

Dear Mr. Garland,

We, faculty members at the University of Pennsylvania, are writing this open letter to express our concerns about the U.S. Department of Justice's *China Initiative*. We acknowledge the importance to the United States of protecting both intellectual property and information that is essential to our national and economic security. We understand that concerns about Chinese government sanctioned activities including intellectual property theft and economic espionage are important to address. We believe, however, that the China Initiative has deviated significantly from its claimed mission: it is harming the United States' research and technology competitiveness and it is fueling biases that, in turn, raise concerns about racial profiling. As the President's Science Advisor, Dr. Eric Lander, [stated](#) on August 10, 2021: "We have to assiduously avoid basing policies or processes on prejudice – including those that could fuel anti-Asian sentiments or xenophobia." We believe that the China Initiative is one such policy. We therefore would like to suggest that you terminate the China Initiative and replace it with an appropriate response that avoids the flaws of this initiative.

More specifically, we believe the China Initiative suffers from the following fundamental flaws:

First, the China Initiative disproportionately targets researchers of Chinese origin. Publicly available information indicates that investigations are often triggered not by any evidence of wrongdoing, but just because of a researcher's connections with China. (For example, see recent article and the research by Prof. Jenny Lee quoted therein. ref: [Has the Hunt for Chinese Spies Become a Witch Hunt?](#), Karin Fischer, Chronicle of Higher Education, August 11, 2021). In many cases the federal response seems disproportionate and inappropriate. In some cases, federal agents associated with the China Initiative have prosecuted researchers without solid evidence. Moreover, racial profiling – even when undertaken in pursuit of justice – is both inconsistent with U.S. law and with the principles underlying our society. Moreover, these actions do not just affect the prosecuted faculty but affect the many more university researchers who are targeted, investigated, and feel threatened by inquiries initiated without prior evidence of significant wrongdoing. Universities and research institutions are often pressured to investigate researchers who are singled out only because of their personal or professional connections with China. (For example, see the description by Prof. Randy Katz, the Vice Chancellor for Research of the University of California Berkeley during a recent Congressional Roundtable available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G24w7d2\\_owo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G24w7d2_owo))

Second, in most of the China Initiative cases involving academics, the alleged crime has nothing to do with scientific espionage or intellectual property theft. Most prosecutions are for misconduct such as failure to disclose foreign appointments or funding. While such problems should be addressed, they should not be confused with national security concerns. Due to the openness of scientific research in academia, it is not surprising that the China Initiative has not led to more espionage-related prosecutions. It is misleading to the public that such prosecutions on unrelated crimes are presented as efforts combating national security threats.

Third, the China Initiative is harming the U.S. science and technology enterprise and the future of the U.S. STEM workforce. Since World War II, the U.S. has benefited from an influx of many of the most talented scientists from around the world, including a large number from China. They have played a significant role in our success as a society. For example, a 2018 study by the American Society for Engineering Education reports that 28.4% of engineering faculty (and 31.5% of Assistant Professors) in the U.S. are Asian. In recent years, the China Initiative (and some other actions of the federal government) have created an increasingly hostile atmosphere for Chinese Americans, visitors, and immigrants of Chinese origin, which has already discouraged many scholars from coming to or staying in the U.S. This seriously hampers our efforts to recruit the best Chinese students and postdoctoral scholars.

The difference between the open fundamental research carried out at universities and more applied and proprietary industrial or military research in the commercial sector must be recognized. Many of our most challenging global problems, including climate change & sustainability and current & future pandemics, require international engagement. Without an open and inclusive environment that attracts the best talents in all areas, the United States cannot retain its world leading position in science and technology. In some China Initiative cases, normal academic activities that we all do, such as serving as referees and writing recommendation letters, are adduced as evidence of “extensive dealings with the PRC” (ref: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20452311-gang-chen-federal-affidavit>). Such actions are based on a significant misunderstanding of how scientific research works. They are detrimental to international collaboration. Instead of protecting the national security of the U.S., we believe such actions harm the U.S.’s ability to innovate.

We strongly urge you to terminate the China Initiative and develop an alternative response to the challenges posed by our relations with the People’s Republic of China, one that avoids racial profiling and discouraging beneficial and important collaborations and influx of talented personnel.

