



Open Letter from Dr. Jenny J. Lee

As a professor of higher education, I have long been examining issues related to educational inequity in universities in the U.S. and abroad. More recently, I had the wonderful opportunity to present some of my research findings regarding U.S.-China scientific partnerships for a past Committee of 100 webinar. Since then, Committee of 100 and I have been in continued conversations about how to promote positive engagement between the U.S. and China and support scientists of Chinese descent, especially in light of U.S. federal actions, including the China Initiative.

Together, we implemented this survey and research in order to provide some empirical evidence to the rising concerns about racial profiling against scientists of Chinese descent. The stark findings, however, were surprising, indicating that the problems are even worse than we anticipated. In addition to answering our questions, survey respondents offered extensive accounts, totaling over 100 pages, elaborating on their opinions, how their work has changed, and how their future plans are less certain. Their accounts are compelling. While scientists across different backgrounds value U.S.-China scientific partnerships, those of Chinese descent experience the world and their work very differently because of racism, stereotypes, xenophobia, and government policies. These individual accounts combined also point to the possible deterioration in the U.S. scientific enterprise, with scientists reporting greater reluctance to engage with Chinese scientists abroad and downscaling their projects. Our findings also warn of future problems related to talent retention as some scientists are looking to further their career and research outside the U.S. because of the China Initiative.

I thank the Committee of 100 for teaming with us at the University of Arizona to help shed light on a significant issue that directly impacts how research across the U.S. is conducted and advanced. Special thanks to Committee of 100 President Zhengyu Huang, Elizabeth Kerr, Charles Zinkowski, John Haupt, Mark Borgstrom, and members of the Committee of 100 academic advisory group for their valuable input throughout the project. This project would especially not have been possible without the assistance of Felicia Zhang, who provided the initial sample data. And thanks most of all to my co-author, Xiaojie Li, for her tireless work in supporting the analyses and interpretation of results.

Sincerely,
Jenny J. Lee