

**George Bush China-U.S. Relations Conference:
Development, Energy, and Security
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FORUM FINAL REPORT

Forum Title: *China-U.S. Higher Education Forum: Global Universities in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*

Session Summary: This session brought together leaders (presidents and vice presidents) from 19 leading public universities in the United States and China to discuss issues of common concern, including student mobility, research collaboration, models for public/private partnerships, and university governance and administration. Each of the participants presented the view from their country regarding the rationale, challenges, and opportunities present for building stronger institutional linkages across national boundaries, and finding methods and procedures for enhancing international exchange. This session was cosponsored by the National Association for State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), a leading organization of public research universities in the United States, and the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) in the People's Republic of China.

Findings/Recommendations:

Student Mobility and Academic Exchange:

The group discussed models for mobility that exist at different universities, including goals and priorities at their own institutions. Factors discussed include both the push and the pull factors within each nation. U.S. institutions pull students from China because of a need for an increased talent pool, world-class educational facilities, available funding, and the prestige of an American degree. American universities have a much smaller "push" factor, though, in that the number of U.S. students studying in China is minimal, and there are few *perceived* educational or job-related benefits. China has a strong push factor, with both university and the central government actively promoting study in the US, and providing significant sources of funding. Xian Jiaotong, for example, has as a goal of having 10 percent of its undergraduates, 50 percent of its Ph.D. students, and 90 percent of its faculty to have an international experience.

China has a strong incentive to draw American students, but the funding and infrastructure are not in place to consistently draw large numbers. This can often lead to great discrepancies in research capacity and the size of the talent pool, as China's students might not return to China after their stay abroad.

Other factors discussed include language proficiency, transferable credits, the challenges of creating joint/dual degree programs, the difficulties of finding appropriate mechanisms for handling issues such as tuition waivers, and the legacy of very different educational systems.

Some potential solutions include building stronger Chinese language programs in the U.S., creating new funding mechanisms for study abroad, reviewing admission procedures to make them more flexible, building a common credit transfer system, and U.S. institutions working closely with Congress and state legislative leaders to provide leadership in these issues.

Academic Research:

Research collaboration is highly valued for a variety of reasons, including the expansion of knowledge, the avoidance of silo effects in advanced research areas, and the key role universities play in national development and research breakthroughs. Although international research collaboration is expanding rapidly, the United States is lagging behind its commitment, especially relative to the EU and other Asian states. Historically, China did not know the key research areas, institutions, or researchers, and so found it difficult to build reliable and productive collaborations. But in the very recent past, both the number of projects and the funds dedicated to internationally collaborative research with China are increasing significantly on a year to year basis. The EU, Korea, and Japan have all established dedicated funds to support international research collaborations, through programs such as the “863” and Korea Research Foundation projects, and these will soon achieve a “lock” on the Chinese research community, if the US doesn’t respond quickly. Challenges to international collaboration include sources of funding, the difficulties of finding appropriate partners, risks concerning intellectual property, and a potential imbalance in research capacity.

Some potential moves forward including building stronger institution to institution ties, exploring alternative funding mechanisms, including university based seed funding mechanisms, and building larger collaborative networks involving multiple universities, rather than just university to university based projects.

University Governance and Administration:

This panel addressed various models of university governance and administration, especially in comparison between the relative roles and responsibilities of faculty and administrators in the respective systems. Moreover, there are different agendas for university education and research in each of the nations, in that academic freedom in the US tends to give faculty far greater power over research topics and teaching areas, whereas funding and administrative priorities in China tend to reflect governmental concerns. Challenges to university administrators are coming in the form of seeking to enhance research competitiveness, globalization, and involving faculty and students in governance in productive ways. Definitions of shared governance between the two nations still are quite different from one another.

University Partnerships with Public and Private Sector:

Universities from both sides see emerging models, as in the US, institutions are seeing falling funding levels from governments, and responding to needs of industries in terms of graduate preparation and industry collaborations in research. In China, institutions are the key drivers of innovation and scientific development, and must remain very responsive to government priorities, which is attempting to rejuvenate the nation through science and engineering proficiency. The state is doing this largely by establishing national key labs and increasing funding available for technologically competitive research initiatives. The universities in China, however, are also responding to the increased strength and research agendas of corporations, which are beginning to invest in university-based research programs. All of these create new tensions in the traditional mechanisms of university governance and administrative evaluation, however. All participants agreed that these emerging forms of partnership can create new incentives, platforms, and support mechanisms for increased international collaboration, however.

Future Collaborations:

The plans for immediate follow up include inviting a group of Chinese university presidents and administrators, along with staff from CEAIE, to attend the summer NASULGC meeting for a longer period of discussion and reflection. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed by the president of NASULGC and the representative of CEAIE, in which each agreed to serve as the coordinating body in their respective countries to support future interactions, including attendance by each side at the NASULGC summer meetings, CEAIE International forums, and to build a network of public research universities in both countries.

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