



August 2016

# CHINA

## U.S. Universities in China Emphasize Academic Freedom but Face Internet Censorship and Other Challenges

Accessible Version

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-757](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

In its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for 2015, the Department of State (State) concluded that academic freedom, a longstanding concern in China, had recently worsened. At the same time, the number of U.S. universities establishing degree-granting institutions in partnership with Chinese universities—teaching predominantly Chinese students—has increased. While universities have noted that these institutions offer benefits, some academics and others have raised questions as to whether faculty, students, and staff may face restricted academic freedom and other constraints.

This report reviews (1) funding and other support provided to U.S. universities to operate in China; (2) the treatment of academic and other key freedoms in arrangements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners; and (3) the experience of academic and other key freedoms by faculty, students, and staff at selected U.S. universities in China. GAO reviewed 12 U.S. universities that have established degree-granting institutions in partnership with Chinese universities; interviewed and obtained university documents and questionnaire responses; interviewed faculty and students; and visited the campuses of 5 institutions selected on the basis of their location, student demographics, date of establishment, and other factors. GAO also interviewed officials and obtained information from the Departments of Education (Education) and State. GAO makes no recommendations in this report. Education and State had no comments on a draft of this report.

View [GAO-16-757](#). For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or [gootnickd@gao.gov](mailto:gootnickd@gao.gov).

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### U.S. Universities in China Emphasize Academic Freedom but Face Internet Censorship and Other Challenges

#### What GAO Found

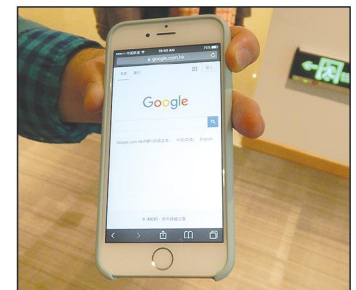
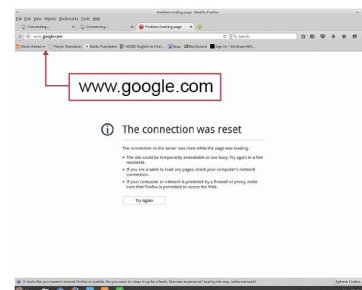
The 12 U.S. universities GAO reviewed generally reported receiving support for their institutions in China from Chinese government entities and universities, with limited funding from U.S. government agencies and other donors. Universities reported contributions from Chinese provincial and local governments and from partner universities for land, building construction, and use of campus facilities. Fewer than half of the universities reported receiving federal funding. Almost all of the U.S. universities said their programs in China generated net revenue for the university or had a neutral impact on its budget.

Universities' agreements with their Chinese partners or other policies that GAO reviewed generally include language protecting academic freedom or indicating their institution in China would adhere to U.S. standards. About half of universities GAO reviewed address access to information, such as providing faculty and students with access to physical or online libraries, though few universities' agreements and policies include language protecting Internet access. About half of the universities' policies include language indicating protection of at least one other key freedom—speech, assembly, or religion.

University members generally indicated that they experienced academic freedom, but they also indicated that Internet censorship and other factors presented constraints. Administrators said they generally controlled curriculum content, and faculty and students said they could teach or study what they chose. However, fewer than half of the universities GAO reviewed have uncensored Internet access. At several universities that lacked uncensored Internet access, students and faculty told us that, as a result, they sometimes faced challenges teaching, conducting research, and completing coursework. Administrators, faculty, and students also cited examples of self-censorship, where certain sensitive political topics—such as Tiananmen Square or China's relationship with Taiwan—were avoided in class, and of constraints faced by Chinese students in particular. Universities approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education as having independent legal status share characteristics—such as campuses located away from their Chinese university partner's campus and extensive student life programs—that may be correlated with greater academic freedom and other key freedoms.

#### Internet Access Varies at Different U.S. Universities in China

At one of the universities GAO visited that lacked uncensored Internet access, university members were unable to access Google's search page and other Internet sites readily available to students at other universities.



