientific Community" demonstrated that, whatever the goals and record of the China Initiative might be, the perception that it targeted ethnic Chinese was driving top talent out of the U.S.<sup>30</sup>

American universities have also pushed back against the China Initiative or called for its abolition. In their January 2021 defense of Gang Chen, 170 members of the MIT faculty wrote:

"The criminal complaint against Professor Chen has nothing to do with protecting intellectual property. As published, it is deeply flawed and misleading in its assertions. At best, it represents a

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28 Shawna Chen, "Chinese Researcher Accused of Spying Under China Initiative Acquitted of Charges", September 9, 2021. <https://www.axios.com/china-initiative-doj-anming-hu-acquitted-4b529c19-ca33-45b0-832f-68d1c3d640d7.html>

29 Andrew C. Kim & Committee of 100, "Racial Disparities in Economic Espionage Act Prosecutions: A Window into the New Red Scare", September 21, 2021. <https://www.committee100.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Whitepaper-Final-9.21-UPDATE-compressed.pdf>

30 Committee of 100, Jenny J., Lee & Xiaojie Li, "Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent and Consequences for the U.S. Scientific Community", October 29, 2021. <https://www.committee100.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/C100-Lee-Li-White-Paper-FINAL-FINAL-10.28.pdf>

deep misunderstanding of how research is conducted or funded at a place like MIT. The official complaint is filled with allegations and innuendo based on what are, in fact, some of the most routine and even innocuous elements of our professional lives.”<sup>31</sup>

In September 2021, 177 members of the Stanford faculty asked the DOJ to terminate the China Initiative because: First, “it disproportionately targets researchers of Chinese origin... Second, in most of the China Initiative cases involving academics, the alleged crime has nothing to do with scientific espionage or intellectual property theft... Third, the China Initiative is harming the U.S. science and technology enterprise and the future of the U.S. STEM workforce.”<sup>32</sup>

### **A More Rational Response**

The three years since the launch of the China Initiative have seen such a rapid decline in U.S.-China relations that the 2017–2019 wave of alarm over Chinese influence operations may now seem like a minor issue. The Trade War; the arrest of Huawei’s chief financial officer in Vancouver and China’s retaliatory hostage-taking; the global pandemic; the ongoing violence against Asian and Chinese Americans; China’s Wolf Warrior diplomacy; imposition of a new security law in Hong Kong; treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang and threatening behavior toward Taiwan; the chaos of the 2020 American presidential election and the January 6, 2021, Insurrection — all of these issues and events seem more urgent than the alleged activity the China Initiative was intended to counter. Yet the China Initiative has ground on through it all.

American universities and their national organizations — the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), and the American Council of Education (ACE) — have worked tirelessly over the past three years to respond to DOJ concerns and minimize harm to American scholarship. These efforts bore fruit in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), passed in June 2019. NDAA Section 1746, “Securing American Science and Technology,” charged the director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, working in tandem with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, to “coordinate activities to protect federally funded research and development from foreign interference, cyberattacks, theft, or espionage and to develop common definitions and best practices for federal science agencies and grantees, while accounting for the importance of the open exchange

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31 MIT Faculty Newsletter. “Faculty Letter to President Reif in Support of Professor Gang Chen”. January 21, 2021. <https://fnl.mit.edu/january-february-2021/faculty-letter-to-president-reif-in-support-of-professor-gang-chen/>

32 Winds of Freedom. <https://sites.google.com/view/winds-of-freedom>

of ideas and international talent required for scientific progress and American leadership in science and technology.”<sup>33</sup>

The 2020 NDAA marked the end of the panic over security concerns and the beginning of a period in which academics and technologists worked with government to frame and contain threats from China (and other countries). The report on “Fundamental Research Security” that JASON, an independent scientific advisory group, submitted to the National Science Foundation in December 2019,<sup>34</sup> was a key contribution to the effort. JASON maintained that it was possible to keep basic research open and collaborative while also safeguarding its integrity. “Meeting the China Challenge: A New American Strategy for Technology Competition,”<sup>35</sup> issued by the University of California San Diego and the Asia Society in November 2020 proposed that while threats to American security and research integrity were real, a strategy of targeted risk mitigation rather than total risk elimination would best serve the interests of the United States and global science. The AAU, APLU, and ACE developed guidelines for American universities to ensure that they upheld openness and supported faculty while strengthening reporting on conflicts of interest and foreign commitments.

The Trump and Biden administrations have both followed through on the letter and spirit of Section 1764. In January 2021, as the Trump team was on its way out the door, White House Science Adviser Kelvin Droegemeier and the National Science and Technology Council issued “Recommended Practices for Strengthening the Security and Integrity of America’s Science and Technology Research Enterprise” — a yawn-inducing title but an expert, earnest effort to create a university research culture that was fully open but more secure.<sup>36</sup> After the caustic rhetoric of the previous year — in which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that “Communists almost always

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33 United States Congress, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 – S.1790”, <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s1790/BILLS-116s1790enr.pdf>

34 The MITRE Corporation, “Fundamental Research Security”, December 2019. [https://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/jasonsecurity/JSR-19-2IFundamentalResearchSecurity\\_12062019FINAL.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/jasonsecurity/JSR-19-2IFundamentalResearchSecurity_12062019FINAL.pdf)

35 Working Group on Science and Technology in U.S.-China Relations, “Meeting the China Challenge: A New American Strategy for Technology Competition”, November 16, 2020. [https://china.ucsd.edu/\\_files/meeting-the-china-challenge\\_2020\\_report.pdf](https://china.ucsd.edu/_files/meeting-the-china-challenge_2020_report.pdf)

36 National Science and Technology Council, “Recommended Practices for Strengthening the Security and Integrity of America’s Science and Technology Research Enterprise”, January 2021. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NSTC-Research-Security-Best-Practices-Jan2021.pdf>

lie”<sup>37</sup> and Senator Marsha Blackburn tweeted that “China has a 5,000 year history of cheating and stealing”<sup>38</sup> — “Recommended Practices” thoughtful tone was a welcome surprise.

On January 14, 2021, less than one week before Joseph Biden was inaugurated, President Trump issued National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM)-33 on national security policies for research and development supported by the U.S. government.<sup>39</sup> NSPM-33 called for development of detailed procedures to safeguard research funded by Washington. This task was urgent because: “Unfortunately, some foreign governments, including the People’s Republic of China, have not demonstrated a reciprocal dedication to open scientific exchange and seek to exploit open United States and international research environments to circumvent the costs and risks of conducting research, thereby increasing their economic and military competitiveness at the expense of the United States, its allies, and its partners.”

Droegemeier’s work was taken up by President Biden’s Office of Science and Technology Policy under Eric Lander. In August 2021, Lander issued an interim NSPM-33 briefing<sup>40</sup> that promised that the final implementation guidance would address three issues: ensuring that federally funded researchers provided full disclosure on potential conflicts of interest; ensuring that federal agencies had clear policies regarding consequences for violations of disclosure requirements; and ensuring that research program security was sufficient. Research integrity could be pursued, Lander wrote, in ways that protected America’s openness and weren’t conducive to xenophobia or prejudice.

The National Science and Technology Council issued final guidance implementing NPSM-33 on January 4, 2022.<sup>41</sup> It notes that “Some foreign governments, including those of the People’s

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37 Ebony Bowden, “Pompeo Gives Speech on ‘Totalitarian’ China as Tensions Continue”, July 24, 2020. <https://nypost.com/2020/07/24/mike-pompeo-gives-scathing-speech-on-totalitarian-china/>

38 Mark Magnier, “Chinese-Americans Protest US Senator Marsha Blackburn’s Tweet Over China’s ‘Cheating and Stealing’”, December 10, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3113280/chinese-americans-protest-us-senator-marsha-blackburns-tweets-over>

39 The White House, “Presidential Memorandum on United States Government – Supported Research and Development National Security Policy”, January 14, 2021. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-united-states-government-supported-research-development-national-security-policy/>

40 Eric Lander, “Clear Rules for Research Security and Researcher Responsibility”, August 10, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2021/08/10/clear-rules-for-research-security-and-researcher-responsibility/>

41 Subcommittee on Research Security and Joint Committee on the Research Environment, “Guidance for Implementing National Security Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33) on National Security Strategy for United States Government-Supported Research and Development”, January 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/010422-NSPM-33-Implementation-Guidance.pdf>

Republic of China, Russia, and Iran, are working vigorously ... to acquire, through both licit and illicit means, U.S. research and technology. There have been efforts to induce American scientists to secretly conduct research programs on behalf of foreign governments or to inappropriately disclose nonpublic results from research funded by U.S. government sources. This is unacceptable.”

That is all the document has to say about China. The rest of its 34 pages consist of clear guidance to universities on how to protect research and researchers by assuring that reporting requirements are closely followed. The implementing guidance treats universities as partners in defending the American innovation system, not as China’s unwitting dupes.

It took a while, but U.S. policy is now on the right path. In retrospect, the integrity of American research would have been better served if, rather than opening with a slew of prosecutions, the China Initiative had begun by consulting with universities, leaders like Congressman Lieu, and scientist-officials like Kelvin Droegemeier to understand the scope of the threat and the nature of Sino-U.S. collaboration. Such preparatory work might have suggested an important, but more limited role for the DOJ on American campuses: Criminals should be investigated by the Justice Department, but, for the sloppy, a reminder and warning should suffice. Most deans and department chairs are up to the task.

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

It seems likely that 2022 will see either the cancellation of the China Initiative or its redesign under National Science and Technology Council guidelines. Either outcome will be cause for celebration. But keep the party brief: There is still rough weather ahead.

Xi Jinping’s China continues to be repressive at home and aggressive abroad in ways that offend American values and threaten American interests. At the 20th Party Congress in late 2022, Xi will probably be anointed as leader for life. His cult of personality will grow. Chinese citizens’ rights of free expression and assembly, such as they are, will be further curtailed. China has taken great pride in its ability to limit the spread of COVID within its borders. The lesson China draws from its success is that authoritarianism, isolation, and surveillance work. We should expect Beijing to double down on all three fronts. As Xi takes China from authoritarianism to techno-totalitarianism, he will continue to call on ethnic Chinese worldwide to support his agenda and his diplomats will continue to attack countries and individuals that question his wisdom.

Another factor Chinese Americans will have to contend with, no matter how reasonable our new research integrity policies turn out to be, is the ongoing deterioration of U.S.-China relations. We are one major crisis away from a new Cold War. It seems likely that over the next decade, and possibly for much longer, the two great powers will become more alienated from each other. Mutual hostility is becoming entrenched as an organizing principle in both countries.

What does this portend for Chinese Americans, on campus and off? While COVID has been the primary spur to anti-Asian racism in the U.S. since the pandemic began, racism is unlikely to fade with the virus because deteriorating bilateral relations will continue to reinforce negative narratives about China and its role in the world. Not all of those narratives will be inaccurate. Even cautious, informed descriptions of U.S.-China relations may, therefore, add to pressures on Chinese American communities. Domestic politics in both countries will also exacerbate tensions. The CCP will continue to erode liberal norms and offend liberal sensibilities internationally. On the American side, most of the likely 2024 Republican presidential candidates delight in insulting China for insult's sake, and their Democratic opponents will not want to appear weak and mealy-mouthed in comparison.

These dynamics ensure that American security agencies will remain skeptical of academic collaboration with China even if the China Initiative ends. There will be no return to Engagement Era co-evolution. In the new dispensation, simply following the rules on conflict-of-interest disclosure won't get academia off the hook. University leaders and researchers must assume that any cooperation with China which might contribute to China's corporate or national power will be used to those ends. They should also assume that any of their China collaborations, however benign they may seem, will draw the attention of U.S. politicians, journalists, and investigators.

There is a broader implication of contentious U.S.-China relations, which, as a non-Chinese, I hesitate to raise: The sudden shift from bilateral engagement to adversity is especially perilous for Chinese who immigrated to the United States after normalization in 1979. I have many friends who came from China to the U.S. to pursue Ph.D.s and later attained green cards and American passports. They love America. But most of them also love China. For the past 45 years, they have been free to move back and forth between both countries, benefiting both, benefiting from both, and behaving in similar ways in both jurisdictions without consequence.

But the ground has shifted under their feet. My sense right along has been that most Chinese American scholars prosecuted under the China Initiative had no intention of betraying the United States; they were just behaving within American institutions as they were accustomed to behaving in Chinese institutions. T-s and I-s sometimes went uncrossed and undotted. For decades, this was not a problem. A certain flexibility about rules and definitions enabled binational scholars to found study abroad programs, joint research projects, and new institutes that benefitted their American employers and their Chinese *almae matres*. They were rewarded for their academic entrepreneurship by both sides.

Those days are gone. Conditions have changed and anyone who doesn't adjust their professional habits will be exposed like the last person standing in a game of musical chairs — or like an accused before a jury. The new dispensation will have different implications for different people, but it will bring a sea change to all Americans, Chinese and otherwise, who care about both countries and are

uncomfortable casting their lot with one against the other. Binational scholars who have not heretofore given much thought to these matters should think hard about them now.

Even as security pressures on American higher education increase, there is much the academy can do to help prevent the collapse of U.S.-China relations. American colleges and universities should invest in training the next generation of American sinologists, expand Chinese language studies, host public events that frankly address issues in bilateral relations, welcome Chinese students to campus and encourage them to interact with American and third-country colleagues, and support faculty research on China.

Chinese American academics have an essential role in this work. American universities must continue to fight hard if anyone tries to prevent them from playing it.

# SPECIAL TOPICS IN U.S.-CHINA

## EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

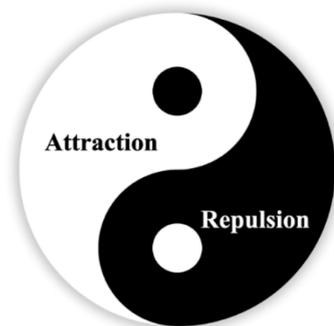
### American Educational Exchange to China: Benefits, Challenges, and Risks

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At a time in which the U.S.-China<sup>1</sup> relationship is becoming increasingly strained, educational exchanges to China are not only beneficial to the individuals involved but also vitally important to maintaining a healthy and peaceful relationship between our two countries. To understand why this is so, it helps to look at the historical context.

#### Historical Background

Ever since the first contacts between the newly established American republic and the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century, the relationship between the United States of America and China has been characterized by periods of attraction alternating with periods of repulsion. John Pomfret in his history of the relationship between the



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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, China refers to the People's Republic of China, which will be abbreviated PRC when necessary to distinguish between mainland China and other places where Chinese is spoken.

United States and China described this “as a never-ending Buddhist cycle of reincarnation. Both sides experience rapturous enchantment begetting hope, followed by disappointment, repulsion, and disgust, only to return to fascination once again.”<sup>2</sup> Seen through the Chinese concept of *yin* and *yang*, this cycle can be described as a dialectical relationship between the *yang* of attraction and the *yin* of repulsion. During times of attraction the seeds of repulsion (black circle) are always present, and during times of repulsion the seeds of attraction (white circle) are always present. If the seeds grow large enough, they eventually turn attraction and repulsion respectively into their opposites.

The three decades between 1950 and 1980 were a time of repulsion between the U.S. and China. During this time, the seeds of attraction were slow to germinate. Then, beginning with ping-pong diplomacy and Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to China in 1971 and President Nixon’s 1972 visit to China, the seeds began to grow. One of these seeds was the opening of China to short- and long-term visits by groups of Americans — including private individuals, scholars, and students — sponsored by such organizations as the U.S.-China People’s Friendship Association, the Committee on Scholarly Exchanges with the People’s Republic of China, and the National Committee on United States-China Relations.<sup>3</sup> These visits allowed Americans to experience first-hand what was going on in China and interact with at least a few Chinese. After returning home they shared their mostly positive experiences with other Americans in an ever-widening circle of people who supported improving the relationship between the U.S. and China.

The opportunities for Americans and Chinese to interact expanded after 1980 when China opened up to the world under Deng Xiaoping’s Reform and Opening Up program and Jiang Zemin’s Going Out strategy. These new policies made it possible for millions of Chinese and Americans to travel to each other’s country and to get to know one another on a personal level. The number of Chinese visitors arriving annually in the U.S. grew to 3.17 million in 2017<sup>4</sup>, and the number of Americans visiting China grew to 2.5 million in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Student exchanges also increased, so that by

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2 John Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to the Present*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2016), 6.

3 Jan Carol Berris, “The Evolution of Sino–American Exchanges: A View from the National Committee,” in *Educational Exchanges: Essays on the Sino-American Experience, Research Papers and Policy Studies 21*, ed. Joyce K. Kallgren and Denis Fred Simon (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1987), 80-95.

4 “Most important countries of origin of foreign tourists in China in 2018,” Statista, accessed on December 10, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234149/tourists-in-china-by-country-of-origin/>.

5 “Number of tourist arrivals in the United States from China from 2005 to 2020,” Statista, accessed on December 10, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/214813/number-of-visitors-to-the-us-from-china/>.

2018 there were 369,548 Chinese college and university students studying in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> and 20,996 American students studying in China<sup>7</sup>. Many American colleges and universities started programs in China to encourage their own students to study there. In addition, more than 110 American universities and organizations formed partnerships with Chinese universities to open Confucius Institutes in the U.S., which not only taught Mandarin in their local communities but organized study-travel trips to China for high school students, college students, faculty members, and community members. Confucius Institutes also facilitated personal interactions between Americans and Chinese by sponsoring hundreds of teachers from China to come to the U.S. every year. During its 16 years of operation, the University of Oklahoma (OU) Confucius Institute alone helped thousands of Oklahoma K–12 students study Mandarin and made it possible for hundreds of students and ordinary citizens to travel to China.

The historically unprecedented level of people-to-people interaction between Americans and Chinese over the past 40 years fostered growing levels of mutual familiarity and created conditions that led to personal friendships, adoptions, marriages, cooperation agreements, and other personal and professional ties between Chinese and Americans. As increasing numbers of Americans learned more about China and its people, American public opinion toward China became more favorable, reaching 51% favorable in 2011 versus 36% unfavorable.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, some Americans, motivated by legitimate concerns about the goals and actions of the Chinese government or by their own personal political agendas, began to sow the seeds of repulsion. An all-out assault on American Confucius Institutes by elected representatives, a small number of academics, and the Falun Gong organization in the U.S. eventually forced most American universities to close their Confucius Institutes to avoid losing federal funding. As a result, many of the Chinese language programs supported by Confucius Institutes have closed and their exchange programs, which helped thousands of Americans visit and study in China, have ended. Moreover, actions by the Trump administration greatly decreased the opportunities for Americans to engage with Chinese. These actions included the trade war, sanctions against American and Chinese companies for activities considered to be hostile to U.S. interests, disinviting China from participating

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6 “Number of college and university students from China in the United States from academic year 2010/11 to 2020/21,” Statista, accessed on December 10, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/372900/number-of-chinese-students-that-study-in-the-us/>.

7 “Statistical report on international students in China for 2018,” Ministry of Education, People’s Republic of China, April 17, 2019, [http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201904/t20190418\\_378692.html](http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201904/t20190418_378692.html).

8 “Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries,” Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>.

in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise in 2018<sup>9</sup>, and canceling the Peace Corps<sup>10</sup> and Fulbright Program<sup>11</sup> in China in 2020. Actions by the Chinese government have also made it more difficult to establish and manage collaborations between Americans and Chinese. These include the Law on the Management of Overseas NGOs' Activities in Mainland China of 2017<sup>12</sup> and the Data Security Law of the People's Republic of China of 2021<sup>13</sup>. Now the COVID<sup>14</sup> pandemic has put an end to all American exchanges to China. Today there are almost no American students studying in China, and the Chinese border is closed to most foreigners. In contrast, because of more relaxed COVID policies, in 2020 there were still more than 382,561 Chinese college and K–12 students studying in the U.S.<sup>15</sup>

Today, the conjunction of growing political tension between the U.S. and China and the COVID pandemic have reduced Americans' opportunities to interact with Chinese to the lowest levels they have been since the 1950s and 1960s, when American repulsion toward China was previously greatest, with up to 91% having unfavorable attitudes toward China.<sup>16</sup> Currently, American public opinion about China is once again trending downward, with 73% of Americans polled in 2020 expressing unfavorable views about China versus 22% expressing favorable views.<sup>17</sup> This is the situation we find ourselves in at the end of 2021 as we contemplate China's eventually reopening its borders to international visitors.

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9 Megan Eckstein, "China Disinvited from Participating in 2018 RIMPAC Exercise," USNI News, May 23, 2018, <https://news.usni.org/2018/05/23/china-disinvited-participating-2018-rimpac-exercise>.

10 Rebecca Beitsch, "Peace Corps' sudden decision to leave China stirs blowback," The Hill, February 12, 2020, <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/482672-peace-corps-sudden-decision-to-leave-china-stirs-blowback>.

11 Eleanor Albert, "The Cost of Ending Fulbright in China," The Diplomat, July 22, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-cost-of-ending-fulbright-in-china/>.

12 Nectar Gan, "Why foreign NGOs are struggling with new Chinese law," South China Morning Post, June 13, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2097923/why-foreign-ngos-are-struggling-new-chinese-law>.

13 "A Close Reading of China's Data Security Law, in Effect Sept. 1, 2021," China Briefing, July 14, 2021, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/a-close-reading-of-chinas-data-security-law-in-effect-sept-1-2021/>.

14 COVID in this essay refers both to the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the COVID-19 coronavirus disease.

15 "International student enrolment in the US fell by nearly 18% in 2020," ICEF Monitor, March 24, 2021, <https://monitor.icef.com/2021/03/international-student-enrolment-in-the-us-fell-by-nearly-18-in-2020/>.

16 Matthew S. Hirshberg, "Consistency and Change in American Perceptions of China," *Political Behavior* 15, no.3 (1993): 247-263, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/586631>.

17 Laura Silver et al., "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>.

## **Benefits of Educational Exchange with China**

As an educator who has spent the past four decades participating in, organizing, facilitating, and leading international exchanges, I have seen firsthand how studying abroad changes people's lives in positive ways. Just living in another country and having to negotiate daily life in a foreign language and culture helps people learn about themselves as a person, develop self-confidence, and acquire practical skills. Americans who have traveled abroad through programs sponsored by OU also comment on how living in another country gave them new perspectives from which to see and appreciate their own country.

