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Latitudes: Congressional report slams U.S. research partnerships with China

1 message

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Latitudes

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Research grants to American colleges are helping China’s military, report said

Academic partnerships between China and the United States have funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to projects that aid Chinese military and national security, a [report](#) by congressional Republicans charges.

The report — released on Monday by Republican members of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce — said that joint projects have aided Chinese advancement in critical areas like artificial intelligence, hypersonic weapons, and semiconductor technology. It called for tougher safeguards and stronger enforcement, including limits on the ability of American researchers with federal

grants to work with Chinese universities and researchers that have military ties.

The result of a yearlong inquiry, the report flagged more than 8,800 publications that involved American researchers who received funding from federal defense and intelligence agencies and who worked with Chinese scientists. These collaborations are “providing back-door access to the very foreign adversary nation whose aggression these capabilities are necessary to protect against,” the report said.

By setting up joint programs, working with Chinese researchers, and educating Chinese students, American higher education “creates a direct pipeline for the transfer of the benefit of their research expertise.”

But college officials have taken significant measures to improve research security and said that the work they do is open and fundamental, distinctly different from the kind of scientific secrets sought by foreign governments.

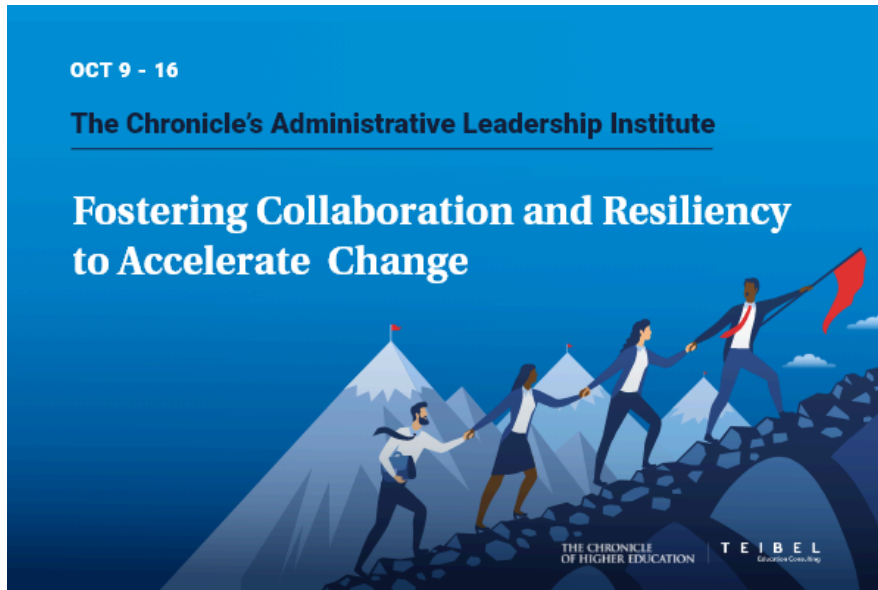
One of the colleges named in the report, [Georgia Institute of Technology](#), has said that a joint institute with Tianjin University was focused on educating students, not on research. Georgia Tech administrators have called the committees' claims baseless.

Still, Georgia Tech has said it will end its partnership with Tianjin because of proposed legislation likely to bar colleges that work with Chinese universities with ties to the Chinese military or intelligence agencies from receiving U.S. Department of Defense grants. Another college mentioned in the House report, the [University of California at Berkeley](#), has said it too will pull out of an institute it runs with a Chinese university.

The report's release comes on the heels of the House [passage of a raft of China-related legislation](#), including a measure that would reinstate the China Initiative, the Trump-era federal probe of researchers' ties to China that stifled international collaboration and led to claims of racial profiling. The outlook for the legislation in the Senate is unclear.

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Cornell student says he faces deportation over protests

A Cornell University graduate student suspended for his part in campus protests said he has been told his visa has been revoked, which would cut short his studies and force him to leave the country.

Momodou Taal, a graduate student from Britain, told [The Cornell Daily Sun](#) that he faces “effectively being deported by the weekend” after college officials told him his visa would be terminated for demonstrating “escalating, egregious behavior and a disregard for the university policies.”

Taal was suspended after he and pro-Palestinian protesters disrupted a campus career fair last week that included two defense contractors. He had previously been [suspended](#) in the spring for his part in campus demonstrations.

In a statement, a Cornell spokesman wrote that the university is required to terminate visas for any student who is not permitted to enroll because of disciplinary action. Cornell did not respond to *Chronicle* questions about whether it has previously revoked an

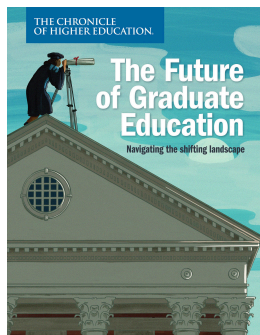
international student's visa for violating campus policies during pro-Palestinian protests.

International students like Taal face [complicated choices](#) about whether to engage in protests: Like American citizens, they have free-speech rights. But their visa status can be affected if they are arrested or convicted or if they receive lengthy suspensions that prevent them from studying full time.

Some elected officials and political candidates, including former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, have advocated for [deporting](#) international students who express support for Palestinians or criticize the Israeli government's military response in Gaza.

Does the Cornell case suggest how colleges will handle pro-Palestinian activism this fall? [My colleague Garrett Shanley has the story.](#)

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Graduate education has enjoyed a jump in enrollment over the past five years, but it faces a host of challenges. [Order this report](#) for insights on the opportunities and pitfalls that graduate-program administrators must navigate.

California governor vetoes work bill for undocumented students

Gov. Gavin Newsom of California has vetoed legislation that would have allowed undocumented students to work on public-college campuses.

In a [statement](#), Newsom, a Democrat, said "California has a proud history of being at the forefront of expanding opportunities for

undocumented students,” but that the measure carries too many legal risks.

The University of California backed away from a [similar plan](#) in January. Administrators cited concerns that it could expose undocumented students and their families to prosecution and deportation and make college employees vulnerable to civil or criminal prosecution if they participate in hiring practices deemed impermissible under federal law.

Supporters of the plan argued that while federal law bars employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, it does not mention states explicitly, meaning that the federal prohibition does not bind state-government entities, like the university system. A group of constitutional and immigration scholars had [signed a letter of support](#) for the legal theory.

California would have been the first state to enact such a policy.

While undocumented students in California are eligible for state financial aid and many have their tuition waived, they are ineligible for federal student aid and may struggle to cover rent and other living expenses.

A [recent study](#) found that the number of newly enrolled undocumented students on University of California and California State University campuses receiving state aid has fallen by half since the 2016-17 academic year. Enrollments for other low- and middle-income groups held steady, the research said.

Nationally, the number of undocumented students attending college has declined, in part because fewer people of college-age [qualify for a federal program that offers legal protections](#) to young people brought to the United States as children. Eligibility requirements for the program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, have not been updated amid court challenges.

The college-work bill’s sponsor, Assemblyman David Alvarez, told [CalMatters](#) that he would reintroduce it next year. “Governor Newsom’s veto is a profound disappointment because it denies students the opportunity to better themselves through education,” he said.

Canada further restricts international students

The Canadian government will expand and extend current caps on international students, a marked shift from the country's previous openness.

Government officials last week [announced](#) a further 10-percent reduction in student visas — on top of a 35-percent cut [imposed earlier this year](#). The tighter restrictions will continue through 2026, a year longer than originally planned.

Notably, master's and doctoral students will no longer be exempt from the cap, beginning next year. The new limits were announced as part of broader changes to Canadian policies for temporary residents, which Marc Miller, the federal minister of immigration, refugees, and citizenship, said were necessary to preserve the system's "integrity."

Canada has risen in popularity as a destination for international students, whose numbers increased by 60 percent in the last three years. Officials have blamed surging enrollments for strains on housing and health care.

Like the United States, Canada faces a divisive election in the next year in which immigration has become a hot-button topic.

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Around the globe

Relations between the United States and China are unlikely to return to the "good old days," but global-education experts said that [restarting the Fulbright Program](#) would be a first step toward mutual understanding.

A report commissioned by the European Commission recommends [doubling](#) the budget of Europe's key research program to spur innovation.

More European universities are offering [academic programs taught in English](#), a bid to attract international students who might otherwise study in major English-speaking destinations.

Venezuela could experience a [brain drain](#), losing scientists and researchers because of lack of investment and a loss of academic freedom.

A record class of college graduates in [China](#) is entering one of the weakest job markets in years.

Taiwan's Ministry of Education said it would prosecute universities that fail to uphold [students' right to privacy](#). A report found that 40 percent of colleges send grades to students' parents.

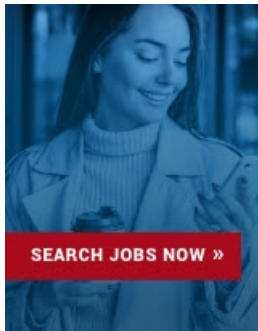
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