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## **Graduate Capstone - Practicum Proposal**

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work with the University of Michigan Global Engagement team as a travel health and safety Graduate Student Assistant. I have been working with the Global Engagement Team in this capacity continuously since May 2022 and will continue to work there this semester. During the school year, my typical work schedule ranges from 10-15 hours per week, whereas during the Spring/Summer semester (beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>), I worked an average of 32 hours/ week for 14 weeks, and my daily working hours were Monday-Thursday 9-5 pm. My office is located on the fourth floor of the Ruthven Building in the Vice Provost's Office. The Global Engagement Team is comprised of eight permanent staff which are named below:

- Dr. Valeria Bertacco - Vice Provost for Engaged Learning, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
- Dr. Amy Carey - Assistant Vice Provost for International Engagement
- Patrick Morgan - Chief International Safety Officer
- Ayesha Usmani - International Travel Safety Manager
- Janelle Pangilinan - Global Engagement Project Manager
- Heidi Doyle – IT Project Manager
- Cindy Kerschbaum – Technical Coordinator
- Wyatt Boykin - International Travel Safety Coordinator

While I have worked extensively with each team member, I most closely work with Patrick Morgan, Ayesha Usmani, and Wyatt Boykin on domestic and international travel affairs. Additionally, Ayesha Usmani is my designated project supervisor and can be reached by email at [ausmani@umich.edu](mailto:ausmani@umich.edu). She has graciously agreed to help me fulfill the practicum experience by allowing me to interview her periodically throughout the semester. As my advisor, she is also most knowledgeable about my work habits, goals, and growth and can provide the most accurate account of my responsibilities.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Global Engagement Team:**

The University of Michigan Global Engagement Team is responsible for the creation, dissemination, and consultation regarding all international and domestic travel requirements related to the University of Michigan. University of Michigan Related Travel is defined as an experience that meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Experiences that receive U-M in-residence credit
- Any travel that receives U-M funding
- Any participation in an abroad experience to satisfy a degree requirement, including but not limited to dissertation, research, internships, practicums, etc.
- Trips sponsored by U-M affiliated student organizations.
- A program or travel that is sanctioned by a U-M unit as a Sponsored Event
- U-M Managed or Organized Trips

View [this resource](#) if you would like to learn more about what qualifies as UMRT.

Thus, the Global Engagement Team's extensive scope encompasses any U-M-related domestic or international travel (UMRT) that students, faculty, or staff attend.

### **a. Creation:**

One of the Global Engagement Team's essential roles is to create the travel safety protocols that individuals on UMRT are expected to follow. Although there are many U-M-specific policies that govern travel, it is unnecessary to list them all; I will give a few examples of the most common regulations that those engaging in UMRT must follow. The first is submitting a travel registration. Whether it is a faculty, staff, or student, anyone traveling outside of the United States must submit a formal travel registration. These registrations cover basic travel information, such as your location and how U-M can contact you amid an emergency. These Safety Plans are extremely useful given that thousands of U-M-related personnel are traveling to all corners of the globe during any given semester. Thus, the team needs to ensure that in the case of natural disasters, political crises, or other dangerous situations, they can reach out to make sure individuals are safe and have the support they need to either continue their experience or return early. This information

is also vital in case a traveler was to go missing and the University needed to contact relatives or in-country contacts.

Another example of regulations that the Global Engagement Team is responsible for creating is the U-M Travel Designations. These designations include two main categories. The first is the Travel Health category, which can receive a low, medium, or high-risk rating. Low-health risk destinations pose limited health to travelers and typically do not require vaccination or health preparation before arrival. Medium-health risk destinations may pose a risk to travelers, but this risk can be mitigated through careful prophylaxis and vigilance abroad. Lastly, high-health risk designations involve goals that pose an immediate danger to travelers, and therefore, it is not advised for any students, faculty, or staff to travel there. Although it is rare today for any destination to have a travel health high-risk rating, it is typically reserved for countries experiencing widespread epidemics. The need for a health rating arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is now standard practice. The second designation category is regional warnings or restrictions. Warnings and restriction labels can apply to various calamities, including natural disasters, political crises, social unrest, etc. A warning indicates that the destination may be unsafe and encourages students to exercise caution. The restriction label is reserved for areas where it is entirely dangerous for individuals to go. The warning and restriction designations can become even more complex because each country can have regional designations labeled as warning or restricted areas. It's easier to understand this concept through an example. An example of this concept is the country Israel, which is currently labeled as a Travel Warning destination but has a regional Travel Restriction of "Areas within 10 kilometers of the border with the Gaza Strip, east of route 98 in the Golan Heights, within 2 kilometers of the Lebanon Border, and within 2 kilometers of the Egypt border along the Sinai."<sup>1</sup> This can be interpreted as Israel being moderately dangerous in every area, and students should exercise caution; furthermore, specific regions in Israel should be avoided entirely due to extreme safety concerns. Another practical example is Armenia, which only has a restricted designation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.<sup>2</sup> This would be interpreted as Armenia being relatively safe to travel to and exercise normal precautions, except in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which should be avoided entirely due to extreme safety concerns. In total, there are a total of 13 different travel health and warning or restriction designations that countries can have. If you

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<sup>1</sup> "Israel." *Global Michigan*, University of Michigan, [global.umich.edu/country/israel/](https://global.umich.edu/country/israel/). Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "Armenia." *Global Michigan*, University of Michigan, [global.umich.edu/country/Armenia/](https://global.umich.edu/country/Armenia/). Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

want to see a visual representation of these designations, you can do so on the [U-M Travel Health and Safety Flowchart](#).

Travel designations are important for two essential reasons. Firstly, they give UM-related personnel a starting point when researching potential travel destinations. It can help inform them of the possible risk areas to consider and help them to explore more educated travel decisions. Secondly, depending on the travel designation, individuals may be required to submit additional Health and Safety plans to ensure that students more extensively consider how they will maintain their health and safety in a specific location. These designations will affect whether a student can go to a particular country in limited cases. For example, undergraduate students cannot go to countries with travel restrictions. Graduate students are allowed to go only after submitting a safety plan and detailing pertinent reasons as to why going now is vital to their research or graduation timeline. The restriction is only put in place in extreme cases, countries that fall under this designation but are not limited to North Korea, Russia, Ukraine, etc. These designations are not taken lightly and are made through a multi-pronged analysis of a country's current affairs. Because of this, we must remain current on all news and all global safety ratings. One of my projects that began in the summer and continues today includes assembling an up-to-date archive for over 200+, encompassing [OSAC](#), [GOV.UK](#), [CDC](#), [IntlSOS](#), and [Max Security](#) data. As changes occur, we adjust designations accordingly. Thus, the Global Engagement Team is responsible for creating the health and safety standards that all U-M-related travel must abide by to ensure safe travel.

Once the Global Engagement Team has formulated or amended new policies, they receive official approval from the International Travel Oversight Committee (ITOC), including the Council on Global Engagement, the International Education Network, and the International Travel Oversight Committee. Once approved, the new policies will be disseminated to the various study-abroad units and related departments.

#### **b. Dissemination:**

Another significant role of the Global Engagement Team is disseminating U-M travel abroad information, resources, and policies to U-M departments. As mentioned previously, the Global Engagement Team is responsible for overseeing and acting as a liaison between the 14+ study abroad unions across three campuses; in addition to departments, they also advise individual student

organizations and U-M-related organizations like the Ginsberg Center, which runs domestic and international programs. Because the Global Engagement Team works with diverse departments, we must foster good relationships between departments and keep in contact with them through things like [The International Education Network \(IEN\)](#), an cumulation of cross-department faculty and staff international affairs practitioners. GET conducts IEN meetings monthly to discuss new policies, conduct workshops on international affairs, and address departmental concerns or questions. While working with the Global Engagement Team, one of my projects has been recognizing each department's individual needs and creating a plan to meet these needs. The differing needs are primarily a result of the variance of department size. For example, LSA's Center for Global and Cultural Affairs is by far the most extensive study abroad department, with over 12 full-time staff members, whereas the School of Kinesiology oscillates between 1-2 staff members; in short, both departments' needs are very different. CGIS often needs little help besides clarification, whereas the school of Kinesiology needs more extensive assistance. This is why one of my favorite projects under the GET team was designing a project where I had the opportunity to meet with a representative from all the study abroad departments from U-M's three campuses. Through these meetings, I could ascertain each department's goals and individual needs and then succinctly convey these to GET. Through my findings, I created a custom plan of core areas where we could advance our resources, such as adding a religion abroad category to our diversity resources, adding more mental health abroad information to the Global Michigan website, and creating an ethical photography guide. In short, the Global Engagement Team continues to innovate and supply new ways to support departmental staff because we recognize that information can only be helpful when appropriately shared.

### **c. Consultation:**

Lastly, the Global Engagement Team is responsible for consulting any department regarding health, safety, or general travel questions. GET directs units to an array of resources we have put together to meet their needs, including materials created to interpret the U-M travel policies. GET also often meets directly with units that require clarification on the specific regulations and regulations. GET also provides information that does not explicitly relate to U-M policies. This includes information on the different resources U-M has for students studying abroad,

funding, travel insurance, mental health abroad, diversity abroad, etc. U-M resources are numerous, and sometimes, this can cause “information overload” for those trying to navigate them; thus, GET’s responsibility is to consult departments on these resources so that they can direct their students to them. Another aspect of consultation involves consulting with students, faculty, or staff in case of an emergency while abroad. This involves the Global Engagement Team reaching out to students abroad who may be affected to determine their needs and what in-country resources we can connect the students with. This can include help locating the nearest hospital, arranging emergency transportation, or establishing emergency accommodations.

In short, the Global Engagement Team is responsible for working with department units to ensure they know UM’s travel policies and can convey them to students. Furthermore, the University of Michigan’s Global Engagement Team is at the heart of all international and domestic travel. The unit is responsible for ensuring that each study abroad department and all related organizations seeking to go overseas have the information needed for a safe and productive trip. Each member juggles numerous roles and responsibilities to fulfill these requirements and must remain current on ever-changing world affairs. If you want to see a visual representation of the general duties of the Global Engagement, you can do so [here](#).

### **Explanation of my role/description of a typical day:**

As a Graduate Student Assistant for the Global Engagement Team, I work primarily in the travel health and safety department. What I enjoy most about this position is that every week is different, and I have various tasks I am responsible for. My typical work week begins on Monday morning when I have a 1 to 1 in-person meeting with my supervisor to go over the tasks I have completed, the tasks in progress, and new tasks for me to take on. We keep a running list of all these meetings to track my progress and ensure we meet deadlines. Our one-to-one meetings are also a great time to get extended feedback on the projects I have been working on to improve them. Much of my work revolves around creating resources for departmental and student use, and thus, things must be conveyed very precisely according to university legal specifications. Therefore, peer review is essential for the task I do. I also often review documents my colleagues have created and provide extensive feedback. I also offer student input on different matters. For example, recently, I was asked to review a product that our unit was considering purchasing. However, after

my review, we decided not to purchase the product as we had resources already with a lot of overlap. Another important aspect of our one-to-one meetings is determining the priority of tasks according to the due date, which can help me keep on track to finish all my projects throughout the week. On Wednesday afternoon, we typically have a GET meeting where everyone from the team is in attendance. This gives us an excellent opportunity to learn what others are working on, debrief, volunteer to help with additional projects, and ask for assignment feedback.

Besides these meetings, my daily agenda is typically set by myself. Once I have my projects, I can work on them in any order as long as they are finished by the deadline. Because I work in person, it is also very convenient to ask other team members if I have any questions, which helps me to meet my deadlines.

Occasionally, I have the opportunity to help host GET-related events, such as in-person IEN meetings or workshops. During these meetings, I am responsible for ensuring that the meeting goes smoothly through helping with logistical tasks. This is also a convenient time for me to gain networking experience with professionals in international education, which could lead to future career opportunities.

## **Project Examples:**

Now that I have detailed the Global Engagement Team's role and my role as a Graduate Student Assistant, I would like to showcase a sample of the specific projects I completed in Spring/Summer 2023. I have selected these projects because they show a variety of the skills that I have cultivated through this internship.

### *Project #1 [Safety Considerations for Independent Study & Field Research Abroad](#)*

This resource is intended to be used by students and faculty who are conducting research in a remote area abroad. It covers four essential components:

- 1) Early Logistical Planning – provides information on meeting UM safety requirements, risk management, and developing relationships with on-site coordinators.
- 2) Pre-departure Preparations – includes information on securing funding, purchasing UM GeoBlue Health Insurance information, and additional preparation considerations.

- 3) While Abroad – includes UM’s General Emergency Protocols and using Health Insurance while abroad, suggested protocols for specific emergencies (mental health, sexual and gender misconduct, arrest or detention, civil unrest, natural disasters, loss of valuables, lab incident, etc.)
- 4) Emergency Contact Information – includes a pocket-sized emergency contact sheet for students to carry with them throughout their time abroad.

This resource was created because the LSA Department of Anthropology wanted resources specifically tailored toward upper-level and graduate students who engage in research as a part of their graduation requirements. They noted that many students travel to remote locations for study and would need a guide to help them navigate what to do in an emergency. The Global Engagement Team realized we did not have a resource of this kind, so we met with the unit to discuss the department's needs and create a plan for meeting those needs through resources. After this information was assembled, I was given a brief outline of the types of information to include along with the document's primary purpose. From there, I researched and accumulated a list of sources I felt would benefit students abroad. Then, I categorized the resources into the sections that are mentioned above. Once I finished working through the resource's specific language and organization, I had the creative freedom to start designing it. Through a few iterations and peer feedback, we were able to land on the linked design, which is now available for student use. This was one of my favorite projects this summer because it allowed me to make a tangible product that would make a meaningful contribution to students. It was also a great experience to know that my supervisors trusted me and knew I was competent enough to create a high-quality resource that meets their needs.

*Project #2 Country Portfolios:*

Another major project that I have worked on this spring/summer is accumulating a country portfolio archive, which is updated monthly. These archives hold information about the 200+ countries that U-M students travel to. To create this resource, I scan multiple web sources to see if new information about a country’s travel status has been released. These sources include the [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory Site](#), The [UK Government Foreign Travel Advice](#), [OSAC](#), [CDC Traveler’s Health](#), [International SOS](#), and [Max Security](#). Because international affairs are



everchanging, I must ensure these resources are updated and correctly archived at least monthly. This archive is helpful to help GET make travel designation decisions and monitor international conditions. It is also beneficial to send to departments who need resources to give to students who want to learn more about their host country. Besides monthly archiving, I also pay attention to global news and archive my colleague Wyatt Boykin's weekly global event report to determine if some countries need to be updated more frequently.

