

# In This Issue #291

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November 5, 2024, is Election Day. You will make a difference in the election. Vote if you have not done so already!

## Scholars Nationwide Endorsed Stanford Letter Opposing Reinstatement of "China Initiative"



Nearly 2,000 Scholars Nationwide Join Stanford Faculty in Opposing the Reinstatement of DOJ's China Initiative - AASF Stands Firm on Support



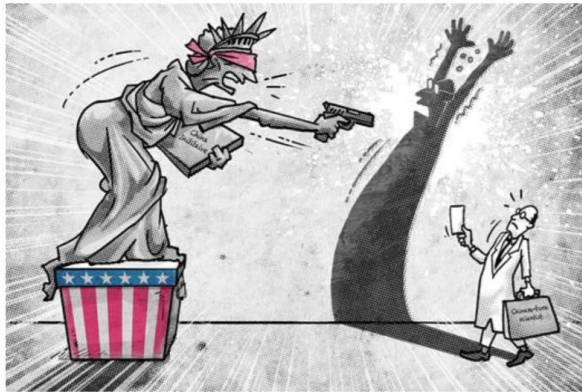
According to the Asian American Scholar Forum, nearly 2,000 faculty members and senior staff from U.S. colleges, universities, and affiliated research laboratories in 46 states and the District of Columbia have joined a growing list of endorsers on an October 8, 2024, letter originally initiated by 166 Stanford University faculty. The letter, led by Professors **Steven A. Kivelson** and **Peter F. Michelson**, urges Senate and House leaders—**Charles E. Schumer**, **Mitch McConnell**, **Mike Johnson**, and **Hakeem S. Jeffries**—not to reinstate the Department of Justice's "China Initiative." This initiative, they argue, risks undermining U.S. scientific leadership and deterring international STEM talent.

The letter highlights that the "national security and economic advantages of U.S. leadership in science and engineering" are strengthened by welcoming international talent. Citing a report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), it warns that other nations,

including competitors, are increasingly benefiting from talented individuals the U.S. fails to attract or retain. "A failure to fully capitalize on our advantage in educating and attracting foreign-born science and engineering talent would be a policy 'own goal' in an era of increased geopolitical competition for leadership in advanced technologies," the letter states. America's strength, it asserts, lies in its openness to diverse global talents.

Read the October 28 update letter: <https://bit.ly/4ec4Sem>.

## China-Born Scientists Face Uncertainty as US Election Looms



### China-born scientists face uncertainty as US election looms

According to the *South China Morning Post* on October 31, 2024, Chinese American scientists are concerned over the implications of the 2024 U.S. presidential election and the possible reinstatement of the China Initiative or its equivalent, which targeted Chinese-born researchers in the name of national security.

Researchers like economist **Yan Chen** and physicist **Xiaoxing Xi** offer differing views on the candidates, with Chen hoping for a Trump loss due to fears of renewed hostility toward Chinese Americans in academia. Xi, however, is skeptical that a Harris administration would reverse the current bipartisan stance that views China as a primary geopolitical threat.

The now-defunct China Initiative, launched in 2018 by the Department of Justice under Trump, aimed to counter China's economic espionage but led to disproportionate scrutiny of Chinese American and immigrant academics. Instead of uncovering spies, it often targeted minor

administrative infractions, such as failures to disclose affiliations with Chinese institutions. Examples of this overreach include Dr. **Franklin Tao**, a former University of Kansas professor, whose career was damaged and financial stability ruined by costly legal battles. Dr. **Anming Hu**, a professor at the University of Tennessee, faced equally severe consequences after an FBI investigation misinterpreted his work due to a lack of understanding of academic collaborations. Charges against Hu were ultimately dropped, and he was reinstated to the university, but his career and personal life suffered lasting impacts, including stress-related health issues for his family.

