

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We are writing to express our grave concerns that the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) is advancing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) interests on U.S. campuses, raising serious foreign policy and national security risks—particularly given that it remains insufficiently regulated and has not been designated as a foreign mission of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The *Foreign Missions Act* passed by the U.S. Congress in 1982 was designed not only to ensure reciprocity in treatment for U.S. diplomatic and consular missions abroad, but to also regulate the activities of foreign missions operating in the homeland and protect the U.S. public from abuses of privileges and immunities by members of those missions and ensure transparency.¹ The challenges presented by the increased presence of missions of foreign adversary countries have grown in recent decades. None more so than from the CCP, which utilizes a wide variety of front organizations that it owns or controls to do its bidding through its United Front strategy.

United Front's work is a sophisticated blend of engagement, influence, and intelligence operations that the CCP employs to shape its political environment and advance its strategic objectives. The United Front's activities include technology transfer; surveillance of Chinese diaspora communities; promotion of pro-PRC narratives through seemingly independent voices; and the harassment, intimidation, or neutralization of CCP critics. These operations are carried out through an extensive and well-documented network of organizations that operate in parallel with China's Foreign Ministry, party organizations, and intelligence services, seeking to influence companies, associations, universities, think tanks, civic organizations, prominent individuals, and public opinion worldwide.²

¹ Foreign Missions Act 22 U.S.C. 4301-4316

² U.S. House Select Committee on China, Memorandum: United Front 101 (Sept. 2023), <https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/uf-101-memo-final-pdf-version.pdf>.

According to the *Foreign Missions Act*, a “‘foreign mission’ means any mission or agency or entity in the United States, which is involved in the diplomatic, consular, or other activities of, or which is substantially owned or effectively controlled by—(A) a foreign government, or (B) an organization...representing a territory or political entity...which engages in some aspect of the conduct of the international affairs of such territory or political entity.”³

As a foreign adversary country,⁴ the activities of the PRC and its missions in the United States reasonably require enhanced scrutiny. To this end, the Department of State appropriately issued a set of new rules back in 2019 and 2020 that:

(1) required all members of China’s foreign missions to provide advance notice to the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) of their planned engagements with any U.S.-based and local government officials, universities, colleges, and research institutions.⁵

(2) required China’s military personnel stationed at its embassy or one of its consular posts in the United States to notify OFM in advance of their travel plans beyond a 25-mile radius of their assigned post.⁶

(3) required Chinese foreign missions to obtain advanced approval from OFM to host a cultural event outside of any mission with more than 50 attendees.⁷

According to a Congressional report from 2024, the U.S. government designated 22 entities as PRC foreign missions:⁸ five embassy/consulates, 13 media companies, two businesses, and two entities directly tied to the CCP’s United Front system.⁹ While these designations are critical for transparency, they do not even begin to scratch the surface of organizations tied to the CCP’s influence and intelligence bureaucracy.¹⁰ It is critical to maintain vigilance regarding PRC entities operating on U.S. soil as foreign missions across sectors—including in academia—to ensure continued effective oversight. As an unclassified intelligence assessment released in 2025

³ Foreign Missions Act 22 U.S.C. 4301-4316 ((b) Determination with respect to the meaning and applicability of the terms used in subsection (a) of this section shall be committed to the discretion of the Secretary.)

⁴ 10 USC § 4872(d)(2)

⁵ Designation and Determination Pursuant to the Foreign Missions Act FR Doc. 2019-22820

⁶ Id.

⁷ Determination Pursuant to the Foreign Missions Act FR Doc. 2020-20732

⁸ Lauren (Greenwood) Menon & Jonathan Roberts, China’s Foreign Missions in the United States, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (July 2024), https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Chinas_Foreign_Missions_in_the_United_States.pdf.

⁹ Id. at 2.

¹⁰ Didi Kirsten Tatlow, Exclusive: 600 U.S. Groups Linked to Chinese Communist Party Influence Effort with Ambition Beyond Election, *Newsweek* (Oct. 26, 2020), <https://www.newsweek.com/2020/11/13/exclusive-600-us-groups-linked-chinese-communist-party-influence-effort-ambition-beyond-1541624.html>

by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence also underscored, U.S. academic institutions and students are targets of the CCP's malign influence campaign.¹¹

One such PRC entity engaging in malign influence is the CSSA. To be clear, these nominally student-led groups¹² on U.S. college campuses are receiving direction and funding from China while also engaging in harmful and disruptive activities that chill free expression, undermine academic freedom, and raise serious national security concerns.