Google access was blocked at one university but allowed at another.

Source: Screenshot provided by university, and GAO staff photo. | GAO-16-757

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August 29, 2016

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and  
International Organizations  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Dana Rohrabacher  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

In recent years, a growing number of U.S. universities have partnered with Chinese universities to establish degree-granting institutions in China approved by the country's government. Some observers have noted that these U.S.-Chinese institutions may offer students a unique international education experience, enhance research opportunities, and increase university revenue streams, among other advantages. However, others have raised concerns that faculty, students, and staff at these institutions may face restricted academic freedom and other constraints that affect Chinese universities.<sup>1</sup> In its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for 2015, the Department of State (State) concluded that human rights and academic freedom in China, which have been long-standing concerns in the country, have worsened in recent years. State's report noted that the Chinese government's restrictions on academic and artistic freedom at Chinese universities and other Chinese institutions had continued, that censorship and self-censorship involving politically sensitive subjects was common, and that the Chinese government denied

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this report, we define academic freedom as including the ability to teach or study what one chooses, ask any questions, or freely express views in the classroom. (This definition is based largely on the American Association of University Professors' "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," accessed June 27, 2016, <https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>.)

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visas and took other measures to constrain discourse at Chinese higher education institutions.

You asked us to review U.S. universities that operate in China. This report reviews (1) funding and other support provided by the U.S. government and other sources to U.S. universities to operate in China; (2) the treatment of academic and other key freedoms in arrangements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners; and (3) the experience of academic and other key freedoms by faculty, students, and staff at selected U.S. universities in China.

To address these objectives, we reviewed the 12 U.S. universities that we identified as having partnered with Chinese universities to establish degree-granting institutions in China.<sup>2</sup> We identified these universities by reviewing U.S. and Chinese government documents that list U.S. university institutions and programs in China, by reviewing independent organizations' analyses of international higher education partnerships, and by interviewing university administrators to better understand the characteristics of their institutions in China. We also developed and administered to all 12 universities a questionnaire asking for information on funding and other topics concerning U.S. university institutions in China. Eleven universities provided detailed responses on the questionnaire form; one university provided useful narrative responses but did not answer the questionnaire itself. Therefore, the overall response rate for the questionnaire was 92 percent.

To identify funding and other support for U.S. universities in China, we analyzed university responses to our questionnaire, interviewed administrators from all 12 universities, and reviewed university documents. We also obtained information and interviewed officials from the Department of Education (Education) and reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations, including those related to financial aid under Title IV

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<sup>2</sup>The 12 U.S. universities we reviewed are Carnegie Mellon University, Duke University, Fort Hays State University, Johns Hopkins University, Kean University, Missouri State University, the New York Institute of Technology, New York University, Northwood University, Rutgers University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pittsburgh. During our review, the University of Illinois and the University of Miami were also approved to operate cooperative education institutions in China. Because of the status of and extent of completed work for our review of the 12 universities, we did not include these universities in our review.

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of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.<sup>3</sup> To determine the treatment of academic and other key freedoms —specifically freedoms of speech, information, assembly, and religion or worship—in arrangements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners, we obtained and reviewed nine agreements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners, as well as student and faculty handbooks and other university policies. To learn about the experiences of academic freedom and other key freedoms by faculty, students, and administrators at selected U.S. universities in China, we interviewed administrators from all 12 universities. We also visited five universities in China, selected on the basis of their location, student demographics, date of establishment, and other factors, where we interviewed university administrators and faculty; conducted discussion groups with U.S. and Chinese students; and reviewed facilities, services, and other aspects of these institutions. In addition, we interviewed faculty and students who had previously studied or taught at six of the universities and were currently living elsewhere. Overall, we interviewed more than 190 faculty, students, and administrators. For more information on our objectives, scope, and methodology see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2015 to August 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

The Chinese Ministry of Education requires that U.S. universities seeking to establish an education arrangement in China partner with a Chinese university. The Chinese government also requires the U.S. universities to establish written agreements with the Chinese university defining the academics, governance, operations, finances, and other key aspects of the arrangement. The Chinese Ministry of Education reviews each U.S. university's written agreement along with other application materials and authorizes approved universities and their Chinese partners to establish:

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<sup>3</sup>20 U.S.C. §§ 1070-1099d and 42 U.S.C. §§ 2751-2756b.

