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The recent FBI raids on Indiana University professor **Xiaofeng Wang**, along with the dismissal of another Chinese American professor, **Kevin Wang**, by the New College of Florida, have stirred deep anxiety among Chinese American scientists and researchers.

In this special issue, we take a closer look at the possible revival of the China Initiative - a controversial program launched during the first Trump administration to combat economic espionage but widely criticized for disproportionately targeting Chinese American scientists. The renewed effort has been dubbed by some as “China Initiative 2.0.”

APA Justice will continue to monitor these developments and provide updates through our [newsletters](#), [social media](#) and [monthly meetings](#). The goal of this issue is to raise awareness and draw attention to this important topic. We invite you to stay engaged and follow our [ongoing coverage](#).

Indiana University Professor Raided by the FBI, Dismissed without Explanation

On March 28, 2025, based on multiple media reports, the FBI carried out court-authorized searches at two residences belonging to Professor Xiaofeng Wang and his wife, **Nianli Ma**, located in Bloomington and Carmel, Indiana. While the exact details of the investigation remain unclear, Wang had reportedly come under scrutiny for allegedly failing to disclose a 2017–2018 grant in China that listed him as a researcher.



Professor Wang, a Chinese American computer scientist, has been a respected faculty member at Indiana University's Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering since 2004. A graduate of two Chinese universities in the 1990s, Wang worked as a software engineer and IT specialist before earning his doctorate from Carnegie Mellon University. Over the years, he built a strong reputation as one of the nation's leading experts in systems security and privacy, overseeing nearly \$23 million in grant funding by 2022.

Following the FBI raids, Wang's profile was abruptly removed from Indiana University's website. The university terminated both Wang and his wife, Ma — who worked as a systems analyst at the university library — four days apart. The university has yet to publicly explain the reasons for their dismissal.

Attorney **James Covert**, representing the couple, confirmed that neither Wang nor Ma has been arrested or charged. "Professor Wang and Ms. Ma are grateful for the support of colleagues at Indiana University and in the academic community," Covert said in a statement. "They look forward to clearing their names and resuming their careers once the investigation concludes."

Ma spoke about her family situation at the State of Play Town Hall hosted by the Asian American Scholar Forum on April 14.

- APA Justice Impacted Person page: [Xiaofeng Wang](#)
- [Professor Abruptly Fired Amid FBI Raid](#)
- [Fired prof accused of research misconduct, FBI involvement unclear](#)
- [Wife, son of cybersecurity professor Xiaofeng Wang make first comments since FBI raid](#)
- [A Cybersecurity Professor Disappeared Amid an FBI Search. His Family Is 'Determined to Fight'](#)

New College of Florida Professor Terminated under Controversial State Law

Meanwhile, in Florida, Professor Kevin Wang, a Chinese national holding valid U.S. work authorization, was abruptly dismissed from his position at the New College of Florida in March. His termination came under Florida's Senate Bill 846 (SB 846) — a 2023 state law that bars public universities and colleges from employing individuals from so-called "countries of concern," including China.



Wang's firing has become a flashpoint in a broader legal and civil rights battle challenging Florida's crackdown on hiring foreign nationals in public higher education. The American Civil Liberties Union of Florida criticized the law, calling it unconstitutional and discriminatory. "The Florida law cited in the firing of this Chinese professor codifies anti-Asian discrimination," the group wrote in a recent Facebook post. "It's why we're fighting it in court."

On March 27, just two weeks after Wang's dismissal, a federal judge in Miami issued a preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the law's hiring restrictions, specifically as they apply to international students. Florida has since appealed the ruling and filed a motion seeking to pause the injunction while the case proceeds. Although the ruling addressed students, civil rights advocates believe it could lay the groundwork for broader challenges on behalf of faculty members.

The renewed scrutiny of Chinese academics and scientists has stirred memories of the now-defunct China Initiative, which was criticized for disproportionately targeting Chinese and Asian American researchers, often without clear evidence of wrongdoing.