The U.S. also benefits when its citizens study abroad. As noted by Mark Farmer of NAFSA, "Students who have studied abroad have greater intercultural understanding, better grasp the complexity of global issues, and are better equipped to work with people from other countries."<sup>18</sup> When these students later pursue careers in the government, military, private sector, and education they bring competencies that enhance the international intelligence of their organizations and help them to be successful in an interconnected world.

In addition to the many general benefits of studying abroad, the principal benefit from Americans' spending time in China is that it can help to slow and even reverse the growth of the seeds of repulsion that today threaten to push both countries into deeper conflict. As China has emerged as a leading world economy and major competitor to the U.S., it is critical to the future well-being of both countries and the world at large for Americans and Chinese to learn to understand one another, because policies and actions based on ignorance are unlikely to be successful and could potentially lead to disaster. However, because Chinese and Americans approach many things from almost diametrically opposite perspectives, achieving mutual understanding is not easy. I have come to this conclusion on the basis of years of experience teaching Chinese about Americans and Americans about Chinese, from which I have learned firsthand how difficult it is for people from both cultures to see things from the other's perspective. Most Americans are atomized individualists who place high value on the rights of the individual, whereas most Chinese are embedded in collective networks of social relationships and place high value on fulfilling their obligations to others. In addition, Americans tend to be reductionist thinkers who see things in terms of binary choices, whereas Chinese tend to be holistic thinkers who see things in terms of an ever-changing dialectical balance between opposites. The practical consequence of these differences in perspective is that Americans and Chinese simply do not understand each other. This ignorance provides fertile ground for those who seek to grow the seeds of repulsion between Americans and Chinese and to objectify

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18 Mark Farmer, "Why Study Abroad Matters....," NAFSA Blog, February 23, 2017, <https://www.nafsa.org/blog/why-study-abroad-matters>.

the other as an enemy. Their success is demonstrated by a recent Pew Survey that found that “nearly two-thirds of conservative Republicans say China is an enemy.”<sup>19</sup>

In my experience, based on helping hundreds of Americans travel to China, the best way for Chinese and Americans to learn to manage their differences and make progress toward mutual understanding is through personal interactions that allow them to get to know each other as human beings with common interests and needs. Living in China gives Americans the opportunity to interact one-on-one with Chinese people in ways that mutually increase their level of knowledge about each other and give Americans an appreciation of the issues and challenges that Chinese face in their daily lives. Through these interactions, Chinese and Americans gain both mutual respect and a better appreciation of each other’s hopes and dreams, which is the first step toward developing mutual understanding. As I always tell my Chinese and American students, they don’t have to agree with what the other thinks and does, but they at least need to understand why the other thinks and acts the way they do. Mutual understanding between individuals may not be enough to prevent conflict by a determined American or Chinese government, but when a large contingent of one’s own citizens have come to see the citizens of the other country as people like themselves with common interests, it may become harder for politicians to stereotype the citizens of the other country as malevolent enemies.

I have personally witnessed the effects on Americans and Chinese of getting to know one another as human beings. Most came to see people in the other country from a more positive and empathetic perspective. Many developed friendships that have persisted in spite of COVID-related travel restrictions. Many OU students who traveled to China extended their stays by enrolling fulltime in a Chinese university, taking a job as an English teacher, or going to work for a company in China. Some found partners, and some now have bicultural children. These students are part of a new generation of both Chinese and Americans who have lived in each other’s country and who have formed bonds of friendship and built cross-cultural bridges that can help keep the seeds of repulsion from growing into the new norm.

Beyond increasing mutual respect and understanding, travel of Americans to China can lead to the formation of mutually beneficial connections between individuals and between American and Chinese organizations, ranging from schools and businesses to nongovernmental and governmental organizations. Establishing such connections was very common before recent actions by the Trump administration and Congress closed many avenues of governmental, commercial, educational, and

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19 Laura Silver et al., “Most Americans Support Tough Stance Toward China on Human Rights, Economic Issues,” Pew Research Center, March 4, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/03/04/most-americans-support-tough-stance-toward-china-on-human-rights-economic-issues/>.

military cooperation with China. Many of us look forward to the day when building such connections can resume.

No discussion of benefits could be complete without mentioning the benefits to the U.S. of having a large number of citizens who have both fluency in Chinese language and firsthand experience of living in the PRC. It is especially critical, whether the U.S. sees China as a competitor or a potential adversary, that those who make policy decisions and develop plans of action have an accurate understanding of the realities on the ground in China. There is ample evidence from the past, with Vietnam and Afghanistan being only two of many painful examples, of how a lack of understanding of everything from the language of another country to its politics and culture can lead to the failure of American policies and the tragic loss of lives and treasure on both sides. As shown by the creation of the National Security Education Program<sup>20</sup> and the Language Flagship Program,<sup>21</sup> both under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Defense and the National Security Language Initiative for Youth<sup>22</sup> under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, the U.S. government recognizes the importance of in-country experience for developing the language skills and cultural understanding necessary for the successful formulation and execution of American foreign policy. Although Americans can acquire Chinese language skills in Taiwan, (to which Harvard<sup>23</sup> and many other American universities, including OU, are moving their language programs both because of COVID and growing resistance to sending students to the PRC), Americans can only develop a functional understanding of the PRC by living in the PRC.

### **Challenges of Educational Exchange with China**

Even those who enthusiastically support the benefits of Americans' traveling to China recognize that there will be many challenges to overcome once travel restrictions are relaxed. The first will be preparing Americans to live in a society whose zero-tolerance policy to prevent the spread of COVID is in sharp contrast to the relatively relaxed and even hostile attitudes of Americans toward any governmental regulations on people's behavior. In China, the ability of people to travel, gather with others, and even leave their homes is subject to restriction at any moment. Every individual and group that travels to China will need contingency plans to deal with sudden disruptions to their lives and programs caused by China's strict public health policies.

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20 "National Security Education Program," accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nsep.gov/>.

21 "The Language Flagship," accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.thelanguageflagship.org/>.

22 "NSLI For Youth," accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.nsliforyouth.org/>.

23 Huizong Wu, "Harvard language program relocates from China to Taiwan," October 13, 2021, ABC News, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/harvard-language-program-relocates-china-taiwan-80552046>.

Another challenge will be to overcome negative public opinion in the U.S. about China. Although there will always be people ready to travel to China no matter what, it will be a challenge to convince many students and their parents that it is safe for Americans to travel to China. Proponents of exchanges with China will need to convince Americans that they are welcome in China, and that while there, they will be both safe and provided with an adequate safety net should problems arise.

The third challenge facing anyone who wants to operate an effective educational exchange program in China is the need to have reliable Chinese partners. On the basis of my own and other's experience managing exchanges with China, I will simply state categorically that given the need for personal connections to get almost anything done in China and the cultural, regulatory, and logistical complexities of working in China, it is essential to have a Chinese partner that is connected with the local authorities and experienced in managing all aspects of running an educational program in China. Throughout our entire history of educational exchanges with China, OU has worked with Chinese partner universities to provide full logistical support for our programs, which included arranging for housing and transportation, providing facilities and teachers, and managing medical and personal emergencies. Although their partnerships have been disrupted by COVID, many American universities and educational organizations have maintained contact with their previous Chinese partners, and there is every reason to believe, based on personal communications with colleagues in China and the U.S., that Chinese educational institutions are eager to resume exchanges with American partners as soon as restrictions on travel are relaxed.

The final challenge that I will mention is cost. For most American students, studying abroad is more expensive than studying in the U.S. and many American students simply cannot afford to study abroad. Therefore, educational organizations that hope to send students to China need to find ways to subsidize the costs. Unfortunately, the closing of American Confucius Institutes has eliminated a major source of funding for Americans to travel to China. American students can still apply on their own for Chinese government scholarships<sup>24</sup> as well as scholarships from U.S. domestic organizations, such as the Freeman Foundation.<sup>25</sup> Colleagues with whom I have spoken also hope to raise funds from American businesses and nonprofits to support educational travel to China. Another potential source of funding is Chinese universities themselves, many of which provide scholarships to cover tuition, room, and board for both degree-seeking and short-term international students. American universities that have partnerships with Chinese universities may be able to help their students obtain these scholarships.

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24 "China Scholarship Council," accessed December 14, 2021, <https://chinascholarshipcouncil.com/>.

25 "Freeman Asia," accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.iie.org/programs/freeman-ASIA>.

## **Risks of Educational Exchange with China**

China is one of the safest places in the world for Americans to live and study. Over the course of my own involvement in international exchanges at OU, we experienced fewer problems with our students going to China than to other countries. Looking ahead, the risks of sending American students to China fall into three main categories.

The first category of risk, and one that is common to all exchange programs, is managing illness, injury, arrests, and other personal problems caused either by accidents or poor personal choices. Sponsors of exchange programs in China need to ensure that their participants have a complete social safety net to manage any problem that might arise, including the need to evacuate participants from the country. This is best accomplished by working with a Chinese partner that has the connections, experience, and cultural competence required to manage any situation that might occur. American programs that try to go it alone in China are at high risk of not being able to work effectively with local authorities and caregivers should the need arise. Programs also need to provide participants with adequate pre-trip orientation to prepare them for what to expect and what to avoid. For China, this includes everything from food safety and using squat toilets to negotiating the internet.

A second category of potential risk is public backlash against foreigners. Given the current state of U.S.-China relations, it cannot be ruled out that Americans in China might encounter public demonstrations against foreigners. However, in my experience Chinese treat individual foreigners as guests in their country and would never take out their anger toward a country on its citizens, who are treated as guests in China. Although there have been highly publicized government-level actions against specific foreigners<sup>26</sup>, and local backlash against Africans who were perceived as not following COVID restrictions<sup>27</sup>, no American in China on an exchange program has, to the best of my knowledge, ever been so targeted. Again, having a Chinese partner with connections to public security services is critical to keeping visiting Americans out of potentially dangerous situations.

A final risk that I will mention is an American domestic risk, and that is the possibility of public and political backlash against organizations that sponsor Americans to travel to China. The orchestrated political attack on Confucius Institutes has made some American universities cautious about engaging with China. University administrators, who are naturally risk-averse under the best of circumstances, may simply conclude that organizing programs in China is simply not worth the

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26 Amanda Coletta, "Canada's 'two Michaels' back home after more than 1,000 days imprisoned in China as Huawei's Meng cuts deal with U.S.," *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/24/canada-two-michaels-china-huawei/>.

27 Jenni Marsh et al., "Africans in Guangzhou are on edge, after many are left homeless amid rising xenophobia as China fights a second wave of coronavirus," *CNN*, April 12, 2020, <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2020/04/10/china/africans-guangzhou-china-coronavirus-hnk-intl/index.html>.

risk of political attack on their reputation and funding. Indeed, American conservatives are already questioning the wisdom of maintaining ties between American and Chinese universities.<sup>28</sup> Even American universities that are discussing with Chinese partners how they will resume cooperation post-COVID are doing so without fanfare to avoid adverse publicity. Leadership in restarting exchange programs with China may have to come from private institutions that are less subject to political interference and institutions in states with political majorities and elected representatives that are not hostile to engagement with China.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the seeds of repulsion in the U.S.-China relationship are growing, nourished by people in both countries who are seeking to portray the other as a malevolent threat. Promoting two-way exchanges that facilitate interpersonal interactions between Americans and Chinese is one way to slow the current slide toward repulsion, if not reverse it altogether. I am optimistic that there is sufficient goodwill in both countries to create conditions that are favorable to exchanges, once the COVID restrictions are loosened. With regard to the benefits, challenges, and risks of such exchanges, I would conclude by saying that the benefits are many and overwhelmingly positive, the challenges are many but surmountable, and the risks are few and manageable. The good news is that our Chinese colleagues are ready to resume educational exchanges at the first opportunity, and they have resources available to fund at least part of the in-country costs of these exchanges. The greatest challenges for American institutions will be finding the will to overcome political resistance to engaging with China and convincing students and their parents that it is both safe and beneficial to travel to China.

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28 Dan De Luce, "U.S. universities retain ties to Chinese universities that support Beijing's military buildup, new report says," NBC News, December 10, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/us-universities-retain-ties-chinese-schools-support-chinas-military-bu-rcna8249>.

## Supporting Students: Chinese Educational Exchange to America

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Although educational exchanges between the U.S. and China have a history of more than 100 years, the large influx of undergraduates from China is a recent phenomenon. From 2005 to 2019, the number of Chinese undergraduates enrolled at American tertiary institutions increased 16-fold.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, Chinese undergraduates outnumbered Chinese graduate students for the first time.

This shift from primarily graduate to undergraduate student enrollment from China is, to a great extent, the result of a change of funding sources. Most Chinese doctoral students are funded by American higher education institutions, while most Chinese undergraduates depend on family funds from China.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Chinese undergraduates have become an important source of tuition revenue for American colleges and universities, which is emblematic of China's rising middle class and the Chinese economy at large.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially reduced the enrollment of Chinese students and reversed the pre-pandemic trend of skyrocketing growth. From 2021–2022, international applications surged, bouncing back from the downturn in the previous year, but China stood out as an exception, with Chinese applicants decreasing by a whopping 18% in the Common Application system, which is used by over 900 colleges and universities in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Institute of International Education, <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment>

2 Yingyi Ma, *Ambitious and Anxious, How Chinese College Students Succeed and Struggle in American Higher Education*, Columbia University Press, 2020.

3 Xiaofeng Wan, "Will enrolment of Chinese students recover in the US?", University World News, June 12 2021. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210608111011101>

Many observers have started to wonder whether international education in the U.S. will enter a post-China era,<sup>4</sup> but, as I have argued elsewhere, despite the downturn, China will remain the top country sending international students for the foreseeable future unless the U.S. and China cut off educational exchanges entirely, because the social forces that propel Chinese students to study in America remain durable.<sup>5</sup> Since May 2021, 90,000 visas were issued to Chinese students to study in America.<sup>6</sup>

Why and how have Chinese students come to study in the United States? What kind of experiences do they have on American college campuses? What does American higher education need to know and do to continue to attract these students and to provide them sufficient support?

### **Why Do Chinese International Students Come to the United States?**

Chinese students are motivated to study in America on both instrumental and idealistic grounds. Their instrumental rationale lies in the opportunity structure in China due to inequalities in global higher education measured by world university rankings. Their idealistic rationale reflects the intangible benefits of American education, such as its capacity for broadening one's horizons and cultivating creativity.

According to the *Times* Higher Education World University Rankings in 2020,<sup>7</sup> China placed just three universities in the top 100 universities in the world compared to the U.S., which is home to almost 40 such universities. Studies have shown that Chinese students and their parents rely almost exclusively on these rankings when making college choices.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, this reliance is exacerbated by the absence of direct outreach by American higher education institutions to Chinese students and the general lack of information about American higher education in China. As a result, rankings serve as the most straightforward source of hierarchical information by signifying to Chinese parents and students inequality in higher education across the two countries.

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4 Anna Esaki-Smith, "International student recruitment in a post-China world." *University World News*, April 2020. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200422154708599>

5 Yingyi Ma, "Is this the end of China's American Education Craze?" *Sixth Tone*, 2021. <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1008039/is-this-the-end-for-chinas-american-education-craze>

6 "China Remains the Top Sender of International Students in the United States in 2020/2021", U.S. Mission China, November 17, 2021. <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/china-remains-the-top-sender-of-international-students-to-the-united-states-in-2020-2021/>

7 "World Reputation Ranking 2020", *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, 2020. [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/reputation-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/reputation-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)

8 Yingyi Ma, *Ambitious and Anxious*.

On the other hand, the competition to get into the top-tier colleges in China is fierce, with the cut-throat national college entrance exam (the Gaokao in Chinese) and its high-stakes test scores shutting a large majority of students out of their desirable schools.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the competition to get into a good university in the U.S. is far less daunting. For example, the acceptance rate for some top-50 universities in the U.S. is as high as 50%,<sup>10</sup> whereas the odds of getting into a first-tier institution in China are as low as 1%. Consequently, American higher education still holds great promise for a vast number of Chinese students who desire a high-quality post-secondary education but cannot beat the odds to test into one of China's top schools.

In addition, Chinese students are also motivated to study in the U.S. for idealistic reasons, such as the desire to broaden their horizons and improve their creativity. These reasons are paramount in rising upper middle-class families who are eager to maintain and magnify their class advantages. Chinese students and their parents seek cosmopolitan capital<sup>11</sup> — global social and cultural capital — from international education. They sense that American higher education embodies cosmopolitan capital by connecting people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. They also consider American education to be superior to Chinese education in cultivating creativity and critical thinking. While they still think highly of Chinese education for nourishing persistence and laying a solid foundation, especially in math and science, they aspire to combine the strengths of the Chinese and American education.<sup>12</sup>

Encapsulating these instrumental and idealistic factors is the belief that studying in the U.S. promises a good future. This belief and related notions are sustained and reinforced by strong social networks of family and peers in urban Chinese schools, forming what I term the “new education gospel,”<sup>13</sup> which has motivated many to study in the U.S. It is not only created and circulated among urban, upper-middle-class Chinese families but also influences working-class families, some of whom sell their only residence to finance their children's overseas education. This new education gospel helps to explain the study abroad fever in urban China over the past two decades; however, the pandemic and rising U.S.-China geopolitical tensions may have eroded this gospel. The education

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9 Ye Liu, *Higher Education, Meritocracy, and Inequality in China*, New York: Springer, 2016.

10 “University of Wisconsin-Madison”, *U.S. News World Report*, accessed on April 5, 2022.  
<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-wisconsin-3895>

11 Don Weenink, 2008, “Cosmopolitanism as a Form of Capital: Parents Preparing their Children for a Globalizing World,” *Sociology* 42, no. 6: 1089–106.

12 Marc S. Tucker, *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2011.

13 Yingyi Ma, *Ambitious and Anxious*.

choices for Chinese students who desire to study abroad in the next few years as the pandemic is ending remain to be seen with the uncertain geopolitical tensions across the Pacific.

### **How Do Chinese International Students Come to the United States?**

My research has identified four pathways<sup>14</sup> followed by Chinese students who come to study in the U.S. as undergraduates:

- (1) From regular classes in Chinese public schools to American colleges
- (2) From international classes in Chinese public schools to American colleges
- (3) From Chinese private schools to American colleges
- (4) From high schools in America (often private) to American colleges

The ages of the students in these four pathways differ when they arrive in the U.S., but more significant is that students are stratified by the amount of resources they need. In general, the first pathway is the least expensive, and the last is the most expensive. Although most Chinese undergraduates studying in the U.S. graduated from Chinese public schools, the number of Chinese students entering college from American private secondary schools has skyrocketed in the past decade,<sup>15</sup> along with the number of those coming from international divisions of Chinese public schools.

From 2012 to 2018, I conducted fieldwork in eight high schools in six cities of varying sizes in China, and during this time, international divisions in Chinese public schools mushroomed in hundreds of Chinese cities, spreading out from megalopolises such as Beijing and Shanghai to second- and third-tier cities such as Hefei and Chengdu in central and western China.<sup>16</sup> These divisions charge tuition like private schools and offer Western-style curriculums such as American Advanced Placement (AP), British A-level, and International Baccalaureate (IB), with English as the primary language of instruction. Their purpose is to prepare Chinese students in secondary schools to attend overseas colleges in English-speaking countries, among which the U.S. has remained the top destination for the past decade. This new education model is, for the most part, meeting strong demand from rising middle-class Chinese families who desire a different education model other than

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14 Over 90% of Chinese students are enrolled in public schools, where students in regular classes are on track to study for Gaokao. But beginning in the early 2000s, a handful of public high schools in China started to set up international tracks so that students study English-language curriculum such as AP and IB courses, and these students often set the goal to go to colleges in the West.

15 Baoyan Cheng, Le Lin, and Aiai Fan. *The New Journey to the West*, Springer Singapore, 2020.

16 Yingyi Ma, "Educating the Elites: School Counselors as Education Nannies in Urban China," *Comparative Education Review* 65, no. 3 (2021): 493-512.

the test-oriented Chinese system and who believe that an international education can help their children gain more competitive advantages in the global world.

However, these private school structures within public schools are problematic for Chinese policymakers and have drawn criticism from Chinese educators as well.<sup>17</sup> As the Chinese government strives for “common prosperity” with an eye to reducing social inequality,<sup>18</sup> the growth of these schools that require higher-than-average tuition is an anathema to the goal of “common prosperity.” The idea of educating Chinese students with a Western-style curriculum is also incompatible with the rising nationalism in China, so the prospect of such schools is uncertain to say the least.

No matter the pathways by which Chinese students travel to study in America, they are alike in the anxieties and challenges they experience in navigating the college admissions process in the U.S. The Chinese college admissions system could not be more different from the American system. Gaokao scores alone can determine college placement, and Chinese students, steeped in a test-oriented system, are anxious and often lost in trying to decipher the elusive value codes intrinsic to the holistic criteria of American admissions. The need for elaborate story-telling and elusive admissions standards<sup>19</sup> creates a cultural bind for Chinese students who yearn for concrete measures to guide them. This is why they tend to obsess over their SAT and TOEFL scores — to improve their odds in a concrete manner. Anxious and insecure, they also tend to rely on for-profit agencies, whose service and quality often vary, and their parents are vulnerable to financial abuse and deceit.<sup>20</sup>

Chinese students are diverse not only in terms of the pathways they travel to the U.S. but also in terms of their family backgrounds. Given that they are largely self-funded and paying full tuition, they belong to the privileged segment of Chinese society. Nevertheless, their parental education and occupation backgrounds are diverse. While a great number of students have college-educated parents and even some have advanced degrees from the West, my research has identified first-generation college students whose parents never attended college and know little English. Notably, the first-generation college students are at a distinct disadvantage regarding college placement and subsequent college experience compared to their peers with college-educated parents in China.

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17 Yingyi Ma, *Ibid.*

18 Ryan Hass, “Assessing China’s Common Prosperity Campaign”, September 9, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/09/09/assessing-chinas-common-prosperity-campaign/>

19 Mitchell L. Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2009.

20 Ying Yang, Sylvie Lomer, Miguel Antonio Lim, and Jenna Mittelmeier, "A Study of Chinese Students' Application to UK Universities in Uncertain Times: From the Perspective of Education Agents," *Journal of International Students* 12, no. 3 (2022).

## Academic Experiences

Once they enter an American college, Chinese international students experience firsthand how different American and Chinese classrooms are. They marvel at their approachable American professors and at how dynamic their class discussions are. They struggle with writing-intensive courses and courses with intensive historical and cultural components that are Western-centric. Meanwhile, many of them breeze through math and science courses and attribute their relative ease to the numerous hours of work they invest in math and science while studying in China.