*Project #3 [Ethical Photography Flyer](#)*

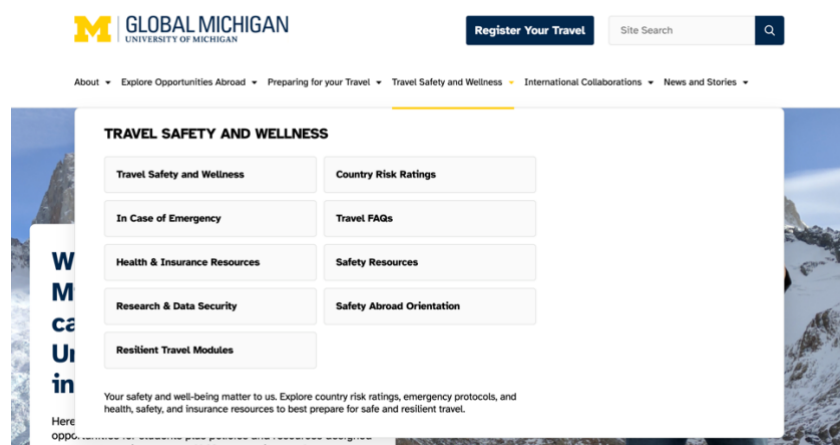
The Ethical Photography Guide was created for the University of Michigan's annual Global Photo Showcase. Students should view it as part of the guidelines before submitting a photo to the showcase. The flyer is also great for students who want to learn how to document their experiences abroad respectfully. The brochure details the critical ethical and legal considerations for photography in foreign countries. For example, it discusses that in places like Japan and Egypt, individuals can break the law when taking photos of particular buildings or people. To create this flyer, I researched the topic and looked at other Universities' published resources. Once I had the resources and made the flyer content, I designed and formatted it to align with U-M design and accessibility standards. Any U-M department can now use this resource.

*Project #4 [M-Compass trivia](#)*

This project was a fun trivia game that I put together for a M-Compass in-person summer workshop. The summer workshop is an annual event where study abroad advisors come together to review and learn new tricks to navigate the M-Compass website. M-Compass is the study abroad search tool that students can use to search for programs and apply for them. The website is built on Terra Dotta software, which study abroad advisors use to keep track of application decisions. I created and presented this trivia session to help advisors review their Terra Dotta knowledge, and it's an excellent example of my contributions to workshops.

*Project #5: [Global Michigan - Website curation](#)*

Throughout the summer, the Global Engagement Team has been building a new website that is more visually appealing and organized in a more easy-to-navigate layout. One of my major projects was to transfer the health and safety content from the old website to the new WordPress site. Not only did this mean moving all text, images, media, etc., but it also meant combing through all the information to get rid of content that was no longer relevant. Following this, I helped reconfigure the rest of the text under new headings and added existing media sources to the website. The result is currently seen in the Travel Safety and Wellness header subpages on the Global Michigan website. This project was a fantastic opportunity to learn more about website development and to exercise my website curation and design skillset.



## My practicum goals:

My goal for this internship is to gain valuable experience working in higher education, particularly within international affairs. I also want to learn more about the day-to-day experience of working in study abroad/ international affairs. This internship has helped me better understand how Universities work together through agreements and memorandums to offer study-abroad opportunities. It also helps me to stay knowledgeable about global affairs and how they can influence study abroad and international student populations. Throughout this experience, I also gained extensive networking experience, which I can leverage when I graduate. I can use the networks and knowledge I have gained here to secure a job in international affairs in higher education. There are also countless soft skills that I got to polish throughout my time with GET, including time management, adaptability, presenting ideas in a public forum, etc. My supervisors

and the whole GET team have been great mentors to me, and I have learned countless skills throughout my time with them. This internship opened my eyes to working in higher education and how I can make a tangible difference in students' lives through my work. In the immediate future, following graduation, I plan to move back to my hometown to secure a position in higher education at a university in either the study abroad field or working with international students on campus. I am also interested in working in the non-profit realm in a position that requires international affairs expertise. I may return to school to receive my Ph.D. in higher education administration or a related field, but I am now excited to have a respite from academia. This position aligns with my anticipated career plans as it is the field I want to enter immediately after graduation.

### **How does my practicum experience relate to my academic interests?**

Beyond the many practical skills I have developed through my experience with the Global Engagement Team, my work complements my area of study (Chinese contemporary history and politics) and research interests. One of my primary research interests involves studying how the CCP uses international higher education as a mechanism of soft power diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, I have been investigating how the CCP recruits foreign students into its universities and how these universities are instructed to become “strongholds”<sup>4</sup> of the CCP party which allows the CCP to curate the experiences of international students through an idealized lens. Furthermore, this one-way transmission of Chinese cultural values can be seen through controversial organizations like CCP-sponsored Confucius Institutes, which have become locations of concern for espionage because they allow the CCP to disseminate its cultural and political values without cross-cultural exchange (reverse cultural imperialism).<sup>5</sup>

While the CCP engages in cultivating soft power through international education, it also maintains a stronghold (regime resilience) over its citizens through mandatory Patriotic

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<sup>3</sup>Yang, Rui. "Soft power and higher education: An examination of China's Confucius Institutes." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 8.2 (2010): 235-245.

<sup>4</sup> "China universities must become Communist party 'strongholds', says Xi Jinping." *The Guardian*, 9 Dec. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/09/china-universities-must-become-communist-party-strongholds-says-xi-jinping](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/09/china-universities-must-become-communist-party-strongholds-says-xi-jinping). Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Lum, Thomas, and Hannah Fischer. "Confucius institutes in the United States: Selected issues." *CRS*, April 15 (2019).

Education.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, ensuring loyalty of Chinese citizens abroad (mainly students) amidst the significant number of Chinese international students, has become an area of CCP concern as evidenced by the CCP's preoccupation with the Western Returned Scholars Association and the major speech *Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True* which states, "First, I hope you will adhere to patriotism. China's history stretches over thousands of years, and patriotism has always been a stirring theme and a powerful force inspiring the Chinese of all ethnic groups to carry on and excel. No matter how long the shadow it may cast, the tree forever strikes deep roots in soil. No matter where they are, Chinese students should always keep the home country and its people in their hearts..."<sup>7</sup> While the CCP tries to improve its image through education abroad and in-country, China is also the single largest exporter of higher education international students in the world.<sup>8</sup> Among fierce competition for limited seats among top Chinese universities, according to a 2021 US Embassy and Consulate in China, the United States remains the number one destination for Chinese international students.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it's important to reconcile China's desire to export soft power through diplomacy while sending a significant portion of its students abroad. Furthermore, the types of Chinese students that tend to study abroad or attend University abroad are those most likely to be skeptical of patriotic education and nationalism, i.e., individuals from middle-class or wealthy urban families, which compounds this issue,<sup>10</sup> and illuminates why the CCP is so concerned with this population.

The US also engages in the cultivation of educational soft power by attracting international students abroad. The goals of attracting these students are multifold and include expanding cross-cultural education, attracting the best and brightest foreign talents for critical industries, and exporting American values globally, etc.<sup>11</sup> However, one barrier to the success of the U.S.

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<sup>6</sup> Zhao, Suisheng. "A state-led nationalism: The patriotic education campaign in post-Tiananmen China." *Communist and post-communist studies* 31.3 (1998): 287-302.

<sup>7</sup> "Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True." presented on Oct 21, 2013, as found in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I*.

<sup>8</sup> "Enrolment of international students by country of origin." *OECD Stats*, stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDU\_ENRL\_MOBILE.

<sup>9</sup> "China remains the top sender of international students to the United States in 2020/2021." *U.S. Embassy and Consulate in China*, 17 Nov. 2021, china.usembassy-china.org.cn/china-remains-the-top-sender-of-international-students-to-the-united-states-in-2020-2021/.

<sup>10</sup> Naftali, Orna. "'Being Chinese Means Becoming Cheap Labour': Education, National Belonging and Social Positionality among Youth in Contemporary China." *The China Quarterly*, vol. 245, 2021, pp. 51-71. *ProQuest*, <https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/being-chinese-means-becoming-cheap-labour/docview/2504685844/se-2>, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741020000120>.

<sup>11</sup> "The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China." , edited by Anthony J. Blinken, U.S. Department of State , 26 May 2022, [www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/](http://www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/).

achieving these goals is the growing geopolitical tension between the U.S. and China, in addition to domestic conditions that International Chinese students may face. For example, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in anti-Asian hate and discrimination, particularly in the U.S., has left many Chinese international students feeling discouraged, angry, and frightened.<sup>12</sup> Over the past two years, I have seen a rise in a blog post on Weibo that discusses anti-Asian discrimination experienced by Chinese students at American universities. This discrimination also led to Chinese international students returning home even more patriotic than before they attended foreign universities, which is counter to US foreign policy goals. Furthermore, the U.S. 2018 China Initiative, which targeted International Chinese academics in the United States, led to even more negative views of the U.S. for Chinese students. Despite the China Initiative having officially ended in 2022, the legacy of the initiative and continuing tension has had a cumulative negative effect on Chinese international student enrollment at US universities.<sup>13</sup>

China's soft power diplomacy through educational means relates to two current projects I am working on with the Global Engagement Team. The first project is a resource guide for U-M students who plan to study abroad in China. This resource includes information on downloading specific apps like WeChat, Alipay, etc., and advises students on how laws differ from those in the US and how this may affect their experiences. As someone who has lived in China for an extended period, I can draw upon my experiences to create a more comprehensive guide for students. Additionally, one of the current issues I am trying to overcome with this project is working with my supervisors and U-M General Legal Council on instructing students to download U-M's VPN or their own to access non-Chinese media sources and search engines. The issue is that VPNs are illegal in China, so as a University, we can not advise students to do something that is against the law of their host country; on the other hand, it is essential to ensure that students have this VPN installed before going abroad.

Another project I am working on relating to this topic is creating a guide for students conducting sensitive research abroad. This project will be geared towards China, as this is the country where we send the most U-M students for study, where legal issues regarding sensitive

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<sup>12</sup> Dong, Fanghong, Yeji Hwang, and Nancy A. Hodgson. "“I Have a Wish”: Anti-Asian Racism and Facing Challenges Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Among Asian International Graduate Students." *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 34.2 (2023): 115-122.

<sup>13</sup> Liu, Angela. "Where Have All The Chinese International Students Gone?" *US - China Today*, 20 May 2023, [uschinatoday.org/features/2023/05/20/where-have-all-the-chinese-international-students-gone/](https://uschinatoday.org/features/2023/05/20/where-have-all-the-chinese-international-students-gone/).

research have resulted in legal matters in the past. This may be of particular interest to students who will be researching at [UM-Shanghai Jiaotong University](#). Thus, my work with the Global Engagement Team is directly linked to my research interests.

### **Timeline/ Plan for Completing the Practicum Reports:**

I have already completed the necessary hours to constitute a practicum experience over the Spring/Summer semester; however, because I did not know I would be doing a practicum experience yet, I couldn't submit a practicum proposal, or the three reports needed. However, through discussion with my academic advisor, Charlie Polinko, he recommended that since I am continuing as an employee for the Global Engagement Team this semester, I just submit the proposal and accompanying reports over the course of this semester. My practicum supervisor, Ayesha Usmani, has agreed to allow me to interview her when needed so that I may submit these reports. Based on this information, I propose that I offer the following reports on the following dates to my LRCCS faculty advisor/ Practicum Advisor, Dr. Pär Cassel:

Report #1: Due Oct 6<sup>th</sup>

- (The first report will outline the goals of the practicum and the steps to achieving them, 2000 words.)

Report #2: Due Oct 27<sup>th</sup>

- (The second report will describe work completed so far, challenges encountered, and plans for addressing the challenges, 2000 words.)

Report #3: Due Nov 10<sup>th</sup>

- (The third report will reflect on the overall practicum experience and the lessons learned 2000 words.)

Final Policy Briefing: Due Dec 6<sup>th</sup>

- Final Policy Brief- Following the conclusion of the practicum experience, the student will be expected to submit a policy brief or scholarly paper of approximately 7500 words that situates the issues or themes encountered during the practicum within broader academic and policy literature 7,500 words.

\*These dates are entirely flexible if these dates need to be changed to accommodate Dr. Cassel’s schedule.

## Plan for submitting the final policy brief:

For my final policy brief, I plan to research how the U.S. can retain many international Chinese students and foster mutually beneficial U.S.–China educational partnerships while preserving security. I will make strategic recommendations based upon these findings. I have accumulated 100+ academic resources on this topic (pictured below), which I have stored on the Zotero database. I also plan to leverage my supervisor, Patrick Morgan, and Dr. An Chih Lin’s expertise on this topic to make actionable recommendations that align with the objectives stated here.

The screenshot shows a Zotero library interface with a search bar at the top containing the text "Title, Creator, Year". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with options: Web Library, Groups, Documentation, Forums, Get Involved, and nataliegilbert. The main area displays a list of 109 items in a table format. The table has columns for Title, Creator, and Date. The items listed include:

Title	Creator	Date
"Xi Jinping Thought" Realisation of the Chinese ...		
A changing environment of urban education: his...	Zhang and Bray	2021
A State-Led Nationalism	Suisheng	
An Empirical Study on Public Service Motivation ...	Ko and Han	2013
Auditing Chinese higher education? The perspe...	Yi	2011-09-01
Banned by Beijing		
BBC NEWS		
"Being Chinese Means Becoming Cheap Labour...		
ccp resilience.pdf		
China Focus   The Changing Political Views of C...	Editors	2020-10-16
China sees record 7.7 million applicants for 200,...	Cherry	2023-03-16
China targets internet users, overseas Chinese ...		2023-06-26
China unveils outline for strengthening patriotic ...		
china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf		
China's cautious new graduates flock to state-b...	Cheng	2021-06-08
China's Coercive Tactics Abroad		
China's higher education expansion and unempl...	Li et al.	2014-09-01
China's Communist Youth League gets new lead...		2023-06-06
China's new Patriotic Education Law reveals Xi's ...		
Chinese Communist Youth League members, Yo...		
Chinese engineer sentenced to 8 years in US pri...	Gan	2023-01-26
Chinese president praises Macau's 'patriotic - P...		
Chinese students abroad take on their governm...		
Chinese students stay local as favour falls with s...	Nuwer	2023-08-09
Chinese Students Studying Abroad a New Focus...		2015-06-10

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## **Practicum Report #1 Interview:**

**MIRS Handbook Prompt:** The first report will outline the goals of the practicum and the steps to achieving them.

**How my practicum experience explicitly relates to international relations (with a specialization in Chinese studies.**

### 1) Cultural Understanding:

Understanding Chinese studies gives me a deep understanding of Chinese history and culture. My area of interest is contemporary Chinese history (post-socialist). My knowledge of China's modern period allows me to make better recommendations about study abroad policies for China. For example, my knowledge was beneficial when China reopened its international travel borders following the COVID-19 pandemic. We had many students eager to study abroad in China, not that it had reopened, but we also had many international students who wanted to return from China to Ann Arbor. On the one hand, I monitored policy shifts in different regions of China to determine if it was likely that China would put these regions on quarantine lockdown, even after opening the country for international travel. Namely, we waited to allow students to travel to China until after the Chinese New Year (the borders were open just before Chinese New Year 2022) to ensure there was no spike in COVID-19 numbers and students would get stuck in quarantine.

My knowledge of China's contemporary history and ever-evolving policies also came into use when helping to create a guide for students studying abroad in China. This guide: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv\\_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing) highlights the different requirements and recommendations for students traveling to China. This document originated from students needing to install VPNs and other safe computing software before traveling abroad. Thus, we aimed to describe the peculiarities of the Chinese study-abroad experience and how best to prepare for travel. To create this document, I completed much of my research on China's current policies and based the document on this research. However, our team understands that under Xi Jinping and considering the rising U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, these laws are more susceptible to change. I also leveraged my experiences living in China to give students pragmatic tips- something I also share with students when I present for GET.