Sincerely yours,

Concerned faculty members (signatory names listed on next pages)

<b>Penn Faculty Name</b>	<b>Penn Faculty Department</b>
Abraham Nitzan	Chemistry
Adam Lidz	Physics & Astronomy
Amish Patel	Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Andrea Liu	Physics and Astronomy
Andrew Lamas	Urban Studies
Andrew M. Rappe	Chemistry
Ania Loomba	English
Ann Kuttner	History of Art
Anne Norton	Political Science
Arjun G. Yodh	Physics and Astronomy
Arnold Mathijssen	Physics & Astronomy
Arvind Bhusnurmath	Computer and Information Science

Avery Goldstein	Political Science
Benjamin C. Pierce	Computer and Information Science
Bhuvnesh Jain	Physics and Astronomy
Bo Zhen	Physics and Astronomy
Boon Thau Loo	Computer and Information Science
Camille Z. Charles	Sociology/Africana Studies
Camillo Jose Taylor	Computer and Information Science
Chao Guo	School of Social Policy & Practice
Charles Yang	Linguistics and Computer and Information Science
Chenshu Zhou	Art history
Chi-ming Yang	English
Ching-Li Chai	Mathematics
Christopher P. Atwood	East Asian Languages and Civilizations
Corey McMillan	Neurology
Cynthia Sung	Mechanical Engineering & Applied Mechanics

Dagmawi Woubshet	English
Dan Roth	Computer and Information Science
Daniel J Rader	Medicine and Genetics
Daniel Janzen	Biology
David Brainard	Psychology
David Cormode	Radiology
David Eng	English
David Lydon-Staley	Annenberg School for Communication
David Spafford	East Asian Languages & Civilizations
Dennis E Discher	Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
Despina Kontos	Radiology
Dinesh Jayaraman	Computer and Information Science
Douglas Durian	Physics and Astronomy
Elliot Lipeles	Physics & Astronomy
Emily Hannum	Sociology

Emily Steinlight	English
Erfei Bi	Cell and Developmental Biology
Eric J. Schelter	Chemistry
Evan Siegelman	Radiology
Farouk Dako	Radiology
Flavia Vitale	Neurology
Foteini Mourkioti	Orthopaedic Surgery
Frederick Dickinson	History
Gary Bernstein	Physics & Astronomy
Gary D. Wu	Medicine
Gary Hack	City and Regional Planning, Weitzman School of Design
Gerald Campano	GSE
Gregory Robert Grant	Genetics
Guobin Yang	Annenberg School & Sociology
Guoli ming	Neuroscience

Hanming Fang	Economics
Hao Wu	Genetics
Heather Love	English
Hongzhe Lee	Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Informatics
Hsiao-wen Cheng	East Asian Languages and Civilizations
I-Wei Chen	Materials Science and Engineering
Insup Lee	Computer and Information Science
Jacob Brenner	Department of Medicine
Jacob Gardner	Computer and Information Science
James Aguirre	Physics and Astronomy
James English	English
James Gee	Radiology
James Ker	Classical Studies
Jay Zhu	Microbiology
Jayaram K Udupa	Radiology

Jean-Christophe Cloutier	English
Jed Esty	English
Jeffery Saven	Chemistry
Jeffrey Winkler	Chemistry
Jennifer S. Ponce de León	English
Jere Behrman	Economics and Sociology
Jeremy Wang	Biomedical Sciences
Jessa Lingel	Annenberg School for Communication
Jianbo Shi	Computer and Information Science
Jing Li	Electrical and Systems Engineering
John A. Detre, MD	Neurology
John D. Landis (Emeritus)	City and Regional Planning
John Kehayias	Critical Writing Program
John Murray	Genetics



Jonathan D. Moreno	Medical Ethics and Health Policy
Jorge Santiago-Aviles	Electrical and Systems Engineering
Joseph Devietti	Computer & Information Science
Josephine Park	English
Joshua Dunaief	Ophthalmology
Joshua Plotkin	Biology
Julia Alekseyeva	English
Julia Lynch	Political Science
Junhyong Kim	Biology
Junwei Shi	Cancer Biology
Justin Khoury	Physics and Astronomy
Karen Redrobe	History of Art
Kathleen Hall	Literacy, Culture, and International Education
Kathryn Hellerstein	Germanic Languages and Literatures
Kevin He	Economics