When choosing a college major, Chinese students are caught between American “expressive individualism” and what I term Chinese “pragmatic collectivism.”<sup>21</sup> Although many Chinese students come from privileged class backgrounds, these students are unlike their privileged counterparts in China or the U.S. who may choose to major in humanities; instead, in the U.S., they are inclined toward fields like STEM and business, which are considered comparatively pragmatic in the job market. In other words, they are keenly aware of their relative lack of cultural capital in American society and gravitate toward fields that are marketable, heavily influenced by their collective network of family and friends back in China. Those who take an interest in the humanities and social sciences often resort to a double or triple major, picking one “pragmatic” major and a second of personal interest.

The major academic challenge facing Chinese students is classroom participation, a vital part of evaluation by professors. American liberal education values speaking up in class, but Chinese students are inhibited not only by language barriers, but also cultural differences that diverge from the value placed on speaking up in American education.<sup>22</sup> In China, actions speak louder than words. Furthermore, test-oriented education in China has predisposed Chinese students to look for the right answer before speaking. Chinese students are often very anxious and concerned about their grades, and they may have an inner critic that is hypervigilant about mistakes, either in their use of English or in the substance of their comments. They feel more at ease in small-group discussion and in settings that do not require impromptu talk.

## Social Life

Birds of a feather flock together. Social scientists term this human tendency to socialize with people like oneself “homophily.”<sup>23</sup> It can provide a social cushion, especially for people in a new

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21 Yingyi Ma, *Ambitious and Anxious*.

22 Jin Li, *Cultural foundations of learning: East and West*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

23 Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415–44.

environment. However, international students, including Chinese students, do desire to venture out and make friends beyond their conational groups. This desire is especially pronounced after the initial stage of settling in a new school. However, studies have shown that one of the major sources of dissatisfaction for international students is their lack of American friends, and international students from East Asian countries are the most likely to report having no American friends.<sup>24</sup>

Chinese students are found to be keenly aware of their rather isolated social network. Despite the widespread perception that they remain within their own group, Chinese students have expressed a strong desire in interviews to venture beyond, yet their desires are thwarted by institutional and cultural barriers. Understanding Chinese students' patterns of social behaviors requires recognition of the simultaneous processes of exclusion and voluntary withdrawal. Neoracism<sup>25</sup> — discrimination based on language, culture, and/or country of origin — has been exacerbated during recent years of rising anti-China sentiment in the U.S., leading many Chinese students to feel excluded from the mainstream campus social life. Furthermore, not only do the dominant party scenes in American colleges exclude lower-income American students but also Chinese international students who feel marginalized socially and culturally. Many have abandoned party gatherings and withdrawn to their comfort zone — hanging out with their Chinese peers.

Furthermore, American colleges and universities often take a sink-or-swim approach with international students. This does not sit well with Chinese students, who were often group-oriented in their prior academic and social contexts in China.<sup>26</sup> Studies show that “the set of social skills (e.g., small talk) that is necessary for establishing friendship in the United States may not be part of international students' repertoire and cannot be internalized without regular exposure”.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, higher education institutions need to be aware of these needs and provide opportunities for international students to acquire such skills. My research shows that participation in campus organizations can help Chinese students make American friends. Institutions can take a more proactive approach in providing structured network opportunities for Chinese students rather than relying on individual initiative or luck. The institutional efforts not only promote Chinese students' satisfaction with American education but also makes clear to American students the benefits of hosting international students on campus.

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24 Elisabeth Gareis, "Intercultural friendship: Effects of home and host region." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 5, no. 4 (2012): 309-328.

25 Jenny. J. Lee, and Charles Rice, “Welcome to America? Perceptions of Neo-Racism and Discrimination Among International Students.” *Higher Education* 53 (2007):381–409.

26 Yingyi Ma, “Is the Grass Greener on the Other Side of the Pacific?” *Contexts* 14, no. 2 (2015): 34–39.

27 Elisabeth Gareis, "Intercultural friendship: Effects of home and host region".

## What American Universities Should Do

Despite an overall decrease in the Chinese's college-educated population and the slowing of the Chinese economy, China will remain the top sender of international students to American institutions of higher education for the foreseeable future unless the two countries intentionally cut off educational exchanges. Nonetheless, international competition for Chinese students has ramped up in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom, and the U.S. can be expected to experience increased competition for Chinese students and future talent.<sup>28</sup> Recent government policies restricting Chinese STEM talent in certain fields, from the China Initiative to the Presidential Proclamation,<sup>29</sup> sent a chilling message to prospective Chinese students who were planning to study in the U.S. However, the fierce competition for education within China and discontent with the Chinese education system among the rising Chinese middle class have gone unabated. The recent policy by the Chinese government banning tutoring companies has not addressed the fundamental issue of access to quality education.<sup>30</sup> American higher education institutions still appeal to Chinese students and their families, albeit there is a risk that they will lose their status with time. This increases the urgency for American higher education to attract Chinese students and improve their support in key administrative and instructional areas.

First, college admissions officers need to be aware of the major differences between the education systems in the U.S. and China and of how alien Chinese students feel with respect to the American admissions process. I suggest more direct recruitment by universities in partnership with local schools in China, which can help Chinese students gather better information during the college application process. Lack of information about American colleges and universities drives Chinese students to take tests multiple times and resort to college rankings as their exclusive guide to choosing a college. This is especially problematic in the test-optional era. American higher education institutions need to reconsider how they evaluate Chinese students in the admissions process.

Second, educational institutions need to take a proactive approach and provide more structured networking opportunities for Chinese students. The seemingly voluntary self-segregation by many Chinese students in America, although protective, is in fact, involuntary and deeply unsatisfying to

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28 Yingyi Ma and Martha A. Garcia-Murillo, *Understanding international students from Asia in American universities*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

29 "Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Non-immigrant of Certain Students and Researchers from the People's Republic of China", The White House, May 29, 2020. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspension-entry-nonimmigrants-certain-students-researchers-peoples-republic-china/>

30 Sini Wu, "Thoughts on Double Alleviation Policy: A Background-based International Comparison of Shadow-education Policies", In *2021 4th International Conference on Humanities Education and Social Sciences (ICHESS 2021)*, pp. 2686-2694. Atlantis Press, 2021.

both Chinese and American students. American institutions need to provide structured platforms to mix Chinese and American students for optimal global learning for all. They need to make an intentional effort to encourage Chinese students to join campus organizations and engage in campus activities that promote social integration. For example, the University of Illinois' Football 101 camp benefits Chinese students through the social glue of campus sports. Other universities such as Temple University and Indiana University have followed suit by hiring Chinese students as sportscasters speaking Mandarin for American football and basketball games. They have experienced success by pulling some Chinese students out of their closed social bubbles and stimulating interactions between Chinese and American students.

Third, American faculty need training and support about how to effectively teach and interact in classrooms with Chinese students. Such support could include seminars and forums on peer mentoring offered by faculty with existing experience in China who could enhance instructors' understanding of the country and Chinese students. Such activities need to be resourced and rewarded by the institutions to participating faculty. In terms of classroom participation, American faculty encourage Chinese students' participation to overcome cultural barriers to speaking up. For example, instructors with Chinese students could facilitate more small-group, as opposed to large-group, discussions and allow more preparation time before students are asked to respond rather than encouraging immediate and spontaneous expression, which tends to intimidate Chinese students from participating in classroom discussions.

Fourth, American universities need to provide robust career services for Chinese students, advising them and advocating on their behalf for more post-graduation opportunities in the U.S. The recent policy change by the Biden administration expanding the list of STEM fields that are eligible for three-year Optional Practical Training is a welcome one.<sup>31</sup> This was the result of collaborative advocacy in which institutions of American higher education played a vital role. Although an increasing number of Chinese students return to China for career opportunities, my research shows that many still want to gain some work experience in the United States first, and working opportunities in the U.S. is integral to the appeal of study in the U.S. Given that STEM fields attract many Chinese students, and that American domestic K-12 STEM education suffers from crippling

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31 Roxanne Levine, et. al., "Biden Administration Expands STEM Fields Relating to Optional Practical Training for International Students, JDSUPRA, January 25, 2022. <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/biden-administration-expands-stem-8323364/#:~:text=Effective%20January%202021%2C%202022%2C%20the,to%20extend%20their%20optional%20practical>

inequalities that hinder the development of talent,<sup>32</sup> it is in the U.S.'s national interest to provide career pathways for Chinese students after graduation if they desire to work in the U.S.

America is strong because it can attract talent, and Chinese international students are a critical part of the talent pool. The fact that they chose the U.S. during their formative years of higher education speaks volumes about the strength of American higher education and undergirds the enormous promise of America. Whether this promise can be realized and to what extent, however, hinges on the quality of the education and support that American colleges and universities can deliver to Chinese students.

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32 Yingyi Ma and Yan Liu, "Entry and Degree Attainment in STEM: The Intersection of Gender and Race/Ethnicity." *Social Science* 6(3), 89. 2017.

## Confucius Institutes and Cultural Programs

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### Introduction

Since the U.S. and China normalized their diplomatic relationship, bilateral flow of information, technology, and people have flourished across the past four decades. However, the trajectory of U.S.-China relations is not always smooth. In both countries, we have witnessed tensions driven by strong emotions, as manifested in the anti-Asian violence in the U.S. and nationalism with anti-American sentiment in China. In reality, the two countries' relationship is not narrowly defined by national governments but also by individuals such as artists, athletes, business professionals, scientists, students, teachers, and travelers of all sorts.

In 2019, about 370,000 Chinese students were enrolled in American schools, marking the 10th consecutive year that Chinese students represented the largest proportion of foreign students in the United States' accounting. However, according to the most recent Open Door data source, in the 2020–2021 academic year the number of Chinese students dropped 14.8% to about 317,300.<sup>1</sup> Although it should be noted that international students from East Asian countries have all fallen significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this decline should not be taken lightly and is discussed elsewhere in this report. A recent development to promote Chinese educational exchange both to and from the U.S. is the Three Ten Thousand (*san ge yi wan*) program. Initiated in 2012,<sup>2</sup> the Three Ten Thousand program includes three main components: Chinese government scholarships to support 10,000 doctoral students to study in the United States, an additional 10,000 special scholarships for

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- 1 Open Doors Report on International Educational exchange has been long regarded as the comprehensive information source on international students and scholars in the U.S. and on U.S. students studying abroad. The most recent international student data in the U.S. can be accessed at: <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/international-students/all-places-of-origin/>
  - 2 The earliest mention of the “Three Ten Thousand” program was published in 2012. Although information of this program can be found on Chinese medium websites, there is almost no mention of such a program in English medium websites.

Sino-U.S. humanities exchange, and support for 10,000 American students visiting China through the Chinese Bridge program.<sup>3</sup>

This essay examines Chinese educational exchange to the U.S. through the lens of the Chinese language and culture learning initiatives, and educational collaborations in higher education, especially those by Confucius Institutes. In analyzing the Chinese educational exchange to America, the essay focuses on the people: visiting instructors teaching Chinese language and culture, and the educational and cultural programs offered by the Confucius Institutes in American universities.

The first Confucius Institute in the U.S. was established in 2004 at the University of Maryland in partnership with Nankai University in China. The next decade witnessed a strong growth of the Confucius Institutes in the U.S., and at its height, the number of Confucius Institutes was more than 110. Confucius Institutes received program funding from China's Office for the Promotion of Chinese Language, also known as Hanban (*hanyu tuiguang bangongshi*), an office affiliated with the Ministry of Education. In addition, Confucius Institutes would also receive in-kind support such as the Chinese language instructors, Chinese teaching materials (books and cultural relia), and incoming cultural performance troupes.

Although in Mandarin, Confucius Institute (*kong zi xue yuan*) suggests these organizations are academic schools or colleges, Confucius Institutes in the U.S. function as enrichment and outreach centers or offices for the promotion of Chinese language and culture. The most common administrative organization to which the Confucius Institutes report is the university's office of international/global programs. This setting is logical because the activities that the Confucius Institutes offer are part of the university's international education. Other supervision units of the Confucius Institutes include the provost's office, individual colleges or departments, and in some cases, the university's extension units. This organizational setting allows universities to supervise and prioritize what they seek Confucius Institutes to achieve, such as supporting Chinese language initiatives on campus; partnering with other campus units on Chinese culture events, where appropriate; or extending programs into the communities, where resources and opportunities to learn Chinese language and culture are scarce.

It is equally important to clarify the leadership structure of the Confucius Institutes in their respective host institutions, including those that are now closed. The Confucius Institutes are the subject of constant criticism because of their connection with Chinese universities and the Ministry of Education in China, but the criticisms fail to acknowledge that all Confucius Institutes were under

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3 Established in 2002, Chinese Bridge is a language and culture platform that includes language contests for college, secondary and primary school students, Chinese language and culture summer camps, and virtual Chinese learning.

the leadership of a director who is an employee of the host institutions.<sup>4</sup> The directorship included three categories: a tenured faculty member who manages the Confucius Institute as part of his/her service duty, a professional staff of the university, or a university senior administrator (in this case, a program manager or assistant director hired to oversee the daily operations). As far as the budgetary management is concerned, the U.S. director is also fully responsible for overseeing and controlling the budget. Although most Confucius Institutes receive some operating funding from Hanban, all of the revenues and expenses related to the Confucius Institutes are reported and reconciled according to the host institutions (i.e., the American universities).

The contract length of the Confucius Institute is usually at five years. Like any contract, some do not get renewed. The massive wave of Confucius Institute closures (by either failing to renew or terminating their contracts), can be traced to the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, which prevented universities from receiving Department of Defense funding if they hosted Confucius Institutes on campus. The criticism of Confucius Institutes escalated from interference with academic freedom to threats to national security through espionage. Despite numerous reports on Confucius Institutes, no evidence has been produced to support these claims.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the U.S. Senate voted in March 2021 to deny Department of Education funding to universities for hosting Confucius Institutes unless oversight provisions are met.<sup>6</sup> The Brookings Institute published an article in April 2021 by Jamie Horsley calling for a new policy on Confucius Institute<sup>7</sup> which, as the editor noted, argues that “the modest financial contribution and native Mandarin language professionals provided through an appropriately managed Confucius Institute network should be welcomed, not castigated.” The article is well-researched and provides a balanced account on the merits and challenges of Confucius Institutes, but the number of Confucius Institutes continues to decline. Down from more than 100, the number of active Confucius Institutes in the United States has plummeted to about 30 as of December 2021.

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4 This is a frequently cited criticism of the Confucius Institute: Rachele Peterson, “Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education” National Association of Scholars, June 2017 <https://www.nas.org/reports/outsourced-to-china/full-report#Summary>

5 The two most influential and comprehensive study are: 1) Statement of Jason Blair, “China: Observations on Confucius Institutes in the United States and U.S. Universities in China”, United States Government Accountability Office, February 2019: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-401t.pdf> and 2) Larry Dimon and Orville Schnell “China’s Influence and American Interests”, chapter 4, “Universities” Hoover institute November 2018: <https://www.hoover.org/research/chinas-influence-american-interests-universities>

6 The bill, or the Confucius Act can be found at: [https://www.kennedy.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/d/0/d045e9ce-3984-4157-b1a1-812091cc4630/FD9873699E07BF735877BA517DDB0582.confucius-act.pdf](https://www.kennedy.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/d/0/d045e9ce-3984-4157-b1a1-812091cc4630/FD9873699E07BF735877BA517DDB0582.confucius-act.pdf)

7 Jamie P. Horsley, “It’s Time for a New Policy on Confucius Institutes” Brookings Institute, April 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/its-time-for-a-new-policy-on-confucius-institutes/>

Despite the extensive amount of published work that focuses on Confucius Institutes and their influence, hardly any attention is given to the actual language teaching and culture programs offered by the Confucius Institutes, which are the core of such organizations.<sup>8</sup> However, cost-benefit analysis about Confucius Institutes requires a nuanced understanding of these organizations' merits and challenges. This essay contributes to U.S.-China dialogue on educational exchange by articulating the educational merits of Confucius Institutes relative to their challenges and their importance to promoting Chinese educational exchange to the U.S., especially at a time when there is a clear need for Mandarin speakers and China expertise in multiple disciplines.

### **Visiting Instructors Teaching Chinese in the U.S.: Benefits, Challenges, and Risks**

Through Confucius Institutes and a few other organizations that specialize in teacher exchange programs (such as the College Board), pre-service and in-service instructors<sup>9</sup> of Chinese language and culture have visited the U.S. to teach at higher education institutions as well as K–12 schools.<sup>10</sup> These visiting instructors usually serve a term of two to five years. In higher education institutions, these instructors teach not only college-level Chinese courses but also community-based Chinese courses that are not for credit.

These visiting instructors undergo a multistep selection process in China at the school, provincial, and national levels. Selection criteria include Chinese teaching experience and expertise, English proficiency, and cross-cultural communication skills. Successful candidates are then interviewed by the American schools or colleges, which ultimately decide whether to invite the instructors to the U.S. or not. For Chinese instructors at the university level, the decision is made by the U.S. director of the Confucius Institutes. The school and/or district level personnel, such as a school principal and/or district human resource director, make the decision.<sup>11</sup> These instructors then complete training both

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8 Although her book does not focus on Chinese language and culture program from a pedagogical perspective, Jennifer Hubbert's "China in the World: An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power and Globalization" (University of Hawaii Press 2020) includes field research through anthropological observations in actual Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, a K-12 part of the Confucius Institute programs.

9 A pre-service Chinese instructor refers to students, usually at graduate level who are studying to become teachers of Chinese to non-native speakers whereas an in-service Chinese instructor refers to university or K-12 Chinese teachers who are currently employed in Chinese educational institutions.

10 Liu Lening, "Current trends and prospects of Chinese Language Education in the United States" (*meiguo hanyu jiaoxue huo jiaoyu de xianzhuang huo qianjing*) *The Journal of International Chinese Teaching* 2017 (3): <http://www.shihan.org.cn/topics/2018/ff808081653c2560016540ce73060018.htm>

11 There have been a number of Confucius Institutes that have partnerships with K-12 schools to provide outreach Chinese language services. The teachers who taught in K-12 schools may receive programmatic support (such as attending professional development workshops), but they are considered exchange teachers at the K-12 school level, and not at the university level.

in China and in the U.S. before they start their teaching assignments, and they participate in professional development workshops throughout their tenure in the U.S.

The visiting Chinese instructors add vibrance to the Chinese programs in K–12 schools and in colleges and universities. Depending on the nature of the Chinese program, the visiting Chinese instructors are primarily instructors of Chinese language courses or play an administrative role. In a university with a well-developed and mature Chinese program, such as the Chinese Flagship program,<sup>12</sup> visiting instructors often serve as teaching drill instructors or teaching assistants. This is because the Chinese program requires instructors to have teaching experience in the U.S. or be very familiar with proficiency-based teaching methods prevalent in the U.S. Since these visiting instructors from China may not have these qualifications, they are more likely to be placed in an apprentice position so that they can teach and learn during their initial teaching placement in the U.S.

Visiting instructors provide much-needed personnel support to the under-funded Chinese language programs because they receive full or partial salary from their Chinese sponsor organizations. In higher education institutes, the Chinese program can offer more sections of language courses, provide students with more practice time through events like Chinese tables, or organize more culture events that capitalize on visiting instructors' talents. Another benefit of visiting instructors is that they can share their lived experience in China compared to textbooks, which are often outdated. They complement the local teachers, who while very experienced in teaching Chinese to American students might have lost some touch with the most updated social and economic development due to infrequent or lack of travel to China. The second benefit is more visible at programs for students with higher proficiency levels. Visiting teachers are better able to utilize a variety of resources that reflect modern China, including films, newspaper articles, and other authentic language resources.

The visiting Chinese instructor program not only brings benefits to American students and institutions, but they also provide an excellent opportunity for the Chinese instructors to learn about the American educational system and American society as a whole. Through the professional development training they receive from the host institutions and conferences that they attend while in the U.S., these instructors learn more about world language education in the U.S., develop expertise in proficiency-based language instruction, and improve their English communication skills. Some visiting instructors bring their children, who attend American public schools. Therefore, the visiting instructors are able to gain a better understanding of the American education system beyond the one in which they teach. It is fair to say that many of these visiting instructors develop friendlier attitudes

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12 See here for a description of Chinese Flagship program: <https://www.thelanguageflagship.org/chinese>

toward American education and the country as a result of their service and share their positive experiences upon their return with colleagues, friends, and family.

An additional major benefit of these visiting instructors is enhanced collaboration between American and Chinese institutions for study abroad programs. Having worked at American universities and gained knowledge about American students, the visiting Chinese instructors become co-leaders or chaperones of the study abroad programs for American students. Upon returning to China, some of them work as in-country coordinators for such programs, and some developed study abroad programs for Chinese students to the U.S.<sup>13</sup>

The challenges for hosting visiting instructors of Chinese at American universities primarily stem from the difference in qualifications, expectations, and development trajectories of Chinese teachers in both countries. Generally speaking, Chinese instructors who are trained in China have a solid foundation of the Chinese language and are highly skilled in preparing students for high-stake language tests. However, their pedagogical training in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language is very different from the proficiency-based communicative approach that dominates the American world language education field.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, visiting Chinese instructors often experience a learning curve when it comes to language assessment for their students, especially when meeting the American world language standards for Mandarin. Perhaps an even bigger challenge comes from cultural adaptation and integration of these instructors inside and outside of the classroom. For example, in China teachers are very accustomed to giving direct criticisms to students who need improvement. By contrast, visiting instructors in the U.S. learn more about how to provide constructive feedback and sandwich their criticisms (or areas for improvement) between “what the students are doing really well” and “what goals the students can set as the next level.” There are many more examples of valuable cultural lessons learned from the interactions of the visiting Chinese instructors with their American students, colleagues, and people they encounter while living in the U.S.

Risks associated with visiting Chinese instructors through Confucius Institutes for American educational institutions are far fewer than not having visiting Chinese instructors at all. As the studies cited in the previous section of this essay have noted, the Chinese curriculum in American universities is controlled by universities themselves. Visiting Chinese instructors design and deliver their instructions based on the school district and/or college level program standards. The criticism that

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13 Information obtained from personal communication between the author and a number of visiting instructors who have served in American universities and/or K-12 schools.