The potential for political detainment in China is another issue for students conducting research in sensitive regions or on sensitive topics. For example, when I was in China, I conducted research on LGBTQ issues, which are more likely than less controversial topics to be flagged by police and subject to detainment. I used my knowledge about safely conducting sensitive research and my findings to create a guide for students doing independent research abroad. This guide is now in use



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Lastly, my understanding of China's contemporary politics- particularly regarding the education system (one of my main areas of interest), is beneficial when I research Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between U-M and Chinese learning institutions. These agreements have stringent requirements that require adherence to US and Chinese laws and each school's policies. One of the major issues we run into when working with Chinese institutions is that we recommend that all U.S. students download a VPN before they go abroad. However, U.S. VPNs are technically illegal in China (though there is a minuscule probability that students would be punished for having one). Another option is to use a Chinese S.I.M. card - however, this leads to other issues, so we typically advise students to download U-M's free travel VPN. The problem comes when we have to create a contract because we can not advocate in writing that we want students to have an illegal VPN. Eventually, after working with legal counsel and the Chinese institution, we decided not to endorse VPNs in writing; however, we can notify students of them as long as we inform them that they are illegal in China.

## 2) Language Proficiency:

My Mandarin and traditional Chinese proficiency have helped me research Chinese and Taiwanese laws. Especially regarding new laws- the English translations often lack nuance, and reading the original Chinese version is better to get a clearer understanding. This ensures that when I advise the rest of the GET team on policies explicitly relating to China, I can provide them with the most accurate and relevant information.

## 3) Academic Program Recommendations:

My understanding of the Chinese educational landscape, notably higher education (as a former student of Nanjing University), helps me better inform the rest of the GET team about the available programs for potential partnerships and how surveillance in Chinese universities can be a potential hazard for students studying abroad. This helps GET better place students at universities and informs China's safety requirements and safety level. For example, students who study in China must submit a safety plan that students to low-risk destinations don't have to offer.

## 4) Cross-Cultural Communication:

Cross-cultural communication is another significant aspect of international higher education. It also underlies all diplomatic relations between the United States and China. When forming new partnerships with foreign institutions, one of the significant questions is whether the partnership is equitable for both countries. This means understanding the goals of each University,

which frequently (from the Chinese perspective) aligns with state goals. Understanding these goals and Chinese culture can help ensure that partnerships between our institutions satisfy the needs of both countries. It also provides equity in the balance of resources and responsibilities that each institution has for its programs for international students.

#### 5) Global Networking:

Understanding China's increasing significance as a global player in higher education, both as a competitor and partner and as a significant source of students for higher education in the US, requires a deeper understanding of China's growing global influence. Although China is the largest country in the world, many Americans don't grasp its geopolitical influence and underestimate China's soft power diplomacy. As a result, there is sometimes a disconnect between American and Chinese universities' goals. One must have an acute understanding of both cultures to bridge this divide, and there cannot be lopsided partnerships. For example, the Confucian institute, which was once applauded for being a purveyor of Chinese culture on American campuses, soon came under scrutiny when many argued that these institutions had a pro-China agenda that did not align with American values. Thus, Confucius institutes have been closed alarmingly (even U-M's)! Therefore, maintaining a global network and having cultural competency skills helps to ensure more enduring and equal partnerships.

##### *I. Competencies and Skills Learned:*

Through discussion with my advisor, Ayesha Usmani, we identified three significant competencies this practicum experience will help me develop. The first competency involves communication. Communication, as we have defined it, is the ability to synthesize information, organize it into a logical order, and present it to various audiences (e.g., student-oriented, public-oriented, etc.). Communication also includes being an active member of team meetings and a willingness to offer constructive feedback on other projects and incorporate team member feedback within my projects. This often involves asking clarifying questions about tasks and responsibilities and adjusting project parameters and timelines when needed. Communication is essential given that half of our team are brand new members; I Am open to sharing knowledge and expertise with new team members. Thus, one of the primary competencies of this internship is to bolster communication skills with various audiences and materials.

The second competency we identified is problem-solving. We defined this as the ability to identify potential problems before they arise or identify specific types of resources that a department may be lacking and work with the department to develop solutions. This involves acting as a liaison between the GET team and individual departments, bridging gaps between current resources and what we need/ want in the future. Problem-solving also includes exploring different ways to tackle a problem that is both efficient and long-lasting. An example of a project I have done during this internship that allowed me to build problem-solving skills is a systematic review of the 14+ study abroad departments across U-M's three campuses. During this project, I interviewed each department representative to get insight into what specific resources they were lacking. Then, I consolidated those findings into specific goals and timelines and began making the resources.

Lastly, willingness to learn is another competency this practicum experience provides me. We define this as the ability to adapt to the team's ever-changing needs as new projects arise. Additionally, it is the understanding that projects change and that the projects change depending on the period, student requests, and departmental needs. The project cycle of the GET team is highly variable, and we must adapt to effectively shift to other projects to address issues at a moment's notice. Pragmatically speaking, willingness to learn also includes the ability to learn new software, including WordPress, Adobe Animator, Canva, HTML, interviewing skills, etc.

*II. How will these competencies impact my career growth?*

Communication, problem-solving, and willingness to learn are necessary skills for any future career, particularly in higher education, where staff must be able to work with and convey material to many stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, etc.). Furthermore, GET benefits from my insights and expertise in international studies because I can alert them to new global developments and provide them with research tailored to their needs.

*III. What are the immediate and long-term goals of this practicum?*

Some of the immediate goals I have been working on include updating the new Global Michigan website. Over the summer, we worked with a website developer to update the Global Michigan website. Still, now that we have the new site, we must continually update the style to accommodate new resources using the WordPress website editor. This is an ongoing project. Another project I have been working on this week is the creation of flyer resources that will be added to the website for department and student use. Recently, the need for a resource for travelers to China arose. I used my knowledge of China and the current political situation to create a flyer that helps students navigate China's entry/exit/ and study abroad requirements. My expertise in Chinese current affairs and International Studies more broadly allows me to create various resources for U-M travelers. Some of the other projects I have been working on this semester include a guide to purchasing U-M's travel health insurance and detailing how students can use these resources to prepare to go abroad and while abroad. This is an area of concern for many travelers unfamiliar with travel health insurance and is consistently one of the areas we get the most student questions about.

A resource for Mental Health and Well-being while abroad has been another long-term project that I have been working on in collaboration with CAPS and SSD resources. We realized that the Global Engagement Team while having resources for those with physical disabilities for studying abroad, did not have a mental health abroad section. This resulted in an issue when many students with mental health issues did not adequately prepare or get accommodation for their study abroad experience. A problem can also arise when students who take medications to maintain mental health either do not bring an entire supply for their stay and, as a result, cannot receive the medicine from the local pharmacy or when drugs that are permissible in the U.S. are banned in other countries (for example, Adderall). The long-term goal of this resource is to get students to understand the resources they have available to monitor their mental health while abroad and proactively address concerns that may arise. The impact of this long-term goal will benefit students who are better prepared for their study abroad experience and GET because they may see a decrease in having to respond to mental health-related emergency situations. There are many other long-term projects that I have been working on that will significantly benefit the university, including the Ethical Photography Guide, the International Internship Health and Safety Considerations document, and more.

My primary goals for this practicum experience are to develop health and safety resources for U-M faculty, staff, and students traveling abroad. The role of the Global Engagement team is to help facilitate education abroad travel by providing knowledge, support, and resources that connect the U-M community to international travel opportunities, and I assist in fulfilling this mission.

*IV. How do these goals align with the organization's goals and the goals of the practicum?*

Unique experience as a student who has participated in an extended study abroad experience through the University of Michigan, as well as being a current student; I can lend a student voice and perspective to projects that the GET team develops, which ensures that the materials that GET create are accessible and understandable to the audience we are focused on supporting. Furthermore, my knowledge of modern East Asian politics allows me to offer insight into the region and understand how current tensions between the US and China may impact study abroad and international students at the University of Michigan, which allows me to support them better.

**Other Projects include:**

- a. Continue [ongoing pre-departure travel safety and identity abroad project](#) that requires the creation of materials (such as short videos, slide decks, and PDFs) on topics of Travel Abroad Health Insurance, Mental Health Abroad, Spiritual Life Abroad, and Ethical Photography.
- b. Collaborate with GET members and develop modular travel safety content for pre-departure orientations that units can present to and share with their travelers abroad.
- c. Assist travel safety GET members in designing communication materials, such as field safety manuals,
- d. Assess the accessibility and comprehension of current travel safety online resources (e.g., Emergency Protocols, Travel FAQs, and Requirements & Policies) and propose alternative formats and language.
- e. Complete projects/assignments as they arise.

*V. Considering my long-term career aspirations, how do you envision this practicum experience helping me progress toward those goals and ultimately benefiting the organization?*

This practicum experience fits into my future career aspirations in many ways. Firstly, in the future, I plan to work in higher education, NGO, or Study Abroad Organization that centers around cross-cultural exchange. This experience has allowed me to gain exposure to higher education, travel, safety, and tech and public relations. The ability to collaborate with other units outside and across U-M's campus has also led to a broader exposure to these related fields and a deeper understanding of the day-to-day workings of an organization. Additionally, while I do not often work directly with students in a counseling capacity, I work with department leaders who do, and understanding the resources that department leads request gives me a better understanding of the types of support that students need.

*VI. What support or resources will help me achieve my short-term goals within the practicum's timeline, and how can I overcome potential challenges?*

Throughout my practicum experience with GET, I have been offered various support to achieve my goals and finish projects. One of the ways that I receive support is through regular

weekly meetings with my supervisor, which allows me to ask questions about current projects and to get feedback from my supervisor. Additionally, I can attend weekly team-wide conferences to discuss my projects and get broader feedback. Because we work in the same office building, it is also easy to ask quick questions when I need assistance, and during hybrid workdays, my supervisor is always available via Google Chat. When it comes to creating projects, I have time to conduct research baked into the project schedule, which allows me to finish projects on time. I also work with my supervisor to develop a realistic timeline for my plan, and there is flexibility in adjusting timelines or prioritizing different tasks as needed.

GET also offers training through programs like Safety Abroad Orientation, M-Compass training, and having access to internal documents and resources. I am also encouraged to attend any staff events that align with my career goals and the various networking opportunities, like the International Career Fair, that can help me network with future employers. Beyond these programs, I can connect with fellow student interns and learn from them. I also have had the opportunity to watch and participate in multiple interviews with new team members and student interns. Participating in the back end of discussions not only helps me to understand how hiring works in an organization but also allows me to see unsuccessful vs. successful interview strategies, which will help me when I apply for positions in the future.

While I don't feel that any significant obstacles have impeded success in my role, I think that communication is something I must continually work on. I must ensure I am upfront about communicating issues with projects when they arise and not taking on too much work. This also involves asking clarifying questions and discussing expectations during weekly meetings to understand better what is expected of me. I can overcome this obstacle by asking for more frequent peer reviews and asking questions during meetings.

*VIII. How can I adapt and refine my goals based on the evolving nature of my practicum experience and any new insights I gain throughout the program while ensuring they align with the organization's needs and objectives?*

Since the Global Engagement Team serves the education abroad needs of the U-M community, the types of support and the corresponding projects can quickly change based on the current environment. We are subject to requests from students, departments, and other team members' needs. An example is the new Global Michigan website launched in August 2023. This led to a pause on current health and safety materials and created a website that best met the team's and our audience's needs. I had to shift my tasks and tackle a new project, which was a priority then. The new website also allowed us to tailor our messaging better toward our travelers and allowed space for new content and more accessible materials. My ability to adapt to projects as they arise and quickly shift tasks when needed has been a skill that I have been developing.

Furthermore, approaching project switching positively has allowed me to do better quality work and develop a growth mindset. A project that exemplified my adaptability was following the easing of UM's COVID-19 restrictions. I had to quickly work to change the guidelines on the Global Michigan website to reflect the updates so that travelers were aware of the new policies.

**Word Count: 2,005**

## **Practicum Report #2:**

*Per the MIRS Handbook, this second report will describe “work completed so far, challenges encountered, and plans for addressing the challenges.”*

### **How my practicum experience explicitly relates to International relations (with a specialization in Chinese studies.**

#### 1) Cultural Understanding:

Understanding Chinese studies gives me a deep understanding of Chinese history and culture. My area of interest is contemporary Chinese history (post-socialist). My knowledge of China’s modern period allows me to make better recommendations about study abroad policies for China. For example, my knowledge was beneficial when China reopened its international travel borders following the COVID-19 pandemic. We had many students eager to study abroad in China, not that it had reopened, but we also had many international students who wanted to return from China to Ann Arbor. On the one hand, I monitored policy shifts in different regions of China to determine if it was likely that China would put these regions on quarantine lockdown, even after opening the country for international travel. Namely, we waited to allow students to travel to China until after the Chinese New Year (the borders were open just before Chinese New Year 2022) to ensure there was no spike in COVID-19 numbers and students would get stuck in quarantine.

My knowledge of China’s contemporary history and ever-evolving policies also came into use when helping to create a guide for students studying abroad in China. This guide: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv\\_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing) highlights the different requirements and recommendations for students traveling to China. This document originated from students needing to install VPNs and other safe computing software before traveling abroad. Thus, we aimed to describe the peculiarities of the Chinese study-abroad experience and how best to prepare for travel. To create this document, I completed much of my research on China's current policies and based the document on this research. However, our team understands that under Xi Jinping and considering the rising U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, these laws are more susceptible to change. I also leveraged my experiences living in China to give students pragmatic tips- something I also share with students when I present for GET.

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### **Practicum Report #2:**

Lastly, my understanding of China's contemporary politics- particularly regarding the education system (one of my main areas of interest), is beneficial when I research Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between U-M and Chinese learning institutions. These agreements have stringent requirements that require adherence to US and Chinese laws and each school's policies. One of the major issues we run into when working with Chinese institutions is that we recommend that all U.S. students download a VPN before they go abroad. However, U.S. VPNs are technically illegal in China (though there is a minuscule probability that students would be punished for having one). Another option is to use a Chinese S.I.M. card - however, this leads to other issues, so we typically advise students to download U-M's free travel VPN. The problem comes when we have to create a contract because we can not advocate in writing that we want students to have an illegal VPN. Eventually, after working with legal counsel and the Chinese institution, we decided not to endorse VPNs in writing; however, we can notify students of them as long as we inform them that they are illegal in China.

#### 2) Language Proficiency:

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My understanding of the Chinese educational landscape, notably higher education (as a former student of Nanjing University), helps me better inform the rest of the GET team about the available programs for potential partnerships and how surveillance in Chinese universities can be a potential hazard for students studying abroad. This helps GET better place students at universities and informs China's safety requirements and safety level. For example, students who study in China must submit a safety plan that students to low-risk destinations don't have to offer.

#### 4) Cross-Cultural Communication:

Cross-cultural communication is another significant aspect of international higher education. It also underlies all diplomatic relations between the United States and China. When forming new partnerships with foreign institutions, one of the significant questions is whether the partnership is equitable for both countries. This means understanding the goals of each University, which frequently (from the Chinese perspective) aligns with state goals. Understanding these goals and Chinese culture can help ensure that partnerships between our institutions satisfy the needs of both countries. It also provides equity in the balance of resources and responsibilities that each institution has for its programs for international students.