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- Cooperative education institutions: degree-granting institutions that can be granted independent legal status.<sup>4</sup>
  - Cooperative education programs: activities take various forms and can include joint and dual degree programs.

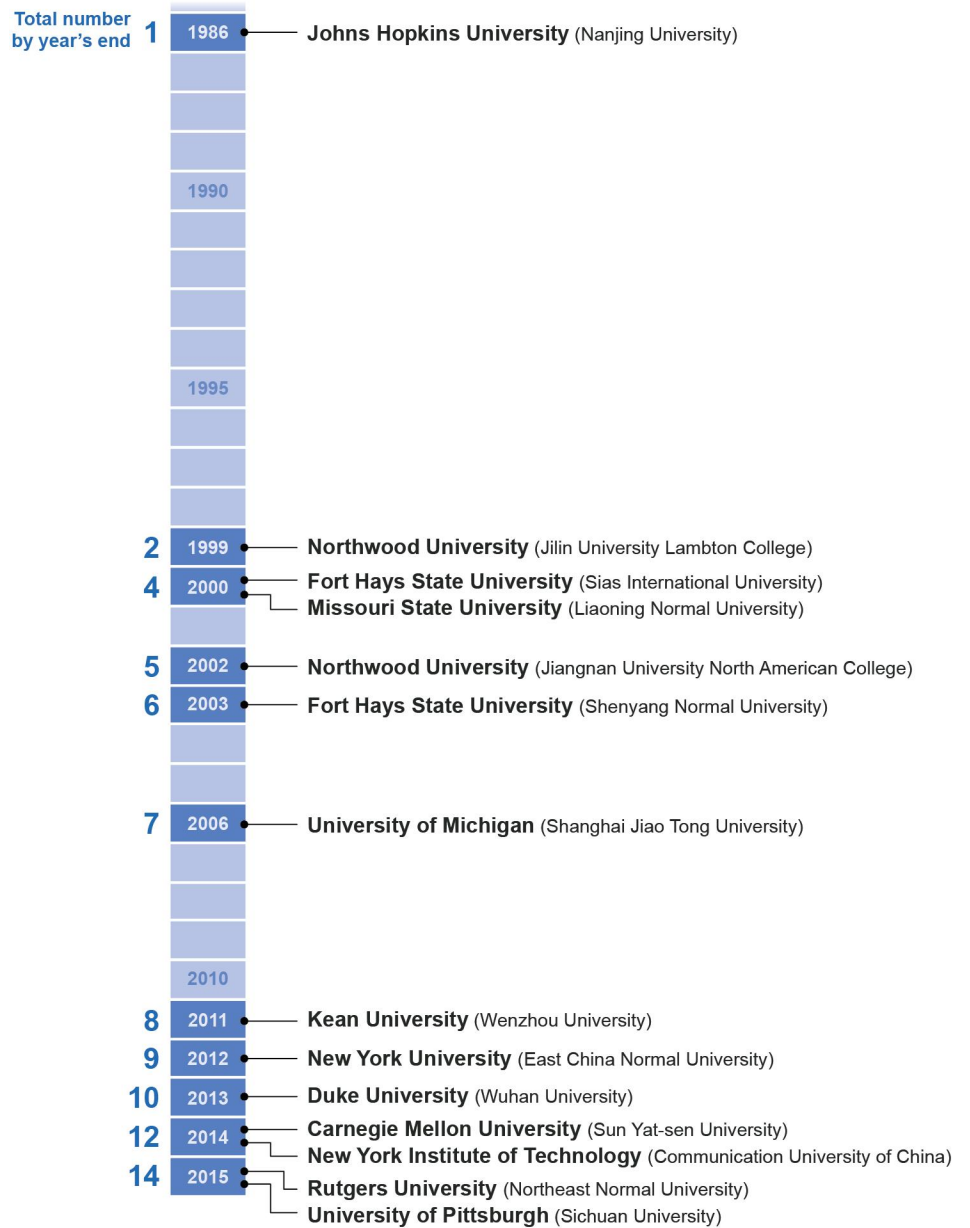
Appendix II provides a complete list of U.S. universities that have been approved to establish cooperative education institutions and cooperative education programs in China. As figure 1 shows, the number of U.S. universities that have partnered with Chinese universities to establish cooperative, degree-granting institutions has increased since 2011.