14 The most common and dominant language standards in the U.S. is The World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, *American Councils on the Teaching of Foreign Languages*: <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/standards/World-ReadinessStandardsforLearningLanguages.pdf>

these Chinese instructors “infiltrate” American classrooms and “brainwash” American students is a fallacy. If anything, the possibility of hearing different perspectives from a Chinese instructor may help American students become better informed and also develop critical thinking skills about how to process information from various sources. Moreover, most of the visiting Chinese instructors teach beginning- and intermediate-level Chinese courses that focus on topics of daily lives: family, hobbies, and school, to name a few. As in any language courses, students improve their communication skills and proficiency level while learning about another culture through the exploration of Chinese citizens’ daily lives. Discussions about topics such as history, religion, politics, and culture take place either in advanced language courses or in topic courses delivered in English, both of which are primarily taught by U.S. faculty members or teachers. Anyone who steps in a Chinese language classroom in the U.S. can easily understand the nature of the work of Chinese instructors, including those visiting from China. Few do, however.

In addition to Confucius Institutes, the two main types of U.S. programs aimed at providing more Mandarin teachers in American classrooms are the STARTALK program and the Teacher of Critical Language program (TCLP), both of which are federally funded.<sup>15</sup> The STARTALK program is funded by the National Security Agency (NSA) and is primarily a summer program for students’ summer learning and teachers’ professional development. One of the goals of STARTALK is to increase the number of highly effective critical language<sup>16</sup> teachers in the U.S. Visiting Chinese instructors from Confucius Institutes had been vital participants of both programs (for which they teach) and the teacher programs (for which they were trainees) until 2018, when NSA forbade instructors with any Confucius Institute affiliations to participate in the STARTALK program. The TCLP program is funded by the U.S. Department of State to increase K–12 schools’ teaching capacity in Mandarin Chinese and Arabic. The visiting Chinese instructors in general are a great complement and alternatives to schools that are not able to receive federally supported programs like STARTALK and TCLP. With the declining number of Confucius Institutes, more educational institutions, especially at the K–12 level, risk being unable to grow or sustain their Chinese programs.

To conclude, Chinese visiting instructors helped U.S. higher education institutions and K–12 schools alike initiate, sustain, and expand their Chinese language and culture programs. Both the Chinese instructors and the American schools gained valuable experiences and enhanced educational collaboration on study abroad programs. Although challenges remain, the benefits greatly outweigh

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15 Teachers of Critical Language Program: <https://tclprogram.org/> and STARTALK: <https://startalk.umd.edu/public/about>

16 Critical languages usually refer to less commonly taught languages that is important to the national security and economic prosperity of the United States. Here is a reference: National Security Education Program, “Critical Languages”: <https://www.nsep.gov/content/critical-languages>

the risks and challenges combined. An important question that remains for American educational institutions is how to recruit and retain highly qualified and effective Chinese instructors, if they had to solely rely on who is available to teach within the U.S.

### **Supplying Chinese Culture and Language Resources in the US: Benefits, Challenges, and Risks**

China is not the only country that exports its language and culture resources overseas to deepen understanding of the home country and to facilitate exchange between the host and home country. For example, the Japanese government, in collaboration with the Japan Foundation, works to promote Japanese learning overseas. Through the Japan Foundation, it dispatches Japanese-language education specialists, invites overseas Japanese instructors and students to training programs in Japan, develops Japanese language education materials, and holds Japanese speech contests at overseas diplomatic establishments.<sup>17</sup> The Japan Foundation has also developed the Sakura Network, whose overseas offices collaborate with influential organizations in the host country to support effective Japanese learning.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) supports the internationalization of German universities, promotes German studies and the German language abroad. This organization, headquartered in Germany, operates with 15 branch offices across the globe and a further 50 international information centers.<sup>19</sup> DAAD is also heavily funded by the German and European government bodies. According to DAAD’s website, its most important funding providers include the Federal Foreign Office — AA (35%); the Federal Ministry of Education and Research – BMBF (25%); the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – BMZ (10%); and the European Union – EU (23%).<sup>20</sup>

National governments play a big role in international education and exchange in most, if not all, countries, and any discussion of foreign influence aversion or minimization in the U.S. is not necessarily a concern grounded in education but rather in politics. This section analyzes the language-based service programs provided by the Chinese government and universities via and beyond the Confucius Institutes’ scope, and their respective benefits, challenges, and risks. The table below provides a simple overview:

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17 “Japanese Language Education”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 12, 2021. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/j\\_language/index.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/exchange/j_language/index.html)

18 “Learn Japanese Language”, Japan Foundation: <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/japanese/education/>

19 German American Academic Exchange Service: <https://www.daad.org/en/about-us/who-we-are/about-the-daad/>

20 German American Academic Exchange Service: <https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/what-we-do/facts-figures/budget-and-funding-bodies/>

**Table 1: Chinese Language-Based Service Programs for Overseas Learners**

Name	Sponsor organization in China	Purpose and Function
Chinese Language Testing	Chinese Testing International	Chinese testing services for learners of all ages
Chinese Competition	Chinese Bridge	Chinese written and speech contest for students of all levels (elementary to university)
Chinese Performance Troupes	Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Sponsored performing arts of all types in overseas tours
Scholarships to Study in China	Chinese Scholarship Council & individual universities	Scholarships for exchange and/or degree seeking students in China
Chinese Language Partnerships	Center for Language Education and Cooperation	Sister schools and language partnership building
China Studies Program		Special scholarships for graduate studies and visiting professorships in Sinology and China studies
Chinese Culture Exchange		Resources for thematic exhibitions and forums on Chinese literature, culinary art and architecture

In higher education institutions, these resources provide fertile ground for academic and educational collaboration and exchange, such as scholarship opportunities, student exchange, cultural events, and research cooperation. The biggest benefit for American colleges and universities is the fact that these programs complement cultural and exchange programs offered by the American government and the universities themselves. Besides the obvious linkage for the language learning students, such opportunities also exist for fields such as humanities and social sciences with a China focus, performing and visual arts, and education and pedagogy.

The challenges for Chinese educational organizations in supplying these resources in the U.S. exist in two areas. The first is to match the desire of American institutions to enhance their China expertise and the desire of Chinese institutions to facilitate understanding about China. To address this challenge, both sides need to have more open dialogues about building educational resources that will benefit students and faculty members from both countries and promote learning about their

educational and governmental systems. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge the diverse and evolving country context in order to facilitate meaningful exchanges. One potential shortfall of Chinese language resources provided by Chinese organizations is that they tend to have rules and stipulations that are narrowly defined,<sup>21</sup> which make it more challenging to meet some of the unique institutional and programmatic settings of the U.S, especially given the decentralized features of American education systems. Therefore, ongoing and thorough review of these resources and periodic revisions by U.S. educational institutions are necessary to make sure that the educational resources can be properly utilized and their benefits maximized.

The biggest risk or barrier to educational exchange, Confucius Institutes and otherwise, is misunderstanding resulting from growing tensions between the two countries' national governments. In China, some criticize the government and universities for pouring large amounts of resources overseas while Chinese national resources for education are still somewhat limited. Critiques of Confucius Institutes, as well as some other forms of Chinese educational aid overseas, center on the need for China to develop its own educational systems. On the other hand, critics in the U.S. actively reject any type of support or resources for exchanges with China for fear of communist and authoritarian influence.

While the number of Confucius Institutes continues to dwindle in the U.S, Chinese universities, with or without the support from Chinese governments, are still working to build language-based educational exchanges with their American counterparts. What has come into this picture of exchange is the bigger role played by K–12 schools in the U.S., which increasingly offer Mandarin immersion and/or Chinese language programs. If the two sides are willing to set aside hostility at the national level, they can carefully implement bilateral and bidirectional programs that meet the needs of both Chinese and American schools.

### **Enhancing Academic Freedom and Facilitating More Bilateral Exchange**

As far as the numbers are concerned, efforts to expand Chinese educational exchange to America through the Confucius Institutes might not be considered successful. The effectiveness of the Chinese language and culture programs need to be better researched by language specialists and cultural researchers rather than organizations with transparent political agendas. Sino-U.S. post-secondary partnerships have experienced a decline after being on the rise in the early 21st century. Gurtov, Julius and Leventhal (2020) point out that attacks on associations with official Chinese entities (such as university and government bodies) are not accidental but rather reflect the bipartisan consensus on

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21 One example of the narrowly defined stipulation is the age limit of certain scholarships, which may exclude some students who otherwise are interested in applying.

toughening China policy. They point out in their article in this report that “Most of the accusations, particularly as they concern Confucius Institutes, are false or misleading, reflecting ideological passion rather than investigation of actual circumstances.” These accusations reflect a “dramatic change in perception of China” that today’s rising communist China is considered dangerous. Having personally spoken with Gurtov and Julius on a prior occasion, I felt at least somewhat hopeful that this article stated that many of these accusations, especially those on the Confucius Institutes, were false and misleading, reflecting ideological passion rather than actual circumstances. Gurtov *et al* analyzed the underpinning operational support for engagement and presented a new paradigm shift for future engagement effort.<sup>22</sup>

The concluding section of this essay offers a few recommendations to sustain and possibly grow Chinese educational exchanges to America and to promote bilateral and bidirectional exchanges. Such recommendations are based on the foundation that engagement with Chinese educational institutions, like any other international partnerships, requires strong supportive leadership from university administrations and faculty, internal advocacy and oversight, and alignment with organizational infrastructure. The recommendations include the following:

- (1) Where a need is identified and resources are available within a university, establish and/or support a university office or center for China-related programs and affairs. Prior to the arrival of Confucius Institutes, some organizations had already established these organizations, while others founded them later realizing the need for a broadened ability to manage China-related academic programs beyond language and learning. A clearly defined, university-level unit can ensure programs like Confucius Institutes align with the university’s strategic needs. Compared to Confucius Institutes, which represent the interests of both American and Chinese institutions, these bodies can represent the university’s interests alone.
- (2) Increase university administrative support to facilitate meaningful and productive educational exchanges with China. This includes regular communication between China programs (or international programs if there is not a unit that focuses on China) and the research regulatory and export control bodies. Addressing research security matters well will enhance the prospect of broadened partnerships with China, especially with respect to incoming Chinese students and scholars. Universities should also explore philanthropic

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22 Mel Gurtov, Daniel J. Julius & Mitch Leventhal “The Rise and Fall of Sino-American Post-Secondary Partnerships”, Berkeley Center for Studies of Higher Education Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.12.2020. [https://cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/rops.cshe.12.2020.gurtovjuliusleventhal.riseandfallofsinoamerican.9.23.2020\\_0.pdf](https://cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/rops.cshe.12.2020.gurtovjuliusleventhal.riseandfallofsinoamerican.9.23.2020_0.pdf)

support for educational exchanges between the U.S. and China, which is crucial when federal funds are tight and foreign gifts are under tight scrutiny.

- (3) While acknowledging that this recommendation is beyond the control of any one university, public or private, the author urges an objective and depoliticized approach to American academia's collaboration with China — not only by the universities themselves but also by state and federal legislators. Resources would be better utilized if aimed at increasing mutual understanding rather than those such as the China Initiative, which seemed to yield little return compared to what has been invested.<sup>23</sup> Journalists can be more precise in their reporting on university connections with China, which tend to be tenuous at best, and emphasize speaking with university administrators and faculty involved in these programs. Return academic freedom to academic institutions and let the universities have the autonomy to define and carry out their own international partnerships, including those with the People's Republic of China.

In a recent press conference of the Ministry of Education of China, the director of the division of ideological and political work, Wei Shiqiang, restated China's principle in terms of outbound educational experience. The principle is: " Giving support to people studying abroad, encouraging them to return to China, providing freedom of coming and going, and motivating them to play a role in China's development." (*zhīchí liúxué, gǔlì huíguó, lái qù zìyóu, fāhuī zuòyòng*). At least on face value, China remains open and supportive to educational exchanges with overseas partners. Let us also hope that U.S. academia and society as a whole can reciprocate by managing how national-level competition spills into the domain of people-to-people exchange and by remaining open-minded to engage in educational exchange in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> Don Lee, "Why Trump's Anti-Spy China Initiative is unraveling", LA Times, September 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-09-16/why-trump-china-initiative-unraveling>

## A Window into the New Red Scare

*The Committee of 100 is, a non-partisan leadership organization of prominent Chinese Americans in business, government, academia, and the arts*

In 1978, when Mr. Frank Press, the science and technology advisor for United States President Jimmy Carter, visited China, the two countries agreed to the exchange of students and scholars. Improved U.S.-China relations had opened the door for 52 Chinese scholars to study in the U.S. They were chosen from among 14,714 students enrolled to take the overseas student exams following China's Cultural Revolution and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping's meeting with President Carter. The students' average age was 40 and only two had advanced English skills, while the rest of the students' English level was roughly equal to a Chinese middle school student today. Nonetheless, these students were extraordinarily talented as elites of their chosen fields of science, engineering, and medicine.<sup>1</sup>

Four decades later, the number of mainland Chinese students studying in the U.S. soared from 52 to a total of 372,532 in 2020. Among these students, more than 90,000 Chinese have received PhD degrees in the U.S., approximately 70 percent studied in the STEM fields, and approximately 80 percent have stayed on in the U.S., contributing significantly to U.S. human capital needs. Collectively, Chinese students contributed \$45 billion to the US economy in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. and China have a profoundly important and complex diplomatic, economic, and strategic bilateral relationship. Telecommunications and the ease of trans-Pacific travel have changed the nature of global knowledge creation and exchange, and the boundaries between national and international science are far less clear than in the past. Given the extensive number of bilateral institutional research collaborations, it is not surprising that for both countries, scientific collaboration has been the most important result of this educational relationship. However, as tensions and

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1 Mary Brown Bullock. "U.S. – China Education Relations: past, present, and future," China Research Center, 16:2, June 19, 2017. [https://www.chinacenter.net/2017/china\\_currents/16-2/u-s-china-education-relations-past-present-future/](https://www.chinacenter.net/2017/china_currents/16-2/u-s-china-education-relations-past-present-future/); Kun Yan and David C. Berliner, "Chinese International Students in the United States: After 1978", Ebrary.net, August 19, 2010. [https://ebrary.net/120924/business\\_finance/chinese\\_international\\_students\\_united\\_states\\_1978](https://ebrary.net/120924/business_finance/chinese_international_students_united_states_1978)

2 Xiaofeng Wang, "Will enrolment of Chinese students recover in the US?" *University World News*, June 12, 2021. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210608111011101>

competition increase between the two superpowers, the U.S.’ concerns with China over issues such as trade, protection of intellectual property, theft of trade secrets, and human rights have also deepened.

### **The Hunt for Chinese Researchers**

During Donald Trump’s presidency, multiple actions taken by his administration eroded deference to scientific expertise, creating a hostile environment for federal agency scientists serving the public. In November 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice officially launched the “China Initiative” with the purpose of responding to China’s “threats to U.S. national security.” Initially, the initiative was aimed primarily at Chinese companies and economic issues, but Chinese American professors and researchers who worked in American universities and research institutions soon became key targets. That same year, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Ray stated that China’s threat was not just a government threat, but a “whole-of society-threat,” which require from the U.S. a “whole-of-society response.”

Dr. Anming Hu, a Chinese-born scientist and naturalized Canadian citizen who worked at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, was accused of concealing his ties with a university in Beijing and defrauding the government in connection with research funds he had received from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).<sup>3</sup> FBI agents spent nearly two years investigating Dr. Hu – following him to work and on daily errands, and even keeping his son under surveillance. They told the university, where Dr. Hu held a tenured position, that he was a Chinese operative, prompting the school to cooperate with the FBI investigation and later fire him. Dr. Hu was placed under house arrest for 18 months during the investigation. Without a job or source of income, he was reliant on GoFundMe donations for his legal defense fees. Ultimately, however, the FBI was unable to find evidence of espionage. The trial ended in a hung jury and the judge took the rare step of acquitting the scientist on all counts. Dr. Hu’s case was not an exception.

Dr. Gang Chen, a naturalized U.S. citizen at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was similarly charged with false statements and fraud for failing to disclose teaching positions and other connections in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Notably absent from the indictments is any charge that Dr. Chen stole or attempted to steal trade secrets from MIT or any other institution. The President of MIT and 170 members of the MIT faculty wrote an open letter in full support of Dr. Chen, signing the letter in part “we are all Gang Chen.” Similarly, Dr. Xiao-Jiang Li moved to the U.S. from China in the late 1980s and became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He rose through American

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3 Amy Qin. “As U.S. Hunts for Chinese Spies, University Scientists Warn of Backlash,” The New York Times, November 28, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/28/world/asia/china-university-spies.html>

academia to become a distinguished professor at Emory University where he led genetic research into treatments for Huntington's disease. In 2020, he pled guilty to filing a false tax return. Like Professor Hu and Professor Chen, Professor Li was never charged with attempting to steal trade secrets for China or anyone else. Nonetheless, in the wake of the federal investigation, Dr. Li was fired from his tenured position at Emory and had to seek employment elsewhere. In an ironic twist, Dr. Li is now a researcher at the China Academy of Sciences in Beijing. In 2019, the MD Anderson Cancer Center ousted five researchers after the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) alleged the scientists had committed potentially serious violations. The five researchers all happened to be of Asian descent. Cases like Dr. Li's as well as the issue at MD Anderson have prompted concerns of a "New American Brain Drain."

On July 1 2021, U.S. Congress members, Representatives Jamie Raskin and Judy Chu, held a roundtable entitled "Researching while Chinese American: Ethnic Profiling, Chinese American Scientists and a New American Brain Drain," in an effort to shed light on the effects of such profiling tactics against Chinese American scientists.<sup>4</sup> Steven Chu, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics and former Secretary of Energy, were among those who attended the roundtable. This roundtable marked the first time that the U.S. Congress seriously examined concerns of racial profiling against Chinese American scientists over the past several years. Racial profiling is also known as racial suspicion, racial classification, and racial categorization, which refers to the practice of law enforcement agencies considering racial or ethnic characteristics when determining the identity of a criminal suspect for a particular type of crime or illegal act. This type of profiling leads to inequitable suspicion of a certain racial or ethnic group in the process of attempting to determine wrongdoing or to solve a case.

Compounding this problem is the Department of Justice's possible bias towards those of Asian ethnicity. Exemplifying this potential bias, the DOJ appears to publicize Economic Espionage Act (EEA) charges against people with Asian names under the EEA more than people with Western names. In an examination of court filings for all cases charged under the EEA from 1996 to 2020 (276 individual defendants charged across 190 cases) the DOJ issued a press release announcing EEA charges in over 80% of cases that involve defendants with Asian names. In contrast, the DOJ issues press releases in only half (51%) of EEA cases involving defendants with Western names.

But there is cause for optimism. On February 23, Matthew G. Olsen, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division at the Department of Justice, delivered remarks on countering nation state threats. Within his remarks, Mr. Olsen announced a reconsideration of the 2018

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4 Boyi Nan. "US Congressional Roundtable Focus on Ethnic Profiling Against Chinese American Scientists," Committee of 100, July 3, 2021. [https://www.committee100.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Translation-the-Paper-coverage-of-Congress-Roundtable-7\\_3\\_2021.pdf](https://www.committee100.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Translation-the-Paper-coverage-of-Congress-Roundtable-7_3_2021.pdf)

Department of Justice’s China Initiative saying clearly, “I have concluded that this initiative is not the right approach. Instead, the current threat landscape demands a broader approach.”

### **A Window into the New Red Scare**

Although President Trump was the first to create a formal initiative, concerns about the PRC threat to American trade secrets were widespread during the Obama administration and continue under the Biden administration. Although few would downplay the significance of China as a trade partner and economic rival and the need to be vigilant in navigating the bilateral relationship, civil rights leaders have long raised concerns that the federal government’s responses to perceived threats have been influenced by racial profiling and implicit biases. However, in the absence of hard data, it has been difficult, if not impossible, for the American public and policymakers to objectively assess such prosecutions that have been brought, ostensibly, to protect our economic interests.

To fill that gap, Committee of 100, a non-profit membership organization of prominent Chinese Americans, initiated and administered two first-hand studies, providing empirical data and analyses to the understanding of discrimination and targeting of Chinese Americans during a time of heightened tensions between the U.S. and China. Published in September 2021, the White Paper “Racial Disparities in Economic Espionage Act Prosecutions: A Window into the New Red Scare” conducted by Committee of 100 and legal scholar Andrew Chongseh Kim (attorney at Greenberg Traurig and visiting scholar at South Texas College of Law Houston), provides empirical evidence that people of Asian ethnicity, particularly those of Chinese descent, are disproportionately and adversely impacted under Economic Espionage Act prosecutions.<sup>5</sup>

The study analyzed court filings for all cases charged under the EEA from 1996 to 2020, totaling 276 individual defendants charged across 190 cases, and revealed individuals with Asian or Chinese names are punished twice as severely as defendants with Western names, and found that 1 in 3 Asian Americans accused of espionage may have been falsely accused. Additionally, jail time for Chinese and Asian defendants is double compared to Western defendants. This study also discovered that 1 in 4 American citizens of Asian descent charged under the EEA are never convicted of any crime. Individuals who are of Asian or Chinese heritage are imprisoned and denied bail far more often than defendants with Western names. Indeed, prison sentences for defendants of Chinese and Asian descent are twice as long as defendants with Western names.

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5 Andrew Kim, “Racial Disparities in Economic Espionage Act Prosecutions: A Window into the New Red Scare”, Committee of 100, 2021. <https://www.committee100.org/initiatives/racial-disparities-in-economic-espionage-act-prosecutions/>

As the title of this white paper suggests, this “New Red Scare” resembles the painful history of the Red Scare and McCarthyism of the 1950s when Qian Xuesen, a rocket scientist and physicist, was accused of being a Communist spy for China. Qian immigrated to the U.S. and made significant contributions to American victory in World War II. After the war when Qian returned to Caltech, he was accused of being a Communist sympathizer and spy for China, but was never officially charged with any crime. The innuendo and accusations effectively ended his career. Disgusted with his treatment, Qian returned to China in 1955 to help develop China’s nuclear weapons program and became the “Father of Chinese Rocketry.” The U.S., driven by fear and hysteria, created a hostile environment for Qian and other scientists that drove them to China. The Secretary of the Navy at the time commented, “It was the stupidest thing this country ever did. He was no more a Communist than I was – and we forced him to go.”

