



**Joint Statement of the
American Council on Education, Association of American Universities,
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Council on Governmental Relations**

“Scholars or Spies: Foreign Plots Targeting America’s Research and Development”

House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and
Subcommittee on Research and Technology Hearing
2318 Rayburn House Office Building
April 11, 2018

The global events of recent years and evolving threats to the United States present new security challenges and require a careful reassessment of our nation’s security vulnerabilities, including those of our colleges and universities. As part of the government-university partnership, U.S. universities share a responsibility with the federal government to ensure that research conducted under their auspices contributes to our national defense and homeland security. Each must work to ensure that the fruits of this research are appropriately secured and protected from outside intrusion or theft by foreign actors and/or governments.

Together, our four associations represent all major U.S. research universities and higher education institutions. Our member research universities share a vested interest with the government in ensuring that intellectual property, proprietary information, trade secrets, sensitive data, and other classified and/or otherwise controlled government information developed or housed at our institutions is not susceptible to academic exfiltration, espionage, or exploitation. Accordingly, we welcome the opportunity to continue to work constructively and cooperatively with Congress and the major national security agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, State, Defense, Commerce and government research agencies to protect legitimate national security interests associated with scientific research conducted at universities.

We greatly appreciate past efforts by the federal government, such as programs launched by the U.S. Departments of Commerce and State, the FBI, and other security agencies, to engage with the higher education community and to forge closer relationships between the academic and security communities both at the local and national levels. The higher education community values the increased training and outreach efforts undertaken by the Commerce Department’s [Bureau of Industry and Security \(BIS\)](#) to help ensure understanding of and compliance with export control laws. We also appreciate other collaborative initiatives with our associations, such as the FBI’s [Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorates Chemical-Biological Safety Program](#).

The Department of Homeland Security’s [Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council \(HSAAC\)](#) provides another very useful forum to discuss such issues; we urge that HSAAC

continue its work as HSAAC is an excellent assembly for increased conversations and deliberations about the very types of security issues raised at today's hearing.

Campus safety and security programs instituted by the FBI after September 11, 2001, including the Counterterrorism Division's [Campus Liaison Officer Program](#) and the [College and University Security Effort](#), have proven beneficial for cultivating relationships between local FBI officials, university security personnel, and research administrators. These programs have allowed the FBI to know who to turn to when they have specific campus-based security concerns and have given our universities a clear point of contact at the Bureau to alert when data breaches or other potential threats have been identified on our campuses.

Unfortunately, another useful government-university security forum, the [FBI's National Security Higher Education Board \(NSHEB\)](#), which was created by the FBI for high-level university leaders to engage directly with government security officials and is referenced in the Charter for this particular hearing, was disbanded in February 2018. The NSHEB served as a useful venue for the university and security communities to candidly discuss national priorities pertaining to terrorism, counterintelligence, immigration, and homeland security. The Board also provided a forum where the higher education and federal security agencies could collaborate to address important security, scientific, technical, and training issues relating to concerns such as export controls, cybersecurity, and training needs in technical areas where domestically-trained talent is essential.

Our associations are disappointed with the decision to disband the NSHEB because we believe it comes at a time when the very types of discussions the Board enabled between the university community and federal security agencies could be especially valuable. We are currently seeking a meeting with FBI leadership to discuss if an alternative forum can be developed to convene future high-level discussions.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue with the House Committee on Space, Science, and Technology concerning how our universities can be even more effective at partnering with federal research and security agencies to advance the nation's scientific interests while at the same protecting our national security. We would welcome an opportunity to identify leaders from the academic community who can speak to what universities are already doing to address key security concerns on our campuses as they relate to the research we conduct on behalf of the federal government.