Studies by legal researcher **Andrew Chongseh Kim** reveal an increase in espionage-related prosecutions against Chinese Americans since 2009, highlighting a shift in the U.S. perception of China as a strategic threat. Kim notes that Chinese Americans comprised only 16% of espionage defendants from 1996 to 2008; after 2009, this number tripled, reflecting the broader national security emphasis. Investigations have also impacted Chinese American cancer researchers at the MD Anderson Cancer Center, where many were dismissed or forced to leave their roles, even without concrete evidence of wrongdoing.

Ongoing investigations by agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have intensified the “chilling effect” on Chinese American academics, discouraging them from federal grant applications and collaborative research. The Asian American Scholar Forum recently held a public meeting with NIH leaders to address these concerns, where scholars expressed frustration over the lack of accountability and the significant harm done to their careers and reputations.

**Denis Simon**, a Duke University professor, warns of the potential long-term damage to U.S. science and technology fields due to the climate of fear, which may deter young talent from China from studying in the United States. He cautions that continuing to target Chinese-born scientists will hamper the country's scientific advancement. Despite the formal end of the "China Initiative," Simon argues that ongoing tensions have escalated, and educational institutions fear repercussions if perceived as too "China-friendly." This atmosphere, fueled by bipartisan support for tougher policies on China, has strained not only individual scientists but also broader academic collaboration, risking an innovation gap as the U.S. disengages from some of the world's leading research talent and perspectives.

Read the *South China Morning Post* report: <https://bit.ly/4f2nT4n>

## **Science: The Stakes for Science: What the Next President Could Mean for Research**



EDITORIAL

Same but different

In some ways, not much has changed from 4 years ago. Donald Trump is running for US president and vowing outrageous things. This year's stand-out is that magnets don't work under water, which sent scientists into a frenzy and no-doubt spawned many home experiments. Democrats are talking more sensibly about science but also avoiding a discussion of their disappointing record on backing up promises to increase funding for US science and technology. But many things are different with this November's election. Four years ago, COVID-19 was the big issue, which made science the centerpiece of discussion. Now, the top issue is the economy, and science has been left once again on the back burner with only an occasional foray into climate science or social science studies on issues like abortion and gun control.

In this week's issue of *Science*, the News section compares the positions of both Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris on matters related to the scientific enterprise. Although the differences will receive more scrutiny, the points on which there is agreement are worth some attention. One matter in the US approach to China, a rising research powerhouse, science now gets more admissions from China than from the US, and the number of accepted papers from China is increasing, whereas the number from the US is decreasing. Chinese science is not only productive but continues to grow in acceleration.

The US should worry about this. One of the main justifications in 1945 for establishing a federal role in funding science research was to bolster the economic and geopolitical power of the nation after physicists working on the Manhattan Project were perceived to have won World War II. Being surpassed as a scientific superpower by China would be anathema to the leaders of postwar and Cold War America. But today's politicians are more focused on overprotecting the tiny amount of know-how they fear could slip out of the US than on the overall success of the country's scientific enterprise. The US has relied on China to supply scientists to the nation's research workforce for decades, and many of these outstanding thinkers have remained in the country. Now, anti-Asian rhetoric and violence combined with chilling political actions have

caused many of them to return home. This is bleeding the US of talent and squandering millions of federal dollars that have been invested in the development of Chinese scientists who might otherwise have stayed.

Both the Democrats and Republicans are contributing to this loss. Whereas Trump and his colleagues display much more overt anti-Asian bigotry with derogatory language and discussion of deportation, the Democrats have continued to implement provisions of a key Trump memorandum that suggest overly intrusive measures to prevent research theft by China. Efforts by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to expose and punish Chinese scientists have attracted bipartisan support. The Democratic platform suggests that the party's goal is to "deouple," not "decouple," from Chinese science, but whether this can be accomplished without harming the US enterprise has not yet been demonstrated.