The study initiated by the Committee of 100 is particularly relevant at this moment in U.S.-China relations because it provides hard evidence that indicates a concerning trend of racial profiling in EEA prosecutions. It is important to consider the backdrop of these prosecutions – in recent years, the U.S. has devoted increasing amounts of attention and resources to countering Chinese espionage, theft, and hacking, most notably through the “China Initiative.” This research is critical to understanding racial discrimination and implicit biases that are byproducts of a rush to ensure national security, and make the U.S. a less attractive place for immigrants of all backgrounds to come and contribute to American innovation.

Key findings from the white paper and research include:

- **The percentage of Chinese and Asian defendants charged skyrocketed over the past decade.** Prior to 2009, two-thirds of the defendants charged under the EEA were people with Western names, while 16% were people with Chinese names. However, since 2009, the majority of people charged with EEA offenses have been people of Chinese descent.
- **Domestic espionage cases nearly as high as international cases.** Although news stories focus on espionage for China, 42% of the defendants charged under the EEA were alleged to have stolen trade secrets for the benefit of an American business or person. 46% alleged theft for the benefit of China, while the remaining 12% alleged theft for the benefit of other countries, including Australia and Russia.
- **Cases against college and university professors are not common.** Although much has been written accusing faculty and staff at universities as agents of economic espionage, the actual charges against these defendants rarely include accusations of espionage. Only 3% of the alleged theft of trade secrets alleged under the EEA occurred in research institutions. These new findings raise concerns that the DOJ is searching for spies in places they are least likely to find them.

- **One in three Asian Americans accused of espionage have been falsely accused.** This study found that 27% of presumed Asian American citizens charged under the EEA were not convicted of any crimes. An additional 6% of Asian Americans were convicted only of process offenses such as false statements. In total, 1 in 3 Asian Americans accused of espionage may have been falsely accused.
- **People of Chinese and Asian descent are punished twice as severely:** Half of the defendants with Western names (49%) convicted under the EEA were given sentences of probation only, with no incarceration. In contrast, the vast majority of defendants of Asian descent (75%) were sent to prison, in particular defendants of Chinese descent (80%). Additionally, Chinese and Asian defendants convicted of economic espionage received average sentences of 27 and 23 months respectively, roughly twice as long as the average sentence of 12 months for defendants with Western names.
- **Surprise arrests are higher for those of Chinese and Asian descent.** Although movies and TV dramas inevitably highlight the “perp walk,” only 38% of EEA defendants with Western names were actually arrested and handcuffed. Instead, most defendants with Western names received a formal letter summoning them to court to face the charges against them. In contrast, the first time that 69% of defendants of Asian descent and 78% of EEA defendants of Chinese descent learned they had been charged was when they were arrested, generally with handcuffs.
- **The DOJ publicizes EEA charges against people with Asian names more than EEA against people with Western names.** The DOJ issues a press release announcing EEA charges in over 80% of cases that involve defendants with Asian names. In contrast, the DOJ issues press releases in only half (51%) of EEA cases involving defendants with Western names.

These findings support concerns that overzealous attempts to fight “Chinese espionage” are unfairly upending the lives of ordinary Asian Americans. Moreover, by disproportionately publicizing alleged spying by people with Asian names, the DOJ may be contributing to the stereotype that Asian Americans are less loyal than Americans that are not of Asian descent. The American dream of justice and equality cannot exist in such a racialized environment.

### **Racial Profiling and Impact**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States, President Trump scapegoated China for his administration’s failure to contain the pandemic, resulting in a surge of anti-Asian violence across the country. Chinese students and their families have been engulfed by the Trump administration’s

inflammatory rhetoric towards them. Chinese students in the U.S. found themselves navigating not only the health crisis, often alone, but also the physical and verbal violence that ultimately resulted in the loss of eight innocent lives in Atlanta and over 10,000 reported racially motivated attacks against the Asian community as documented by Stop AAPI Hate.

Over the summer of 2021, another study jointly conducted by Committee of 100 and the University of Arizona, one of the leading research universities in the country, unveiled further findings of the effects of racial profiling in the research community.<sup>6</sup> 1,949 scientists, both of Chinese and non-Chinese descent (including faculty, postdocs, graduate students at top U.S. colleges and universities), participated in a survey. The white paper “*Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent and Consequences for the U.S. Scientific Community*” showcased data which demonstrated a consistent pattern of racial profiling in science and research. Scientists of Chinese descent and of Asian descent report far greater racial profiling from the U.S. government, difficulty in obtaining research funds, professional challenges and setbacks, and fear and anxiety that they are surveilled by the U.S. government, compared to non-Asian scientists.

Compared to scientists of non-Chinese descent, scientists of Chinese descent indicate that they have deliberately refrained from pursuing federal funding for fear of increased scrutiny due to their race. This can lead to smaller teams, downsizing of projects, and working with reduced resources. Scientists of Chinese descent have also started to consider working in less hostile climates outside the U.S., which could affect talent retention. Exacerbated by the pandemic, the enrollment of new international graduate students from China is already declining. Overall, new foreign student enrolments in 2020-21 dropped 46 percent compared to 2019-20, according to Institute of International Education. The number of Chinese students at U.S. institutions dropped for the first time, to approximately 317,000 “We don’t do anything wrong,” noted a Chinese American Mathematics Professor, “Science has no borders. International collaborations should be encouraged. But under the China Initiative, who knows what will happen?”

The survey data also shows that the China Initiative is producing a wave of fear among scientists of non-Chinese descent as well. Some scientists described cutting ties with their collaborators in China, no longer hiring Chinese postdocs, and limiting communications with scholars in China, even at the expense of their own research projects. “What is clear from this research is that U.S. scientists and researchers of Chinese descent and non-Chinese descent experience the world and their work very differently because of racism, stereotypes, xenophobia, and government policies,” said Dr. Jenny

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6 “Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent by Committee of 100 and the University of Arizona”, Committee of 100, October 29, 2021. <https://www.committee100.org/initiatives/racial-profiling-among-scientists-of-chinese-descent-and-consequences-for-the-us-scientific-community/>

J. Lee, Co-Lead on the research project and Professor in the Center for the Study of Higher Education, College of Education, at the University of Arizona.

Key findings from the report include: Overall, scientists of Chinese descent and non-Chinese descent both recognize the value of scientists of Chinese descent and support collaboration with China. 96% of scientists of Chinese descent and 93% of scientists of non-Chinese descent believe that scientists of Chinese descent make important contributions to research and teaching programs in the U.S.

- 42% of scientists of Chinese descent feel racially profiled by the U.S. government, while only 8% of scientists of non-Chinese descent feel so.
- 38% of scientists of Chinese descent experience more difficulty obtaining funding for research projects in the U.S. as a result of their race/ethnicity/country of origin, compared to only 14% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- 50% of scientists of Chinese descent feel considerable fear and/or anxiety that they are being surveilled by the U.S. government, compared to only 11% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- 39% of scientists of Chinese descent believe the U.S. should be tougher on China to prevent the theft of intellectual property, while 74% of scientists of non-Chinese descent feel so.
- Among those who had reported conducting research that involves China over the past 3 years, a higher percentage of the scientists of Chinese over non-Chinese descent reported limiting communication with collaborators in China (40% vs. 12%), deciding not to involve China in future projects (23% vs. 5%), and deciding not to work with collaborators in China in the future projects (23% vs. 9%).
- Among those whose research with China was prematurely suspended over the past three years, 78% of scientists of Chinese descent wanted to distance themselves from collaborators in China due to the China Initiative, compared to 27% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- Among non-U.S. citizen scientists in the sample, 42% of the scientists of Chinese descent indicate that the FBI investigations and/or the China Initiative affected their plans to stay in the U.S., while only 7% of the scientists of non-Chinese descent report so.

## **Conclusion**

Over two centuries, the Chinese and Asian American communities have suffered from persistent racial stereotypes, starting with the “Yellow Peril” of the 19th century to the “perpetual foreigner” that still exists today. Anti-China rhetoric has increasingly morphed into anti-Chinese rhetoric, which adversely affects some six million patriotic and law-abiding Chinese Americans. The China Initiative

is a failed program that has fueled racial animosity, xenophobia, and suspicion towards the AAPI community and Chinese Americans in particular. Much more work needs to be done to ensure that all cases being prosecuted are based solely on evidence and not on perception.

American science and engineering have depended heavily on talent from abroad, including students and academics from China, and the open exchange of ideas and resources. There is no doubt that the China Initiative is driving Chinese talent away from the U.S. and damaging the country's overall competitiveness. These two studies exhibit evidence that the China Initiative is deeply flawed, not only because of its racial-bent, but also because it strangles the spirit of open scientific research and exchange. "Government policies have a direct correlation with and impact on advancements in life-saving innovation and technological breakthroughs," said Zheng Yu Huang, President of Committee of 100. "We need to move beyond the stereotypes of the perpetual foreigner and halt the xenophobia being directed at Chinese Americans and the entire AAPI community."

Today, the U.S. may be on the verge of repeating the same tragic errors, as we witnessed in the Japanese internment of World War II, by not only harming the individual lives of Chinese Americans, but also damaging U.S. national and economic competitiveness. Many Chinese American scientists and academics feel increasingly unwelcome. Yet, these may be among the very people best equipped to ensure America remains at the global forefront of science and technology. They are also best equipped to foster understanding and peaceful collaboration between the U.S. and China. Moreover, the perception that such racial discrimination exists will inevitably make America a less attractive place for potential immigrants of varied backgrounds from all corners of the world, not just those from China.

As Gary Locke, Chairman of Committee of 100, wrote in the opening comment of the white paper, "We believe strongly that immigration into the U.S. from places like China is essential for America's continued moral leadership and its leadership in science and technology. As Americans, we must therefore continue to make all people feel welcome here and to embrace our nation's historic diversity as one of our unique strengths." Closing his comment, he quoted President Ronald Reagan to summarize the importance of diversity in America: "We create the future, and the world follows us into tomorrow. Thanks to each wave of new arrivals to this land of opportunity, we're a nation forever young, forever bursting with energy and new ideas, and always on the cutting edge, always leading the world to the next frontier. This quality is vital to our future as a nation. If we ever closed the door to new Americans, our leadership in the world would soon be lost."

## Merits of U.S.-China Special Educational Exchange

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Researchers and scholars often reflect on the outcomes of the first state visit of Deng Xiaoping in 1979 during President Carter's time in office through an economic and geopolitical lens. However, another little-known area of partnership emerged from this visit. In the summer of 1987, Deng shared a special request with President Carter that American special education teachers provide training to special education teachers in China at schools for the deaf. "We hope that this project . . . will spread its beneficial influence to every handicapped person in the entire country," Carter said.<sup>1</sup> Deng's request was motivated by his own experiences with his son, Deng Pufang, who was injured by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, leaving him paralyzed and a wheelchair user. Deng Pufang has famously dedicated his own life to improving the rights of disabled people globally, and the request from Deng Xiaoping to President Carter initiated sharing of knowledge and expertise in special education for students with disabilities.

Deng's request initiated U.S.-China educational exchange centered around the improvement of the teaching and learning of students with disabilities in China. Since that initial cohort of special education teachers, there have occurred numerous educational conferences and exchanges of teachers, faculty, and scholars focused on best practices for teaching children with disabilities, advancing educational opportunities for students with special needs in China. However, the inclusion of students, researchers, and scholars with disability themselves remains a challenge in these educational exchanges. International programs inclusive of individuals with disabilities within higher education

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1 Newspaper Staff, "Carter, On Visit To China, Visits Schools for the Deaf", *The Buffalo News*, November 14, 1991. [https://buffalonews.com/news/carter-on-visit-to-china-tours-school-for-the-deaf/article\\_d998441e-baab-5838-b8d9-fcc23ba02d9e.html](https://buffalonews.com/news/carter-on-visit-to-china-tours-school-for-the-deaf/article_d998441e-baab-5838-b8d9-fcc23ba02d9e.html)

hold immense potential for advancing and promoting disability rights in the U.S. and China. However, numerous challenges and barriers exist in promoting inclusive educational exchange. This essay seeks to demonstrate the value-added benefit of inclusive programming, exchange, research, and development and discuss strategies to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in U.S.-China exchanges, partnerships, collaboration, academic research, and diplomacy.

Our analysis focuses on St. Cloud State University's (SCSU) strategic focus for promoting inclusive educational exchange opportunities for U.S. and Chinese students, teachers, administrators, researchers, and scholars with disabilities. Nine case studies are presented, highlighting quotes from individuals who participated in existing exchange programs. These case studies illustrate the benefits of education abroad for students, teachers, and administrators in K–12 programs as well as ways that inclusive knowledge mobilization<sup>2</sup> among individuals with disabilities and collaborative, interdisciplinary research are effective strategies for advancing special education and disability rights within China and the United States. These exchanges also provide opportunities for strengthening and enhancing the global competencies of students, teachers, administrators, and scholars with disabilities from both countries, ensuring that people with disabilities are not caught in the educational equity gap. Ultimately, the inclusion of people with disabilities in educational exchanges is crucial due to the increasingly interconnected and interdependent global community.

As a final note, SCSU's strategic focus on inclusive educational exchange programs has been achieved through the SCSU Confucius Institute partnership with Jilin Province Education Department. Having a trusted partnership that aligned with the core values of inclusion and accessibility of exchanges was key to the success of the collaborative partnership. Regretfully, this partnership ceased with the official closing of the SCSU Confucius Institute on December 31, 2021, due to changes in U.S. federal policy elaborated elsewhere in this report.

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2 In this section, inclusive educational exchange refers to exchanges that involve individuals with disabilities, including students, scholars, teachers, professors, and leaders from within the disability community. Knowledge mobilization, or maximizing interdisciplinary research and development, is a critical component of these exchanges.

## Case Study 1: Graduate Student Thesis Research Project in Beijing

*Aaron Cross, Paralympic Athlete/Motivational Speaker/Rehabilitation Counselor*

As part of the research for his master's thesis, Aaron Cross, a graduate student with quadriplegia and a wheelchair user, traveled to China in 2014 to assess accessibility for people with disabilities in Beijing. A challenge with his research was that upon his arrival in China a scheduled accessible van for his pick-up from the airport was actually just a "regular van" without accommodation for his disabilities. He spent three days in his hotel, which had an accessible room, calling contacts and exploring every option for an accessible van. After many phone calls to anyone and everyone we knew, he finally found the one last driver who had an accessible van that was still in service following the end of the Paralympic Games in the summer of 2008. He immediately hired the driver for the remainder of the week. Having accessible transportation, an additional barrier experienced during this exchange was that his room was on the 4th floor with no elevator in the building.

Cross was able to complete the research for his thesis, but he also shared with his Chinese counterparts his story of overcoming a life-changing accident when he was 15. Through boldness, bravery, and his journey to becoming a Paralympic athlete (Cross won a Paralympic bronze medal in archery), he shared how he overcame the challenges of his disability to focus on his life goals. Although Aaron had to be carried up and down the four flights of stairs, the university promised to remodel the building with an accessible elevator by the following summer. Furthermore, Cross noted it was the first time for the majority of Chinese university students he met to interact and learn from an American individual in a wheelchair, let alone one who held a bronze medal from the Paralympics, which Aaron shared with all of them. Aaron later completed his thesis and served as the commencement speaker at his graduation the following year, where he shared a testimony on the impact of education abroad for all.

*“Once I arrived at the hotel, the staff just could not believe I had flown by myself from the United States to Beijing, gotten through the airport and to the hotel by myself. They kept having the interpreter from the hotel ask me, who is with me and how many people are needed to help me in the hotel room. I placed my luggage on my lap, grabbed the key, and said with a big grin, ‘It’s just me.’ I honestly thought the staff was going to fall on the floor in disbelief.” — Aaron Cross*

## **Case Study 2: SCSU Faculty and K–12 Partner School Leadership Delegation**

*Sarah How, School Psychologist/Educational Consultant*

*Grady Hou, Photographer, Shepherd's Field Foster Home/Emerging Disability Advocate*

Sarah How, the school psychologist from a K–12 partner school program in West Fargo, North Dakota, participated in an exchange program to strengthen the schools' sister school partnership in Changchun in March of 2016. The gift from Sarah to the school principal at the end of the school visit was a copy of her children's book "Tell Me About Your Greatness"<sup>3</sup> that described young children from the U.S. sharing how they show their greatness. By the end of Sarah's time in China, her children's book evolved into a dream of a Chinese version, with an invitation to Grady Hou, the photographer for Shepherd's Field Children's Home, to capture the photos of the children at Shepherd's Field for the Chinese version. Shepherd's Field is a foster home for children with disabilities whose home orphanage cannot care for them due to increased care needs from their disability. Grady was one of the young orphans, as a young man with spina bifida and a wheelchair user, who "aged out" of adoption. Having him collaborate with Sarah on creating the Chinese version of the children's book, which included photos of children at the foster home with disabilities showing their greatness, was a powerful testimony to collaborative, innovative work between the U.S. and China. The Chinese version of "Tell Me About Your Greatness" has now been used in Chinese immersion programs in Minnesota, implemented as a tool for Chinese teachers in their classrooms to reduce behavioral problems. In addition, the book is used as a tool to share information about disabilities and show how children with disabilities can still show greatness. Grady Hou also had the opportunity to present about his involvement with this project in the U.S. Embassy on the U.N. International Day for Persons with Disabilities on Dec. 3. This was an opportunity that truly had an impact on him allowing him to share his greatness too.

*"Creating impact together describes the heart of what it meant for me to go to China. Traveling to China meant I was able to learn the culture firsthand and develop life changing friendships and transformative collaborations with people in China, such as raising awareness around children with disabilities with photographer Grady Hou as we co-created a children's book." — Sarah How*

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3 Sarah How, "Tell Me About Your Greatness", How2Creative Services, October 2012.  
<https://www.amazon.com/Tell-Me-about-Your-Greatness/dp/0615645135>

*“I was really grateful to have the opportunity to share my story and realize some of my dreams on the stage in the U.S. Embassy.” — Grady Hou*

### **Case Study 3: SCSU China Education Abroad Program for University Students**

*Charith Rozairo, SCSU Alumni/China Education Abroad Participant*

*Anastasia Somoza, International Disability Rights Consultant*

Anastasia Somoza was the first individual with a disability to receive a scholarship from the Jilin Province Education Department to participate in an SCSU Inclusive Education Abroad Program to China in May of 2016. Another participant of this delegation was Charith Rozairo, a graduate student at St. Cloud State University, who assisted Anastasia during this exchange. During her time in China, Anastasia shared presentations about her life living with a disability and avenues for inclusive education for students with disabilities at universities in China. Her quote from visiting the Great Wall is: "Today, I was able to be on the Great Wall in China through the help of SCSU students. Nothing is impossible if you try!" Two months after participating in this short-term educational exchange, Anastasia rolled out onto the Democratic National Convention stage. She shared a powerful speech on how people with disabilities would be supported under the presidency of Hillary Clinton should she have won the 2016 presidential election. A video story<sup>4</sup> of Anastasia's time in China provides evidence of how this opportunity impacted her life and the lives of every student who was a part of this delegation. This is the cross-benefit of inclusive educational exchanges. Students without disabilities who travel with students with disabilities experience the cross-cultural context from a different perspective, culture, and environment and witness firsthand the challenges confronting individuals with disabilities. In addition, they witness the inclusion and accessibility standards of another country, which contributes to lifelong learning through a cross-cultural reflection on inclusion and accessibility from an international perspective.

*“Being a part of an educational delegation to China with Anastasia helped me understand accessibility and the power of people coming together as a delegation to make it a great experience for her. We all learned from each other about disabilities and accessibility in China.” — Charith Rozairo*

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4 SCSU Chinese Culture and Language Programs, “SCSU Confucius Institute 2016 May Delegation – Anastasia Somoza – Closed Caption”, YouTube Video, 4:51, April 26, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W3jLUwJ\\_Sg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W3jLUwJ_Sg)

*“Having the opportunity to travel to China, to experience accessibility firsthand, really opened my eyes on the power of impact on myself but also on all who I met throughout the time in Beijing. I was grateful for the opportunity to present at the U.S. Embassy Beijing American Center, to share my story of overcoming my own life challenges.” — Anastasia Somoza*

#### **Case Study 4: Harkin Institute Partnership with St. Cloud State University**

*Dr. Joseph Jones, Executive Director, Harkin Institute*

*Sherri Rademacher, SCSU Faculty Member/Deaf Community Leader*

Discussions with Joseph Jones, executive director of the Harkin Institute, during the June delegation in 2017 with SCSU President Vaidya laid the foundational support for inclusive educational exchanges and future Harkin Fellowships. Sheri Rademacher, SCSU American Sign Language instructor, was also a participant in this delegation. She was the first participant who was deaf to receive a scholarship to join in this leadership delegation. Sherri's participation opened the door of discussions with our partners at Jilin Province Education Department about including members of the deaf community in our exchanges and programs. The participation of Sheri demonstrated that it was possible for individuals who are deaf to be contributing members of educational exchange programs between China and the U.S. Sheri opened the doors for future work in developing and expanding opportunities for more teachers, researchers, and interns who are deaf to participate in these exchanges.

*“There is a huge emphasis on deaf education and employment barriers in China, but the global connection and collaborative efforts have helped me broaden my horizons to think from a different perspective.” — Sherri Rademacher*

#### **Case Study 5: SCSU China Education Abroad Program for University Students**

*Jerrad Solberg, SCSU Undergraduate Student/Emerging Disability Advocate*

Jerrad Solberg was another student participant with a disability in an SCSU Inclusive Education Abroad Program to China in May of 2018. Jerrad is a young man with cerebral palsy and a first-generation university student. Jerrad presented at universities in China on having a disability and attending SCSU. He was seeking avenues for strengthening his global competencies by participating

in the China program. During his time in China, Jerrad was supported by a personal care assistant, an SCSU graduate student who was fluent in Chinese, to assist in navigating challenges related to communication and accessibility. This accommodation was determined to be essential for the successful integration of Jerrad to participate in the delegation fully. In addition, a documentary was created that chronicled Jerrad's journey through every step of his time in China. The documentary has been made available in Chinese<sup>5</sup> and English<sup>6</sup> to ensure this story is told in both languages. The positive impact on Jerrad from this trip is also evidenced by the strengthening of his own disability cultural identity, which led him to change his major from computer science to community psychology. He now aspires to work with individuals with disabilities and serve as a disability advocate in his future career.