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<sup>4</sup>According to a publication of the National Association of College and University Attorneys, cooperative institutions approved with independent legal status can exercise rights associated with legal persons in China, such as owning property or other assets. Fewer than 10 universities from countries worldwide, including three from the United States, have been approved with independent legal status in China.



**Figure 1: Timeline of U.S. Universities and Their Chinese University Partners Establishing Cooperative, Degree-Granting Institutions in China, through 2015**



Source: GAO analysis of Chinese Ministry of Education and U.S. university data. | GAO-16-757

Note: We reviewed the 12 U.S. universities shown in figure 1. Two of these universities, Fort Hays State University and Northwood University, have established more than one cooperative institution. After we began our review, China's Ministry of Education approved two other universities to establish cooperative education institutions in China. We did not review these two universities.

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Just as the number of U.S. universities operating cooperative institutions in China has grown, for the past 6 years China has been the leading country of origin for international college students in the United States, according to the Institute of International Education, with double-digit percentage increases in the past 8 years. In academic year 2014-2015, more than 300,000 students arrived in the United States from China, representing almost a third of all international students in the United States.

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## Selected Characteristics of U.S.-China Cooperative Education Institutions

We reviewed 12 U.S. universities that have partnered with Chinese universities to establish degree-granting institutions in China: six public universities and six private, nonprofit universities. The curriculum at each institution is taught in English, with the exception of foreign language courses.<sup>5</sup>

Additional information about these institutions' students, faculty, and degree offerings is as follows.

### Students

- More than 6,500 total students were enrolled in the 2014-2015 academic year.
- Enrollment ranged from fewer than 40 to more than 3,000 students across the different universities, with about half of the institutions enrolling between 150 and 900 students.
- More than 90 percent of these students are Chinese, and less than 6 percent are U.S. citizens.

### Faculty

- About 60 percent of faculty, in the 2014-2015 academic year, were U.S. citizens, about 16 percent were Chinese, and the remainder were from other countries.

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<sup>5</sup>One of the universities in our review conducts classes in English for Chinese students and Chinese for U.S. and international students.

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- Universities include both faculty sent from the U.S. universities' home campus to teach at the institution in China and faculty hired specifically to teach at the institution in China.

### **Degree Offerings**

The 12 universities offer various undergraduate and graduate degrees in China, including

- bachelor's degrees in accounting, business administration, computer science, engineering, English, finance, graphic design, organizational leadership, and supply chain management;
- master's degrees in computer graphics and animation, engineering, global health, international studies, management studies, and medical physics; and a
- doctorate of engineering.

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## **Role of the U.S. Government in U.S. Higher Education Arrangements in China**

Education and State are involved in different aspects of higher education arrangements in China. Education provides federal student loans, grants, and other financial aid each year through programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. U.S. students in overseas programs are eligible for this federal financial aid under some circumstances, but Chinese and other non-U.S. students are generally not eligible.<sup>6</sup>

State supports various international educational grants and scholarships, some of which apply to U.S. students studying in China. In addition, State monitors and reports on human rights conditions around the world. State annually publishes country reports on global human rights practices, including academic freedom.