All of this leads to another worry—potential changes to the NIH put forward by both parties. Some of the strongest and most radical ideas have come from Republicans, such as eliminating 12 NIH institutes. But Democrats, too, have criticized the agency, particularly in cases that have arisen from NIH's self-inflicted wounds. In one instance, Congress found that NIH was trying to avoid public records requests from the media regarding the origin of COVID-19. And alleged research misconduct by NIH Alzheimer's leader Filomeno Muzina has recently drawn more ire from both sides of Congress. At the last possible moment before *Science* broke that story, the NIH acknowledged in a generic statement that misconduct occurred, but Director Monica Bertagnolli has said nothing on the record to reassure the public or Congress that the agency recognizes how badly these findings reflect on the NIH or that it intends to keep this from happening again.

The 2024 election is bringing a set of high-stakes conflicts to the fore for American scientists. Many resolutions hinge on who wins the election. But some issues—such as who should have access to American science and how federal agencies should react to public controversy—are deep philosophical questions that keep getting kicked down the road.



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**"The 2024 election is bringing a set of high-stakes conflicts to the fore for American scientists."**

—H. Holden Thorp

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SCIENCE sciencemag.org

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The cover of the October 18 issue of *Science* highlighted "The Stakes for Science: What the Next President Could Mean for Research?"

According to the editorial, the 2024 election has drawn attention to key issues shaping the U.S. scientific landscape, highlighting concerns about global competitiveness, talent retention, and political influences on science policy. In 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic at its peak, science was at the forefront of political debate. Fast forward to 2024, science has largely been relegated to the background as economic concerns dominate the national conversation. This shift highlights the persistent difficulty in maintaining consistent political support for science and technology in the U.S.

As China's rapid rise in scientific output surpasses that of the U.S., concerns about America's global scientific standing have come to the forefront. China's lead in research publications and the growing quality of its scientific output signal a shift that alarms many in the U.S. scientific and political communities, where the long-standing scientific and technological dominance has been foundational to U.S. geopolitical power since World War II.

In response, both Republicans and Democrats have pursued increasingly restrictive policies regarding collaboration with Chinese researchers, citing national security concerns. The editorial highlights how these restrictions, originally introduced under Trump's administration, have persisted under Biden, albeit with a different rhetorical approach. "Today's politicians are more focused on overprotecting the tiny amount of know-how they fear could slip out of the US than on the overall success of the country's scientific enterprise," the editorial said.

While Trump's administration openly employed anti-Asian rhetoric and policies, labeling Chinese scholars as potential security threats, the Biden administration has also maintained some of these restrictive measures, albeit under the guise of protecting intellectual property. The result has been a "chilling effect" on U.S.-China research partnerships, leading many Chinese scientists to return to China, depriving U.S. institutions of talent in fields critical to American innovation. These policies have raised concerns within the U.S. scientific community that they might undermine America's long-term competitiveness by stifling collaboration and alienating researchers.

"This is bleeding the US of talent and squandering millions of federal dollars that have been invested in the development of Chinese scientists who might otherwise have stayed," the editorial said.

This loss of talent is not a minor issue; it undermines decades of U.S. investment in building a diverse and world-leading scientific workforce. For years, the U.S. has benefited from the immigration of highly skilled scientists, many from China, who have played a key role in driving innovation in industries ranging from biotechnology to artificial intelligence. The recent political climate, however, has reversed this trend. Policies driven by national security concerns are seen by many as overly intrusive and counterproductive, focusing more on restricting access to knowledge rather than fostering innovation.

Amid these growing tensions, there is also increasing scrutiny of the NIH, the leading U.S. agency for medical research. "Efforts by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to expose and punish Chinese scientists have attracted bipartisan support," the editorial said.

On the eve of *Science* reporting allegations of research misconduct by NIH Alzheimer's leader **Eliezer Masliah**, the NIH issued a generic statement acknowledging the misconduct. However, Director **Monica Bertagnolli** has said nothing on the record to reassure the public or Congress that the agency recognizes how badly these findings reflect on the NIH or that it intends to keep this from happening again.

