



NSF SECURE Center Research Security Briefing

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The SECURE Center distributes research security briefings and timely alerts via its listserv. The Briefing provides a centralized resource for research security-related information, including new statutory and research funding agency requirements, new or updated federal and community resources, and significant news items and scholarly works. The Center will also assess and provide commentary, interpretation, or implementation considerations on new requirements, notices and resources, working with higher education associations, legal partners, or agencies as needed.

Briefing Contents

Federal Agency News & Updates	3
Three Chinese National Scholars from University of Michigan Laboratory Charged for Conspiring to Smuggle Biological Materials into the U.S.	3
Research Security News & Reports	3
Let's Talk About Hard Power: America's Universities Are National Security Assets	3
U.S.–China Scientific Collaboration at a Crossroads:	3
China academic intimidation claim referred to counter-terrorism police	4
How China's 15th five-year plan signals a new phase of strategic adaptation	4
International Research Security Policy & Resources	4
Arctic Circle Issues and Concerns	4
NSF SECURE Center Opportunities & Updates	5
Research Security Mentorship Workshop Series	5
Conferences	5
ASCE 2026 Registration Now Open	5
RISC Bulletin	5
Previous NSF SECURE Center Research Security Briefings	6

Federal Agency News & Updates

Three Chinese National Scholars from University of Michigan Laboratory Charged for Conspiring to Smuggle Biological Materials into the U.S.

On November 5, 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs issued a press release stating that three Chinese nationals conducting research at the University of Michigan have been charged with conspiring to smuggle biological materials into the country and making false statements. According to the complaint, they received shipments of concealed biological specimens from China, refused to cooperate with the university's internal investigation, and attempted to leave the country before being located by federal agents. ([more](#))

Research Security News & Reports

Please note, articles linked below may require a subscription to view.

NSF SECURE Center cannot distribute copies of subscription-based articles.

Let's Talk About Hard Power: America's Universities Are National Security Assets

(Inside Higher Ed, 11/10/2025)

In this opinion piece, the author (Brian L. Heuser, Associate Professor, Vanderbilt University) argues that U.S. universities are not just centers of culture or soft power, but key national security assets. It highlights how many campuses host large-scale research in defense, cybersecurity, biosecurity and technology, and also train officers, linguists, and analysts for the military and intelligence community. The author warns that under-funding and politicizing this higher-education ecosystem threatens America's ability to compete globally in innovation and strategic security. ([more](#))

U.S.–China Scientific Collaboration at a Crossroads: Navigating Strategic Engagement in the Era of Scientific Nationalism

(Quincy Institute, 11/4/2025)

The authors propose that the era of open global scientific cooperation between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China is being replaced by selective decoupling and strategic competition. They document how China now matches (and, in some metrics, exceeds) the U.S. in research output. Yet collaboration between the two countries has fallen, especially in sensitive fields such as AI, advanced materials, and wireless communications. The authors argue that a binary choice between full openness and full separation is a false one. Instead, they suggest a "smart openness" model, based on a revised version of the U.S.–China Science and Technology Agreement to create a new framework for research collaboration that permits cooperation under safeguards, in areas where mutual benefits remain and national security risks can be managed. ([more](#))

China academic intimidation claim referred to counter-terrorism police

(BBC, 11/3/2025)

Documents obtained by the BBC suggest that China conducted a two-year campaign of harassment and intimidation against Sheffield Hallam University to halt research led by Professor Laura Murphy into forced labor and human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. “Chinese National Security Service” agents reportedly threatened the university’s China-based staff, blocked its websites, and curtailed communication channels, severely affecting the university’s ability to recruit Chinese students. Facing mounting pressure, a defamation lawsuit, and loss of insurance coverage, Sheffield Hallam decided not to publish Murphy’s final report and ultimately shut down her research unit in early 2025. Murphy accused the university of trading academic freedom for access to the Chinese student market and initiated legal action. ([more](#))

The BBC [has also reported](#) that the university’s allegations of intimidation and harassment have now been referred to counter-terrorism police in the United Kingdom.

How China’s 15th five-year plan signals a new phase of strategic adaptation

(World Economic Forum, 10/30/2025)

The article suggests that China’s newest five-year plan, covering the years 2026 through 2030, signals a strategic pivot rather than continuation of past patterns. The new plan will prioritize industrial modernization first, with technological innovation placed immediately after. It also underscores how China is linking economic security, opening-up, and domestic demand with growth, indicating that external risks and supply-chain resilience are now high priorities. ([more](#))

International Research Security Policy & Resources

Arctic Circle Issues and Concerns

Glenn Tiffert, PhD, Hoover Institution/Stanford

On October 16, the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik hosted a panel on research security with representatives from Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the United States. The panel included a scientist, a university research security officer, and analysts of great power competition in the region. The Arctic Circle Assembly is attended by more than 2,000 participants from civil society organizations, governments, think tanks, universities, and indigenous communities in more than 60 countries. It is the largest annual event dedicated to Arctic issues.

The panel focused on how the intensifying securitization of the Arctic is affecting the practice of science. For example, cooperation with Russian institutions and researchers in the Arctic has plummeted since the invasion of Ukraine and joint projects have experienced disruptions. Intensifying Russian military activity, poorly maintained shadow fleet tankers that risk environmental accidents, drone incursions into restricted airspace over ports and other critical infrastructure, and incidents damaging undersea pipelines and cables have the region on edge. Research vessels report intimidating, close range encounters with other ships at sea.

Retreating sea ice is opening new maritime routes for navigation and research that raise questions about national territory and sovereignty. Gaps in coastal domain awareness mean that unidentified

ships are appearing at the edge of indigenous communities and disrupting the hunts that sustain their ways of life. Securitization could impact the ability of these communities to benefit from research conducted on their lands and their rights to data they collect and store.

Panelists noted that in the Arctic civilian and military research frequently intersect. Civilian scientists may rely in part on military infrastructure or transport, which is increasing requirements for due diligence particularly around access to shared facilities. As new nations conduct research in the region, trust deficits loom large. Climate observatories can gather data vital to compensating for the magnetic conditions that interfere with military communications at the poles. Survey ships that map the sea floor or measure ocean currents, salinity, and temperature may advance submarine warfare or identify vulnerable undersea infrastructure. The panel underscored that, far from being a refuge from the security considerations that increasingly weigh on research elsewhere in the world, the Arctic may instead be a focal point for them. Consultative mechanisms that include the inhabitants of the region, visiting scientists, governments, and research institutions must rise to that challenge.

NSF SECURE Center Opportunities & Updates

Research Security Mentorship Workshop Series

[Registration](#) for the Research Security Mentorship Workshop Series closes Friday, 11/14/2025. Any questions regarding registration can be directed to the SECURE Center Midwest Project Manager, Amy Brenneke, at asbrenneke@umkc.edu.

Conferences

ASCE 2026 Registration Now Open

[Registration is now open](#) for the 2026 Academic Security and Counter Exploitation (ASCE) Program. Next year is the 10th anniversary of the largest research security conference in the world: February 24 - 26, 2026. ([more](#))

RISC Bulletin

Texas A&M University's Research and Innovation Security and Competitiveness ([RISC](#)) Institute disseminates weekly RISC Media Bulletins, covering topics related to research security, foreign influence, and the intersection of science, technology, and national security. To join the distribution list for the RISC Bulletin or view previous editions, [click here](#).

Previous NSF SECURE Center Research Security Briefings

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