

WHAT TO REPORT

Any contact (i.e., emails, telephone, personal contact) that is suspicious because of the manner or subject matter of the request. This may include requests from U.S. persons or from foreign nationals located in the United States or abroad, and may consist of:

- Unsolicited applications or requests for undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, or other research positions
- Unsolicited requests for access to research papers or other research-related publications or documents
- Unsolicited requests for assistance with or review of thesis papers, draft publications, or other research-related documents
- Unsolicited invitations to attend and/or present at international conferences
- Unsolicited grants or gifting of funds/equipment to conduct joint research projects from foreign academic institutions or foreign governments

Researcher Pleads Guilty to Conspiring to Steal Scientific Trade Secrets from a Hospital to Sell in China

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs



DCSA
<https://www.dcsa.mil>

DCSA, Counterintelligence Directorate
<https://www.dcsa.mil/mc/ci>

Center for Development of Security Excellence
<https://www.cdse.edu>

ACADEMIC SOLICITATION

BE ALERT! BE AWARE!

Report suspicious activities to your facility security officer



DEFENSE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY AGENCY

WHAT IS ACADEMIC SOLICITATION?

DCSA defines academic solicitation as the use of students, professors, scientists, or researchers as collectors improperly attempting to obtain sensitive or classified information.

Placing academics at, and requesting to collaborate with, U.S. research institutions under the guise of legitimate research in order to access developing technologies and cutting edge research.

These attempts can include requests for, or arrangement of, peer or scientific board reviews of academic papers or presentations; requests to study or consult with faculty members; and requests for and access to software and dual-use technology.

Academic solicitation can also occur when a faculty member, student, employee, or visiting scholar seeks access to this same information.

The number of foreign academics requesting to work with classified programs continues to rise, and the academic community will likely remain a top target for the foreseeable future.

Although most academic contacts are likely legitimate, some foreign academics may ultimately take advantage of their placement and access to further their country's research and development goals.

Chinese Professors Among Six Defendants Charged with Economic Espionage and Theft of Trade Secrets for Benefit of People's Republic of China

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs

WHO ARE THEY TARGETING?

- Researchers, scientists, and subject matter experts conducting classified or controlled unclassified research/projects on behalf of a U.S. Government customer
- Researchers, scientists, and subject matter experts employed at cleared components of academic institutions or with unclassified and controlled unclassified information (CUI) work published in scientific or technical journals or presented at conferences
- Students, professors, and researchers with access to research and technical information (especially graduate and post-doctorate students)
- Researchers, scientists, and subject matter experts working on cutting-edge technology
- Subject matter experts teaching technical courses

WHAT IS TARGETED?

- Classified, CUI, or export-restricted basic and applied research
- Developing defense or dual-use technologies
- Significant or important research-related information, including: prepublication research results; research data; laboratory equipment and software; access protocols; equipment specifications; proprietary research, formulas, and processes; prototypes and blueprints; and technical components and plans
- Information about the students, professors, and researchers working on the technologies

WHY DO COLLECTORS USE THIS METHOD?

- Academic solicitation is an effective way to collect information due to the academic community's collaborative nature
- Foreign countries can exploit their students' access to supplement intelligence collection efforts against emerging Department of Defense (DOD) and civilian technical research
- Sending students to study at U.S. academic and research facilities will provide better educated scientists and researchers for country-specific technology development

COUNTERMEASURES

- Be familiar with foreign intelligence entities methods or operation
- Know and understand the legal and institutional restrictions to the research at your facility
- Ensure proprietary and controlled information is carefully protected
- Employ screening/vetting procedures before collaborating with unknown entities and conduct background checks on potential partners from foreign state-sponsored entities
- Adhere to information system security procedures and monitor computer networks routinely for suspicious activities or compromise
- When in doubt, report any questionable solicitation, engagement, or unusual activity to your institution's security official/facility security officer. Do not try to downplay or self-adjudicate the suspected interaction as it may be a small piece of information that completes the bigger picture at higher echelons

EXAMPLES OF ACADEMIC SOLICITATION

- Foreign students accepted to a U.S. university or to a postgraduate research program receive state-sponsored scholarships from their home country's government/government-affiliated entity
- U.S. researchers receive requests to provide dual-use components under the guise of academic research
- U.S. researchers receive unsolicited emails from peers in their academic field soliciting assistance on fundamental and developing research
- U.S. professors or researchers receive unsolicited invitations to attend or submit a paper for an international conference
- Overqualified candidates seek to work as interns in cleared laboratories
- Candidates seek to work in cleared laboratories whose work is incompatible with the requesting individual's field of research
- Foreign scientists, academics, or researchers request a U.S. subject matter expert review research papers, in hopes the expert will inadvertently provide information that assists with future research
- Request for a foreign exchange program or one-for-one swap

