



**Statement by Association of American Universities (AAU): June 5, 2019 Senate Finance Hearing
Foreign Threats to Taxpayer-Funded Research: Oversight Opportunities and Policy Solutions**

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America's leading research universities take national security threats posed by international actors seriously and are actively working to mitigate those threats. Universities share a vested interest with the federal government in protecting intellectual property, proprietary information, trade secrets, and classified or otherwise controlled government information resulting from federally funded research.

Striking the right balance between controlling sensitive technological information and maintaining the free flow of fundamental scientific knowledge and international talent is vital to protecting America's national security, maintaining the nation's role as the world's leader in science and innovation, and continuing the economic growth enabled by scientific and technological advances.

In light of recent concerns about foreign security threats, AAU and other higher-education associations are working together with law enforcement, the intelligence community, federal science agencies, and Congress to secure research on our university campuses. For example, last September AAU, along with the American Council on Education, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the FBI, held a summit on security that brought together high-level university administrators, key FBI leadership, and representatives from agencies that fund federal scientific initiatives. This April, Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) convened representatives from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security in two classified briefings that engaged over 75 university presidents and chancellors. AAU plans to hold a similar briefing at its upcoming Counsel of Presidents meeting.

AAU and other higher education associations have also actively engaged our members in discussions about how better to secure academic research. Last fall, AAU and APLU conducted a survey of universities on effective practices for securing research and guarding against undue foreign interference.

In April, our two associations sent a [report](#) on these effective practices to our institutions to help improve how they secure the important research they perform on behalf of the federal government.

Even as we continually improve our security protocols, we must guard against measures that would stifle the very openness and collaboration that are necessary to advancing science and technology. This is key to maintaining America's scientific and technological preeminence – itself critical to our national security, economic competitiveness and quality of life.

Likewise, we must guard against measures that would unnecessarily stem the flow of foreign research talent to our shores. American science has remained on the cutting edge of science because U.S. institutions attract and retain the best and brightest foreign researchers. U.S. visa and immigration policies must continue to encourage talented students and scholars from around the world to come to this country and actively contribute to advancing American science and the U.S. economy.

Finally, the United States must invest more in critical areas of scientific research and scientific talent development to ensure that we do not fall behind China and other competitors who are currently making such investments. We must commit to developing stronger domestic STEM talent; making strong investments in the research programs supported by the National Science Foundation, the NIH, NASA, the Departments of Defense and Energy, and other major federal research agencies; and increasing funding for emerging areas of science such as quantum information, artificial intelligence, robotics, advanced manufacturing, and biotechnology.

In 2006 AAU released a [report](#) calling for the creation of a new National Defense Education and Innovation Initiative that highlighted the need for major investments in domestic research and talent development. The report envisioned modern-day investments similar in magnitude to federal investments in science during the years following the launch of Sputnik in 1957. It's thanks to this forward-looking leap in investment that we have the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, NASA, and the National Defense Authorization Act. AAU urges Congress to consider the report's recommendations to bolster our nation's security, strength, and competitiveness on an ever-changing global stage.

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Founded in 1900, the Association of American Universities is composed of America's leading research universities. AAU's 62 research universities transform lives through education, research, and innovation.

Our member universities earn the majority of competitively awarded federal funding for research that improves public health, seeks to address national challenges, and contributes significantly to our economic strength, while educating and training tomorrow's visionary leaders and innovators.

AAU member universities collectively help shape policy for higher education, science, and innovation; promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education; and strengthen the contributions of leading research universities to American society.