#### 5) Global Networking:

## **Practicum Report #2:**

Understanding China's increasing significance as a global player in higher education, both as a competitor and partner and as a significant source of students for higher education in the US, requires a deeper understanding of China's growing global influence. Although China is the largest country in the world, many Americans don't grasp its geopolitical influence and underestimate China's soft power diplomacy. As a result, there is sometimes a disconnect between American and Chinese universities' goals. One must have an acute understanding of both cultures to bridge this divide, and there cannot be lopsided partnerships. For example, the Confucian institute, which was once applauded for being a purveyor of Chinese culture on American campuses, soon came under scrutiny when many argued that these institutions had a pro-China agenda that did not align with American values. Thus, Confucius institutes have been closed alarmingly (even U-M's)! Therefore, maintaining a global network and having cultural competency skills helps to ensure more enduring and equal partnerships.

### **Part I: Work Completed**

My work supervisor, Ayesha Usmani, and I decided that rather than try to recall the numerous and multifaceted projects that I have completed over the 1 ½ years that I have worked for the Global Engagement Team that it would be more pertinent to limit the discussion to the three most recent substantial projects that I have worked on. These are in addition to the more minute tasks that I am responsible for performing every day. I have provided an overview of three significant projects below:

- 1) International Internships: Health & Safety Considerations  
Link: <https://shorturl.at/cdkV7>

#### *The impetus for the project:*

As we transferred content for the recently launched Global Michigan website (launch date September 2023), we identified a deficiency in our existing resources, particularly in the context of internships. This shortfall primarily affected students pursuing non-UM-related internships, which prompted a significant volume of inquiries from both students and staff regarding how to secure suitable internships. These questions revolved around concerns related to securing safe housing while abroad, evaluating the credibility of prospective employers, ensuring that internships align with students' objectives, and navigating the process of obtaining secure accommodations when employers don't provide this service for them. To guide departments and students on securing credible, safe, and fulfilling internships, I created the International Internships Health and Safety Consideration Guide. This resource is a starting point for students of all academic levels to prepare for a successful internship experience.

#### *Step #1: Research*

My first step in creating this document was to research how students can best determine the credibility of a potential employer. I also researched how after having decided on an employer, students can ensure that they have access to safe accommodations while abroad. To research these topics, I reviewed trusted platforms like LinkedIn and Handshake to find



## **Practicum Report #2:**

related articles. I also reviewed information from other Big 10 Universities to determine what guidance they offer their students. Lastly, I analyzed the resources that individual UM departments and the GET team already have which would be applicable to this project. After researching, I compiled a concise document that included my findings.

### *Step #2: Synthesize & Rough Draft*

Once I had taken stock of the many resources available, I began to synthesize the information into different categories and identify key points that emerged from my research. As one can see by the final product linked above, this resulted in eight categories of travel safety information. After synthesizing the information, I created a rough draft of the content and a basic visual sketch of what the document would look like. This aspect of the project was the most difficult because I had to condense the information into only the most key points.

### *Step #3: Peer Review*

After creating a rough draft of the document, I presented it to my advisor, Ayesha Usmani, for feedback. She offered additional tweaks to the language and formatting, which were incorporated in the final document. We also shared the initial draft with other team members (Wyatt Boykin and Patrick Morgan) for additional suggestions.

### *Step #4: Final Draft*

Following a review of suggestions, I made modifications to the document. Once the finished product was completed, I again asked for final feedback in case there was anything that I had overlooked or if additional changes were required. Once approved, this new document was shared with team members and the broader UM community.

### *Step #5: Adding to the Global Michigan Website*

The final step of this project is to add the document to a new page on the Global Michigan WordPress site. I am still working on this aspect of the project, and it is expected to be uploaded within the next week.

## 2) Global Michigan Website pages

Link: <https://global.umich.edu/travel-safety-and-wellness/>

### *The impetus for the project:*

The impetus for this project is the need for an up-to-date and effective website for students, faculty, and staff use.

### *Step #1: Preparing to Transfer Web Content*

Over the summer, I worked on transferring website content from the previous Global Michigan site to our current site. This was a significant task because it involved reviewing each page under the “travel safety and wellness” subheading and determining if the information was still up to date or needed to be replaced. Additionally, because the new site has more updated features and runs on a more advanced WordPress system, many aspects of how we categorized further information were no longer suitable for the new

## **Practicum Report #2:**

website's design. I started transferring content by first clarifying with the rest of the team the goals for the new website design. For example, do we prefer concise WordPress pages or longer, more comprehensive pages? How should the design flow from page to page? How will we ensure that our pages are easily accessible to those who use screen readers and other assistive technology?

### *Step #2: Manually Updating WordPress*

Once we decided on the design goals and I had identified out-of-date information that was no longer relevant, I manually transferred relevant website materials from the old site one to the current one. This was a pretty straightforward task, but it involved me learning more HTML coding skills and how the new version of WordPress operates.

### *Step #3: Peer Review and Ongoing Curation*

After I finished uploading content to the new pages, I asked my GET team members for any feedback and made changes accordingly. Additionally, because of the fast-paced nature of global events and the constant changes in community needs, I frequently change these pages to ensure they encompass the most accurate and up-to-date information the University provides. Thus, this is an ongoing project.

## 3) Ethical Photography Field Guide

Link: <https://shorturl.at/glntH>

### *The Impetus for this Project:*

The impetus for this project was the Global Photo Showcase, sponsored by study abroad and related departments at the University of Michigan (LRCCS included). The departments contact students who have studied abroad over the summer for photographs of their travels. These photographs can win prizes, hang up in public areas around campus, and even be featured on the Global Michigan website. Each year the Global Showcase gets many submissions, and departments were looking for resources that would help guide photographers while abroad. Additionally, in some countries, it is illegal to take photographs of government buildings, sacred spaces, etc.; thus, it is necessary to advise students to think about the legal implications of photography abroad.

### *Step #1: Research*

The first step of this project was to accumulate a list of resources from a variety of sources and to take stock of resources that the University already has on this subject. The most influential resources I came across were guides that other universities had published, legal guides to photography abroad, and academic articles about the ethics of photography.

### *Step #2: Synthesize*

After identifying the information, I synthesized the significant points and created a design concept for the document. I used Canva to create the document because it has a lot of different design aspects for designers to use, and for a document like this, Adobe InDesign wasn't necessary. Adobe InDesign is typically used for projects that require more artistic design flexibility.

## **Practicum Report #2:**

### *Step #3: Peer Review*

Once finished with my rough draft document, the GET team engaged in a peer review cycle, in which needed modifications were made.

### *Step #4: Final Product and Dissemination*

The final product has been approved and is shared with different departments hosting the Global Showcase. The flyer was also included in the emails to staff and students announcing the Global Showcase. I am currently working on adding the flyer to a permanent Global Michigan website page so that it can be referenced for future showcases.

## **II. Challenges Encountered:**

I have not had any significant or sustained challenges during my internship experience that warrant discussion. My team is a phenomenal group, and we work together to ensure everyone is on the same page and can complete their projects. If I need to leverage someone's expertise from the team, I am also very comfortable with reaching out. Therefore, for this section of my report, instead of focusing on a specific issue I have experienced, I will focus on a few minor difficulties that are inherent to this position.

- The first difficulty involves learning new skills. Like any internship, developing a skillset to meet an employer's needs is crucial to success. Throughout my internship experience, I have continued to hone my WordPress website editing, Adobe Animator, MailChimp, Canva, Word, etc. skills. I have also become more accustomed to how the University of Michigan structures its resources. I am proficient in all these software and have become an expert in most areas.
- Another difficulty of the internship is adapting quickly to new projects. Because of the nature of our work, we often must change projects and shift priorities as global crises arise, student needs change, etc. This can be difficult when I am hyper-focused on a particular project and need to switch suddenly, but usually, this is not too difficult to manage.
- Another issue that I sometimes experience has to do with the nature of University affairs. For example, anytime a significant alteration is made to the Global Michigan website, we have to get the modification approved. I am currently working on creating new WordPress pages that are accessible, and I need to have a WordPress plug-in installed; because this is a modification to the entire website, I first need to have it approved (a more complex process than doing it on my own).
- Lastly, complications can arise when my employers are out of the office, and I need to ask for clarification. Because my supervisors sometimes attend global conferences, reaching them immediately can be difficult. Luckily, this hasn't been much of an issue because before they leave, we meet to go over significant projects and questions that may arise. I have also found that I can defer most of my questions to other team members when I cannot get ahold of my supervisors.

## **Practicum Report #2:**

### **Strategies to Address Challenges:**

As mentioned above, some strategies I have used to mitigate challenges in this position involve reaching out to other team members who may have more knowledge about a particular aspect of the job than I do. For example, while I was working on the Ethical Photography flyer, I leveraged Janelle Pangilinan's SSD and DEI expertise to ensure that language was inclusive. Furthermore, I often make use of online tutorials and university resources when working on projects that I am unfamiliar with. For example, for some of the design elements needed for the Global Michigan website, I used YouTube WordPress tutorials to help me recreate them on the website.

### **Performance Feedback:**

My supervisor and I also discussed my performance; below are the highlights:

- Nat excels at synthesizing information, i.e., looking at sources and determining what is relevant, and does a phenomenal job of catering work to particular audiences.
- Nat also is great at peer reviewing and identifying areas where the team might overlook things.
- One of the areas that Nat and Ayesha continue to work on is understanding what support is needed to finish projects. To overcome this challenge, we work on ongoing communication through one-to-one meetings and accessible communication. Through Nat's internship experience, we have improved at this and are a very effective team now!
- One area of continued growth is that Nat is enthusiastic to take on any project and sees every opportunity as a learning experience. Sometimes, she may be even too flexible. One of the main areas for growth would be ensuring that Nat can do projects that cater to her specific interests!

### **Learning and Growth Opportunities/ Goals:**

Opportunities for further learning and growth:

- International Career Fair – I attended this event and had the opportunity to network with careers and experiences in study abroad (my intended field following graduation).
- Study Abroad Fair – Networking with study abroad units on campus and learning about what they do.
- U-M Career courses – We have decided to start incorporating the U-M learning modules into my job responsibilities. Each month I plan on taking one course that aligns with my professional interests.
- Host-specific workshops and attend, when possible.
- Attend pre-departure orientations – perhaps also co-present at these orientations.
- Work with other on-campus units (besides study abroad) to learn about different university operations—for example, SSD, international student department, II, etc.

**Word Count: 2,067**

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### **Practicum Report #3:**

*Practicum #3 Report: The third report will reflect on the overall practicum experience and the lessons learned.*

**Self-Reflection:** How has your perception of your abilities and skills evolved throughout the practicum experience, and in what specific ways do you believe you have grown professionally?

My abilities and skills have significantly evolved while working with the Global Engagement Team. When I started this position, I was very apprehensive about jumping into projects, mainly because a significant portion of my work involved creating newsletters that went out to a large group of professionals and also making direct edits to the Global Michigan website, a website used by 14+ study abroad units across U-M's three campuses, and also available to U-M's 50,000+ enrolled students. This responsibility was initially daunting, and I felt immense pressure to perfect every project I undertook. While I continue to seek perfection in my current tasks, I now understand that I can leverage my team members' expertise when needed and that not having the answers to every question I have is par for the course. Throughout my time with GET, I have also become more confident in understanding our team structure and how it operates. I no longer have tasks assigned to me, but I also work to define my duties when I notice issues with the website, flyers, etc. I take it upon myself to update those without worrying about whether I am overstepping my role. So, I would say that one of the most significant areas of growth for me throughout this internship has been my growth in self-confidence.

One project that significantly shifted my self-confidence was when I worked with different units on campus to determine their needs and how GET could best serve them. I began this project by meeting with representatives from each of the 14 U-M study abroad departments. I scheduled interviews in which I had ten questions regarding their use of GET materials and whether GET could be doing more to support them. I took notes after every interview and compiled the notes into one document. After the interviews, I reviewed my notes to determine emerging trends. From there, I worked to create projects to address the issues that arose. Some of the significant problems that were noticed included the lack of an ethical photography field guide, the lack of resources for students doing research in remote areas as a part of their degree program, the lack of mental health abroad resources, and religious diversity abroad resources. Once I had established these areas of focus for future growth, I researched what guidance other universities offer their students. I then devised a proposed plan and timeline for executing these projects. I presented these projects to the rest of my team during our weekly meetings, and everyone was very supportive of the project and eager to help me in whatever capacity I needed to finish them. This experience made me more confident about my abilities and worth as a team member. It also helped me to realize that I am a valuable member of the team and that my views were taken into consideration. I have also developed my proficiency in many skills, including website design, public speaking, research, synthesizing information, public relations & communication, and graphic design. The projects I

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### **Practicum Report #3:**

have worked on for GET have been manifold, each requiring different skill sets. I have cultivated these different skill sets through peer review cycles and experimenting with creating and finishing projects.

**Challenges and Solutions:** Reflect on a significant challenge you encountered during your practicum. What strategies did you employ to overcome this challenge, and what did you learn from the experience?

I haven't experienced sustained challenges throughout my practicum experience; however, I will say that the most challenging task for me was Website editing. In the past, I have done some minor coding and web design through software like Wix and WordPress; however, updating the Global Michigan website required me to learn a new WordPress system and get more in-depth coding experience. An example of this was when I was tasked with redesigning WordPress pages for the Health and Safety portion of the Global Michigan website. Initially, the pages just consisted of a long text that was difficult to navigate and overwhelming to the observer. To rectify this issue, I created accordions for grouped topics to help individuals navigate the WordPress site more easily. I also learned how to generate cyclone sliders (picture slides) in WordPress to create revolving slideshows. There are many other skills that I have learned through this internship that will apply to my future career in studying abroad, higher education, or public policy (with an emphasis on East Asian countries).

**Impact on Future Practice:** Considering the lessons learned during your practicum, how do you envision applying these insights to your future professional practice?

This practicum experience has greatly informed my understanding of how international higher education works and how important it is to the fabric of the University as a whole. Having completed this internship, I have been exposed to the different fields within International Higher Education and policy issues regarding international education, which will allow me to seamlessly transition into a position in a similar field following graduation. My exposure to the multifaceted nature of higher education has prepared me to work in this field. Through this internship, I have also understood how world events (particularly in China) affect the political relationship between the U.S. and China and, by extension, cross-cultural education.

**How my practicum experience explicitly relates to International relations (with a specialization in Chinese studies.**

1) Cultural Understanding:

Understanding Chinese studies gives me a deep understanding of Chinese history and culture. My area of interest is contemporary Chinese history (post-socialist). My knowledge of

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China's modern period allows me to make better recommendations about study abroad policies for China. For example, my knowledge was beneficial when China reopened its international travel borders following the COVID-19 pandemic. We had many students eager to study abroad in China, not that it had reopened, but we also had many international students who wanted to return from China to Ann Arbor. On the one hand, I monitored policy shifts in different regions of China to determine if it was likely that China would put these regions on quarantine lockdown, even after opening the country for international travel. Namely, we waited to allow students to travel to China until after the Chinese New Year (the borders were open just before Chinese New Year 2022) to ensure there was no spike in COVID-19 numbers and students would get stuck in quarantine.

My knowledge of China's contemporary history and ever-evolving policies also came into use when helping to create a guide for students studying abroad in China. This guide: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv\\_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing) highlights the different requirements and recommendations for students traveling to China. This document originated from students needing to install VPNs and other safe computing software before traveling abroad. Thus, we aimed to describe the peculiarities of the Chinese study-abroad experience and how best to prepare for travel. To create this document, I completed much of my research on China's current policies and based the document on this research. However, our team understands that under Xi Jinping and considering the rising U.S.-China geopolitical tensions, these laws are more susceptible to change. I also leveraged my experiences living in China to give students pragmatic tips- something I also share with students when I present for GET.

