

Countering China's Theft of American Research and Innovation (CCTARI) Act

China and other strategic competitors of the United States are engaged in large-scale efforts to target and extract sensitive information and technology from American institutions of higher learning.

Chinese law requires its citizens to “support, assist, and cooperate with state intelligence work.” China’s security services have dramatically increased their recruitment of non-traditional collectors, often students and research scholars, to transfer the U.S. technology back to the Chinese defense industrial base. Non-traditional collectors and other Chinese initiatives, like the Thousand Talents program, are actively targeting fields like artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computing, electrical engineering, aerospace, robotics, nuclear and biotechnology.

There is also compelling evidence that Russia and Iran are tapping into their student populations studying at American universities to exfiltrate sensitive technology and research.

Visa Security Loopholes Put American Excellence at Risk

GAP 1: Today, no national security review occurs if a foreign student or researcher from one of America’s strategic competitors changes their field of study from what was originally declared on their visa application to a highly sensitive field after entering the U.S. This is the case even if the new field of study would have triggered a national security review of that person before they entered the U.S.

GAP 2: Current federal information systems for collecting and maintaining international student records do not require comprehensive documentation of activities that often grant unrestricted access to sensitive research data, taxpayer-funded research, labs, and key faculty.

GAP 3: DHS multi-layered visa security vetting operations are only conducted at 38 visa-issuing posts, and do not yet include high-volume strategic competitor posts, such as in China and Russia.

GAP 4: DHS intelligence analysts and special agents do not receive visa applicant information from the State Department in machine-readable formats, forcing them to manually review applications and limiting use of data analytics.

The CCTARI Act Closes Visa Security Gaps to Stop Research and Innovation Theft

- Requires the American Science and Technology interagency working group to review the visa application, vetting, and screening process to improve our ability to identify and prevent individuals acting as intelligence collectors from entering the United States.
- Lays the groundwork for national security reviews of nonimmigrant aliens already in the U.S. who change their program of study or status to study in a sensitive field that would have triggered additional vetting before they entered the country.
- Improves existing reporting from schools and research institutions about which foreign nationals have access to sensitive technologies, research, and laboratories.
- Expands the scope of visa security screening and vetting to identify and further investigate likely foreign intelligence assets. Creates a joint DHS/State pilot to improve the quality of data available at consular posts to improve screening and vetting during the visa process.