- APA Justice Impacted Person page: [Kevin Wang](#)
- [New College fires Chinese professor under controversial Florida 'countries of concern' law](#)
- [Firing of Chinese asylum seeker under SB 846 raises alarm in Florida and beyond](#)
- [Report: New College of Florida Fires Chinese Adjunct, Citing Regulations](#)
- [Asian American Scholar Forum Alarmed by Termination of New College of Florida Professor Under Florida's SB 846](#)

“China Initiative” Webinar Hosted at Michigan State University

In a webinar on China Initiative hosted by Michigan State University's Asian Pacific American Studies Program on March 12, Dr. **Jeremy Wu**, Founder of [APA Justice](#), was a panelist along with Dr. **Lok Siu** of UC Berkeley. The event was moderated by Dr. **Kent Weber** of Michigan State University.



Dr. Wu provided an in-depth overview of the initiative's history and impact. Launched in November 2018, the China Initiative aimed to address economic espionage but quickly shifted focus to Asian American academics, particularly those of Chinese descent. Over its 1,210-day duration, it led to 77 known cases and affected 162 individuals. More than two dozen scientists faced prosecution, none for espionage or trade secret theft. The initiative harmed not just individuals but also academic freedom, open science, and U.S. leadership in research.

Even before the DOJ's involvement, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had already initiated investigations in 2018, sending 10,000 letters to research institutions about alleged foreign ties. In response, advocacy groups and professional networks mobilized, providing support and pushing for policy change. Their efforts ultimately led to the initiative's termination in February 2022.

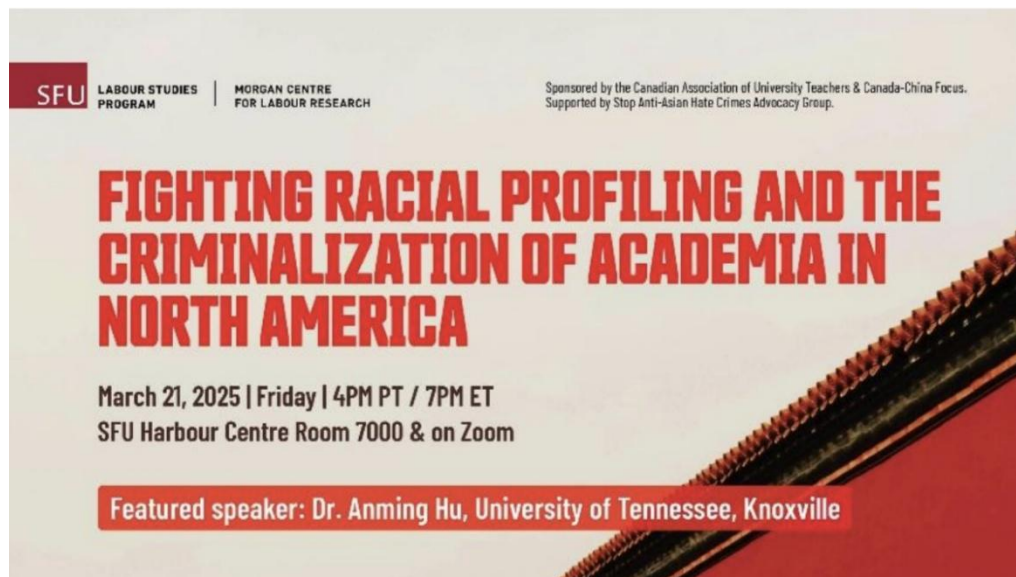
However, challenges remain. As of now, the U.S. Congress has not officially revived the “China Initiative” in name, but there are signs of similar efforts resurfacing under different guises. Within the current political climate, these types of laws and investigations will likely expand, even if the “China Initiative” name is not used.

