



**Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Hearing: “Exposing the Dangers of the Influence of Foreign Adversaries on
College Campuses”
July 13, 2023**

(As prepared for delivery)

Today’s hearing addresses the growing threat of foreign influence on American education.

The father of this nation, George Washington, was acutely aware of this threat and offered sage advice to future generations upon leaving office. In his farewell address, Washington warned, “History and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”

In the year 2023, Washington would look upon our foreign entanglements with disfavor and disappointment.

China and other foreign adversaries are determined to undermine America’s national interests and infect our political discourse. The modern battleground now includes college, university campuses, and our students’ young minds.

In April, I took to the House Floor to condemn foreign influence in our postsecondary academic institutions. I said then what I will repeat today, “The manipulation of our children on American soil—paid for by the American taxpayer—is unacceptable.” And for those who facilitate undermining our institutions, it is traitorous.

We’re now in an era when too many “American” college and university administrators—due to financial incentives or bribes from adversarial regimes—choose to allow indoctrination on our American campuses. I call it “profit over patriotism.” Adversaries, monarchies, theocracies, dictatorships, and the anti-

American Chinese Communist Party, pay for influence in our universities through foreign gifts and funding. It is the height of disloyalty, and if the Biden administration will do nothing about it, we have a Republican Party and Conference, I promise you, that will.

Under section 117 of the Higher Education Act, colleges and universities must disclose any foreign funding to their institution exceeding \$250,000. Yet in 2019, a Senate report found 70 percent of colleges choose to skirt, hide, and cheat so as not to be compliant with this law. We're at a time when only 30 percent of administrators overseeing our educational institutions deem it important to follow a law, put in place by a Congress with oversight authority. To make matters worse, the Trump administration discovered \$6.5 billion in previously undisclosed foreign funds. Once again, "profit over patriotism," "profit over love of country," and "profit over the love of freedom."

Our adversaries—America's enemies—some guilty of the absolute worst of human rights abuses, do not pay billions of dollars to educational institutions because of some "pie in the sky" wish for humanitarian goodness. No. These dollars come with strings attached, which are then used as leverage against American faculty and students. Meanwhile, the American taxpayer is left supporting institutions that sacrifice our national values, our freedom, and our future for money.

For example, foreign funds are used to set up state-backed "cultural exchange centers" that operate as cultural indoctrination centers. China, for instance, donates money to American universities to fund Confucius Institutes – renowned campus hubs known for pushing propaganda like the denial of the Tiananmen Square massacre. These institutes also monitor and threaten Chinese international students here in the U.S. if they speak out against the CCP. Political pressure has caused many of these Institutes to close on paper, but in reality, they simply evolve and rebrand under a different name. These problematic relationships still pose a direct threat to students and academic freedom.

Moreover, foreign funding creates inroads for intellectual property theft. In this arena, again, China poses a serious threat. Around 80 percent of economic espionage crimes prosecuted by the Department of Justice are committed by Communist Chinese actors. The theft of trade secrets costs America an estimated \$600 billion

annually. How many American universities are inadvertently sponsoring CCP-backed espionage? There are 70 percent of college administrators who are non-compliant – opting not to be transparent to Congressional oversight. For far too long, educational institutions have reaped financial benefits while our enemies undermine our culture. Unfortunately, too many of these college administrators feel that they are above accountability and oversight. What else can we conclude other than there is a systemic sense of arrogance within these institutions? Once again, \$6.5 billion has been funneled in secrecy—“undisclosed” foreign funds—to 70 percent of American institutions of learning. For a regime that is anti-capitalist, the CCP seems to have made a remarkable return on their investment in our taxpayer funded colleges and universities.

It is time we take these foreign threats seriously, beginning with Chinese influence on American campuses. We should disentangle from China as Washington would have preferred, but that requires a serious executive.

The Biden administration doesn't seem to get it. Recently, Secretary Janet Yellen called decoupling from China “a big mistake.” National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan echoed her a week later. Biden's feckless Department of Education has yet to open even a single section 117 investigation.

The Department talks out of both sides of its mouth when scapegoating this issue. The Department blames Congress, saying they are overwhelmed and lack funding, yet the Department transferred the authority to investigate these violations from the well-equipped Office of General Counsel to the underwater FSA. The FSA is so ill-suited for enforcement that the online portal to report these violations was broken for months with no communication. We also have no indication the Department is conducting substantive reviews of any submitted disclosures. For those who are curious, what is the FSA (Federal Student Aid)? What do student loans have to do with CCP infiltrating, bribing our universities, and stealing our intellectual properties? Absolutely nothing. It's a total sham and the Department of Education thinks it can get away with it. Pure arrogance!

Rather than enforce the law, President Biden has cozied up to Beijing. Thanks to congressional oversight, we know the Penn Biden Center received tens of millions in anonymous Chinese funding and then paid the future President a handsome salary

of \$900,000. Moreover, we know the Penn Biden Center employed 10 future senior administration officials with salaries up to \$208,000. Does that have anything to do with his administration's unwillingness to enforce section 117?

It appears that the Biden administration has purposely chosen to turn a blind eye. I can promise you this Committee, with a Republican majority, will not. Freedom can only survive with transparency.

The next reporting deadline for section 117 disclosures is the end of this month. This administration has just under 20 days to ensure that America's colleges and universities—taxpayer funded institutions—are not hiding foreign donations from the public eye.

For the sake of our republic, and the millions of tax paying Americans, we look for full transparency from these institutions.