*“By going to China, it opened my eyes to new opportunities and experiences and allowed me to share and learn about their culture in a unique and personal way. It was an experience that I definitely cherish.” — Jerrad Solberg*

## **Case Study 6: SCSU Deaf Leadership Delegation to China**

*Terry Wilding, Superintendent of Minnesota State Academy/Deaf Community Leader*

To support the development of the emerging U.S.-China Deaf School Project, SCSU facilitated a leadership delegation to China in the summer of 2018 with administrators from the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf, the Delaware School for the Deaf, and the Iowa School for the Deaf, along with leaders from the U.S. deaf community. A notable participant was Leah Katz-Hernandez, the former receptionist for the Office of U.S. President Obama in the White House. The support of Jilin Province Education Department again contributed to the success of this program and assisted in organizing a large conference focused on deaf education in China hosted by Changchun University. Numerous academic conferences, seminars, and dialogue sessions were integrated into the two-week educational exchange to promote deaf education, interpreter education and certification, standardization of sign language, video relay services, and the critical need for deaf leadership in K–

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5 SCSU Chinese Culture and Language Programs, “2018 Education Abroad – May SCSU Delegation – Chinese CC”, YouTube Video, 15:18, December 3, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaiEn-ovbP8>

6 SCSU Chinese Culture and Language Programs, “2018 Education Abroad – May SCSU Delegation – English CC”, YouTube Video, 15:11, December 1, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE-F2rYgbek>

16 education programs. Compelling were the presentations by Terry Wilding, superintendent of the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf, who is from a family with generations of deaf members. The presentations by Leah Katz-Hernandez were also impactful, as she spoke on her experience of growing up deaf and serving as the receptionist for a U.S. president.

*“Having the opportunity to travel and take part in conferences, meetings, and discussions with the deaf community and leaders in China impacted my understanding for the critical need to promote cross-cultural learning and understanding for students who are deaf in the U.S.” — Terry Wilding*

### **Case Study 7: Harkin Institute Partnership: George H. W. Bush Fellowships**

*Dr. Amy Knopf, Co-Director, SCSU Center for International Disability Advocacy and Diplomacy/Associate Professor, Rehabilitation Studies, St. Cloud State University*

*Dr. Xuan Zheng, Faculty, Beijing Normal University/Deaf Community Leader*

Through the partnership with the Harkin Institute and Executive Director Dr. Joseph Jones, two professors were awarded a George H. W. Bush Harkin Fellowship. The first was in 2017: Dr. Xuan Zheng, who had previously served as the first professor who was deaf to come to Minnesota to teach Chinese sign language to Minnesota learners who are deaf. The second was SCSU's faculty member, Dr. Amy Hebert Knopf, who was also awarded in the fall of 2018. These opportunities are again evidence of the cross-benefit and impact of inclusive exchange for research scholars in the U.S. and China. In the fall of 2019, Dr. Zheng became the first faculty member who is deaf to be hired at Beijing Normal University (BNU) National Chinese Sign Language Research Center to lead research and development. The research and knowledge she attained through her time in the U.S. contributed significantly to her interdisciplinary research and development on deaf education and her advocacy for access to Chinese sign language for the deaf community in China. Dr. Knopf was able to mobilize knowledge from her research for collaborative grant proposals to support the advancement of Chinese sign language education programs and certification in China. This work will contribute significantly to equity and access to communication for individuals who are deaf in China through certified Chinese sign language interpreters.

*“The SCSU U.S.-China Deaf school project was a direct outcome of the combined research of Dr. Xuan Zheng and myself as George H. W. Bush Fellows with the Harkin Institute. I'm so proud to continue to be involved in the enhancement of the project with the addition of a Deaf Leadership and Advocacy program being launched under the*

*Center for International Disability Advocacy and Diplomacy. The cross-benefit to both the U.S. and China deaf communities has been amazing.” — Dr. Amy Knopf*

*“The Harkin Institute's inaugural George H. W. Bush Disability Policy Fellows, Drs. Amy Hebert Knopf and Xuan Zheng, conducted research aimed to build support for people with disabilities in China by examining the core values and principles of disability and inclusion. These fellowships provided that opportunity to analyze the Chinese government's efforts in improving the education and employment for people with disabilities, teacher training, and bilingual and bicultural deaf education. Specifically, the fellowship enabled the researchers to analyze services and outcomes for people who are deaf in a comparative analysis between China and the United States.” — Dr. Joseph Jones*

### **Case Study 8: China Annual Conference for International Education: Forum on Inclusive Education Collaboration**

*Dawn Raymond, Sorenson Communications Certified ASL Interpreter*

The collaborative work of Dr. Kathryn Johnson and Dr. Amy Hebert Knopf contributed to an invitation to collaborate on programming and present at the China Annual Conference for International Education’s second Forum on Inclusive Education in China in 2019. A delegation of leaders from K–12 schools for the deaf traveled to China to present at the forum in Beijing. Through this cultural exchange, academic leaders from the schools for the deaf, who were deaf themselves, were able to share knowledge and expertise on deaf education and leadership. A value-added benefit of this delegation was another event at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. This panel focused on deaf rights and access to communication via certified sign language interpreters. This event welcomed a packed venue of participants, including members of the deaf community, deaf leaders, and faculty from universities that offer higher education to students who are deaf. The certified American Sign Language interpreters for this delegation were sponsored by Sorenson Communications. The Chinese sign language interpreters, though not certified, were two of the most respected in China. A significant visit to Voice of Hands, one of the first video-relay service agencies in China, was also arranged for the team from Sorenson to learn about the state of video-relay services in China. Sharing through collaborative dialogue and discussion contributed to strategic planning for sustainable development of video-relay services for the deaf in China.

*“We were so thrilled to work with the sign language interpreters in China at Voice of Hand in Zhuzhou who interpret for deaf people all across China via an app. We felt*

*that we were able to make an impact in our short time there, providing workshops and explaining how our company provides a similar service on a much larger scale in the U.S. As is always the case with international development work, we were equally impacted during and after the visit by connecting with international deaf community and interpreters there.” — Dawn Raymond*

### **Case Study 9: U.S. China Deaf School Project SCSU Interns and Visiting Scholar/Project Mentor**

*Zhiyuan Hou, SCSU Chinese Student Intern, Emerging Deaf Community Leader*

*Jiixin Ma, SCSU Chinese Student Intern/Emerging Deaf Community Leader*

*Xiaorong Zhou, SCSU Visiting Scholar, Deaf Community Leader*

The door that opened through the experience of Dr. Zheng as a visiting scholar at SCSU and Dr. Amy Knopf during her sabbatical in China created further opportunities for three young, deaf interns in 2019 to come to the U.S. as the first interns in the U.S.-China Deaf School Project. After an orientation at SCSU, the three interns began their internships in January of 2020 at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf, the Delaware School for the Deaf, and the Iowa School for the Deaf. Students at the schools demonstrated a very strong interest for learning more about China from the interns who were placed in their schools. This experience not only provided opportunities for American students to learn about China and Chinese sign language but also provided an exceptional professional development opportunity for the three interns. Through this internship, the interns were also able to have in-depth dialogue and discussion with leaders from the deaf community in the U.S., which contributed to a much greater understanding of their own deaf identity, deaf culture, and deaf rights founded on the Americans with Disabilities Act and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through these personal and professional learning opportunities, they gained an empowered sense of deaf pride and identity.

In support of the three interns, Jilin Province Education Department also approved a deaf visiting scholar to assist with the implementation of the project in the schools for the deaf. The interns who were deaf had no prior education in teaching in China, and all were art or graphic design majors. Therefore, the mentorship of Zhou Xiaorong was critical for the successful implementation of the programs within the schools. Zhou’s research is founded upon her own personal and professional development as a scholar, which has contributed to greater understanding of deaf culture, identity, and community. With the recent efforts to standardize Chinese sign language nationally, a curriculum

for teaching Chinese sign language is only now evolving. The research and scholarship of Zhou will contribute significantly to this work, impacting the teaching of learning of Chinese sign language in interpreter education programs, in schools for the deaf, deaf communities and among hearing students who have a curiosity for learning Chinese sign language.

*“The whole experience in America has not only given me the opportunity to live there for one year, it also gave me new abilities on how to perceive the world from many different perspectives. Despite the COVID-19 epidemic, it was still an enriching experience for me where I learned many new things such as teaching methods that involved student-centered approach and deaf advocacy, learned how much America cared and supported me as a deaf intern teacher, and enjoyed all the accessibilities deaf people have in America such as certified ASL interpreters.” — Zhiyuan Hou*

*“Because of the status and rich history of the deaf culture in the U.S., I was greatly influenced and I deeply recognize my deaf identity and culture. The status of deaf and hearing is equal and fair in the U.S.” — Jiaxin Ma*

*“After two years of being a visiting research scholar, I have come to realize the value of many different concepts and skills such as ‘inclusive diplomacy,’ ‘global competency,’ and what ‘Nothing about us without us’ truly means when the deaf communities around the world advocate for themselves. I am still processing all of the positive insights, wisdom, and new understandings about the power of languages from around the world and how it can unite us, helping us to remove the ‘dis’ from all of our abilities.” — Xiaorong Zhou*

## **Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusive Educational Exchanges**

A significant challenge for inclusive education abroad and exchange between China and the U.S. is a lack of awareness of how to make inclusive educational exchanges accessible. Additionally, universities and faculty who lead educational exchanges need to be educated on the value-added benefit of including students with disabilities in these programs. This lack of awareness occurs at all levels, including institutional leadership, faculty, funding agencies, businesses, and financial donors. An avenue to address this is to provide more evidence of impact, including the powerful testimony of participants, not only on individuals with disabilities at the personal and professional levels, but also on those who have an opportunity to learn from these programs. What also needs to be amplified is the contribution that inclusive education abroad has for advancing disability rights, equity in employment, accessibility, and education through research and development.

A second challenge is funding. It is often overwhelming for universities to allocate funding for the required accommodations for students, faculty, and staff with disabilities, from accessible transportation to access to language. This is where universities in both China and the U.S. need to leverage resources, expertise, and partnerships. It is recommended that several universities collaborate on inclusive education abroad for students who are deaf to share the costs and maximize the time and financial investment of the ASL interpreters. SCSU aspires to champion this and lead a delegation for deaf students from the U.S. in 2023. Securing committed sponsors from organizations like Sorenson Communications is a win-win partnership, as Sorenson Communication holds potential for sharing their expertise and expanding their business development within the global space.

A third challenge for U.S. students with disabilities traveling to China is accessibility. Accessibility needs to be planned for from point A to point B and all steps in between. Accessibility may be an added expense that needs to be incorporated into the planning upfront. Ensuring accessible accommodations for the participants with disabilities remains a challenge in China, especially if delegations stay in university dorms. Hotels may state they have accessible accommodations, but these may not meet Western standards. Ensuring that every travel destination has an accessible restroom is also a priority. Pre-planning and site visits may be necessary to ensure the education abroad is accessible. The Paralympic Games hosted in 2008 increased the number of tourist sites that are accessible, but they are limited to the Beijing area. It is not as challenging for Chinese students with disabilities coming to the U.S., but it still requires advanced planning and coordination.

Finally, the safety of participants remains a top priority and a continuing challenge for specific individuals with disabilities. It is recommended that each university establish a review team consisting of faculty, student accessibility services directors, and legal counsel to review any applicant who may have health challenges to determine if the risks of travel outweigh the benefits. Universities need to have a system in place for this review process to occur so that faculty who lead these programs are not left to be the sole decision-maker as to whether or not a student with a disability is able to participate in an education abroad program in China. Universities and programs cannot reject students with disabilities simply because it is perceived as too challenging, too expensive, or too much extra work. The Americans with Disabilities Act states that students with disabilities cannot be denied participation in programming based on disability alone. Therefore, it is advised that administrators and faculty work together to ensure opportunities for inclusive educational exchanges between China and the U.S. are available, accessible, affordable, and safe for those involved.

SCSU has worked hard to demonstrate our commitment to inclusive educational exchanges with China. We have learned numerous lessons since the beginning of the programming and partnership with Jilin Province Education Department in 2014. The work of Drs. Johnson and Knopf promoting

inclusive educational exchanges will be integrated into the strategic planning of the newly launched SCSU Center for International Disability Advocacy and Diplomacy. We welcome the opportunity to partner and collaborate with universities, organizations, and businesses that aspire to create more inclusive educational exchange between China and the U.S. built upon the first programs initiated and supported by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in 1987.

The nine case studies within this report illuminate the impact on individuals with and without disabilities through being involved in inclusive educational exchange between higher education in China and the U.S. What started with Deng's unique request to President Carter for special education teachers to travel to China to share best practices at the schools for the deaf in China has emerged and expanded to inclusive educational exchange for Chinese and American citizens with disabilities and those who are allies and advocates for all. Inclusive educational exchange impacts the individuals while also promoting and advancing knowledge, research, and international development. Evidence of this is also through Dr. Kathryn Johnson's personal story about her first trip to China in the summer of 2000 with Gallaudet University to initiating the U.S.-China Network of Schools for the Deaf in 2020 with colleagues Dr. Amy Hebert Knopf and Xiaorong Zhou. The collaborative research with colleagues who are deaf from China aspires to also contribute to strengthening Chinese sign language interpreter education and certification and advance the leadership and advocacy of those who are deaf from China for building capacity from within. Inclusive educational exchange is not just a "nice" opportunity for individuals with disabilities to experience a different culture and context, it is critical for knowledge mobilization, research, and advancing human rights for those with disabilities in both countries.

## Reviewing Trends in Government Support for US-China Educational Exchange

*Miao Lu is the Co-founder and Secretary General of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), the largest non-governmental think tank in China. Miao is an expert on globalization and international cultural exchange.*

*Mei Qu is an Associate Research Fellow in the Center for China and Globalization research department. She has a PhD degree in educational anthropology awarded by Aarhus University (Denmark) and a master's degree in comparative education awarded by Beijing Normal University.*

### Introduction

The Sino-U.S. relationship is one of the most critical bilateral relationships in the world. A famous ancient Chinese philosopher, Han Fei, once said, “Friendship of nations lies in the closeness of people, and the closeness of people lies in the communion of hearts.” Drawing inspiration from this famous quote, one of the best ways to strengthen the Sino-U.S. relationship is to promote people-to-people exchange, of which international students play an important and vibrant role. There is a long history of Sino-U.S. international student exchange since the early 20th century, which is discussed extensively in another section of this report. Despite twists and turns caused by international tension and war, Sino-U.S. student exchange has prevailed and contributed to friendship and stability between the U.S. and China.

An unfortunate consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is that international student exchange is no longer as lively and large-scale as before. While this is a worldwide reality, there are more obstacles to student exchange between China and the U.S. due in large part to gradually intensifying diplomatic tension over the past few years. Such tension has contributed to increased restrictions on Chinese students (especially those majoring in STEM disciplines) to study in the U.S. Less frequently explored is how U.S. student exchange to China has been affected, which is the subject of this section. Have they been affected and, if so, how? There is no question that, in previous decades, both the American and Chinese governments have played a crucial role in promoting U.S. student exchange to China. Scholarships or fellowships such as the Fulbright Program have been praised as diplomatic

success stories in the history of Sino-U.S. relations. Against the current diplomatic backdrop, how have these government programs been affected, and what will be the possible result?

To answer the questions, this section will first analyze the trends in U.S. student exchange to China since the beginning of 21st century. Afterward, it will review the current status of key programs provided by the U.S. and Chinese governments to support American student exchange to China. Based on this analysis, the article will provide recommendations to encourage more American students to study in China, the most important instance of people-to-people exchange between these two countries.

### **Trends in American Student Exchange to China**

Across the past two decades, China has been the leading exporter of international students. By 2018, China had also become the third largest host country worldwide and the top destination in Asia for international students. China has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of international students since the beginning of the 21st century. In 2000, the total number of international students was merely 52,200; however, by 2018, it achieved nearly tenfold growth, reaching 492,200. Against this backdrop, what are the trends for U.S. students to China? Is it growing just as rapidly? How does the trend relate to the U.S. and Chinese governments and their diplomacy?

### **An Emerging Destination for U.S Students?**

Generally speaking, the number of U.S. students studying in China has been on the rise since 2000. According to data from Open Doors,<sup>1</sup> in the past two decades the total number of U.S. students to China has increased nearly fivefold (Figure 1). In 2018–2019, about 12,000 American students came to China for study.

At the beginning of the 21st century, China hosted less than 3,000 American students, a very small base number. In 2001, China's accession to the World Trade Organization accelerated its full integration into the international economy and, to further facilitate this process, greater international talent was needed in order to improve China's acceptance and adoption of international norms, rules, conventions, and languages.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the Chinese government simplified and relaxed its regulations on international education to encourage local students to study abroad while welcoming

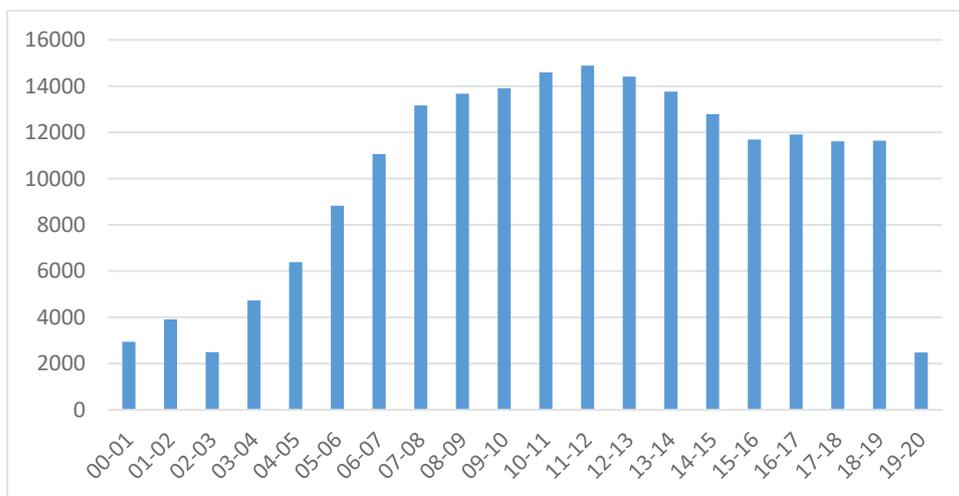
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1 "Report on International Educational exchange", Institute of International Education, Open Doors, accessed on October 8, 2021. <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/>

2 S Yao, "回首百年路遥:伴随中国现代化的十次留学潮" [Looking back at the Century-long History: The Ten Studying Abroad Tides Accompanying China's Modernization], (Shanghai: Shanghai Educational Publishing House, 2017).

international students to China. Meanwhile, the U.S. shifted its national diplomatic strategy to focus on anti-terrorism and public diplomacy following the attacks on September 11, 2001. To reshape U.S.’s image and credibility, the United States recognized the need for more local intellectual expertise with knowledge of other civilizations and cultures to communicate with other people and nations through friendly public diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Academic exchange programs were considered an important measure to maintain sustainable relationships with other countries and to strengthen American soft power. The number of U.S. students to China grew rapidly from 2003–2008, with an increasing rate ranging from 18.99% (2007–2008) to 90.01% (2003–2004). Since 2007, China has been the most popular studying abroad destination outside of Western Europe and one of the top five destinations for U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit from their college or university in the United States.<sup>4,5</sup>

**Figure 1. 2000–2020 Total Number of American Students to Chinese Mainland**



Source: Institute of International Education. (2021). "Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 1999/00 - 2019/20" *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved October 10 from <https://opendoorsdata.org/>.

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- 3 Z Li, “‘9·11’事件后美国公共外交研究的争论与进展” [Post-9/11 Study on Public Diplomacy in US: Arguments and Progress], *当代世界* [The Contemporary World], 3, (2011), pp. 46-48.
  - 4 R. Belyavina, “U.S. Students in China: Meeting the Goals of the 100,000 Strong Initiative”, Institute of International Education, January 2013. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/US-Students-in-China>
  - 5 “Report on International Educational Exchange”, Institute of International Education, Open Doors, accessed on October 8, 2021. <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/>

In the period of 2008–2012, during President Obama’s first administration, the Sino-U.S. relationship was by and large stable and progressive, undergirded by international student exchange. In 2008, the world’s major economies were confronted with financial crisis. While China was not severely affected by the crisis, it was an imperative to strengthen cooperation between China, the largest emerging economy, and the United States, the most advanced developed country, in order to reinvigorate the world economy. To traverse domestic and external difficulties, the Obama administration had to set aside disputes and deepen cooperation with China. As tense as relations between the two countries were in 2010 — including friction over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Korean Peninsula — the two sides exercised restraint and engaged in “damage control.”<sup>6</sup> In 2011, a series of high-level political visits between the two countries (for instance, President Hu Jintao’s state visit to the U.S., the annual U.S.-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE), then-Vice President Xi Jinping’s visit to the U.S., and then-Vice President Biden’s visit to China), increased strategic mutual trust and enhanced the ties between the citizens of the United States and China. During these visits, the concept of “building a new type of relationship between major countries” was put forward and received much praise, and deepening Sino-U.S. people-to-people exchange was considered integral to the relationship. With stability in the bilateral political relationship, as shown in Figure 1, a moderate but continuous increase in the number of U.S. students to China was maintained from 2008 to 2012 and finally reached its peak 2011–2012.

The year of 2013 was also a tipping point in the political relationship of the two countries. Near the end of Obama’s first term, he launched an Asia Pacific rebalancing strategy (often referred to as the “pivot to Asia”), seeking to balance China’s growing influence in the Asia Pacific region. This signaled a strategic shift in the China-U.S. relationship, which transited from friendly partnership to responsible competition. In Obama’s second administration, there were rising disputes with China on Asia Pacific issues. In recent years, competition between the two sides, along with the trade war under the Trump administration and restraint on talent and technology, have caused antipathy toward the U.S. government in Chinese society,<sup>7</sup> a sign of intensified misunderstanding and mistrust between the two nations. As a result of the changing political climate, the four-year program 100,000 Strong China Initiative, which started in November 2009 and promised that the United States will send 100,000 American youth to study in China in the next four years, was not maintained. Obama’s successors show no interest in reintegrating it, including President Biden — despite his past deep

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6 W. Tao, “奥巴马第一任期的中美关系” [China-US Relations under the First Obama Administration], *美国问题研究* [Fudan American Review], 2, (2012), pp. 26-53.