The potential for political detainment in China is another issue for students conducting research in sensitive regions or on sensitive topics. For example, when I was in China, I conducted research on LGBTQ issues, which are more likely than less controversial topics to be flagged by police and subject to detainment. I used my knowledge about safely conducting sensitive research and my findings to create a guide for students doing independent research abroad. This guide is now in use

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAFY4JHa7x4/EEM81ODmqAAN0w0ceJb6PQ/view?utm\\_content=DAFY4JHa7x4&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishsharelink](https://www.canva.com/design/DAFY4JHa7x4/EEM81ODmqAAN0w0ceJb6PQ/view?utm_content=DAFY4JHa7x4&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink)

Lastly, my understanding of China's contemporary politics- particularly regarding the education system (one of my main areas of interest), is beneficial when I research Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between U-M and Chinese learning institutions. These agreements have stringent requirements that require adherence to US and Chinese laws and each school's policies. One of the major issues we run into when working with Chinese institutions is that we recommend that all U.S. students download a VPN before they go abroad. However, U.S. VPNs are technically

### **Practicum Report #3:**

illegal in China (though there is a minuscule probability that students would be punished for having one). Another option is to use a Chinese S.I.M. card - however, this leads to other issues, so we typically advise students to download U-M's free travel VPN. The problem comes when we have to create a contract because we can not advocate in writing that we want students to have an illegal VPN. Eventually, after working with legal counsel and the Chinese institution, we decided not to endorse VPNs in writing; however, we can notify students of them as long as we inform them that they are illegal in China.

#### 2) Language Proficiency:

My Mandarin and traditional Chinese proficiency have helped me research Chinese and Taiwanese laws. Especially regarding new laws- the English translations often lack nuance, and reading the original Chinese version is better to get a clearer understanding. This ensures that when I advise the rest of the GET team on policies explicitly relating to China, I can provide them with the most accurate and relevant information.

#### 3) Academic Program Recommendations:

My understanding of the Chinese educational landscape, notably higher education (as a former student of Nanjing University), helps me better inform the rest of the GET team about the available programs for potential partnerships and how surveillance in Chinese universities can be a potential hazard for students studying abroad. This helps GET better place students at universities and informs China's safety requirements and safety level. For example, students who study in China must submit a safety plan that students to low-risk destinations don't have to offer.

#### 4) Cross-Cultural Communication:

Cross-cultural communication is another significant aspect of international higher education. It also underlies all diplomatic relations between the United States and China. When forming new partnerships with foreign institutions, one of the significant questions is whether the partnership is equitable for both countries. This means understanding the goals of each University, which frequently (from the Chinese perspective) aligns with state goals. Understanding these goals and Chinese culture can help ensure that partnerships between our institutions satisfy the needs of both countries. It also provides equity in the balance of resources and responsibilities that each institution has for its programs for international students.

#### 5) Global Networking:

Understanding China's increasing significance as a global player in higher education, both as a competitor and partner and as a significant source of students for higher education in the US,



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requires a deeper understanding of China's growing global influence. Although China is the largest country in the world, many Americans don't grasp its geopolitical influence and underestimate China's soft power diplomacy. As a result, there is sometimes a disconnect between American and Chinese universities' goals. One must have an acute understanding of both cultures to bridge this divide, and there cannot be lopsided partnerships. For example, the Confucian institute, which was once applauded for being a purveyor of Chinese culture on American campuses, soon came under scrutiny when many argued that these institutions had a pro-China agenda that did not align with American values. Thus, Confucius institutes have been closed alarmingly (even U-M's)! Therefore, maintaining a global network and having cultural competency skills helps to ensure more enduring and equal partnerships.

Word Count 2,010

Journey to the West:  
Enhancing Chinese International Student Enrollment in U.S. Universities by Addressing Student  
Needs, U.S. Interests, and CCP Objectives

Natalie J. Gilbert  
Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan  
Practicum Advisor: Dr. Pär Cassel  
December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## The Scope of Chinese International Education in the U.S.

In 2019, the number of international students in the United States peaked, exceeding 1.078 million.<sup>1</sup> The United States hosted not only over 1.078 million students but also a large cohort of international postdoctoral researchers, professors, and other academic professionals, resulting in a cumulative representation of this international education community exceeding 1.4 million.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, of the 1.078 million international students in the United States, approximately 372,532 of them were citizens of Mainland China.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in 2019, like most years prior, Chinese international students have composed slightly over 1/3 of the cumulative cohort. For this reason, and many others that will be examined, Chinese international students constitute a significant demographic that warrants special consideration if U.S. universities wish to keep their enrollment figures steady, as they have been for the last 15 years.<sup>4</sup>

The contemporary origin of the continuous stream of Chinese international student enrollment can be principally attributed to Deng Xiaoping's funding of 3,000 Chinese students in 1987, an initiative that expanded significantly in the subsequent years.<sup>5</sup> The objective of this program, established during the "reform and opening up" period, was to counteract the catastrophic impact of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese academics.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Deng Xiaoping, having studied in the West himself, possessed an acute awareness of the innumerable benefits associated with international collaboration and talent sharing.<sup>7</sup> The "reform and opening up" period intrinsically led to an increase in Chinese international students. It revolutionized the Chinese economy and exponentially increased the wealth of everyday Chinese citizens, allowing more individuals to self-fund their international academic experiences.<sup>8</sup> With the broader world now accessible to an increasing number of Chinese students, the U.S. witnessed a proliferation of this

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<sup>1</sup>Number of international students in the United States from 2003/04 to 2021/23 (n.d.). *Statista*. <https://shorturl.at/jAPR3>

<sup>2</sup> China: The Risk to Academia (2019). *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf/view>

<sup>3</sup> Open Doors. (November 14, 2022). Number of college and university students from China in the United States from academic year 2011/12 to 2021/22 [Graph]. In *Statista*. Retrieved December 08, 2023, from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/372900/number-of-chinese-students-that-study-in-the-us/>

<sup>4</sup> Fischer, K., & Bauman, D. (2023, October 9). China Was Long the Top Source of Foreign Students in the U.S. Now India Has Overtaken It. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

<sup>5</sup> Zweig, D., & Rosen, S. (n.d.). How China trained a new generation abroad. *Sci Dev*

*Net*. <https://www.scidev.net/global/features/how-china-trained-a-new-generation-abroad/>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Wang, N. (1982). Deng Xiaoping: The Years in France. *The China Quarterly*, 92, 698-705. doi:10.1017/S0305741000001028

<sup>8</sup> Delisle, J., & Goldstein, A. (2019). China's economic reform and opening at forty: past accomplishments and emerging challenges. *To Get Rich is Glorious: Challenges Facing China's Economic Reform and Opening at Forty*.

student demographic as they pursued education at numerous prestigious universities in the United States. Since this period, U.S. universities have welcomed these Chinese students and academics as a consistent source of ingenuity, revenue, and talent, and both the U.S. and China have benefited dramatically through collaboration and academic exchange.

However, in 2020, following the global spread of COVID-19, the steady stream of Chinese international students abruptly lulled.<sup>9</sup> When COVID-19 reached the U.S. in late January/early February, many U.S. institutions were forced to close or move to online locations to avoid spreading the virus. This resulted in a mass exodus of international students choosing to return home before borders closed (borders closed in China in March 2020), while some remained in the U.S., not knowing when they would be able to return due to travel restrictions. The first case of COVID-19 was documented in China in January 2020.<sup>10</sup> Still, no one could foresee that standard international tourism would not resume until March 2023 in China and November 2021 in the United States.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, international Chinese students studying in the U.S. were granted special consideration and could return for the 2021-2022 academic school year due to their student visas.<sup>12</sup> However, many of these students did not return until 2022-2023 due to intermittent lockdowns in China, and some universities chose to continue hybrid or online-based coursework. As a result of COVID-19 complications, numerous Chinese students and academics opted to transfer to domestic institutions.<sup>13</sup> In fact, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Mainland Chinese international students in the U.S. has fallen dramatically. By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the number of Chinese international students in the US decreased by 10.6%. Similarly, in 2020-21, the population decreased by 38.7%<sup>14</sup>, and for the 2022-2023 academic year, the enrollment of Chinese international students was roughly 254,000, which pales in comparison to the 2018-2019 peak enrollment of 369,548 students.<sup>15</sup> These statistics signal that universities have been unable to attract Chinese students at pre-pandemic rates.

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<sup>9</sup> Number of international students in the United States from 2003/04 to 2021/23 (n.d.). *Statista*. <https://shorturl.at/jAPR3>

<sup>10</sup> CDC Museum COVID-19 Timeline (n.d.). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. <https://shorturl.at/oyMZ8>

<sup>11</sup> Cash, J., & Yu, S. (n.d.). China to fully reopen borders to foreigners but near-term hurdles remain. *Reuters* .

<sup>12</sup> Some Chinese university students to return home to reduce Lunar New Year COVID spread (n.d.). *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/13/1142416107/china-university-students-return-home-covid>

<sup>13</sup> Billman, S. (2022, July 7). How the Pandemic Transformed China's International Applicants. *China Admissions*.

<sup>14</sup> Nuwer, R. (2023, August 9). Chinese students stay local as favour falls with study abroad. *Nature* . <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02162-y>

<sup>15</sup> Fischer, K., & Bauman, D. (2023, October 9). China Was Long the Top Source of Foreign Students in the U.S. Now India Has Overtaken It. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Notwithstanding the significant decline in the enrollment of Chinese international students after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cumulative enrollment of international students in the United States has approximated pre-pandemic figures, totaling around 1.057 million.<sup>16</sup> The decline in Chinese international students has also led to interesting demographic shifts, most notably within the Indian international student population. In the academic year 2022-2023, the number of Indian international students studying in the U.S. peaked (320,000), eclipsing Chinese enrollment.<sup>17</sup> This marks the first instance in 15 years where China is no longer the primary source of international students and may be the beginning of a shift in enrollment patterns.<sup>18</sup> Another population that has seen significant enrollment growth following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions is students from Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>19</sup> While there may be reason to suspect that Chinese students will return to U.S. host institutions in more significant numbers in the coming academic years on par with previous levels, their absence is sorely missed. If their enrollment continues a downward trend, it could produce economic and educational issues for universities and the United States economy. A crucial query arises from this fact: what renders Chinese students indispensable to the U.S. international education infrastructure, and why is the influx of international students from other regions, specifically India and Sub-Saharan Africa, insufficient to fill their absence?

The first reason Chinese international students are indispensable to U.S. universities is rather obvious but still worth noting. China has the second largest population, with over 1.4 billion people, and is a rising geopolitical power. Institutions must keep attracting Chinese students from this critical region if the U.S. wants to maintain a competitive advantage in many fields. While it is an incredibly positive development that the population of international students, specifically from India and African countries, has risen, this does not mean that they can fill the space of their Chinese counterparts in the unique diversity of thought and experience that Chinese students bring to the table. The second rationale is less obvious but equally compelling for why U.S. higher institutions should be concerned about declining Chinese international student enrollment. William Brunstein, Professor Emeritus at the University of West Virginia, told *Inside Higher Ed*,

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<sup>16</sup> Knox, L. (2023, November 13). A 'Near-Record' International Student Surge. *Inside Higher Ed*.

<sup>17</sup> Fischer, K., & Bauman, D. (2023, October 9). China Was Long the Top Source of Foreign Students in the U.S. Now India Has Overtaken It. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Durrani, A. (2023, November 28). International Student Numbers in U.S. Show Fastest Growth in 40 Years. *U.S. News and World Report*.

“China was a godsend for international higher education. You had a booming middle class that put a premium on education and would spend their last penny to pay that full fare...G-d, we were reaping the benefits ... I don’t see China bouncing back, and I don’t see what it brought being replaced.”<sup>20</sup> For most public U.S. Universities, the typical tuition rates for international students exceed those for out-of-state students by \$874 to \$5,218.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, many of these students are ineligible for many forms of financial aid, including federal, with limited exceptions.<sup>22</sup> As a result, most international students are expected to pay out-of-pocket tuition and fees. This practice aids universities in budgeting, funding projects, and research, facilitating student scholarships, maintaining stable tuition rates, and supporting many more aspects of campus life. By comparison, international students from India and Africa typically search for more cost-effective education. In contrast to their Chinese counterparts, they are less willing to shell out exorbitant tuition prices needed to attend some of the most prestigious universities in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Rajika Bhandari, principal of *Rajika Bhandari Advisors* and co-founder of the *South Asia International Education Network*, states, “Most students coming from India are at the graduate level. This has always been the case and likely will be for the foreseeable future...Therefore, just from a recruitment and revenue perspective, they are never going to have the same impact on an institution’s bottom line as the Chinese undergraduate students.”<sup>24</sup> Graduate students generate less revenue because most Ph.D. programs are funded by the university regardless of whether the student is international.<sup>25</sup> This is unlike undergraduate degrees in which international students are not eligible for federal aid and typically are expected to pay tuition fees upfront, thus a source of immediate revenue. Due to these factors, Indian international students nor any other demographic group can effectively supplement the decrease in Chinese international students in the United States.

The problem of shrinking Chinese international enrollment has an alarming impact on universities dependent on a substantial proportion of international students to constitute their incoming classes. For example, The New School, located in New York, currently has the highest

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<sup>20</sup> Knox, L. (2023, November 13). A ‘Near-Record’ International Student Surge. *Inside Higher Ed*.

<sup>21</sup> Mihut, G., & Matross Helms, R. International Student Funding: Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid. *American Council on Education*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Knox, L. (2023, November 13). A ‘Near-Record’ International Student Surge. *Inside Higher Ed*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

population of international students, composing roughly 33% of its student body.<sup>26</sup> It is followed closely by New York University, with an incoming class of 2022 consisting of 26% international students. Additionally, the University of Michigan is no stranger to international students. In 2022, it was reported that international students comprised roughly 8% of the student body.<sup>27</sup> According to the *University of Michigan 2023 International Student Statistics*, of the 7,313 international students at the University of Michigan, Chinese students (4,358) comprised 59%.<sup>28</sup> Thus, for universities with high global student populations, it is not only academically but also economically worthwhile to devise strategies to keep Chinese international student enrollment stable.

Retaining high levels of Chinese international student enrollment is vital for U.S. universities' academic and economic success, but it also benefits the U.S. economy. On the macroeconomic level, international student contributions are astounding. "In the 2021/22 academic year...international students who attended US colleges and universities contributed roughly \$33.8 billion to the US economy and supported more than 335,000 jobs."<sup>29</sup> This is also supported by other figures, such as that 18% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants<sup>30</sup> and that "over 25% of the 583 US companies valued at a billion dollars or more in 2022 were founded by an international student."<sup>31</sup> From these statistics, one can deduce that retaining a steady flow of international students is crucial to ensure that the U.S. maintains a competitive advantage in the ingenuity that sparks market growth. Diversity is another significant benefit that international students bring that should not be undervalued. This holds especially true for U.S. students from regions with limited cultural diversity. Such exposure to these international students can broaden the perspectives of U.S. students, introducing them to novel ways of thinking and diverse cultural values that foster cultural competence and ingenuity. Through an analysis of the many academic and economic benefits that international students bring, further mirrored by statistical evidence,

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<sup>26</sup> Most International Students National Universities (2022). *U.S. News and World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/most-international>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> 2023 Statistical Report. (2023). *University of Michigan International Students Center*. [https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/Annual_Report.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> The Impact of International Students on the US Economy in 2023 (n.d.). *The Association of International Enrollment Management*. <https://shorturl.at/lnNV5>.

