

February 8, 2022

Ana Mari Cauce  
Office of the President  
The University of Washington  
301 Gerberding Hall  
Box 351230  
Seattle, WA 98195

Dear President Cauce:

I write to urge you to terminate your existing academic and research partnerships with universities located in the People's Republic of China (PRC) that have been overtly tasked by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to support Beijing's military-industrial complex.

In a speech last year in Beijing, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping said that the PRC would "exhaust all means" to recruit intelligent and innovative professionals from around the world to support the technological development of the CCP's military, known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Such efforts, which include the PRC's Thousand Talents Program and its Double First-Class University Plan, are unambiguously geared towards advancing military-civil fusion (MCF), a national strategy of the CCP aimed at acquiring and developing the world's cutting-edge technology, including through theft, to achieve economic and military dominance.

In recent months, the PRC's increasingly aggressive tactics have also ensnared several notable U.S. academics and jeopardized the standing of their university patrons. This includes once-acclaimed Harvard University professor Charles Lieber, who in December 2021 was convicted in federal court on charges stemming from his illicit relationship with the PRC government. Lieber's case, and other similar convictions, raise important questions about how the United States assesses risk to its national security within its broader research enterprise.

The PRC is fully integrating Chinese private industry and the PRC's civilian universities into their MCF strategy. To that end, nearly 70 Chinese civilian universities have been officially designated as part of the PRC's defense enterprise by the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND), the civilian agency responsible for funding commercial and academic research in support of the PLA's requirements. That list of 70 PLA-linked civilian universities includes at least one of your current academic partners in the PRC.

For decades, Beijing has openly exploited the expertise of Chinese students and scholars studying or conducting research in the United States to accelerate the PRC's economic and military development. For example, according to one study conducted between 2007 and 2017,

the PLA reportedly sent more than 2,500 of its own scientists abroad to study and work at foreign universities. Some of these scientists travelled abroad under civilian cover so as to obfuscate their military affiliations. After completing their studies, these scientists returned to the PRC to support the country's military-industrial complex, including its nuclear weapons program and cyber-espionage platforms. Increasingly, Beijing has also come to rely on its civilian students and researchers to enable such nefarious work. This includes formal sponsorship of promising Chinese scholars in science, technology, engineering, and math to study at American and other foreign universities, after which time they are expected to return to the PRC to provide the technological know-how and talent needed to support its defense industry.

Information available in open sources indicates that the University of Washington currently maintains at least one partnership agreement with Peking University, with whom it previously jointly operated a Confucius Institute. Even though the University of Washington shuttered its Confucius Institute, the university elected to maintain its partnership with Peking, which, according to public records, actively supports Beijing's military-industrial complex. More specifically, Peking's work on defense research began in 2006, when it was awarded a Chinese security clearance. Peking then established a stand-alone office to handle classified information. Peking maintains agreements between the Chinese Ministry of Education and SASTIND, Beijing's defense industry agency, signed in 2012 and 2016, to deepen the university's involvement in classified defense research. SASTIND recognizes Peking's work in nuclear physics, nuclear technology, and nuclear chemical engineering as supporting Beijing's national defense industry, including its nuclear weapons development program.

Peking's Advanced Technology Institute, founded in 2006, oversees and develops the university's defense research. The institute's research includes classified work on semiconductors, nuclear technology, quantum physics, advanced materials, underwater acoustics, satellite navigation and communications, flight propulsion, aerospace engineering, and microprocessors. Moreover, in 2017, PKU and China Academy of Engineering Physics (CAEP) established the PKU-CAEP New Structure Center for Applied Physics and Technology. CAEP is the Chinese entity responsible for conducting the research, development, and testing of Beijing's nuclear weapons. CAEP is also listed on the U.S. Commerce Department Bureau of Industry and Security's Entity List, which restricts the exportation of sensitive items to designated entities and individuals. The center conducts research on lasers for atomic physics applications, laser plasma physics, computer science, and fluid dynamics. PKU acknowledges that the center serves Beijing's defense needs, and CAEP's deputy director has emphasized that such work supports MCF. The center's honorary director and founding director, He Xiantu, is credited with developing Beijing's first neutron bomb.

In 2013, Peking and the PLA Navy signed a strategic MCF cooperation framework agreement at a ceremony attended by then-PLA Navy commander Admiral Wu Shengli. The agreement was forged on the instructions of the CCP's Central Committee, Beijing's Central Military Commission, and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Peking researchers have participated in expos and other events related to MCF. Peking is also a founding member of the Beijing University Technology Transfer Alliance, which works in dual-use and military-relevant sectors such as 3D printing and robotics.

I remain deeply concerned by the PLA's aggressive campaign to infiltrate America's research enterprise. I respectfully urge you to terminate the above outlined partnership agreement, and to take steps to thoroughly vet your other academic partners in the PRC for similar risks involving the misappropriation of academic research. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator