



Office of the Chancellor
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

February 9, 2022

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Rubio:

Thank you for your letter regarding the threat posed to the American research enterprise by foreign adversaries, particularly the People's Republic of China and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The Texas A&M University System has been a leader in the academic security arena for more than a decade. In fact, we have been repeatedly recognized by numerous federal agencies for our program's effectiveness in protecting our federally-funded research portfolio.

With respect to your questions regarding Texas A&M University affiliations with Ocean University, those affiliations **no longer exist or are being terminated** as part of our rigorous, ongoing review and collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). No further University-sanctioned research will occur.

International research collaboration provides valuable opportunities to advance scientific knowledge, but can also present challenges and risks, all of which we are aware. Each of our international agreements is regularly reviewed for inherent risks by Texas A&M University personnel as well as by Texas A&M System's Research Security Office (RSO). When the decision is made to enter an international research collaboration, risks are identified and measures are put in place to mitigate those risks. These agreements are all subject to regular review.

Texas A&M System has a robust relationship with the FBI, coordinating on these issues on a near daily basis. During a July 2019 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, in response to questions from Senators regarding the Chinese threat to the research enterprise, FBI Director Chris Wray highlighted the collaboration between the FBI and Texas A&M System to defend against these threats and raise awareness in the university space.

Texas A&M System's RSO has developed a program to monitor computer network activity for evidence of foreign influence. When evidence is discovered, the RSO coordinates with impacted organizations to mitigate or eliminate the threat. This effort has resulted in

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identification and mitigation/elimination of more than 200 instances of Foreign Talent Recruitment activity across Texas A&M System universities and state agencies. Processes and procedures for this program have been shared widely across academia.

Our Chief Research Security Officer, Dr. Kevin Gamache, and his team have also developed a robust vetting capability to ensure we are aware of and able to mitigate and threats presented by research collaborations. Coupled with updated conflict of interest and conflict of commitment policies, the RSO works with all leadership levels to address problematic collaborations and any failures to disclose foreign partnerships.

As you may know, The Texas A&M University System hosts the Academic Security and Counter Exploitation (ASCE) Program, which was established to tap the expertise of universities who have demonstrated excellence in academic security programs in an effort to help address the threat foreign adversaries pose to U.S. academic institutions. ASCE works closely with U.S. universities, higher education associations, and our federal partners. FBI Deputy Director David Bowdich identified ASCE as one of the FBI's most important partners, stating, "Texas A&M took a leadership role in the academic community after seeing firsthand what the Chinese government is capable of. ASCE is serving as a rallying point for research security, and Kevin Gamache, in particular, has been leading the charge."

As we are sure you will agree, success of the academic security and counter exploitation effort depends on close collaboration between academia and federal government partners. To that end, ASCE will be hosting its sixth annual seminar from March 1-3, 2022 at Texas A&M University Hotel and Conference Center in College Station. This seminar brings together experts from federal research agencies, law enforcement, and intelligence services, academia, and the private sector to ensure the openness and transparency of the U.S. research enterprise, and examine, promote awareness of, and counter the threat posed by foreign influence and theft of academic research.

As a member of the National Industrial Security Program, Texas A&M was recognized with the Colonel James S. Cogswell Award for Industrial Security Excellence by the Defense and Counterintelligence Security Agency (DCSA, then the Defense Security Service) in 2015 and 2020 – only 60 of more than 12,000 cleared defense contractors received this recognition. In 2017, Texas A&M System was one of only two cleared defense contractors from amongst more than 12,000 recognized by DCSA with the Award for Excellence in Counterintelligence. Texas A&M System was the recipient of this award again in 2019. No other academic institution has received this recognition twice.

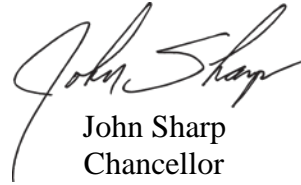
Recently, Dr. Gamache hosted Republican staff from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) in College Station to brief them on our capabilities. Dr. Gamache will be in Washington, D.C. next week at the invitation of the SSCI staff to provide a follow up briefing on our research security program. He would welcome the opportunity to discuss our programs with you in person. As the research security threats evolve, we will continue to adapt our research security program to address them. Texas A&M University and The Texas A&M University System remain committed to maintaining this high-level excellence in our research security efforts in the future. We trust this information is responsive to your request.

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Sincerely,



M. Katherine Banks, Ph.D., P.E.
President
Texas A&M University



John Sharp
Chancellor
The Texas A&M University System

cc: Senator John Cornyn
Senator Ted Cruz