<sup>30</sup> China: The Risk to Academia (2019). *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf/view>.

<sup>31</sup> The Impact of International Students on the US Economy in 2023 (n.d.). *The Association of International Enrollment Management*.

international students from every country and Chinese students, roughly 1/3 of this population, add invaluable benefits to academic study in the United States.

The presence of Chinese international students studying in the U.S. contributes positively to the U.S. and proves beneficial for the students. One noteworthy advantage of U.S. universities is the predominant use of English in their courses, providing Chinese students an opportunity to enhance their English language proficiency.<sup>32</sup> Proficiency in English proves advantageous for international business and enables applicants to distinguish themselves in the competitive employment landscape in China. Additionally, English proficiency can be instrumental for Chinese students who wish to pursue long-term professional opportunities in the U.S. or another predominantly English-speaking country. As a result of studying in the U.S., it was found that “Students generally as a whole saw improvement in their language skills.”<sup>33</sup> Another benefit for Chinese international students studying in the U.S. is the class structure and learning style employed in many classes. U.S. universities are great for teaching problem-solving skills, whereas Chinese education focuses on reaching the correct answer.<sup>34</sup> When Chinese international students are exposed to a different learning environment emphasizing problem-solving skills, these environments will increase their ingenuity and creativity.<sup>35</sup> Lastly, the U.S. cultural environment differs significantly from China, and the U.S. is more culturally diverse than China. Many Han Chinese students, who comprise roughly 92% of China’s population, haven’t had the opportunity to learn about other cultures.<sup>36</sup> America’s diversity can be a great place for Chinese students to gain the cultural competency skills necessary for a globalized world.

While most international education involves undergraduate and graduate students, it is imperative to acknowledge that roughly 400,000 international professors, participants in short study abroad or semester-long programs, researchers, and other forms of transnational education also have essential academic and economic benefits.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, international education that

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<sup>32</sup> Sheng, P. (n.d.). *Why Chinese People Want to Study Abroad* (Master's thesis). <http://libjournals.unca.edu/ncur/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/3216-Pengyi-Sheng-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Chen, T., & Chen, J. (2021). Effects of study-abroad experiences on Chinese students’ L2 learning activities and study-abroad motivations. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 44(1), 21-34.

<sup>34</sup> Milian, M., Birnbaum, M., Cardona, B., Nicholson, B. (2015). Personal and Professional Challenges and Benefits of Studying Abroad. *University of Northern Colorado*. <https://doi.org/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1135354.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Chao, C. N., Hegarty, N., Angelidis, J., & Lu, V. F. (2019). Chinese students’ motivations for studying in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, 7(2), 257-269.

<sup>36</sup> Ethnic Groups of the People's Republic of China (n.d.). *University of Minnesota Human Rights Library*. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/china-ethnicgroups.html>

<sup>37</sup> China: The Risk to Academia (2019). *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf/view>



falls outside of individual students and professionals is international University partnerships. These partnerships are based on agreements between two countries' universities and often involve exchanging students through a legally binding agreement called Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). These memorandums help establish the guidelines and what is expected that each university partner provides host students. An example of one successful partnership between the U.S. and Chinese universities is the U-M - Shanghai Jiaotong University Joint Institute. This program is run through the School of Information and is a 3.5-year program involving two years at the University of Michigan and 1.5 years at the Shanghai Jiaotong University.<sup>38</sup> This program has been economically and academically viable for both universities and is a model of successful partnership.

### **What attracts Chinese students to study abroad?**

Having discussed the U.S. international education landscape concerning Chinese students and professionals and the economic and academic imperative of confronting declining Chinese international student enrollment, let us now turn to understanding what Chinese students are looking for in an international education experience to assess which attributes Universities adequately should prioritize when recruiting these students.

In a study by Peter Bodycott of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, which involved a sample group of 251 mainland Chinese parents and 100 Chinese students aspiring to study abroad, the participants were asked to discuss their aspiration to pursue international education and what qualities they were looking for in a potential university. This study revealed ten common factors. These factors were identified as follows:<sup>39</sup>

1. Knowledge of the institution and its reputation: *Is the host institution considered high-ranking or prestigious? How well is this University known among mainland Chinese employers?*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> (n.d.). *U-M Shanghai Jiaotong Joint Institute*. <https://www.ji.sjtu.edu.cn/>

<sup>39</sup> Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of research in International education*, 8(3), 349-373.

<sup>40</sup> These descriptors are added by myself, not the researcher.

2. Positive attitude toward international education in the host country: *How welcoming is the host country to foreigners? How well-established are international education programs at the host university?*
3. Recommendations of friends, family, mentors, etc. *Was the potential host institution recommended by a trusted mentor, family member, or friend?*
4. Tuition fees and living expenses: *How expensive is the host institution? How expensive is the cost of living compared to the student's home country?*
5. Environment Considerations: *Factors include climate, lifestyle, crime, language, etc.*
6. Proximity to Mainland China: *Are plane flights expensive to return to China? How often will students be able to return home?*
7. Host Country Social Network: *Does the student have friends, family, or other community members in the host country?*
8. Immigration prospects after graduation: *Is it plausible for Chinese students to immigrate to the host country/work in the host country?*
9. Perceived Higher Standards of Education: *Is the potential host university more prestigious than the Chinese universities a student is accepted to? Does the potential host institution have a high standard of education?*
10. Availability of scholarships for study: *What is the typical funding/scholarships available to international students at a particular host institution?*

All ten factors influenced students' and parents' decisions across the board; however, variations in these factors' importance existed, with some carrying more significant impact than others. For example, among parents, the primary impetus for enrolling their child in a foreign institution was the lack of spaces available to students at prestigious Chinese universities, falling under (9) Perceived Higher Standards of Education.<sup>41</sup> The second-most important factor is (8) Immigration prospects after graduation.<sup>42</sup> This would suggest that Chinese parents are most concerned with the prestige of host universities and the potential for their child to immigrate to the United States, which can lead to larger salaries and other benefits than staying in mainland China. Similarly, Chinese students were most concerned with the perceived higher quality education

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

available in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Chao et al., *Chinese Students' Motivations for Studying in the United States*, also confirmed these two factors as top priorities for Chinese students. However, interestingly, in this study, students also ranked “Gain perspective on my home country” as another decisive factor for studying abroad.<sup>44</sup>

Both studies indicate that to attract more Chinese international students, U.S. universities must ensure they provide a high-level education- which most U.S. universities already excel at. This doesn't mean that universities shouldn't make a concerted effort to improve other areas of international student experiences. Still, ultimately, Chinese students are coming to the U.S. for an excellent education system. Universities should emphasize the prestige of their university and high-quality learning environments when marketing to potential Chinese international students.

Another important aspect of Peter Bodycott's article was a discussion of how students learn about foreign university options and how much these sources factor into their final decisions on which university to attend. According to his study, it was found that Exhibition/Fairs and Friend/Relative recommendations outweighed all other sources.<sup>45</sup> Exhibitions/Fairs refer to college fairs that are commonplace among Chinese high schools and typically invite domestic and international institutions to meet with students and parents. Students and their families will most likely be exposed to international academic opportunities through these fairs. The second most important source of information was mentor, peer, or family recommendations. This source is followed closely by Internet marketing. Though the study has some limitations and is based on a population from one urban city, it still provides valuable insight into the channels universities should concentrate on when marketing their university to potential international Chinese students.<sup>46</sup>

In short, Chinese international students select American universities for many reasons, as articulated in the quote: “Completing studies abroad is a global trend that has placed the United States in the enviable position of being the most desirable destination for those considering post-secondary education. Students who plan to earn a post-secondary degree outside of their homeland perceive the United States as welcoming, having a quality higher education system, and offering

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Chao, C. N., Hegarty, N., Angelidis, J., & Lu, V. F. (2019). Chinese students' motivations for studying in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, 7(2), 257-269.

<sup>45</sup> Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of research in International education*, 8(3), 349-373.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

various schools to accommodate and prepare various students.”<sup>47</sup> This quotation, in conjunction with the studies mentioned above, offers universities insights into the potential rationale behind the ongoing decline in Chinese international student enrollment, even after the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic. This decline is not attributable to diminished educational quality or reduced educational variety, which has remained relatively stable. Instead, it underscores the importance of assessing whether the U.S. is perceived as a “welcoming environment.” Thus, the significant decrease in Chinese international students even after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be at least partially the result of the deterioration in the perceived “welcomeness” of the United States. When evaluating American events that shaped Chinese student experiences and characterized U.S.–China relations post-2019, a clearer picture emerges of why the U.S. was perceived as less welcoming to Chinese international students.

### **COVID-19 and Geopolitical Tensions under Trump’s Presidency:**

The most obvious reason one could point to as a rationale for the falling Chinese International student population is the COVID-19 pandemic itself. The outbreak began in Wuhan, China, and led to a 76-day lockdown beginning Jan. 23, 2020.<sup>48</sup> China imposed intermittent and partially restrictive quarantines for its population throughout the COVID-19 period, even though the highly contagious virus spread globally, and by late February, many U.S. universities were forced to shut down. This created shock waves for international students, some of whom were lucky enough to return home before China stopped accepting international flights, but more likely, they were forced to stay on their campus or find other accommodations until they could return home. Due to many universities being on Zoom during the 2021-2022 year, some Chinese students decided not to return to U.S. colleges because they were unable to leave their homes; they were afraid of not being able to return home and being stuck in the US as a result of another outbreak or felt that they could not take courses at unusual times because China is ahead of U.S. schedule.<sup>49</sup> U.S. individual university restrictive enrollment policies were also partially to blame, “With regard

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<sup>47</sup> Milian, M., Birnbaum, M., Cardona, B., Nicholson, B. (2015). Personal and Professional Challenges and Benefits of Studying Abroad. *University of Northern Colorado*. <https://doi.org/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1135354.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> (2021, January 22). *Timeline: China’s COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown of Wuhan*. <https://shorturl.at/bQU45>.

<sup>49</sup> Some Chinese university students to return home to reduce Lunar New Year COVID spread (n.d.). *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/13/1142416107/china-university-students-return-home-covid>

to policy, we find a stark divergence: Canada's federal policies quickly adapted to support international students and ensure they remained eligible for post-graduate work permits, preserving the appeal of Canada as a study destination. Meanwhile, in the US, federal policies for student visas required international students to maintain physical presence, reflecting a more hostile stance towards immigration, characteristic of the Trump administration.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, enrollment decreased because previously enrolled students decided not to return to the U.S. and instead transferred domestically. It also affected applicant rates, as many students decided to stay closer to home. Universities are, to this day, seeing the aftereffects of the pandemic. However, COVID-19 cannot fully account for the significant decrease in Chinese international students enrolled in the 2022-2023 year.

Besides COVID-19 being the obvious answer for the decreased enrollment of Chinese international students, an equally important factor is how the U.S. responded to the pandemic and other events that made U.S.-Chinese relations more volatile. An initial reference point for these arguments lies in the campaign and election of former President Donald Trump. President Trump's campaign was embroiled in controversy from its inception, with a notable contention being that his statements frequently conveyed White supremacist sentiments, leading to accusations of blatant racism.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the "American First" policies, which were the ideological background of his presidency, often amounted to xenophobic rhetoric that demonized other countries, including China.<sup>52</sup> This rhetoric was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the proliferation of anti-Asian hate in America stemming from the misguided attribution of the pandemic to China. This misattribution was erroneously extrapolated to people of Asian descent in the United States.<sup>53</sup>

With Donald Trump as U.S. president, the COVID-19 pandemic became mired in racism and xenophobia, driving division. On numerous occasions, Trump referred to COVID-19 as the “kung flu” and “Chinese virus.”<sup>54</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian verbal and physical violence saw an increase. Many Chinese international students, along with all people of Asian

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<sup>50</sup> Buckner, E., Zhang, Y., & Blanco, G. L. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on international student enrolments in North America: Comparing Canada and the United States. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 76(2), 328–342. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12365>

<sup>51</sup> Trump dines with white supremacist, renewing questions about GOP's leadership and values (2022, November 28). *PBS*.

<sup>52</sup> Olsen, Gorm Rye. "Donald Trump and "America first": the road ahead is open." *International Politics* 58, no. 1 (2021): 71-89.

<sup>53</sup> Kai, J. (2021, June 8). How Trump Fueled Anti-Asian Violence in America. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/how-trump-fueled-anti-asian-violence-in-america/>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

descent, experienced unprecedented hate. One particular incident that sent shockwaves through the entire US and was picked up on by Chinese news was the Atlanta Spa Shootings, in which a white Georgia man killed eight people, six of whom were of Asian descent; his crimes were found to be hate-motivated.<sup>55</sup> Based on a study conducted by Pew Research in April 2021, roughly 32% of Asians surveyed feared being threatened or physically attacked, while 81 percent said violence against Asian Americans is increasing to dangerous levels.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, one in five U.S. Asians cited former President Donald Trump as the primary for the rise in violence against Asian Americans.<sup>57</sup> Thus, how Trump handled COVID-19 led to the U.S. being perceived as less welcoming to Asians- especially Chinese people.

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the backdrop of U.S.–Chinese relations were very contentious. From Trump’s days in office, he vowed to fight back against the unequal U.S.-China trade relationship, using inflammatory statements such as “[the trade imbalance] the greatest theft in the history of the world” and “We can’t continue to allow China to rape our country.” Although his language received backlash, many, including the Director of National Intelligence, John Ratcliffe, endorsed this sentiment by stating that China is “the greatest threat to America today,” which precipitated sweeping trade regulations and the “tightening of visa rules” for over 90 million CCP members to combat potential trade espionage.<sup>58</sup> The U.S. also evoked CCP outrage by condemning Chinese human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.<sup>59</sup>

Hence, the dwindling enrollment of Chinese international students in U.S. institutions is not solely attributable to the pandemic. Geopolitical tensions also certainly influenced some Chinese students to search for more “welcoming” environments than the U.S. Factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S.-China trade war, and controversies over human rights abuses perpetuated anti-Asian hate and negative sentiments about China, contributing to an atmosphere that made Chinese students feel unwelcome and resulted in reduced enrollment numbers. Presently, under the Biden administration, there is a decrease in bigotry, but the trade war persists, and geopolitical tensions have intensified, particularly highlighted by Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

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<sup>55</sup> Constantino, A. (n.d.). Atlanta spa shooter who targeted Asian women pleads guilty to four of eight murders. *CNN*.

<sup>56</sup> Ruiz, N. G., Im, C., Tian, Z. (2023, November 30). Asian Americans and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Pew Research Center*.

<sup>57</sup> Kai, J. (2021, June 8). How Trump Fueled Anti-Asian Violence in America. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/how-trump-fueled-anti-asian-violence-in-america/>.

<sup>58</sup> 1949 – 2023 U.S.-China Relations (n.d.). *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## **President Biden and U.S.-China Relations:**

While President Biden is less controversial and more reserved than his predecessor, his presidency continues to see the continuation of the trade war in China and increasing trade restrictions- particularly within the semiconductor industry. Biden also continues to label China a significant threat on the world stage, resulting in the NATO communique declaring China a major threat to the world order.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, tensions erupted in the South China Sea following Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan on August 2, 2022.<sup>61</sup> In summary, the combined impact of the trade war, COVID-19, and the rise in anti-Asian hate has led to Chinese international students perceiving the U.S. as less welcoming. The impact of these geopolitical issues is demonstrated by Jane Tian, a mainland Chinese student, who excluded the United States from her shortlist of potential foreign universities, attributing this decision primarily to China's "quite tense relationship" with the country.<sup>62</sup> While the effects of COVID-19 on Chinese student enrollment are expected to diminish over time, the enduring and complex repercussions of U.S.-China relations, as indicated by these events, may prove more pervasive, challenging to address, and potentially even result in more far-reaching impacts.

