

Opening Statement of Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI)
Education and Workforce Committee

“U.S. Universities Under Siege: Foreign Espionage, Stolen Innovation,
and the National Security Threat”

March 26, 2026

(As prepared for delivery)

Dominating global research rankings, American universities remain among the top academic institutions in the world. They are entrusted with hundreds of billions in taxpayer-funded research dollars and federal student aid to help develop the next generation of leaders and drive cutting-edge scientific discovery.

The free exchange of ideas is a core American principle and a cornerstone of higher education. International collaboration, whether through welcoming international students or creating international research partnerships, can, when done right, have very positive effects for our country.

However, it would be naïve and reckless to ignore the serious dangers facing our higher education system. Foreign adversaries, particularly geopolitical rivals like the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), are actively competing against our nation’s interests on the battlegrounds of our university campuses. They are unafraid to exploit American good intentions for ill-gotten gains.

I'm proud that this Committee has been a leader in combatting malign foreign influence on college campuses. Last year the House passed the DETERRENT Act with a strong bipartisan vote for a second Congress in a row. DETERRENT would bring much-needed transparency to foreign gifts and contracts under section 117 of the *Higher Education Act*, and I will continue working to get it signed into law.

This Committee's oversight has also brought to light troubling partnerships between American universities and the CCPs defense-linked institutions, including "joint research institutes" operating with American campuses. As a result of this work, many universities have taken steps to shut down these programs.

The Trump administration and Secretary McMahon have also taken this issue seriously. The Education Department has launched multiple section 117 compliance investigations, improved the usability of disclosed data, and just last month announced an interagency agreement with the Department of State to incorporate the State Department's national security expertise.

Despite this progress, recent events make it clear that the threat remains active. Last summer there were multiple disturbing instances of potential foreign espionage on U.S. campuses. At the University of Michigan students, employees, and faculty have been charged and sentenced for conspiracy and smuggling related crimes. At Stanford, students were approached by foreign nationals posing as peers in an effort to get students to travel to China and share research. These instances must not be swept under the rug, and I'm excited to discuss them more in depth today at this hearing.

Institutions must be proactive in addressing these threats. They should not wait for a Congressional inquiry or hearing before taking a hard look at their campus culture, vetting processes, and compliance with the law.

Openness is one of our greatest strengths—but it cannot become our greatest weakness. We can—and must—ensure that academic collaboration strengthens America, not our adversaries.