Konrad Kording	Neuroscience and Bioengineering
Kostas Daniilidis	Computer Information Science
Lachlan Smith	Orthopaedic Surgery
Li Shen	Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Informatics
Liang Feng	Materials Science and Engineering
Liling Wan	Cancer Biology
Lin Z. Li	Radiology
Linda Grabner Travis	Romance Languages
Linda H. Chance	East Asian Languages and Civilizations
Ling Qin	Orthopaedic Surgery
Long Ding	Neuroscience
Lou Soslowsky	Orthopaedic Surgery
Lu Lu	Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
M. Ani Hsieh	Mechanical Engineering
Marc F Schmidt	Biology

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Marcia Ferguson	SAS Theatre Arts
Mariangela Bernardi	Physics and Astronomy
Marisa Kozlowski	Chemistry
Mark Liberman	Linguistics, Computer and Information Science
Mark Trodden	Physics & Astronomy
Mark Yatskar	Computer and Information Science
Mechthild Pohlschroder	Biology
Meera Sundaram	Genetics
Megan Matthews	Chemistry
Melissa E Sanchez	English
Michael Lampson	Biology
Michael Louis Platt	Neuroscience, Psychology, and Marketing
Michael Posa	Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics
Mien-hwa Chiang	East Asian Languages and Civilizations

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Minghong Ma	Neuroscience
Murray Grossman	Neurology
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Nicholas J. Hand, PhD	Genetics
Nico Millman	English
Nikhil Anand	Anthropology
Ning Jenny Jiang	Bioengineering
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Patrick Walsh	Chemistry
Paul Ducheyne	Bioengineering
Paul Janmey	Physiology
Paul Saint-Amour	English
Paul Yushkevich	Radiology
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Rogers M. Smith	Political Science
Roy Hoshi Hamilton	Neurology
Rudra Sil	Political Science & Huntsman Program
Rupa Pillai	Asian American Studies Program
Sarah Tishkoff	Genetics and Biology
Sergei Vinogradov	Biochemistry and Biophysics
Shu Yang	Materials Science and Engineering
Simon Richter	Germanic Languages and Literatures
So-Rim Lee	East Asian Languages and Civilizations

Stephan A. Zdancewic	Computer and Information Science
Stephanie Weirich	Computer and Information Science
Stephen DiNardo	Cell and Developmental Biology
Steven Weitzman	Religious Studies
Struan Grant	Pediatrics
Tatyana Svitkina	Biology
Thomas Mallouk	Chemistry
Tobias Baumgart	Chemistry
Tony Cai	Statistics and Data Science
Tony Pantev	Mathematics
Toorjo Ghose	SP2
Travis McGaha	Computer and Information Science
Vatinee Bunya	Ophthalmology
Victor Pickard	Annenberg School for Communication
Vincent Liu	Computer and Information Science

Vivek Shenoy	Materials Science and Engineering
Wayne Gao	Economics
Wei Guo	Biology
Wei Tong	Pediatrics
Weijie Su	Statistics and Data Science
Wenchao Song	Systems Pharmacology and Translational Therapeutics
Xi Song	Sociology
Xianxin Hua	Cancer Biology
Xiaolu Yang	Cancer Biology
Xiaowei Sherry Liu	Orthopaedic Surgery
Xiaoying Liu	Population Studies Center
Xu Cheng	Economics
Yan Yuan	Penn Dental School
Yao Zeng	Finance
Yingdi Qin	Mathematics

Yoichiro Mori	Mathematics and Department of Biology
Yong Fan	Radiology
Yuanquan Song	Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
Yue Hou	Political Science
Yun Ding	Biology
Zachary G Ives	Computer and Information Science
Zahra Fakhraai	Department of Chemistry
Zhaolan Zhou	Genetics
Zhiliang Cheng	Bioengineering
Ziyue Gao	Genetics