## **Navigating the Impact of U.S.-Chinese Relations on Chinese Students: Espionage, Visa Restrictions, and Striking a Balance for National Security**

The dynamics between the U.S. and China during the Trump and Biden administrations shaped students' general perception, fostering a more negative view of the U.S. as unwelcoming. Still, it also yielded more direct consequences for some Chinese individuals. Throughout both administrations, several Chinese students, professors, and academics, both ethnically Chinese American citizens but especially international students, came under investigation for alleged espionage. For example, one high profile case was on January 26th, a Chinese national engineer and recent graduate student at a University in Chicago, Ji Chaoqun, was sentenced to 8 years in

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Haenle, P., & Sher, N. (2022, August 17). How Pelosi's Taiwan Visit Has Set a New Status Quo for U.S-China Tensions. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

<sup>62</sup> Nuwer, R. (2023, August 9). Chinese students stay local as favour falls with study abroad. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02162-y>

prison due to espionage working on behalf of China's Ministry of State Security (MSS), aiming to gain insight into US satellite and aerospace technology.<sup>63</sup> Additional prominent instances involved the closure of the Houston Chinese consulate over alleged espionage<sup>64</sup> and the extradition of Yanjun Xu from China to the U.S., resulting in a 20-year sentence for stealing trade secrets.<sup>65</sup> While these cases justified government actions to safeguard national security, for certain Chinese academics and students, it sparked a perceived witch hunt, subjecting them to suspicion or causing missed opportunities to engage with classified data.<sup>66</sup> Another issue that has resulted from potential espionage is that the United States has put more significant visa restrictions in place. Since 2020, the US government has been denying visas for science and engineering graduate students who have studied at a Chinese institution that they allege has ties with the Chinese military programs.<sup>67</sup> In the summer of 2022, the United States issued 45% fewer visas to Chinese students compared with the same period in 2021, which can lead to a loss in talent.<sup>68</sup> In 2022, Ann Chih Lin, a renowned professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Policy addressed these concerns that many Chinese academics were feeling. In her lecture titled *Scapegoating Chinese American Scientists in the Name of National Security*, she explained how preserving national security should not be used to legitimize discrimination or call for a witch hunt.<sup>69</sup> Thus, U.S. universities and the government must create commonsense strategies to protect Chinese academics. Xiaofeng Wan, an associate dean of admission and coordinator of international recruitment at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, echoes this sentiment and demonstrates how, when combined with the rise of Anti-Asian prejudice, this has resulted in many Chinese families deciding not to enroll students in U.S. institutions. "Chinese families are concerned about throwing all of their eggs into one basket, which is the United States...everything signals them that things

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<sup>63</sup> Chinese National Sentenced to Eight Years for Acting within the United States as an Unregistered Agent of the People's Republic of China (2023, January 25). *Office of Public Affairs: U.S. Department of Justice*.

<sup>64</sup> 1949 – 2023 U.S.-China Relations (n.d.). *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>.

<sup>65</sup> Chinese Government Intelligence Officer Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison for Espionage Crimes, Attempting to Steal Trade Secrets From Cincinnati Company (2022, November 16). *Office of Public Affairs: U.S. Department of Justice*.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/mit-professor-wrongfully-accused-spying-china-helps-make-major-discove-rcna44637>

<sup>67</sup> 1949 – 2023 U.S.-China Relations (n.d.). *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-china-relations>.

<sup>68</sup> Nuwer, R. (2023, August 9). Chinese students stay local as favour falls with study abroad. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02162-y>

<sup>69</sup> Lin, Ann Chih. "Scapegoating Chinese American Scientists." University of Michigan International Ins, 22 Sept. 2022, [ii.umich.edu/ii/news-events/all-events.detail.html/95671-21790539.html](https://www.umich.edu/ii/news-events/all-events.detail.html/95671-21790539.html).



can change fast, in a very negative direction for Chinese students.”<sup>70</sup> For universities to retain a high enrollment of Chinese students, they need to come up with more concrete plans to balance national security concerns while avoiding xenophobic attacks on Chinese students.

### **The Issue Defined:**

The benefits of Chinese international students on the economy and academia of Western institutions and American society are profound. Therefore, the decline in Chinese international student enrollment due to COVID-19, anti-Asian hate, and U.S.–China geopolitical tensions poses a considerable problem. The testimonies from Chinese students and academics whom these factors have directly affected, and those opting not to apply to U.S. institutions, illustrate that preserving this student population is a multifaceted challenge. Beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19, universities and the U.S. government must grapple with broader issues, including the underlying racism stemming from the pandemic and geopolitical tensions, if they want to maintain steady enrollment numbers. Conversely, the U.S. must also navigate the threats to national security from a few Chinese international students and academics. To address the diverse needs of the U.S. government (from a national security perspective), the Chinese government, and Chinese students, it is crucial to evaluate the goals of each stakeholder so that proposed solutions adeptly balance these varied interests.

### *U.S. Goals:*

The United States’ primary goal in recruiting Chinese international students is to increase competitiveness through economic gains from business and job growth and acquire the best talent to help innovate core industries, including defense and STEM fields.<sup>71</sup> Thus, it is in the U.S.’s interest to recruit top-performing students and academics from Chinese universities. This is also important, as noted previously, for U.S. institutions to balance their budgets and for academic prestige and diversity. Another primary objective is to retain the best international students for

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<sup>70</sup> Nuwer, R. (2023, August 9). Chinese students stay local as favour falls with study abroad. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02162-y>

<sup>71</sup> China: The Risk to Academia (2019). *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf/view>

long-term careers in the U.S. or those who have developed a company for economic benefits. Despite all the potential benefits of Chinese students, the U.S. also must carefully balance its national security in the face of rising Chinese intervention and political strain. According to an FBI report titled *China the Risk to Academia*, each year, the U.S. loses roughly 225-600 billion dollars annually in counterfeit goods, pirated software, and theft of trade secrets.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, they assert that China exploits the U.S. open education system to pilfer inventions or academic research. Additionally, China is accused of sponsoring espionage and holds the dubious distinction of being the world's largest infringer on intellectual property. The FBI expresses particular concern regarding Chinese international graduate students and academics, especially those in STEM fields.

The FBI also contends that China's infringement on copyright and the theft of trade secrets result from a combination of state-promoted espionage and the inherent characteristics of China's academic environment, especially when compared to the U.S. Concerns regarding the educational environment include the widespread prevalence of plagiarism in Chinese universities and differing standards compared to most U.S. institutions. Consequently, some academics may adopt original ideas from their U.S. counterparts and publish them under their name in China.<sup>73</sup> Regarding state-sponsored espionage and theft, the FBI cites *Thousand Talents Program*, which attracts Chinese U.S. citizens and foreigners to study and work in China through competitive salaries, but also requires that the research is shared with China.<sup>74</sup> There have also been cases where Chinese students had their education funded by the MSS to gain U.S. academic innovations.<sup>75</sup> Given this knowledge and worsening U.S.-Chinese relations, any policy to improve Chinese international student enrollment must balance two main factors: economic cost vs. benefit of hosting Chinese international students and national security concerns.

#### *CCP Goals:*

From the perspective of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the primary objective of international education aligns with that of the U.S., aiming to secure a competitive advantage by enticing American international students and sending Chinese students to the West to acquire

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

knowledge and subsequently contribute to the revitalization of China. This pursuit encompasses various means, including alleged state-sponsored espionage. China faces three main challenges in maximizing the benefits of studying abroad. The first involves maintaining regime stability, the second is encouraging Chinese international students to return to mainland China after their overseas experiences, and the third focuses on attracting more foreign academics.

Regime stability is a significant concern for Xi Jinping and communist regimes in general. There is apprehension that exposure of Chinese students to democratic and liberal values abroad may threaten the legitimacy of the CCP. This concern has grown, especially after the Tiananmen Square Massacre, during which the state's response to protests potentially resulted in the deaths of possibly thousands of students.<sup>76</sup> To counteract the influence of Western liberal democratic values on Chinese youth, the CCP has implemented measures aimed at shaping ideological narratives and reinforcing its authority. One of the significant components of this strategy is the introduction of Patriotic Education. Patriotic Education emerged in the 1990s as a response to the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident and a decline in the acceptance of Communist ideology.<sup>77</sup> It represents a state-led effort to foster and cultivate nationalism among the Chinese population. This initiative is part of a broader movement that seeks to institutionalize patriotic education, reform history education, and establish patriotic public monuments, including museums.<sup>78</sup> The success of this endeavor is notable, as many young Chinese individuals view their lives as improved compared to their parents, contributing to a positive perception. While Patriotic Education has consistently held significance in Chinese policy, it has garnered even more robust support under the leadership of the current president, Xi Jinping. This fact is reflected in a continued emphasis on instilling national pride and loyalty to the state among the younger generation. Xi Jinping's commitment to ensuring the allegiance of younger generations to the Chinese Communist Party is demonstrated through increased restrictions on higher education and the drafting of new laws aimed at expanding and intensifying patriotic education. One specific law that will be in effect starting in January 2023 calls for (1) Deeper integration of patriotic education at every level of Chinese schooling; (2) More activity based patriotic education, all school activities must visit national patriotic education bases; (3) Larger scope: The CCP will make efforts to expand Patriotic Education to Hong Kong, Macau,

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<sup>76</sup> Lui, Andrew. "Looking back at Tiananmen square." *Peace Review* 12, no. 1 (2000): 139-145.

<sup>77</sup> Zhao, Suisheng. "A state-led nationalism: The patriotic education campaign in post-Tiananmen China." *Communist and post-communist studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287-302.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

and Taiwanese youth and also to Chinese international students.<sup>79</sup> According to a recent poll conducted by the Journal of Foreign Policy, studying abroad not only makes Chinese students more pro-U.S. but surprisingly, these students also report having more support for their home country.<sup>80</sup> Thus, this demonstrates patriotic education's enduring effect on students while abroad.

One strategy to maintain loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) among Chinese international students while abroad involves using organizations such as the Chinese Student Scholars Association (CSSA). These organizations often function as representatives of the Chinese government on campus, potentially engaging in activities like the surveillance of students. Additionally, they may advocate for Chinese interests within college settings. According to the United States Department of State, "The CCP created the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) to monitor Chinese students and mobilize them against views that dissent from the CCP's stance."<sup>81</sup> This organization, prevalent on major campuses such as the University of Michigan, is crucial in upholding regime stability during students' time abroad and is a critical element in Xi Jinping's soft power strategy. The dual perspective on students studying abroad reflects China's need for them in roles such as espionage and cultural ambassadors while simultaneously aiming to prevent excessive adoption of Western values.<sup>82</sup> Despite CSSA's claims of being a cultural organization with no political ties, this is refuted by numerous incidents in which CSSA at multiple U.S. institutions engaged in political activities. For instance, in 2017, the CSSA at the University of California San Diego advocated against allowing the Dalai Lama to speak.<sup>83</sup> When the university rejected this request, the Chinese government responded by prohibiting students with state-funded scholarships from attending the university. Similarly, in 2021, Nathan Law, a Hong Kong activist, attempted to remove him from a panel.<sup>84</sup>

Another Chinese organization embedded in universities is the Confucius Institute, which provides resources for Chinese language learners, Chinese cultural events, and other public activities funded by the Chinese government. These institutes were funded by the Chinese government and the host institution and were staffed by Chinese citizens.<sup>85</sup> These institutes began

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<sup>79</sup> China passes patriotic education law for children, families -state media (2023, October 24). *Reuters*.

<sup>80</sup> Chinese hearts and minds

<sup>81</sup> "The Chinese Communist Party on Campus: Opportunities & Risks"-United States Department of State-

<sup>82</sup> Huang, K., & Zou, K. (n.d.). China's new Patriotic Education Law reveals Xi's deepest fears for the future. *The China Project*.

<sup>83</sup> Redden, E. (2017). Chinese Students vs. Dalai Lama. *Inside Higher Ed*.

<sup>84</sup> Pressure continues against campus critics of China (n.d.). *FIRE*. <https://www.thefire.org/news/pressure-continues-against-campus-critics-china>

<sup>85</sup> With Nearly All U.S. Confucius Institutes Closed, Some Schools Sought Alternative Language Support (n.d.). *U.S. Government Accountability Office*. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-105981>

in 2004 and, at their peak, had over 90 colleges.<sup>86</sup> Today, many of these institutes, which exerted soft power on many college campuses in the U.S., including the University of Michigan, have closed.<sup>87</sup> The cause of closures was the results of intense condemnation from the federal government, which stated that these institutes were potential sites of espionage and could also be used to sway American public opinion; as a result, under the National Defense Authorization Act, schools with Confucius Institutes were unable to receive funding for Chinese language courses, causing universities to choose between funding the Institute or Chinese language courses.<sup>88</sup>

Upon students' return to China, The CCP employs various strategies to ensure loyalty to the CCP. One way involves recruiting students for government positions, particularly in response to the high unemployment rates experienced by Chinese young adults.<sup>89</sup> Public service jobs, often called the “iron rice bowl” for their ability to provide a stable income, have gained popularity.<sup>90</sup> The “public service chic” trend emerged, where students flaunt these coveted careers, contributing to their increased desirability.<sup>91</sup> In 2023, over 7 million Chinese students applied for 200,000 Chinese government positions. Another student group under government purview is the Western Returned Scholars Program.<sup>92</sup>

In a CCP speech *Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True*, the speaker noted four major hopes for Chinese students who study at foreign universities. (1) Adhere to Patriotism, “...always bearing in mind the idea of being first to worry about the affairs of the state and the last to enjoy oneself.” (2) Study hard, “...an important basis for one to serve one’s country and people.” (3) Innovation and Creativity “...innovation is the soul of the nation’s progress...” (4) Dynamic exchanges “China cannot develop without the rest of the world; nor can the world as a whole prosper without China.”<sup>93</sup> This speech underscores the perspective of the CCP, which views Chinese students studying abroad as representatives of the Chinese party. Their primary role, as perceived by the CCP, is to bring back valuable talents for the benefit of the state.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> The Root of China’s Growing Youth Unemployment Crisis (2023, September 18). *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/root-chinas-growing-youth-unemployment-crisis>

<sup>90</sup> Baharade, A. (n.d.). 8 million Chinese youths sat for a test in the style of an 'imperial examination' — all for a job that pays about \$7,000 a year. *Business Insider*.

<sup>91</sup> In China, civil servant chic is the new look for straitened times (2022). *The Washington Post*.

<sup>92</sup> Cheng, E., & Cherry, D. (n.d.). China sees record 7.7 million applicants for 200,000 government jobs. *CNBC*.

<sup>93</sup> "Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams C." Source: Xi Jinping The Governance of Chi, 2020, [en.qstheory.cn/2020-09/30/c\\_541840.htm](http://en.qstheory.cn/2020-09/30/c_541840.htm).

