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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
548 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6002

May 31, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

The Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies, and Innovation write to express our deep concern that lucrative Department of Defense (DOD) research grants continue to be awarded to universities that host Confucius Institutes. These institutes are “funded by the CCP Propaganda Department” and “overseen by personnel based in Chinese embassies and consulates,” according to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.¹ One university in particular—Alfred—was awarded a \$13.5 million DOD research grant for hypersonic weapons while simultaneously hosting a Confucius Institute and partnering with a Chinese university “actively engaged in defense research” on behalf of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).² To put it plainly, DOD is funding advanced, hypersonic weapons-related research at an American university that actively partners with a Chinese university that performs similar research for the PLA. We seek additional information regarding this alarming matter and the DOD’s efforts to safeguard sensitive U.S. military research.

As you know, Section 1062 of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) prohibits the DOD from providing funds to “institution[s] of higher education that hosts a Confucius Institute” after October 1, 2023.³ Despite this looming deadline, Alfred University was awarded a 5-year contract worth \$13.5 million, to “improve the performance of ceramic materials used in weapons (i.e., cruise weapons).”⁴ The grant does not end until 2027, so unless Alfred

¹ Alexander Bowe, *China’s Overseas United Front Work Background and Implications for the United States*, U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMM. (Aug. 24, 2018) available at www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%27s%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US_final_0.pdf.

² *China University of Geosciences (Wuhan)*, AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE (Nov. 19, 2019) available at www.unitracker.aspi.org.au/universities/china-university-of-geosciences-wuhan/.

³ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, H.R. 6395, § 1062, 116th Cong. (2020).

⁴ *Fiat ARL at Alfred University*, ALFRED UNIVERSITY (May 2, 2022) available at www.blog.alfred.edu/president

University closes its Confucius Institute or receives a waiver, this grant will be in violation of the law as of October 1, 2023.⁵ As a result of Section 1062, over one hundred U.S. universities shut down their Confucius Institutes as of June 2022.⁶ However, Alfred University continues to operate a Confucius Institute to this day.

Confucius Institutes were originally established as a part of the United Front Work system of the CCP in order to expand the Chinese government's influence abroad.⁷ Confucius Institutes play an instrumental role in establishing under-regulated research partnerships between U.S. and Chinese universities. The People's Republic of China (PRC) often assigns Chinese universities to partner with U.S. universities that have research strength in targeted technologies that correspond to areas the Chinese universities are tasked with developing in China. Some of the Chinese civilian universities partnered with U.S. universities under the Confucius Institute agreements are involved in supporting China's military industrial complex.⁸

On top of its affiliation with a Confucius Institute, Alfred University has entered into a research agreement with China University of Geosciences in Wuhan, which maintains a research program in advanced materials science—a research area closely related to the DOD-funded research at Alfred University.⁹ China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) also participates in classified PLA defense projects.¹⁰ In 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation found that “foreign state adversaries seek to illicitly or illegitimately acquire U.S. academic research and information to advance their scientific, economic, and military development goals.”¹¹ It is vital to U.S. national interests that sensitive military research is safeguarded from our foreign adversaries.

In light of these significant concerns, the Select Committee seeks additional information regarding DOD's efforts to protect sensitive national security and American taxpayer-funded research from theft or compromise. We respectfully request you provide the following information no later than June 14, 2023:

1. All correspondence—including letters, emails, and electronic documents—between the Department of Defense and Alfred University since the enactment of FY2021 NDAA;
2. All documents and communications related to the Department of Defense's grant—Award ID: W911NF2220061—to Alfred University;

/2022/05/02/flat-arl-at-alfred-university/.

⁵ *Supra*, n. 3; *Confucius Institute Waiver Program Guidance to U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*, U.S. DEP'T OF DEFENSE (Mar. 28, 2023) available at www.basicresearch.defense.gov/Portals/61/Documents/Academic%20Research%20Security%20Page/Confucius%20Institute%20Waiver%20Program%20Guidance_3.28.2023.pdf.

⁶ *How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?*, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS (Mar. 23, 2023) available at www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states.

⁷ *Supra*, n. 1.

⁸ Craig Singleton, *The Middle Kingdom Meets Higher Education: How U.S. Universities Support China's Military-Industrial Complex*, FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES (Dec. 2021) available at www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/fdd-monograph-the-middle-kingdom-meets-higher-education.pdf.

⁹ See www.chxy.cug.edu.cn/xygk/xyjj.htm.

¹⁰ *Supra*, n. 2.

¹¹ *China: The Risk to Academia*, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (2019) available at www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf.

3. All documents and communications related to the implementation of Section 1062 of FY21 NDAA;
4. All policy, guidance, interpretive, or other documents or communications that direct, instruct, or recommend how DOD employees and contractors perform due diligence in assessing research security risks related to grants, awards, or other funding agreements with American universities; and
5. All documents and communications related to the creation and planned enforcement of the Department’s *Confucius Institute Waiver Program Guidance to U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*.¹²
6. A list of universities that have applied or have expressed interest in applying for the Department’s Confucius Institute Waiver Program.

In addition, we request you provide a briefing to relevant staff no later than June 14, 2023 regarding the Department’s plan to enforce Section 1062 of FY 2021 NDAA and grant waivers to U.S. universities—including Alfred—who receive DOD research funds and yet continue to host a Confucius Institute today.

The House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party has broad authority to “investigate and submit policy recommendations on the status of the Chinese Communist Party’s economic, technological, and security progress and its competition with the United States” under H. Res. 11.

To make arrangements to deliver a response, please contact Select Committee staff at (202) 226-9678.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher
Chairman

¹² Supra, n. 5.