As the U.S. State Department has assessed: "When the Chinese government first allowed its citizens to attend western universities in the late 1970s, the CCP created the CSSA to monitor Chinese students and mobilize them against views that dissent from the CCP's stance. That directive has not changed. The PRC's ongoing and increasing efforts to suppress open inquiry on foreign campuses are troubling."¹³

There were more than 277,000 Chinese students studying in undergraduate and graduate programs within the United States during the 2023-2024 academic year and approximately 200 chapters of CSSA are currently operating across U.S. college campuses.¹⁴

The Chinese government uses student organizations like CSSA branches, which are organized and collectively overseen by the PRC Ministry of Education and the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD), to monitor, control, manipulate, and direct Chinese students abroad. The fact that a senior UFWD cadre has been posted to serve as the education attaché at a major consulate in the United States also points to the considerable overlap between UFWD and Chinese education officials abroad—and how the latter post can be used as a cover for United Front operations and state-led overseas talent recruitment.¹⁵

¹¹ National Counterintelligence and Security Center, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Safeguarding Our Future: Protecting Government and Business Leaders at the U.S. State and Local Level from People's Republic of China (PRC) Influence Operations* (July 2022),

https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/PRC_Subnational_Influence-06-July-2022.pdf.

¹² John Moolenaar, Letter to Acting President Claire Shipman (House Select Committee on China, 119th Cong.)

(Nov. 4, 2025), https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-columbia_cusef_final.pdf.

¹³ U.S. Department of State, *The Chinese Communist Party on Campus: Opportunities & Risks* (2020),

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CCP-on-campus-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ Id; Miles Yu, *Enabling The Dragon: The Dangers Of China's Academic Outsourcing To The United States*, *Hoover Institution* (November 13, 2024), <https://www.hoover.org/research/enabling-dragon-dangers-chinas-academic-outsourcing-united-states>

¹⁵ [覃菊华同志任驻芝加哥总领馆教育组参赞衔领事] Comrade Qin Juhua is appointed as Counselor with the rank of Consul in the Education Section at the Consulate General in Chicago, 中华人民共和国教育部 [Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China] (Nov. 13, 2013), https://hudong.moe.gov.cn/s78/A04/gongzuo/renmian/zhuwai/201311/t20131120_168151.html

Open-source information based on CSSA branches' websites and social media accounts show how these organizations are directed and controlled by the CCP. The evidence includes multiple CSSA branches claiming that they are the only organization on campus "authorized by" or being "directed by" or that "works with" the Chinese Embassy.¹⁶ Multiple groups also asserted that they are "approved," "recognized," and "supported" by the consulates.¹⁷ For example, the constitution of the Southwest Chinese Students and Scholars Association (SWCSSA), a registered 501(c)(3) that covers 42 American universities, expressly indicates that it operates under the oversight of the Chinese consulate.¹⁸ Article 4 of the SWCSSA's constitution expressly states that it "accepts the guidance of the People's Republic of China Consulate-General in Los Angeles."¹⁹ Multiple CSSA branches on campuses advertise on their social media accounts that they are the only official association of Chinese students on their respective campuses recognized by their respective local consulates. This includes CSSA chapters at the University of Massachusetts Boston,²⁰ University of Washington,²¹ University of California Santa Barbara,²² among others.²³ Additionally, the Chinese Embassy in the United States controls the activities of CSSA branches through the approval of some of their leadership candidates.²⁴ Also, the requirement for membership in some CSSA branches includes what amount to loyalty pledges to the Chinese government and to its policy objectives.²⁵

The case of SWCSSA is illustrative.²⁶ The SWCSSA regularly convenes cultural events and banquets that are supported and attended by officials from the Chinese consulate.²⁷ Senior

¹⁶ Chuck Grassley, Letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland (U.S. House of Representatives, 118th Cong.) (Dec. 8, 2023), https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/scott_grassley_et_al_to_doj_-_cssa_fara.pdf

¹⁷ Sebastian Rotella, Even on U.S. Campuses, China Cracks Down on Students Who Speak Out, *ProPublica* (November 30, 2021), <https://www.propublica.org/article/even-on-us-campuses-china-cracks-down-on-students-who-speak-out>

¹⁸ U.S. Southwestern Chinese Students and Scholars Association (SWCSSA), <https://swcssa.org/en/>