7 *Global Times*, “在中国人眼中，美国跌到第三” [In the opinion of Chinese, the United States fell to third in terms of global power], Baidu, December 29, 2021. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1720484278336923179>.

participation and promotion in this program. Therefore, since 2013, the number of U.S. students studying in China has been on a downward trend. The United States has long been one of the top five or 10 countries of origin for international students to China, but in the last 5–10 years, the ranking of U.S. students studying in China has fallen. By 2018, China had jumped to become the third largest host country worldwide and the top destination in Asia for international students, with the Asian developing countries being the primary countries of student origin. According to official statistics (Table 1), the U.S. was in second place in 2015 and 2016 but was replaced by Thailand during 2017 and 2018 and slipped to fifth place in 2018.

**Table 1 2015–2018 Top 10 Places of Origin for International Students to China**

Ranking	2018		2017		2016		2015	
	Country	NO.	Country	NO.	Country	NO.	Country	NO.
1	Korea	50600	Korea	63827	Korea	70540	Korea	66672
2	Thailand	28608	Thailand	27884	U.S.	23838	U.S.	21975
3	Pakistan	28023	Pakistan	24878	Thailand	23044	Thailand	19976
4	India	23198	U.S.	23911	Pakistan	18626	India	16694
5	U.S.	20996	India	20911	India	18717	Russia	16197
6	Russia	19239	Russia	19751	Russia	17971	Pakistan	15654
7	Indonesia	15050	Japan	14717	Indonesia	14714	Japan	14085
8	Laos	14645	Indonesia	14573	Kazak.	13996	Kazakh.	13198
9	Japan	14230	Kazakh.	14224	Japan	13595	Indonesia	12694
10	Kazakhstan	11784	Laos	14222	Vietnam	10639	France	10436

*Source: Department of International Cooperation and Exchange at the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 来华留学简明统计(2015-2018)[Concise Statistics on Study in China (2015-2018)].*

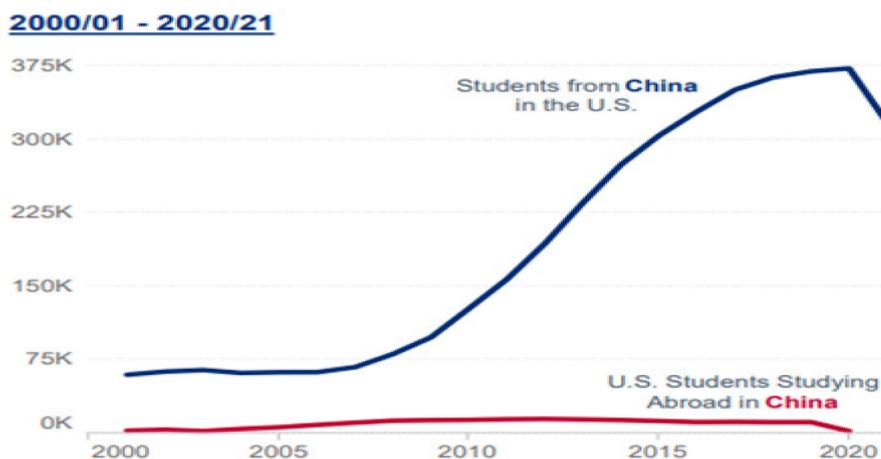
By reviewing these trends within the macro Sino-U.S. diplomatic background, it should be noted that the change in the number of U.S. students to China synchronizes with the subtle shift in the Sino-U.S. political relationship. This should be a warning to both the Chinese and U.S. governments. If relations between the two countries do not move forward, the number of American students to China will continue to fall, which is not conducive to maintaining people-to-people ties.

### **The Asymmetry of Sino-U.S. Student Flows**

Despite remarkable increases in the 2000s, there is clearly a striking asymmetry among international student exchange between the U.S. and China (Figure 2). In 2018, China's total student population is 4.23 times larger than that of the United States, yet there are 30 times as many Chinese

students in the U.S. as there are U.S. students in China.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 2. International Student Deficit From China to the U.S.**



Source: IIE (2021). 2021 fact sheet on China Retrieved October 10 from [https://opendoorsdata.org/fact\\_sheets/china/](https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/china/)

Another asymmetry worth mentioning is that the form of exchange for American students to China is strikingly different from that of Chinese students to the U.S.

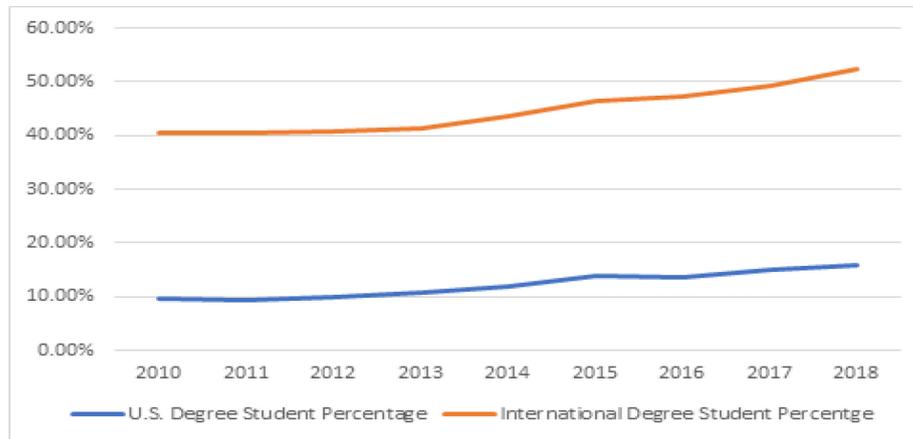
Unlike most Chinese students who travel to the U.S. for academic degrees, American students who travel to China mainly do so for short-term visits. The proportion of undergraduate students in the U.S. is around 88% — most of whom come to China for short-term visits of two months or one semester during their sophomore and junior years — and only about 2% of high school graduates come to China for undergraduate degrees. The proportion of graduate students among international students is about 12%, among whom only 0.7% are doctoral students.<sup>9</sup> Take the Sino-American Cooperation on Higher Education and Professional Development program (short for 1+2+1 dual-degree program) as an example. The program is a bidirectional exchange and cooperation program between the U.S. and China in higher education, jointly administered by the China Education Association for International Exchange, the China Center for International Educational exchange, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The program attracts countless

8 P. Vanham, “US students should be encouraged to study in China”, *Financial Times*, November 22, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/6665e98c-ece6-11e8-8180-9cf212677a57>.

9 J. Yang & J. Hao, “中美两国间人才流动的特点及启示” [The Characteristics and Enlightenment of Talent Flow between China and the United States], *全球科技经济瞭望* [Global Science, Technology and Economy Outlook], 34(8), (2019), pp. 42-49.

Chinese students to apply for study in the US; by contrast, students from the U.S. come to China mainly for study tours. With a group of only about 20 American students and a two-week exchange period, such short tours can hardly provide any in-depth understanding of China, while Chinese students to the U.S. often have formed a more thorough contact with the U.S. higher education system and American society. Presumably, the main format of American students to China — study tours and short-term exchange — largely guarantees that American students will return to their motherland after their studies, while Chinese students have an increased likelihood of staying in the U.S. for employment after their graduation. From 2004 to 2017, around 100,000 Chinese graduates chose to stay in America.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3. Source: Department of International Cooperation and Exchange at the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.**



来华留学简明统计(2015–2018)[*Concise Statistics on Study in China (2015–2018)*].

For the U.S., the implication of this asymmetry could be that the number of Americans with a working knowledge of China is likely to fall further behind the number of Chinese who are familiar with the U.S.<sup>11</sup> As the economic and trade relationship between China and the U.S. become increasingly difficult, the U.S. needs more talent with a local understanding of China to better cooperate and engage with China in commerce and trade. Some of the most prestigious Sinologists in previous generations, such as John King Fairbank and Ezra Feivel Vogel, have passed away, and there is a continual need for new generations of scholars with on-the-ground expertise. Due to a dearth of knowledge on Chinese laws and regulations, the Chinese political system, and traditional customs

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> P. Vanham, US students should be encouraged to study in China.

among the general population, there is a narrow pool of expert U.S. citizens to take the initiative on Sino-U.S. foreign affairs, trade and economic relations, and other areas important to national interests.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, without such talent living and studying in China for an extended period of time, it is less likely for the U.S. to form a sophisticated, objective, and thorough image of China. Instead, the result may be binary or biased, which may easily cause the simplification of the Self and the Other, triggering misunderstandings and increasing the cost of U.S. decision-making.

From the lens of China, the U.S. undoubtedly holds the dominant position in terms of attracting international students, the most critical talent resources for building a national innovation system.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, many Chinese scholars consider the U.S. as the essential winner in the Sino-U.S. international student exchange.<sup>14,15,16</sup> A long-term, substantial deficit in educational exchange has caused brain drain in China, which consequently lacks human resources fit for embracing globalization. Moreover, American students can be outstanding cultural ambassadors, telling the world a true, multidimensional, and panoramic story of China and helping China improve the strained international environment. Therefore, it is beneficial and profitable for China to reverse the deficit, or at least narrow the gap, in international student flows.

### **Government Support for American Students to China**

Financial support for international students is a crucial tool for both American and Chinese governments to maintain bilateral relations. U.S. students to China are often supported officially by both sides. As Sino-U.S. relations have deteriorated in recent years, a number of important funding programs have been suspended; yet some are still in operation. What impacts have the suspended programs had on U.S. students to study in China? What are the strengths and shortcomings of the existing programs?

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12 J. Sun, “十万赴华: 美国对外教育交流政策分析及反思” [100,000 to China: Analysis and Reflection on U.S. Foreign Educational exchange Policy], 上海教育科研 [Journal of Shanghai Educational Research], 7:9, (2011) pp. 24-26.

13 J. Yang & J. Hao, “中美两国间人才流动的特点及启示” [The Characteristics and Enlightenment of Talent Flow between China and the United States].

14 Y. Hu & Y. Zhang, “中美科技人才交流的历史、现状及挑战” [History, Status and Challenges of U.S.-China Scientific and Technological Personnel Exchanges], Huaqiao University, June 25, 2020. <https://cn.apdnews.com/toutiao/993691.html>

15 H. Huo, Y. Wang, & Y. Xiao, “中美科技人才交流形势分析与对策” [Situation Analysis of Sino-US Scientific and Technological Personnel Exchanges], 科技进步与对策 [Science & Technology Progress and Policy], 31(10), 2014, pp. 143-148.

16 J. Yang & J. Hao, “中美两国间人才流动的特点及启示” [The Characteristics and Enlightenment of Talent Flow between China and the United States].

## The Rise And Decline of Three U.S. Flagship Programs

**Fulbright Program to China.** The Fulbright Program was set up in 1946 by the U.S. government. It offers grants for U.S. citizens to go abroad and for non-U.S. citizens to come to the U.S. for the purpose of studying, teaching, and conducting research.<sup>17</sup> The Fulbright Program in China dates back to 1947, before being suspended when the People’s Republic of China was established in October 1949. The program was resumed following the normalization of China-U.S. diplomatic relations in 1979. In 1983, the program was expanded to include research and education opportunities across a wide array of academic fields, from science and technology to history, literature, law, journalism, business, economics, political science, sociology, philosophy, and international relations.<sup>18</sup> Table 2 lists four specific programs within the Fulbright Program that U.S. students may apply to, each of which has a specific focus. The programs are sponsored primarily by U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), but two of them are collaborative programs between ECA and other organizations. All of the programs were administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE), a centennial nonprofit organization in U.S.

**Table 2. Fulbright Grant Opportunities for U.S. Students To Go to China**

Name	Sponsorship	Administration	Description
Fulbright U.S. Student Program	ECA	IIE	Offers fellowships for U.S. graduating college seniors, graduate students, young professionals, and artists to study, conduct research, and/or teach English abroad.
Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program	ECA	IIE	Places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas, thereby improving foreign students’ English language abilities and knowledge of the United States while increasing the U.S. student’s own language skills and knowledge of the host country. ETAs may also pursue individual study/research plans in addition to their teaching responsibilities.

17. About Fulbright, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs U.S. Department of State*, accessed on October 9, 2021. <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright/about-fulbright>.

18. Albert, E. The cost of ending Fulbright in China. *The Diplomat*, July 22, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-cost-of-ending-fulbright-in-china/>.

Fulbright-National Geographic Storytelling Fellowship	ECA and National Geographic Society	IIE	Provides opportunities for selected Fulbright U.S. student grantees to participate in an academic year of storytelling on a globally significant theme.
Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program	ECA and United States Department of Education	IIE	Awards grants to individual U.S. K–12 pre-teachers, teachers, and administrators; pre-doctoral students and postdoctoral faculty; and to U.S. institutions and organizations. Funding supports research and training efforts overseas that focus on non-Western foreign languages and area studies.

Source: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (2021). *Fulbright Programs: Grants for U.S. Students to Go Abroad*. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://eca.state.gov/Fulbright/Fulbright-programs>

In its early days, the Fulbright programs to China were primarily open to scholars. In 1999, the first group of recent college graduates came to China on this program. The following year, 26 U.S. students went to China, and for the last 15 years, that number has hovered around 50 annually.<sup>19</sup> Students who come to China through the Fulbright program attend 28 key universities in Chinese metropolises such as Tsinghua University, Peking University, Shanghai University of Foreign Studies, Sichuan University, and so on.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, compared to other programs, Fulbright offers a distinctly elite pathway to study in China, through which American students not only have access to China's top-notch educational resources but are also exposed to the most modern side of China.

However, in July 2020, then-U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order to suspend the Fulbright Program in China and Hong Kong, China, in response to the enactment of the Hong Kong National Security Law. This elicited strong reactions from the China-watching and academic communities. The alumni of the Fulbright program even launched a petition in opposition to its closure, which garnered more than 740 signatories within two days.<sup>21</sup>

**Peace Corps to China.** Another program with a similar fate to the Fulbright program is the Peace Corps to China program. The Peace Corps, founded by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and run by the U.S. government, is a volunteer program for American citizens, typically with college degrees. The volunteers are expected to work with governments, schools, nongovernmental

19 E. Lynch, “Biden should bring back the China Fulbright Program”, *SupChina*, November 11, 2020. <https://supchina.com/2020/11/11/biden-should-bring-back-the-china-fulbright-program/>.

20 美国富布莱特项目 [The Fulbright Program], *The office of Educational Affairs of the Embassy of P.R. of China in USA*, Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <http://usa.lxgz.org.cn/publish/portal131/tab6578/info126733.htm>.

21 E. Albert, “The Cost of ending Fulbright in China”, *The Diplomat*, July 22, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-cost-of-ending-fulbright-in-china/>.

organizations, nonprofit organizations, and entrepreneurs in education, youth development, community health, business, information technology, agriculture, and the environment.

In 1988, the U.S. and Chinese governments reached an agreement to send the Peace Corps to China, and the first group of volunteers arrived in 1993. At that time, the program was given a more friendly name, U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers. Then, in 1998, the Chinese Ministry of Education and the U.S. government signed a formal agreement, according to which volunteers would teach basic English and environmental protection courses in teachers' colleges and vocational technical institutes in four less-developed provinces in Western China: Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, and Gansu. Unlike the Fulbright, the Peace Corps provided an essential opportunity for American students to learn about how China, as a developing country, continued to fight poverty and contribute to this goal.

The Peace Corps is a government-funded program, but “the agency has always functioned independently within the executive branch, in part to prevent programs from being manipulated as direct tools of foreign policy.”<sup>22</sup> On China's side, the program is implemented by the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), China's nationwide not-for-profit organization conducting international educational exchanges and cooperation, and supervised by the Ministry of Education of China.<sup>23</sup> In January 2020, the U.S. government terminated the Peace Corps to China, not because of COVID-19 but because of growing Sino-U.S. frictions. Before the termination, surveys found that while China was not usually what people had in mind when they joined the Peace Corps, the satisfaction rates toward it were higher than those reported in most other countries.<sup>24</sup> Apart from that, the Peace Corps has sent more than 1,300 volunteers to China, and 27 former China volunteers now work in the U.S. State Department.<sup>25</sup> However, this also didn't save Peace Corps to China from suspension.

**100,000 Strong Initiative.** In contrast with the two programs previously mentioned, the suspension of the 100,000 Strong initiative is more than a pity because it integrates the advantages of the Fulbright and the Peace Corps, providing more diversified access for U.S. students to China; meanwhile, it opened an era of “official leadership and civilian participation.” The 100,000 Strong initiative was first announced by President Obama during his visit to China in November 2009. The

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22 P. Hessler, “The Peace Corps Breaks Ties with China”, *The New Yorker*, March 16, 2020.  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/16/the-peace-corps-breaks-ties-with-china>.

23 美中友好志愿者项目 [US-China Friendship Volunteers], *The Office of Educational Affairs of the Embassy of P.R. of China in USA*, Retrieved November 12, 2021, from  
<http://usa.lxgz.org.cn/publish/portal131/tab6578/info126732.htm>

24 Daniel Schoolenberg, “The inside story of the Peace Corps in China”, *SupChina*, September 30, 2021.  
<https://supchina.com/2021/09/30/the-inside-story-of-the-peace-corps-in-china/>.

25 P. Hessler, “The Peace Corps Breaks Ties with China”, *The New Yorker*, March 16, 2020.  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/16/the-peace-corps-breaks-ties-with-china>

plan proposes that the United States will send 100,000 American youth to study in China in the next four years, including high school students, undergraduate students, and graduate students.

The most distinctive feature of the 100,000 Strong initiative is its diversity. First, in terms of program formats, these involve: (1) joint training and dual-degree programs at U.S. and Chinese schools; (2) formal bachelor's, master's, or doctoral programs at Chinese universities; (3) Chinese language study courses in China; (4) one-year study visits or exchange programs (such as Fulbright scholarships); (5) study trips (organized by universities or professional institutions); (6) internships or jobs in China; (7) participation in volunteer work or service-learning projects; (8) teaching projects in China; (9) educational research in China supported by professional organizations or conducted by independent researchers; (10) other educational activities in China (e.g., educational trips, independent study programs, etc.). Secondly, in terms of disciplines, while most U.S. students have gone to China for the humanities disciplines such as languages and history, 100,000 Strong encouraged more students to study science, technology, engineering, medicine, and other disciplines in China; at the same time, it did not neglect the importance of vocational skills in communication and training. Last but not least, in terms of destination, the program encouraged U.S. students to venture into smaller cities and rural areas outside of China's major cities. Yunnan, for example, received 400 American students in one year.<sup>26</sup>

The 100,000 Strong initiative is initiated and coordinated primarily by the U.S. government, but the U.S. government has no special appropriation for the 100,000 Strong initiative, nor has it established a special office or government agency for this purpose. In addition to government scholarships, the funding source is provided primarily by private foundations in the United States. In addition, the Chinese government also promised to provide 20,000 scholarships for American students studying in China. To ensure the operation of the 100,000 Strong Initiative, the Ford Foundation and the Florence Fang Family Foundation of the United States each provided \$1 million early on. In January 2013, the United States established a nonprofit foundation independent of the government, which is committed to building the 100,000 Strong initiative into a long-term, continuous people-to-people and cultural exchange program. As a result, the 100,000 Strong Initiative became the actual promoter and source of funds of the 100,000 Strong initiative. Due to the influence of governmental leaders, especially the calls of Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton, the 100,000 Strong Initiative actively raised funds from enterprises and society to fund and support American students to study in China. The funds of the 100,000 Strong initiative mainly came from enterprises, private institutions, and philanthropists. Donors include international enterprises such as Microsoft,

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26 W. Li, “专访|白诗浪：为无边界中美交流贡献一份力量” [Interview| Frank Whitaker: Contributing to U.S.-China Exchanges without Borders], *Guangming Daily*, January 5, 2018. [https://www.sohu.com/a/216981048\\_107743](https://www.sohu.com/a/216981048_107743).

Motorola, and Citibank as well as enterprises with Chinese backgrounds such as China Wanxiang Group and Perfect World.

The 100,000 Strong China program had made significant achievements in promoting American students to China. According to IIE's research,<sup>27</sup> there were at least 26,686 participating in educational activities in China in 2011 (including mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau), thanks in large part to the program. Funded by 100,000 Strong, for-credit study abroad programs became the most popular among American students traveling to China for study, followed by study tours. In addition, more and more American students were willing to participate in more extended academic and language coursework in China. The number of Americans working toward full degrees from Chinese institutions includes 1,028 students in undergraduate programs and 1,156 students in graduate programs, primarily at the master's degree level.

However, the 100,000 Strong initiative was maintained only during the Obama administration; originally, 100,000 Strong was to be followed by a more extensive 1,000,000 Strong initiative. However, the Trump administration showed no interest in maintaining it. With the end of the 100,000 Strong China, the rush of U.S. students studying in China subsided, and the number of Americans studying in China has been declining since 2015.<sup>28</sup>

From the perspective of program design, the Fulbright program gave U.S. students insight into the "advanced" side of China; the Peace Corps program gave U.S. students a look at the "underdeveloped" side of China; and, above all, 100,000 Strong gave students the opportunity to acquire a more holistic image of China. It is unfortunate that the three flagship programs have been suspended. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the suspensions effectively wiped out the opportunity for American students to learn about a multidimensional and panoramic view China. Under such circumstances, can existing programs make up for the gap?

### **Existing U.S. Programs**

With tensions in Sino-U.S. relations intensified, the U.S. government called off three major flagship projects, but some other projects are retained, including the National Security Education Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and the Critical Language Scholarship.

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27 Belyavina, R. U.S. Students in China: Meeting the Goals of the 100,000 Strong Initiative. *Institute of International Education*, January 2013. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/US-Students-in-China>.

28 Number of American Students to China Decreasing, *Access Education LLC*, March 17, 2015. <https://accesseducationllc.com/american-students-to-china/>.