The pattern is similar in Dr. Bertagnolli's statement of support for Asian American, Asian immigrant and Asian researchers after the suicide of Dr. **Jane Wu** of the School of Medicine at Northwestern University.

Responses by both Republicans and Democrats have raised broader questions about the governance and future direction of federal science agencies, especially as public trust in institutions like the NIH has been eroded by high-profile scandals.

As the election nears, the stakes for American science have never been higher. If U.S. policymakers continue to prioritize short-term political gains over long-term investments in science and research, the country risks falling further behind China and other global competitors. The debate over immigration, research collaboration, and the future of scientific

funding reflects deeper philosophical divisions over who should have access to American scientific resources and how federal agencies should respond to public scrutiny and controversy.

Whether the U.S. can regain its footing as a global leader in research will depend not only on who wins the presidency but also on the political will to address the systemic challenges that have long been ignored. Questions about how to balance national security with the need for international collaboration, how to rebuild public trust in science institutions, and how to sustain the U.S.'s leadership in innovation will remain central to this evolving debate. The outcome of the election could either pave the way for renewed investment in science or further entrench the barriers that are slowly eroding the nation's scientific capacity.

*Science* noted in the feature article that the presidential candidates have said almost nothing about science. Despite this silence, the next president's impact on the U.S. research community will be significant, influencing climate change policy, public health, U.S.-China scientific competition, and AI regulation. Both Harris and Trump will face decisions about attracting foreign scientific talent, supporting domestic researchers, and ensuring government scientists can work without political interference.

*Science* proceeded to compare the presidential candidates on six major issues:

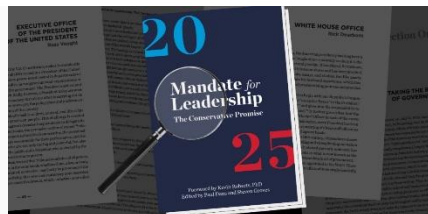
- Research budgets
- Burdensome rules
- Green cards for scientists
- The president's scientist
- Staying tough on China
- Training the next generation

Read these *Science* articles:

2024/10/16 *Science* Editorial: [Same but different](#)

2024/10/16 *Science*: [The stakes for science: Where Kamala Harris and Donald Trump stand on the issues that matter most to scientists](#)

## "Project 2025: An Existential Threat to Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders"



In August 2024, Stop AAPI Hate published a commentary providing a rundown of Project 2025, explaining why it is so dangerous for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) communities from the deportation of immigrants to the full-scale attack on civil rights.

Project 2025 is an ultra-conservative blueprint by the Heritage Foundation with the aim to reshape the governance of the United States in a Republican administration, including extensive plans to change immigration, civil rights, education, and social welfare policies. Stop AAPI Hate's analysis highlights the project's potentially harmful impacts on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and other marginalized groups.

Stop AAPI Hate's key concerns are:

**Project 2025 targets AA/PI and other immigrants for arrest, incarceration, and deportation.**

- The plan would give Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents broad access to detain and deport immigrants without a warrant, wherever and whenever they choose.
- It would add a citizenship question to the U.S. Census, discouraging citizens and non-citizens alike from responding — leading to decreased federal funding and political representation for immigrant-rich communities (Project 2025, Mandate for Leadership, pg. 680).
- The project would eliminate family-based immigration and other immigration categories that have allowed generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to immigrate to the United States (Project 2025, Mandate for Leadership, pg. 145).

**Project 2025 will fuel the racial profiling of scientists, researchers, and international students, threatening our civil rights and technological leadership.**

- It would revive the “China Initiative,” leading to a second wave of racist witch hunts targeting Chinese scientists and researchers (Project 2025, Mandate for Leadership, pg. 556).
- It would lead to the discontinuation of visas for Chinese students and researchers, hampering progress in critical fields (Project 2025, Mandate for Leadership, pg. 790).