- [China Initiative - Timeline of Major Events](#)
- [Impacted Persons List](#)
- [Attempts to Revive China Initiative](#)

Fighting Racial Profiling and the Criminalization of Academia in North America

On March 21, 2025, the Chinese Canadian Faculty Project at Simon Fraser University, Canada, invited [Dr. Anming Hu](#) for an event named Fighting Racial Profiling and the Criminalization of Academia in North America, both in-person and online. The event was moderated by Dr. **Xinying Hu** of Simon Fraser University. Dr. **Jane Wang** of University of British Columbia, and Dr. **Jie Yang** of Simon Fraser University participated as discussants.

This event was one of the Chinese Canadian Faculty Project’s ongoing series of Academic Freedom, Anti-racial profiling and Labour Rights. The series is sponsored by the Labour Studies Program and the [Simon Fraser University Morgan Centre for Labour Research](#), [Canadian Association of University Teachers](#) (CAUT) and [Canada-China Focus](#) (CCF).



The purpose of the Chinese Canadian Faculty Project is to engage and support researchers, scholars, as well as graduate students of Chinese descent and other minority groups to fight

against racial profiling and defend academic freedom in the increasingly restrictive national security measures adopted by the Canadian government through its Named Research Organizations in Sensitive Technology Research Areas, and legalized control of academic freedom under the newly passed Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act. Through organizing open conversations, the Chinese Canadian Faculty Project hopes to foster an inclusive and open academic environment.

At the event, Dr. Hu shared his powerful story as the first academic wrongfully charged and went on trial under the China Initiative. He spoke about what he experienced, the impacts on his academic career, his life and his family. He spoke out against racial profiling, and warned about the dangers of overreach in national security measures targeting academia.

Immediate impact of the event: As a Chinese Canadian, Dr. Anming Hu's story was known to the Chinese Canadian academic community. The event attracted attention nationwide in Canada. Scholars in sensitive technology areas have a wide fear of racial profiling and being wrongfully treated by their own government. Therefore, university professors, scholars and students participated widely. There were more than seventy attendees across North America. The participants addressed their concerns during the panel discussion. They consulted Dr. Hu regarding legal concerns and sought advice on how to protect themselves. In response, Dr. Hu shared insights from his own experience.

Political impact: Beyond attracting academia attention, the event has also drawn interest from politicians. Senator **Yuen Pau Woo** participated in person. He was concerned about whether the Canadian government provided adequate support to Dr. Hu when he encountered injustice. He asked whether the Canadian government took any action to help Dr. Hu during his investigation and trial, and if any Canadian diplomats, government agencies or parliamentarians stood up to support him. In addition, Senator Yuen Pau Woo also asked if the Canadian government would provide similar advice and support when a Canadian citizen encountered similar legal problems in China. Dr. Hu responded how the Canadian government instructed him to "follow the U.S. law" and provided no help. In comparison, Dr. Hu addressed how U.S. congressional members provided assistance in his case. He hopes that the Canadian government will be more proactive in protecting its citizens in the future, especially when handling similar legal issues, and can act more forcefully and effectively.

Social impact: A local Vancouver social activist **Ally Wang** participated in the event in person. The [Stop Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Advocacy Group](#), which she co-founded, helped promote the event. She writes articles for Chinese language media. She has translated Dr. Anming Hu's story into Chinese and will publish in a Chinese language magazine.

In conclusion, the event raised attention to racial profiling against Chinese professors in the academy in both Canada and America. It called wide attention to academic independence and impartiality, firmly oppose political interference, and encourage everyone to actively participate

in discussions among universities, policymakers and the public to jointly promote the construction of an inclusive and fair higher education environment.

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APA Justice Task Force is a non-partisan platform to build a sustainable ecosystem that addresses racial profiling concerns and to facilitate, inform, and advocate on selected issues related to justice and fairness for the Asian Pacific American community. For more information, please refer to the new APA Justice website under development at www.apajusticetaskforce.org. We value your feedback. Please send your comments to contact@apajustice.org.

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