**National Security Education Program.** The National Security Education Program (NSEP), initiated in 1991, is a key component of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) in the U.S Department of Defense (DoD). The purpose of NSEP is to create a “workforce ready to serve 21st century national security needs” and to build a “broader and more qualified pool of U.S. citizens with foreign language and international skills”.<sup>29</sup> The NSEP lists some countries as “areas of emphasis,” of which China is one.<sup>30</sup> Among the nine initiatives that NSEP offered, the David L. Boren Scholarship and Fellowship, The Language Flagship, Project Global Officer (Project GO), and the Language Training Centers provide opportunities for American students studying in China (Table 3). The similarities of these programs are: first, the initiatives are (co-)administered by the Institute of International Education; second, the initiatives focus on humanities, especially language and cultural studies. Another feature that deserves attention is that China is one of the most popular destinations for these students. For instance, the total number of Boren Scholars and Fellows to China in 2018 is 46, which is the largest.<sup>31</sup> In Project GO, China was also the most popular destination for students who studied overseas.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 3. The NSEP Initiatives Providing Opportunities for American Students Studying in China**

Name	Administration	Description
David L. Boren Scholarship	IIE	Boren Scholars and Fellows receive funding (up to \$25,000 for scholars and \$25,000 for fellows) to study the languages and cultures most critical to our nation's security. In exchange, they agree to utilize those skills within the government by seeking and securing federal employment for at least one year. <sup>33</sup>
David L. Boren Fellowship	IIE	

29 National Security Education Program, Defense Language and National Education Office, Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/about-nsep>

30 National Security Education Program. 2018 Annual Report, Defense Language and National Security Educations office, p.7. Retrieved on November 17, 2021 from [https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29\\_0.pdf](https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29_0.pdf),

31 National Security Educational Program, 2018 Annual Report, Defense Language and National Security Educations office, p.72. Retrieved November 17, 2021 from [https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29\\_0.pdf](https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29_0.pdf),

32 National Security Education Program, Annual Report, Defense Language and National Education Office, p.45. Retrieved November 17, 2021 from [https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29\\_0.pdf](https://nsep.gov/sites/default/files/NSEP%202018%20Annual%20Report%20%28web%29_0.pdf),

33 National Security Educational Program, David L. Boren Fellowships, *Defense Language and National Education Office*. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/david-l-boren-fellowships>

The Language Flagship	NSEP and IIE	The initiative is designed to help individuals achieve superior-level proficiency in critical languages, including Chinese. It awards grants to U.S. universities recognized as leaders in the field of language education. <sup>34</sup>
Project GO	DINSEO and IIE	The initiative is aimed at improving the language skills, regional expertise, and intercultural communication skills of future military officers. The 22 Project GO institutions are currently offering fully funded programs in 14 critical languages (including) at home or abroad. <sup>35</sup>
Language Training Centers	DINSEO and IIE	The program is a collaborative initiative between the Department of Defense (DoD) and institutions of higher education to develop expertise in critical languages, cultures, and strategic regions for DoD personnel. <sup>36</sup>

Resource: NSEP. (n.d.). *Nine Critical Initiative, One Goal*. Retrieved December 3, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/initiatives>

**Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program.** The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program was initiated in 2001, and it has financed 34,000 students from 1,350 U.S. institutions to 155 countries for study.<sup>37</sup> The program enables American students to gain proficiency in a diversity of languages and cultures, skills that are critically important to their academic and career development, as well as to U.S. national security and economic prosperity. The program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), but IIE has administered the program since its inception. The program works with universities and colleges across the U.S. to encourage and support applicants from public, private, two-year, and four-year institutions.

A remarkable feature of the program is that it enables students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad. To be eligible for the Gilman Program, applicants must be receiving a federal Pell Grant<sup>38</sup> during the time of application or provide proof that they will be receiving a Pell Grant during the term of their study abroad program or internship. Veterans of military service are

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34 National Security Educational Program, The Language Flagship. *Defense Language and National Education Office*. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/language-flagship>

35 National Security Educational Program, Project Global Officer. *Defense Language and National Education Office*. Retrieved on November 12, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/project-go>

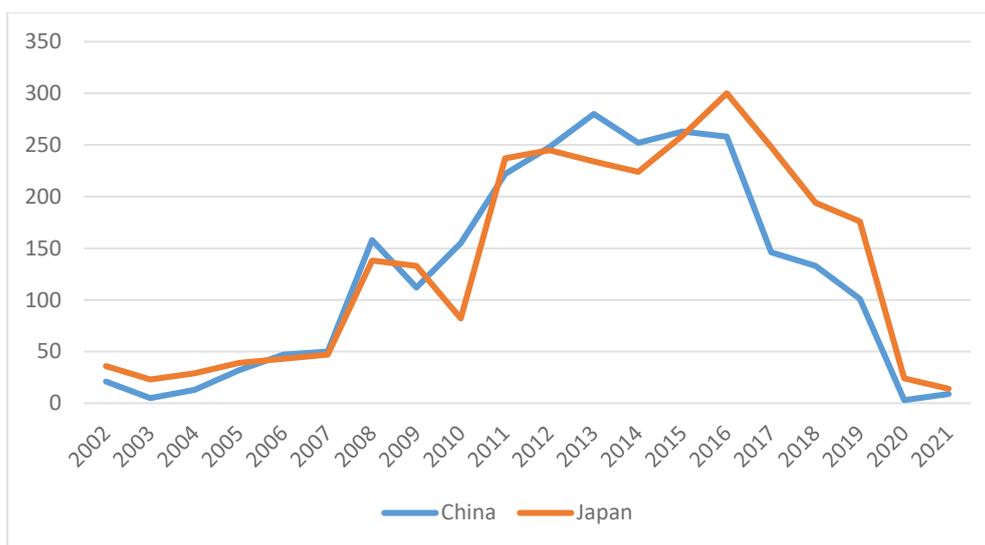
36 National Security Educational Program, Language Training Centers. *Defense Language and National Education Office*. Retrieved on November 12, 2021, from <https://nsep.gov/content/language-training-centers>.

37 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, U.S. *Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*, Retrieved on December 12, 2021, from <https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/>.

38 Federal Pell Grant is a subsidy the U.S. federal government provides for students who need it to pay for college.

encouraged to apply, and preference is given to veterans when other factors are equivalent. Through this initiative, students studying in China are the second largest group in the total number of funded students, following only those who study in Japan. Thus far, the program has supported 2,514 U.S. students studying in China and 2,736 students in Japan (Figure 4). Notably, for most of the period prior to 2015, more program awardees were studying in China than in Japan, a trend that was reversed in 2015. The program now supports significantly more U.S. students to Japan than to China.

**Figure 4. A Comparison of the Number of U.S. Students Studying in China and Japan in the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program**



Source: Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program (2021). *Scholar Directory*. Retrieved Dec.12 from <https://gilmanapplication.iie.org/ScholarDirectory.aspx>.

**The Critical Language Scholarship:** The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) program supports American undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities to receive intensive training in one of 15 U.S.-designated critical languages along with structured cultural immersion overseas. CLS is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and is implemented by the American Councils for International Education, a nonprofit organization founded in 1974 for language and area professionals. It has a community of more than 94,000 alumni, including national leaders, ministers, members of Parliament, ambassadors, and chief executive officers.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Critical Language Scholarship, *Critical Language Scholarship*. Retrieved December 10, 2021, from <https://clscholarship.org/about>.

Among the 15 languages, Chinese and Japanese are the only languages that require applicants to have at least two years of study. Normally, from 2007–2021, in each year there were two to five higher education institutions from Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as program sites.<sup>40</sup>

Based on this brief analysis, it is evident that, aside from the Gilman scholarship program, the other two programs are too small in scale to be commensurate to the three suspended programs. Additionally, these programs are mostly focused on language and culture learning, which is rather a narrow scope.

### **Support From China**

U.S. students studying in China have received official support not only from local governments but also from the Chinese central government. Notwithstanding the friction in Sino-U.S. relations in recent years, there has been little change in the Chinese government's policy on funding for international students, including U.S. students. Stricken by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of international students to China has a sharp fall in the past two years, in part due to difficulty obtaining a visa to study in China. However, President Xi Jinping's two letters to international students, respectively in 2020<sup>41</sup> and 2021<sup>42</sup>, both mentioned that China continues to welcome young people from all countries to study in China and that China will continue to provide generous assistance to all foreign students in China. All those signs imply that the door for U.S. students studying in China will remain open for a long time to come. To make studying in China affordable, U.S. students can file for three scholarships offered by the Chinese government for international students around the world, including the Chinese Government Scholarship, local government scholarships, and the International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship. While these are not specifically designed for American students, American students can apply for a special scholarship, the Sino-American Cultural Exchange Scholarship.

**Chinese Government Scholarship.** The Chinese Government Scholarship was established in the 1950s and was the first scholarship in China for international students to China. It is open to undergraduates, postgraduates, and general and senior scholars. At present, the China Scholarship

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40 The Chinese Language, *Critical Language Scholarship*. Retrieved December 14, 2021, from <https://clscholarship.org/languages/chinese>.

41 Xi Jinping, “习近平给北京科技大学全体巴基斯坦留学生回信” [Xi Jinping wrote back to all Pakistani students at University of Science and Technology Beijing], *Xinhua News Agency*, May 18, 2020. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/18/c\\_139065857.htm?from=groupmessage](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/18/c_139065857.htm?from=groupmessage)

42 Xi Jinping, “习近平给‘国际青年领袖对话’项目外籍青年代表回信” [Xi Jinping wrote back to foreign youth representatives of the Global Young Leaders Dialogue], *Xinhua News Agency*, August 11, 2021. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/11/c\\_1310121056.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-08/11/c_1310121056.htm)

Council is responsible for the management of the scholarship. The Chinese Government Scholarship supports American students to apply for 289 universities in China and a wide range of disciplines.<sup>43</sup> The awards are divided into two categories: fully funded and partially funded. American students can apply for the following four categories.

**Table 4. China Government Scholarship Programs Open to U.S. Students**

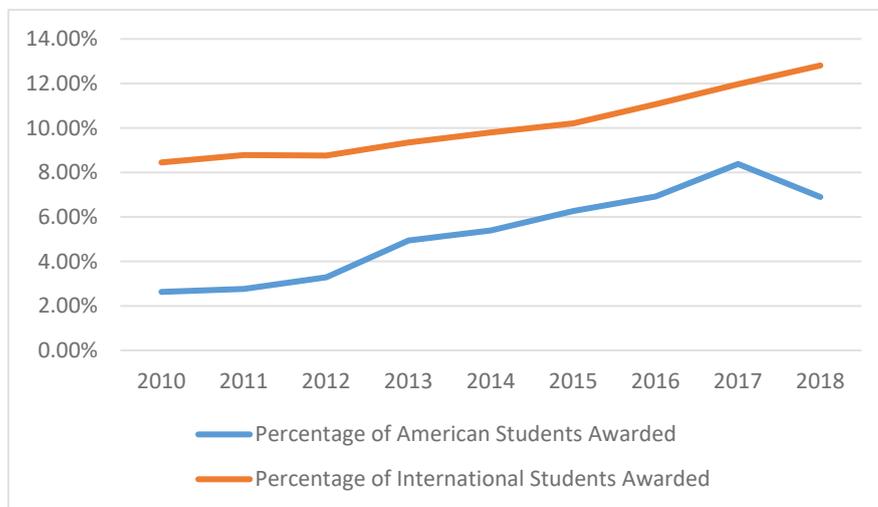
Name	Administration	Description
Bilateral Program	Dispatching department of their home countries	The program accords with the cooperation and exchange agreements or consensus reached by the Chinese government and the governments and institutions of other nations. It is open to undergraduates, postgraduates, and general and senior scholars.
University Program	Universities	The program is designed to finance the study of talented international students in China that are directly selected and recommended by designated Chinese universities. The supporting student categories are various, which is subject to the requirements of each of these universities.
Designated Scholarship Program-WMO Program	WMO	Aspiring international students and scholars in meteorological research; undergraduates and postgraduates
Student Exchange Program	Universities	The program, launched in accordance with exchange and cooperation agreements between Chinese universities and foreign partners, is designed to support general and senior scholars for a training session of no more than 12 months.

*Resource: China Scholarship Council. Application Guide for Chinese Government Scholarship. Retrieved December 3, 2021, from [https://www.campuschina.org/content/details3\\_74776.html](https://www.campuschina.org/content/details3_74776.html)*

*Figure 5 shows that the percentage of U.S. scholarship recipients is below average at present. From 2010–2018, the percentage of U.S. students awarded Chinese Government Scholarships steadily increased, rising from 2.63% in 2010 to 6.9% as of 2018, with the apex of 8.38% in 2017.*

43 Liu, X. & Qian T. “来华留学生奖学金制度设计的困境与突破” [Difficulties and Breakthroughs in the Design of Scholarship System for International Students in China], 国家教育行政学院学报 [Journal of National Academy of Education Administration], 4, (2021), 75-80.

**Figure 5. A Comparison of the U.S. Students and International Students Awarded**



Source: Department of International Cooperation and Exchange at the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 来华留学简明统计(2015-2018)[Concise Statistics on Study in China (2015-2018)].

**Local Government Scholarships.** Local government scholarships are those established by local governments to attract international students to higher education institutions in a particular locale. Currently, a lot of provinces and municipalities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Hubei, and Liaoning, have set local government scholarships. In addition, some prefecture-level cities have also designed certain international scholarships; for instance, the Nanjing Municipal Government scholarship. There are also some special scholarships designed for U.S. students. For instance, the Sister Cities of Jinan Scholarship, set up by the Jinan Municipal Government, encourages international students from American sister cities of Jinan (including cities that have built friendly international relations with Jinan, which are also referred to as “sister cities”) to study in Jinan. Sacramento, California, is one of these cities. However, these scholarships are very competitive. The scholarship opportunities for international students offered by the Beijing government, for example, are rather limited, covering less than 10% of students to Beijing, and the percentage of awards for U.S. students is not known.

**International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship.** The International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship, previously named the Confucius Institutes Scholarship, is a program aimed at meeting the growing demand of the international community for Chinese language teachers and facilitating Chinese language education in other countries. The program was supported by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC), a governmental unit affiliated with the Ministry of Education and previously named Hanban. American students may apply to this scholarship through

“recommending institutions,” which include Confucius Institutes, independently operated Confucius Classrooms, certain HSK test centers, Chinese language (education) departments of foreign universities, professional associations for Chinese language instruction of other countries, and Chinese embassies (consulates) abroad. These institutions are in charge of recommending outstanding students and currently employed Chinese language teachers to study International Chinese Language Education or related majors in 196<sup>44</sup> Chinese universities and colleges, which are called the host institutions.<sup>45</sup> More information about these scholarships can be found in an additional section of this report.

**The Sino-U.S. Cultural Exchange Scholarship.** Developed as a response to the 100,000 Strong initiative launched by the Obama administration in 2009, the Sino-U.S. Cultural Exchange Scholarship program is sponsored by the Ministry of Education of China to finance U.S. students either for degree studies or for nondegree credits. Although 100,000 Strong has been suspended, the Sino-U.S. Cultural Exchange Scholarship program is still ongoing. The scholarship for degree studies is a full-tuition scholarship for full-time graduate students (both master’s and doctoral) of U.S. nationality who are admitted to a university recognized by the Chinese Government Scholarship program. The scholarship for nondegree credits is available to American students who have studied at designated Chinese universities for three months or more and whose credits earned in China are recognized by a U.S. institution of higher education. It aims to encourage the establishment of exchange programs, or the expansion of existing ones, between the designated Chinese universities and their American counterparts.

Overall, the support from China for American students is relatively stable, but compared to other countries, the percentage of U.S. scholarship receivers still needs to increase. Additionally, the Chinese programs are homogeneous in form — primarily supporting U.S. students to pursue degrees or conduct exchanges in China but not involve internship and volunteer programs. Other than the CSC program, the website development and outreach of other scholarship programs are seriously lagging behind. Except for information on how to apply, those official websites lack long-lasting support for the applicants, making the program less well-known and less influential.

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44 国际中文教师奖学金接收院校 [International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship Host Institutions (2021)], *Center For Language Education and Cooperation*. Retrieved December 12, 2021, from <https://cis.chinese.cn/Account/AcceptShool>

45 Application Guide for International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship, *Center For Language Education and Cooperation*. Retrieved on December 12, 2021 from <https://cis.chinese.cn/Account/Proceduresfor?lang=en-us>.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Changes in the Sino-U.S. relationship have significantly influenced bilateral student flows across the past two decades, demonstrating how student exchange is influenced by geopolitical tensions. Although the number of American students studying in China has significantly increased compared to the beginning of 2000s, the trend is gradually declining due to continuous frictions between the two countries. Educational exchange has a deep impact on students studying in either country, and if the two largest economies seek to realize a sustainable, cooperative relationship moving forward, it is imperative that the governments of both sides reverse declining trends elaborated in this section.

It is a customary practice for governments to provide funding for students studying abroad. For students, this is not the icing on the cake but a necessary or even indispensable condition, deciding whether a student is able to receive education in a foreign country (which usually means more expensive living and education costs). According to previous studies, there have been fewer American students willing to study in China<sup>46,47,48</sup> since 2013. The deterrents are various, among which financial constraints are the principal factor.<sup>49,50,51,52</sup> Government funding matters. The three flagship programs — the Fulbright Program to China, the Peace Corps to China and 100,000 Strong — once built a holistic channel for American students to learn and understand China. Their suspension is unfortunate, and existing programs can hardly close the gap left by them. Although the programs on the China-side are fairly stable, there still exist serious issues, such as program formats, the percentage of U.S. recipients, and their outreach.

There is one more issue worth attention: the involvement of civilian power in funding student mobility. The creativity of the 100,000 Strong initiative lies in the fact that it is initiated by the

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46 Number of American Students to China Decreasing. *Access Education LLC*, March 17, 2015. <https://accesseducationllc.com/american-students-to-china/>

47 Why Are Fewer American Students Going to China? *The Asia Society*, 2017. <https://asiasociety.org/new-york/why-are-fewer-american-students-going-china>

48 P. Vanham, “US students should be encouraged to study in China”, *Financial Times*, November 22, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/6665e98c-ece6-11e8-8180-9cf212677a57>.

49 Number of American Students to China Decreasing. *Access Education LLC*, March 17, 2015. <https://accesseducationllc.com/american-students-to-china/>

50 Why Are Fewer American Students Going to China? *The Asia Society*, Retrieved October 12, 2021, from <https://asiasociety.org/new-york/why-are-fewer-american-students-going-china>

51 R. Belyavina, “U.S. Students in China: Meeting the Goals of the 100,000 Strong Initiative”, January, 2013. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/US-Students-in-China>.

52 Guo Y. “从国家利益角度更有效吸引美国学子来华留学” [Improving Effectiveness in Attracting American Students for Study in China in the National Interests], (Beijing: Guangming Daily Press, 2012).

government but is operated by the non-governmental sector, which unleashed great passion and resources from the American civil society. Although the 100,000 Strong initiative itself did come to an end, societal participation in this field did not. For example, the Institute of International Education (IIE) initiated the China-U.S. Scholars Program (CUSP), an exchange program for Chinese and American scholars and students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences to teach, study, or conduct research abroad in China, Hong Kong SAR (China), or the U.S.

The U.S. and Chinese governments should highlight the importance of encouraging U.S. students to study in China, which could be a first step to break the ice between the two countries. Second, considering the features of and the contributions made by the three suspended U.S. government funded or initiated programs, it is recommended that they are restored, or similar programs developed. Third, the Chinese government should consider increasing the percentage of U.S. scholarship receivers and further develop current programs in terms of their format, publicity, and network-building opportunities. Last but not least, universities, enterprises, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals should work together to create more programs designed to fund U.S. students to study in China, so that this important way of people-to-people exchange will be less impacted by geopolitical tensions in the future.

## CONCLUSION

*Yawei Liu manages the China Focus at the Carter Center and has been a member of numerous Carter Center missions to monitor Chinese village, township, and county people's congress deputy elections since 1997. He launched the China Elections & Governance website in 2002 and the U.S.-China Perception Monitor in 2014.*

On December 16, 1978, towards the end of my freshman year in college, my fellow classmates and I heard over the college PA system that China and the U.S. would establish diplomatic relations effective January 1, 1979. To say that we were bewildered is an understatement. Why would revolutionary China normalize relations with the imperial and decadent United States? After watching Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States during the spring festival of 1979 on a 9-inch black-and-white television, I began to ask myself whether the United States I learned about from elementary school on was a real reflection of the United States.

A few years later in 1982, I went to work as an English editor in a provincial publishing house. During my time there, some of my friends and classmates traveled to the United States to study and encouraged me to do so. I was very reluctant. I failed the physical for my undergraduate admission such that my parents had to pull all their connections to get me in to college. I thought there was no way I could pass the physical for an American graduate school, not to mention the fact I had no guanxi there. To my surprise, there was no such requirement and, upon further encouragement from my family and friends, I accepted an offer to study for a masters in American history at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). A year later, my wife joined me as a graduate student at the same university.

My professors at UHM, Idus Newby, Daniel Kwok and David Farber, all encouraged me to further my studies in the United States. I was also reluctant, this time struggling with the GRE instead of a physical exam. To my surprise yet again, however, I was offered the Robert Woodruff Fellowship at Emory University in 1989 to pursue my doctorate.

Under the guidance of Professors Fraser Harbutt, Irwin Hyatt and Patrick Allitt, I wrote my dissertation on Mao Zedong's perception of the United States and its impact on U.S.-China relations. I received my doctorate in 1996 and began to teach American history at DeKalb College in Atlanta. In the same year, Dr. Robert Pastor, a professor of political science at Emory University and director

of Latin America and Caribbean Program at the Carter Center, asked me to help him with election monitoring in Chinese villages. Two years later, I began to work for President Carter, the same gentleman I saw standing next to Deng Xiaoping on that little black-and-white television in 1979.

I took the oath to become an American citizen in 2005.

My story, along with those of other authors in this report, are a handful of many, but it's hard to understate the impact that U.S.-China educational exchange has had on our lives. Exchange has not only guided us on a path towards proximate goals, like educating the next generation or conducting historical research, but it has also allowed us to contribute to strengthened mutual understanding, trust, and peaceful coexistence between the United States and China. These are perhaps the most salient benefits of such exchange. It provides Americans and Chinese an opportunity to see and understand the other country firsthand and to look past the stereotypes, propaganda, and misinformation that so often cloud the judgement of their policymakers.

Alongside its innumerable benefits, there is no doubt that educational exchange has brought unique challenges, including concerns about academic freedom and intellectual property. As this report has described in detail, the challenge for policymakers today is to simultaneously sustain the benefits of educational exchange and attentively address its risks. However, this is a surgical task. As tensions between the United States and China worsen, there is a danger that reckless policy will significantly slow the progress that educational exchange has brought to the U.S.-China relationship. This report has recounted the past of such exchange, detailed the predicament of its present circumstances, and posed recommendations to address its challenges in future.

Without careful attention by policymakers in both countries, there is a risk that this critical pillar of U.S.-China relations will collapse. The consequence for mutual understanding between the U.S. and China will be dramatic and students, just like me in 1978, will once again be left to only ponder the reality of the other country without the opportunity to experience it firsthand.