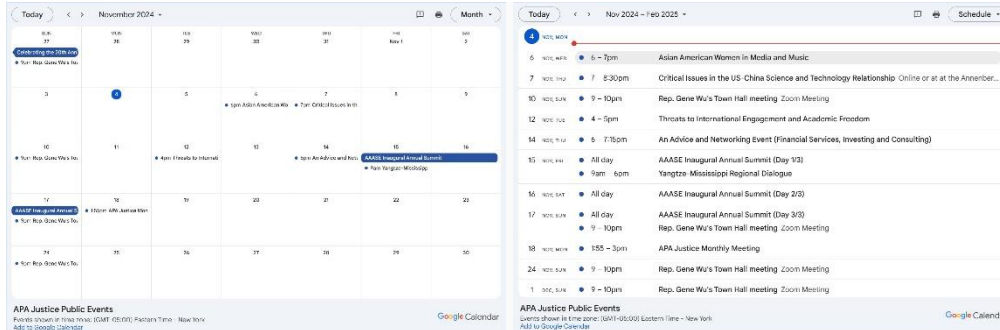
**Project 2025 will make it next to impossible for working families to thrive.**

- The plan would dramatically expand tariffs to “levels that will block out ‘Made in China’ products”, worsening US-China trade relations and driving across-the-board inflation and job losses (Project 2025, Mandate for Leadership, pg. 789).
- It would drastically cut food assistance and other critical social benefits, plunging millions of working families below the poverty line.
- It would impose sweeping reforms to K-12 and higher education, making it harder for low and middle income students to access education opportunities.
- The project would put new restrictions on reproductive rights and let politicians make life-altering decisions about our bodies.
- It would reduce worker protections against race- or gender-based discrimination.

Read the Stop AAPI commentary on Project 2025: <https://bit.ly/4fnBxPh>

## News and Activities for the Communities

### 1. APA Justice Community Calendar



#### Upcoming Events:

- 2024/11/06 Asian American Women in Media and Music
- 2024/11/07 Critical Issues in the US-China Science and Technology Relationship
- 2024/11/10 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/11/12 Threats to International Engagement and Academic Freedom
- 2024/11/14 An Advice and Networking Event (Financial Services, Investing and Consulting)
- 2024/11/15 Yangtze-Mississippi Regional Dialogue
- 2024/11/15-17 AAASE Inaugural Summit
- 2024/11/17 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/11/18 APA Justice Monthly Meeting
- 2024/11/24 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/12/01 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting

Visit <https://bit.ly/3XD61qV> for event details.

**NOTE:** Because the regular scheduled day falls on the eve of Election Day, we have moved the next APA Justice monthly meeting to Monday, November 18, 2024. The virtual monthly meeting is by invitation only. It is closed to the press. If you wish to join, either one time or for future meetings, please contact one of the co-organizers of APA Justice - **Steven Pei** 白先慎, **Vincent Wang** 王文奎, and **Jeremy Wu** 胡善庆 - or send a message to [contact@apajustice.org](mailto:contact@apajustice.org).

### 2. Critical Issues in the US-China Science and Technology Relationship





**WHAT:** Critical Issues in the US-Science and Technology Relationship  
**WHEN:** November 7, 2024, 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm PT/7:00 pm - 8:30 pm ET  
**WHERE:** Hybrid event

- **In-Person:** George P. Shultz Building, Annenberg Conference Room, Stanford University
- **Streaming:** <https://stanford.io/4e9VpV7>

**HOST:** Hoover Institution, Stanford University

**Moderator:** Frances Hisgen, Senior Research Program Manager, Hoover Institution  
**Speakers:**

- **Zhenan Bao**, K.K. Lee Professor of Chemical Engineering, Stanford University
- **Yasheng Huang**, Epoch Foundation Professor of Global Economics and Management, MIT
- **Peter F. Michelson**, Luke Blossom Professor in the School of Humanities & Sciences and Professor of Physics, Stanford University
- **Glenn Tiffert**, Distinguished Research Fellow, Hoover Institution