¹⁹ 美西南中国学生学者联谊会 [Southwestern Chinese Students and Scholars Association], 美西南中国学生学者联谊会章程 [Constitution of the Southwest U.S. Chinese Students and Scholars Association], <https://swcssa.wixsite.com/swcssa/about1-ckhs>

²⁰ 波士顿大学中国学生学者联合会 [Boston University Chinese Students and Scholars Association], 官网 [Official Website], <https://www.bucssa.org/#home-container>

²¹ 华盛顿大学中国学生学者联谊会 [University of Washington Chinese Students & Scholars Association], <https://www.cssauw.org/en/>

²² 加州大学圣芭芭拉中国学生新生指南 [University of California, Santa Barbara New Student Guide for Chinese Students], [加州大学圣芭芭拉分校中国学生学者联谊会] Chinese Students & Scholars Association (CSSA) (2018), https://oiss.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/2020-05/2018_ucsbcssa_%E6%96%B0%E7%94%9F%E6%89%8B%E5%86%8C.pdf

²³ *Id.* at 17.

²⁴ *Id.* at 16.

²⁵ Alex Joske, The party speaks for you, *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* (June 9 2020), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you/>

²⁶ *Id.* at 18.

²⁷ *Id.*

officers of SWCSSA frequently participate in United Front forums held throughout China and organized by the provincial chapters of the Western Returned Scholars Association—an organization directly supervised by the CCP’s United Front Work Department.²⁸ SWCSSA was accorded the title as an Overseas Liaison Branch for a government-led public-private initiative, the Shenzhen Online Industrial Technology Research Institute, and one of dozens Overseas Talent Recruitment Partners for cities in Guangdong province.²⁹ These recognitions serve as incontestable proof of how CSSA branches are secretly supporting the Chinese government’s foreign talent recruitment programs.³⁰ In the same year, the SWCSSA was also promoting talent recruitment initiatives for companies blacklisted by the Department of War, such as Tencent³¹ and Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Ltd..³² In 2019, the SWCSSA worked with the Ningbo Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese—another United Front organization under the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese—to organize an exchange visit for its members that was ostensibly paid for by the Chinese Party-State.³³

In addition to being under the Chinese government’s direction and control, the Chinese consulates are also directly and indirectly funding CSSA branches.³⁴ CSSA chapters advertise the financial support they receive from the consulates, which have helped to identify these ties. Several CSSA branches like the ones at Vanderbilt University,³⁵ Duke University,³⁶ and Florida

²⁸ [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA\\$](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA$); Shenzhen Overseas Chinese Daily [深圳侨报] (Aug. 11, 2025), http://www.sz-qb.com/PC/content/202508/11/content_78960.html

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA\\$](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA$); Id.

³¹ [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA\\$](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-tTMkIjhXSusW3FF7oCl9w__!!BSgrhSFG!HVNTuWntmMgO4V49b6Y_mE1Z-zxTc8wmtUbcnnpf22U14b5GvOY4GaDQKX_EMrG7EhJOJxS7fIDePTsbAjtwwpDIA$); U.S. Department of War, Entities Identified as Chinese Military Companies Operating in the United States in Accordance with Section 1260H of the William M. (“Mac”) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283) (Jan. 7, 2025), <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Jan/07/2003625471/-1/-1/1/ENTITIES-IDENTIFIED-AS-CHINESE-MILITARY-COMPANIES-OPERATING-IN-THE-UNITED-STATES.PDF>.

³² Id.

³³ The Municipal Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese organized the 2019 “Charm of Overseas Famous Students in Ningbo - The Southwest China Federation of Students in the United States Enters Ningbo” activity [中共宁波市委统战部 港澳台海外 市侨联组织 2019“海外名校学子魅力宁波行—美西南中国学联走进宁波”活动] (Jun. 19, 2019),

https://web.archive.org/web/20260218204941/http://www.nbtzb.gov.cn/art/2019/6/26/art_5717_365093.html.

³⁴ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, China’s Long Arm Reaches Into American Campuses, *Foreign Policy* (March 7, 2018), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/07/chinas-long-arm-reaches-into-american-campuses-chinese-students-scholars-association-university-communist-party/>

³⁵ Vanderbilt University Chinese Students and Scholars Association, About us [关于我们],

https://web.archive.org/web/20190802154939/https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/vucssa/?page_id=14.

