



Understanding Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs (MFTRP)

— Research Security & Export Control (RSEC)

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Research Security Matters!



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By **Eric Tucker** | AP

Feb. 27, 2020 at 4:53 p.m. CST

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Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs (FTRP)

An effort organized or funded by a foreign government or entity to recruit professionals or students regardless of citizenship or national origin.

- Many countries sponsor talent programs for purposes of attracting researchers in targeted fields.
- Can be legitimate means of attracting talent, and can include offers for research fellowships and grants to incentivize researchers to relocate.
- Note: involvement with a talent program may be permitted, but must be disclosed.



U.S. Government Concerns

- Participation in some foreign talent recruitment programs sponsored by specific government entities could lead to:
 - Undisclosed conflicts of interest or commitment,
 - Inappropriate transfer of federally-funded research to foreign governments,
 - Violation of export control laws, or
 - Theft of intellectual property.

*These may signal participation in a Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program.



What Makes a Program Malign?

Designed to recruit individuals with access to **sensitive research, intellectual property, proprietary data**, or otherwise **non-public information**. Can include:

- Unauthorized transfer of materials or information;
- Establishing a laboratory or entity in a foreign country;
- Accepting a faculty position, or other employment;
- Work that overlaps or duplicates a federal research award;
- And more...



What Makes a Program Malign?, cont.

A program that is sponsored by an entity based in a foreign country of concern:

- The People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong and Macau),
- North Korea,
- Russia,
- Iran, or
- Any other country determined to be a country of concern by the Secretary of State, or



Recognizing a Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program

- Research funding/facilities
- Honorific titles or appointments
- Contracts that are difficult to terminate
- Complimentary travel
- Requirement for secret employment contracts
- Requirement to publish based on US funded work
- Mandated attribution requirements



Why This Is Important To The Federal Government

- Disruption of the peer review process and inappropriate sharing of grant applications.
- Conducting the same or similar research at two different institutions.
- Incomplete disclosures of relationships with foreign governments.
- Activities that gave rise to overall conflicts of interest or commitment.



Potential Consequences: Why You Should Care

Participation in a talent program can have an impact on federal sponsored research opportunities, depending on agency rules and policies.

- Undisclosed participation could affect your federal funding.
- Undisclosed participation could lead to repayment of federal funds.
- Undisclosed participation could lead to legal action.



Quick Summary

FTRP	MFTRP
Must be disclosed!	Must be disclosed!
Sponsored by one or more foreign entities	Sponsored by a country or entity identified as a Foreign Country of Concern
May be allowed if it doesn't violate university and federal policies	Prohibited by UW–Madison and federal research sponsors policies



Researcher Responsibilities

Disclosure and transparency are paramount.

- UW–Madison requires submission of disclosures through the [Outside Activities Report Dashboard](#).
- Federal disclosure requirements are captured through submission of common forms, which include the biographical sketch, current and pending (other) support, and regular project reports.
- Some federal partners are requiring disclosure as a certification at the proposal stage.
- Digital Persistent Identifiers (DPI) will also serve as a method of disclosure. ORCID is recommended. ([UW–Madison Libraries](#) have resources.)



We are here to help!

For Questions about Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Programs please contact

- *Stefani Buster, Director of Research Security and Export Control*
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- *[RSEC email](#)*
- *[Research Security Program website](#)*

NSPM-33 Government Next Steps