**DESCRIPTION:** Both the United States and the People’s Republic of China see sustaining leadership in science and technology (S+T) as foundational to national and economic security. Policymakers on both sides of the Pacific have taken action to promote indigenous innovation, and to protect S+T ecosystems from misappropriation of research and malign technology transfer. In the US, some of these steps, including the China Initiative, have led to pain, mistrust, and a climate of fear, particularly for students and scholars of and from China. Newer efforts, including research security programs and policies, seek to learn from these mistakes. A distinguished panel of scientists and China scholars will discuss these dynamics and their implications. What are the issues facing US-China science and technology collaboration? What

are the current challenges confronting Chinese American scientists? How should we foster scientific ecosystems that are inclusive, resilient to security challenges, and aligned with democratic values?

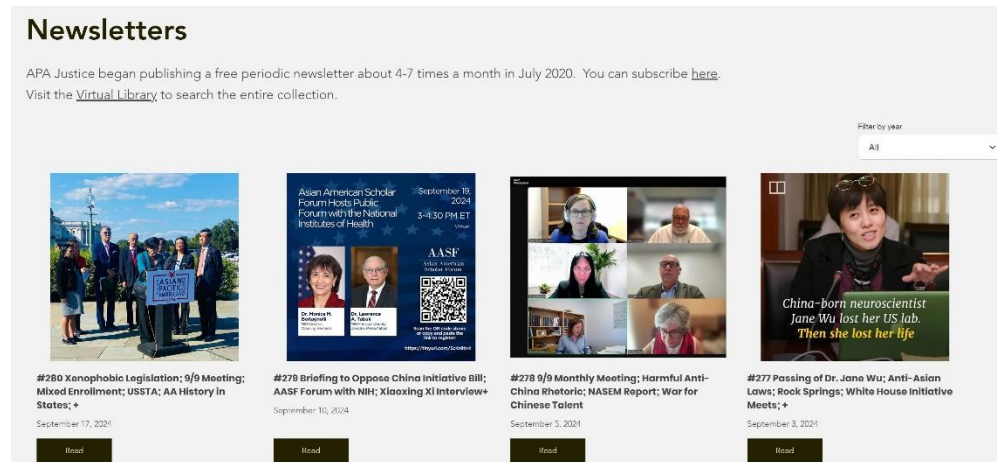
**REGISTRATION:** <https://bit.ly/3YwyOvU>

### 3. APA Justice Newsletter Web Page Moved to New Website

**Newsletters**

APA Justice began publishing a free periodic newsletter about 4-7 times a month in July 2020. You can subscribe [here](#). Visit the [Virtual Library](#) to search the entire collection.

Filter by year  
All



The screenshot shows a grid of four newsletter articles. Each article includes a thumbnail image, a title, a date, and a 'Read' button. The first article is dated September 17, 2021, and features a group of people holding a sign. The second is dated September 10, 2024, and features a blue background with text and a QR code. The third is dated September 5, 2021, and features a video conference grid. The fourth is dated September 3, 2021, and features a portrait of a woman with text overlay.

- #280 Xenophobic Legislation; 9/9 Meeting; Mixed Enrollment; USSTA; AA History In States; +**  
September 17, 2021
- #278 Briefing to Oppose China Initiative Bill; AASF Forum with NIH; Xiaoxing Xi Interview+**  
September 10, 2024
- #278 9/9 Monthly Meeting; Harmful Anti-China Rhetoric; NASEM Report; War for Chinese Talent**  
September 5, 2021
- #277 Passing of Dr. Jane Wu; Anti-Asian Laws; Rock Springs; White House Initiative Meets; +**  
September 3, 2021

As part of its continuing migration to a new website under construction, we have moved the Newsletter webpage to <https://www.apajusticetaskforce.org/newsletters>. Content of the existing website will remain, but it will no longer be updated. We value your feedback about the new web page. Please send your comments to [contact@apajustice.org](mailto:contact@apajustice.org).

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