Despite the relatively minor challenge to regime stability facilitated by Patriotic Education and the presence of Chinese student associations on campus, a more formidable obstacle emerges. Namely, many Chinese students studying abroad, particularly in the U.S., opt to stay in their home country. In fact, “Deng underestimated the magnetism of the West and its ability to keep China’s best and brightest. As of 1997, only 32 percent of the 293,000 students and scholars who had gone overseas since 1978 had returned, and 40 percent of those who did come home had gone out as short-term scholars sponsored by the state. Among the 154,000 “self-funded” students, the return rate was a paltry 3.9 percent.”<sup>94</sup> This trend continues today, particularly among Chinese doctorate students in science and engineering. In 2017, it was reported that roughly 87% of international Chinese student graduates planned on staying in the United States.<sup>95</sup> This causes a problem for China because the U.S. is taking some of its brightest minds in the STEM field, and thus, these students cannot fulfill the mission of uplifting the people and country.

In summary, China's three overarching priorities concerning international Chinese students are: (1) gaining a competitive advantage and recruiting more students from the U.S. and other foreign nations, (2) ensuring that Chinese students maintain allegiance to the CCP and serve as cultural ambassadors while abroad, and (3) ensuring that Chinese students return home with acquired knowledge to contribute to societal advancement.

### *What do Chinese international students need?*

The last but equally vital stakeholder to mention is the Chinese students going abroad and, by extension, their families. A concerted effort to identify their needs to have a worthwhile experience abroad and to keep selecting U.S. institutions of higher education is vital to ensuring that enrollment numbers remain high.

One of the most significant struggles that Chinese students face outside of standard geopolitical tensions is the issue of becoming targets of the CCP even when they are abroad. Some of the most common topics that students can be reported to Chinese authorities for include Tibet,

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<sup>94</sup> Zweig, D., & Rosen, S. (n.d.). How China trained a new generation abroad. *Sci Dev Net*. <https://www.scidev.net/global/features/how-china-trained-a-new-generation-abroad/>

<sup>95</sup> International students who intend to stay in the United States: What are the overall trends? (n.d.). *Science and Engineering Doctorates*. <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17306/report/international-students-staying-overall-trends/stay-rates-country-of-origin.cfm#:~:text=Approximately%209%20in%2010%20doctorates,these%20top%2010%20w>

Xinjiang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and even the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989. This became a reality for Zhihao Kong, a Chinese international graduate student at Purdue University.<sup>96</sup> Through his courses at Purdue, Kong became aware that the education he had received as a student in China about the Tiananmen Square Massacre did not match what he had learned at the University. As a result, he posted an essay about what he had learned online that contradicted the CCP narrative. When other Chinese students at the University found out, they harassed, bullied, and reported his information to China's Ministry of State Security (MSS).<sup>97</sup> Shortly after that, Chinese authorities contacted his parents, resulting in a situation where he could not return to China, and his parents could not leave the country. He attributes this predicament to the belief that certain members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at his school function as informants for the Ministry of State Security (MSS).<sup>98</sup> Mike Orlando, the U.S. leader for counterintelligence and security, contends that Chinese students are particularly vulnerable to targeting due to political involvement, underscoring that such incidents are far from isolated.<sup>99</sup>

In Boston, Rayhan Asat, a member of the Uyghur Muslim community, faced censorship by the Chinese Student Scholars Association during a public Zoom discussion about her brother's ordeal in China's concentration camps.<sup>100</sup> Ekpar, another Uyghur student, experienced abduction upon returning to China after engaging in political activities while studying abroad.<sup>101</sup> Chuang-Chuang Chen, a St. John's University law student, reported that his dissident chat was hacked, creating an environment where "if there are more than three or more Chinese students in the same class, you are scared to talk."<sup>102</sup> While Chinese students come to the U.S. seeking diverse perspectives and open discussions not possible in their home country, the looming presence of Chinese informants not only poses a direct physical threat to students and families but also jeopardizes U.S. academic freedom, stifling free thinking.

Universities contribute to the issue of Chinese international students becoming targets of the CCP while abroad by seldom advocating for these students. The challenge for the U.S. to intervene lies in the reluctance to jeopardize academic freedom, which safeguards pro-regime

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<sup>96</sup> Rotella, S. (2021). Even on U.S. Campuses, China Cracks Down on Students Who Speak Out. *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/even-on-us-campuses-china-cracks-down-on-students-who-speak-out>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

students and others. This reluctance often results from legal ambiguities, and there is an apprehension about risking access to the lucrative Chinese market. U.S. Universities benefit significantly, receiving \$1 billion in donations from China.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, a lack of awareness among many professors about the unique needs of Chinese students, particularly those with no connection to the region, further complicates effective intervention. Many professors, faculty, and university staff don't consider the possible implications of free speech for Chinese students. In sum, "Chinese students say they find themselves caught in the crossfire. The police state stalks them; U.S. officialdom sees them as potential spies; anti-Asian hate crimes endanger them on the street. It can be a lonely and paranoid existence."<sup>104</sup> To facilitate successful experiences for Chinese international students in the United States, host institutions must formulate effective strategies to foster an environment where students can learn without apprehension of becoming targets of China's restrictive views or encountering U.S. xenophobia. Moreover, universities must proactively intervene and advocate for the affected students if such challenges arise. Failure to address these issues could significantly threaten free speech, academic freedom, and overall student enrollment.

### **Possible solutions/ Policy recommendations:**

In examining potential policy recommendations, I aim to align with the objectives of the key stakeholders in U.S.–China international education. While acknowledging occasional conflicts among the stakeholders' goals, I present the following recommendations guided by the principles of reciprocity. It is important to note my pro-United States bias and my inclination toward safeguarding the interests of Chinese international students in U.S. institutions- sometimes at the expense of CCP goals.

#### *Recruitment:*

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<sup>103</sup> Rotella, S. (2021). Even on U.S. Campuses, China Cracks Down on Students Who Speak

Out. *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/even-on-us-campuses-china-cracks-down-on-students-who-speak-out>.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



Based on the study conducted by Peter Bodycott of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, his findings suggest that university presence at high school fairs is crucial to securing high Chinese international student enrollment, at least students from urban cities.<sup>105</sup> The second most significant way to recruit these students is through word-of-mouth recommendations from family, friends, and mentors.<sup>106</sup> It follows that U.S. universities wishing to recruit these students gain access to these college fairs. To accomplish this, universities would do their best to coordinate with in-country alumni/ create in-country representatives to attend these school fairs. Networking with high schools is also essential, and universities should analyze high schools and cities from which their Chinese international students originate to make concerted efforts to expand their presence in those regions and beyond.

Furthermore, based on the factors that influence Chinese students and their parents to attend foreign universities, these universities should try to market the prestige of the University first and foremost, the high level of educational standards, and lastly, the specific skills (language and otherwise) that they can take advantage of at your university and how this relates to career fulfillment. These universities should prioritize marketing the institution's prestige and high educational standards, emphasizing specific skills, including language proficiency and others, that are unique to the university. Universities should also mention how the unique skills learned at their university will contribute to student career fulfillment.

Additionally, creating a safe learning environment catered to Chinese International students' unique needs can contribute to increased positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Hence, simply making efforts to improve current Chinese international students' experience will contribute to higher enrollment of Chinese international students in the future. I recommend that all universities wishing to expand Chinese enrollment utilize anonymous polls and forms of Chinese international students to determine their needs. Following poll results, universities should implement programs that mitigate and address uncovered issues, working with global student leaders to make recommendations to combat challenges.

Finally, for colleges seeking to attract Chinese international students, exploring online advertising on Chinese platforms such as Duoyin and WeChat could be a strategic approach. This

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<sup>105</sup> Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of research in International education*, 8(3), 349-373.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

method allows prospective students to gain increased visibility of U.S. universities, potentially influencing their decision to enroll.

*Broadening U.S.- Chinese Educational Partnerships:*

While it may sound controversial from a U.S. national security standpoint, increasing the number of mutually beneficial U.S.-Chinese learning partnerships may be the key to increasing Chinese international student enrollment in the U.S. One of the significant reasons Chinese families/students choose to study abroad is the lack of seats available at prestigious Chinese institutions- particularly at the undergraduate level where the threat of espionage or trade steal is low. While Xi Jinping is actively working to increase available seats at Chinese universities, it would require years of sustained effort to meet the escalating demand.<sup>107</sup> A more efficient and mutually beneficial alternative is to foster partnerships like Shanghai Jiaotong, enhancing cultural exposure for students and concurrently boosting revenue for U.S. and Chinese universities. Should these partnerships prove successful on a widespread scale, they have the potential to facilitate a profound integration of U.S.-Chinese education systems. Such integration may render high rates of disenrollment precarious and will result in a safer environment for maintaining enrollment numbers. This is particularly significant for U.S.-Chinese undergraduate exchange programs, fostering increased revenue for both educational institutions and attracting talent to both countries, “Most importantly, society will benefit from a stream of previously unimaginable advances — in life sciences, biomedical engineering, communications, environmental sciences, artificial intelligence, and more — that will vastly improve everyone’s life.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, broadening and increasing the number of mutually beneficial exchange programs can yield positive outcomes both economically, academically, and particularly in terms of talent recruitment.

To incentivize universities to create these partnerships, I recommend that the federal government provide some form of monetary incentive for universities that create new programs to take advantage. Although this type of program would rely on startup costs from the U.S. government, and there would have to be accountability measures put in place, if successful- the

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<sup>107</sup> How Xi Jinping is Shaping China’s Universities (n.d.). *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/how-xi-jinping-is-shaping-chinas-universities/>

<sup>108</sup> Lutchen, K. R. (n.d.). Why Companies and Universities Should Forge Long-Term Collaborations. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-companies-and-universities-should-forge-long-term-collaborations>

plethora of benefits stemming from a high enrollment of Chinese international students would far outweigh the time, energy, and money required for startup costs.

*Protecting students while abroad:*

For Chinese international students studying in the U.S., there are several ways that Universities can better protect students from racially motivated attacks and CCP censorship. The most obvious first step is for universities to actively inform professors about the challenges faced by Chinese students and those from countries attempting to extend their governance to students abroad. As mentioned previously, many professors are unaware of the specific problems that Chinese students face regarding censorship, so universities should make a more concerted effort to spread this information. There are many ways that a university may choose to do this; one example could be through a module that professors and all teaching staff must take before each school year, or at minimum, the beginning of their employment with intermittent refresher courses. Another option could be a mandatory meeting for new hires or before each academic school year; for universities that wish to receive funding for new U.S.–China educational partnerships, this practice should be one of the contingents for receiving federal aid. Other basic steps universities could take to protect these students is offering them a U.S. phone and advising them not to use WeChat in the U.S., except to speak directly to friends and family in China. Universities should also explore allowing students to anonymously publish essays, theses, and dissertations on controversial topics by the CCP.

For universities with international student centers, it would also be recommended for students to have a specialized international counselor to whom they can direct concerns about potential censorship or China-related questions; these counselors should be required to have an in-depth knowledge of the issues that Chinese international students face and work with students to evaluate unanimously whether these students feel supported, “Chinese internationals wanted their professors and host peers to be aware of and curious about their backgrounds and show care and initiative in approaching them. They also asked for improved international student services and more academic support to decode implicit norms of the academy.”<sup>109</sup> Additionally, these

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<sup>109</sup> Heng, T. T. (2017). Voices of Chinese international students in USA colleges: ‘I want to tell them that...’. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 833-850.

coordinators should be thoroughly vetted and not have any withstanding ties to the CCP. Some of the other issues that these specialized counselors should tackle include “Language Insufficiency, Social Isolation, Perceived Discrimination, Academic Pressure, and Guilt toward Family,” which were found to be the leading causes of stress among Chinese international students.<sup>110</sup>

Besides University actions, the U.S. government should also aim to implement all FBI recommendations for maintaining national security while increasing Chinese international student enrollment. Some of the recommendation actions suggested in the China Education report were (1) identifying and disrupting sources of spying on students and (2) blocking visas for those identified as “high risk” for espionage, including Chinese academics with connections with Chinese military universities. Although the FBI also recommends that similar limits be put on all CCP members, I feel this should only be invoked during times of imminent threat. Instead of this, the current requirement for those involved with Communist groups (including the CCP) should still be in place. Still, it should be judged on a case-by-case basis, and a student’s political involvement with the CCP should also be required to disclose at universities following their acceptance. Furthermore, regarding national security or emerging technology projects, it would be advisable for all international students, regardless of national origin, to receive an interview and thorough investigative background checks. Before receiving highly classified information of international importance, this pre-condition should be necessary for universities to follow if they receive federal funding. A task force in conjunction with the FBI should be put in place to establish the required standards to protect national security. The FBI should also continue monitoring CCP-aligned or directly sponsored organizations in public universities such as the CSSA, notify universities immediately if a significant threat is detected, and work with the University to determine the next appropriate steps. Conversely, U.S. students traveling to China should be alerted about travel risks and advised to take proactive steps to alleviate these risks. The following document that I helped create during my practicum experience is currently in use at the University of Michigan. The document outlines recommendations that all universities should adopt.

[Link to document](#)<sup>111</sup>

### *Talent Retention:*

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<sup>110</sup> Bai, Jieru. "Development and validation of the Acculturative Stress Scale for Chinese College Students in the United States (ASSCS)." *Psychological Assessment* 28, no. 4 (2016): 443.

<sup>111</sup> Full Link: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv\\_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ke0Xv_o0K35gVS59c2z7y3yMiX51NkYC/view?usp=sharing)

To increase talent retention following international student graduation, the U.S. and Chinese governments should look to implement ways to make visas more attainable for high-potential international students. A recently introduced program by the UK government, the [\*High Potential Individual \(HPI\) visa\*](#), has successfully recruited students from top universities around the world to encourage UK economic growth.<sup>112</sup> It would benefit the U.S. and China to introduce similar programs to diversify their professional landscape and boost innovation.

### **Final Notes:**

Enrolling Chinese international institutions in U.S. universities is advantageous for many economic and academic reasons. Chinese international students constitute roughly one-third of the total global student population in the U.S., indicating their significant presence within this demographic. The decline of Chinese international universities beginning in the 2019-2020 school year can be attributed mainly to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, upon further scrutiny, one will find that the decrease in enrollment was not merely an inevitable outcome of the virus but also how the United States responded to it. Additionally, other factors such as geopolitical issues, xenophobia, and the targeting of Chinese academics also precipitated the decline in student enrollment.

To stabilize and increase Chinese international student enrollment in U.S. universities, one must first evaluate the stakeholders in this global education exchange, including the U.S. government, the CCP, and Chinese international students. After determining the needs of each stakeholder, policy recommendations can be made to boost enrollment while still being in line with the interests of most parties or all parties involved. Lastly, research identified three significant policy changes to boost Chinese international enrollment at every stage of the study abroad experience. The first policy would be to increase enrollment through targeted, research-based recruitment strategies. The second policy would be federally sponsoring more U.S.–Chinese academic partnerships contingent on following FBI national security guidelines. Lastly, host institutions should give Chinese international students more support. These institutions are advised to create specialized counseling programs and offer common-sense solutions to better protect these

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<sup>112</sup> High Potential Individual (HPI) visa (n.d.). *Gov.UK*.

students from becoming targets of racially motivated attacks and CCP censorship only through concerted efforts to understand the stakeholders and evaluate the reasoning behind Chinese international student enrollment decline, which requires looking beyond attributing the decline solely to the inevitable consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Word Count sans citations:**

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