³⁶ Tang Wei, [Inside Story] Chinese Consulate Controls CSSA, Extends Its Long Arm to Threaten the World [【内幕】中领馆操控 CSSA 长臂威胁世界 | 中共统战 | 中国学生学者联合会 | 学联会], Epoch Times [大纪元] (Aug. 13, 2020), <https://www.epochtimes.com/gb/20/8/11/n12322176.htm/amp>.

State University³⁷ have openly stated that they received funding from Chinese consulates. The Chinese consulate reportedly transferred \$6,000 to the president of the University of Pittsburgh CSSA annually to support the chapter's activities. The CSSA branches of other U.S. universities like Georgetown University³⁸ and the University of Tennessee,³⁹ among others, have also received funding from the consulates for their operations. A CSSA chapter at Wayne State University in Michigan was involved in an investigation for having facilitated the travel fees of local officials to visit China as part of an effort to secure a local government contract.⁴⁰ The fees were provided by the PRC consulate to the CSSA through a business intermediary utilized ostensibly to mask the original source of the funds and circumvent regulations.⁴¹

Clear and consistent application of the *Foreign Missions Act* to organizations like the CSSA, as well as effective and comprehensive enforcement of the law, are especially critical given how agents of foreign adversarial countries have used their associations as cover for malign activities like acting as an undeclared agent, transnational repression, and even espionage.⁴²

Therefore, we respectfully request that you, in consultation with the Attorney General, make and submit a formal determination on whether CSSA branches meet the criteria for designation under the *Foreign Missions Act* and are therefore subject to its disclosure and other statutory requirements. Please provide this determination, together with a detailed justification and supporting analysis, to the Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, the House Committee on Education and Workforce, and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

³⁷ Xiangrong Xu, "Thank you to the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Houston for their concern for Chinese students and scholars at FSU (Attached: Six CSSA Newsletters)," Florida State University Chinese Students and Scholars Association (Oct. 25, 2005), https://groups.google.com/g/fsu-cssa/c/mIRXyievFdY/m/W9B_0Gca82gJ.

³⁸ Id. at 34.

³⁹ Li Jia, CCP's Economic Manipulation: Chinese Students and Scholars Association Website Exposes Its Own Secrets [中共經濟操控 學聯誼會網站自曝黑幕], Epoch Times [大紀元] (Jun. 27, 2007), <https://www.epochtimes.com/b5/7/6/27/n1756119.htm>.

⁴⁰ Tyler Scott, Developer of failed project paid for Ypsilanti officials' China trip, NPR (Apr. 10, 2018), <https://www.michiganpublic.org/news/2018-04-10/developer-of-failed-project-paid-for-ypsilanti-officials-china-trip>

⁴¹ City of Ypsilanti, Council Special Meeting Agenda, at 97 (Oct. 10, 2017), <https://cityofypsilanti.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1257?fileID=2442>.

⁴² U.S. Department of Justice, Leader of Multi-Year 'Operation Fox Hunt' Repatriation Campaign Directed by the People's Republic of China Sentenced to 20 Months in Prison (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/leader-multi-year-operation-fox-hunt-repatriation-campaign-directed-peoples-republic-china>; U.S. Department of Justice, Former High-Ranking New York State Government Employee Charged with Acting as an Undisclosed Agent of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party (Sep. 3, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/former-high-ranking-new-york-state-government-employee-charged-acting-undisclosed>.

The Honorable Marco Rubio

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We stand ready to assist your efforts to mitigate the threats posed by the PRC's foreign influence operations by enhancing transparency regarding CSSA activities, including PRC funding, coordination, and direction on U.S. campuses. The CCP's exploitation of America's openness—while refusing adequate treatment for legitimate U.S. diplomatic and consular missions in China—must come to an end.

Thank you for your action in these matters.

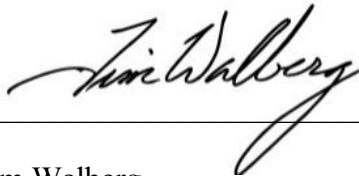
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John Moolenaar", written over a horizontal line.

John Moolenaar
Chairman
House Select Committee on the CCP

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brian Mast", written over a horizontal line.

Brian Mast
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim Walberg", written over a horizontal line.

Tim Walberg
Chairman
House Committee on Education & Workforce

CC: The Honorable Linda McMahon, Secretary of Education
Department of Education

The Honorable Pam Bondi, Attorney General
Department of Justice