

THOMAS P. TIFFANY
7TH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1714 LONGWORTH HOB
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3365

DISTRICT OFFICES:
P.O. Box 586
HAYWARD, WI 54843
(202) 225-3365

2620 STEWART AVE SUITE 312
WAUSAU, WI 54401
(202) 225-3365



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2020

Dr. Rebecca Blank
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Madison
161 Bascom Hall
500 Lincoln Drive
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Chancellor Blank,

Foreign efforts to steal valuable American military, technological and economic know-how through well-coordinated, long-term espionage efforts are widely known, and often involve trained operatives posing as students or researchers at U.S. colleges and universities. It is imperative that we work together to guard intellectual property and other proprietary material.

America's institutions of higher education are among the most prestigious in the world. They are incubators for the most advanced scientific, medical and industrial research, as well as cutting-edge, dual-use technology. This makes our most elite campuses – such as the University of Wisconsin – a top target for foreign intelligence services. One chief source of global espionage efforts against the United States is the People's Republic of China, which Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe recently identified as “the greatest threat to America today, and the greatest threat to democracy and freedom world-wide since World War II.”¹

In recent months we have seen multiple examples that demonstrate the lengths to which Communist China will go in their effort to steal American technology and infiltrate American institutions.

In one high profile case, a Chinese researcher working on artificial intelligence at UCLA “threw a damaged computer hard drive in a dumpster” after being stopped by FBI agents at Los Angeles International Airport while his fiancée, a Chinese national studying computer science at the UC-Irvine, was arrested “running through the Los Angeles airport.”² In another incident, a scientist at the University of Virginia was detained as he attempted to board a China-bound flight in Chicago with “proprietary software code under development for two decades [with] U.S. Navy funding.”³

¹ John Ratcliffe, DNI, “China is National Security Threat No.1,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 3, 2020

² Kate O’Keefe and Aruna Viswanatha, “FBI Sweep of China Researchers Leads to Cat-and-Mouse Tactics,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 7, 2020

³ Ibid.

Just this week, we learned that a Chinese operative known as Christine Fang successfully conducted a multi-year infiltration effort targeting numerous U.S. Representatives (including one member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence) while posing as a university student and chapter president of a national student civic engagement group – a cover that enabled her to network with influential politicians, some of whom she invited on trips to China.⁴

These are just a few examples of how widespread Chinese espionage efforts in the U.S. have become – reaching what a former Chief of China Analysis at the State Department’s Office of Intelligence and Research described as a “frenetic op-tempo [that has] overwhelmed FBI field offices.”⁵

According to the Office of the Chancellor’s website, 3,200 students from Communist China studied at UW-Madison in 2018. At that time, they constituted a majority – 55 percent – of all international students on campus, representing a significant increase from the 25 percent of total foreign enrollment that they constituted in 2000.⁶

Given the growing scope of Chinese espionage and the increasing frequency with which these efforts involve Chinese students and academics in the U.S. on visas, I would like to know what affirmative steps UW-Madison administrators have taken to facilitate cooperation with FBI and Department of Homeland Security counter-espionage efforts, as well as any other proactive measures university officials may have put in place to guard against foreign intelligence operatives on campus.

Thank you in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas P Tiffany". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress

cc: State Senator Dale Kooyenga
State Senator Steve Nass
State Representative David Murphy
State Representative Travis Tranel
Tommy Thompson, University of Wisconsin System President

⁴ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian and Zach Dorfman, “Suspected Chinese spy targeted California politicians,” *Axios*, Dec. 8, 2020

⁵ Bill Gertz, “U.S. to order drastic reduction in Chinese diplomats amid surge in spy cases,” *The Washington Times*, July 28, 2020

⁶ <https://chancellor.wisc.edu/blog/uws-relationship-with-china/>