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<sup>6</sup>Throughout this report, we use the term "federal financial aid" to refer to Title IV aid. U.S. students in study abroad programs are eligible for such aid if their program is approved for academic credit toward their degrees by the U.S. university at which the students are enrolled. U.S. students enrolled at overseas locations of U.S. universities, where the university offers 50 percent or more of an educational program, are eligible to receive Title IV aid once the institution reports that location to Education. In certain circumstances, such as when the institution is operating under a provisional certification, students may not receive Title IV aid until the institution applies for and receives Education's approval.

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## Academic and Other Key Freedoms Related to U.S. Universities in China

State has reported that China's human rights record, which has been a long-standing concern, has deteriorated in recent years, with participation in civil society curtailed and academic freedom on Chinese university campuses restricted. State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for 2015 reported that Chinese government officials have instructed professors at Chinese universities to avoid discussing freedom of the press, civil rights and society, and other subjects, and have cautioned universities against using textbooks that promote Western values. In addition, the report notes that the Chinese government has increased efforts to monitor Internet usage and control Internet content, while also taking measures to restrict freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly. The Chinese government regulates the Internet by censoring or restricting access to many websites, including search engines, news outlets, and social media.

In April 2016, the Chinese government passed a law regulating the activities of foreign nongovernmental organizations. According to State, this new law requires foreign nongovernmental organizations operating in China to be sponsored by a Chinese organization, to report funding and event information to the Chinese government, and to report directly to the Ministry of Public Security. In a letter to the Chinese government, a group of U.S. universities voiced their concerns regarding a previous draft version of the law, stating that the draft law was ambiguous in defining what types of foreign nongovernmental organizations would be subject to the law. The extent to which the law may impact universities remains to be determined.

Academics and researchers, among others, have expressed concerns that, given these conditions, faculty, students, and others at U.S. universities in China may face constraints to their academic freedom and other key freedoms. For the purpose of this report, we define these freedoms as follows:

- *Academic freedom*: includes the ability to teach or study what one chooses, ask any questions, or freely express views in the classroom.
- *Freedom of speech*: includes the ability to express one's opinion in print, video, in person, or through other means without interference.
- *Freedom of information*: includes the ability to access information and ideas through any medium, including the Internet, libraries, and databases.
- *Freedom of assembly*: includes the ability to gather with students and others.

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- *Freedom of worship or religion:* includes the ability to practice one's religion, read religious texts, and share one's beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

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## U.S. Universities Reported Receiving Support from Chinese Universities and Government Entities, with Limited Support from the U.S. Government

The 12 U.S. universities we reviewed generally reported receiving support for their institutions in China from their Chinese partner universities and from Chinese government entities, with limited funding from U.S. government agencies and private donors. Universities reported contributions from their partner universities and from Chinese provincial and local governments for land, building construction, and use of campus facilities. Almost all of the universities said their institutions in China generated net revenue or had neutral impact on their budget.

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## Chinese Universities and Government Entities Provided Support to U.S. University Institutions We Reviewed

### Universities Reported Sometimes Substantial Material Support and Funding from Chinese Universities and Government Entities

The universities we reviewed generally reported receiving material support and funding from their Chinese partner universities or from provincial and local governments to help establish and operate their institutions in China.<sup>8</sup> In interviews and questionnaire responses, most universities reported being granted land, resources for construction of new buildings, and the use of the Chinese university's campus facilities.

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<sup>7</sup>The definitions of freedom of speech, freedom of information, freedom of assembly, and freedom of worship or religion are based on information from the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Application of this declaration to the Internet is derived from the United Nations' 2011 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

<sup>8</sup>Most Chinese universities are public, and they may be funded by the national government or by the provincial or local government.

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The amount of support reported by the universities varied widely and was in some cases substantial.<sup>9</sup>

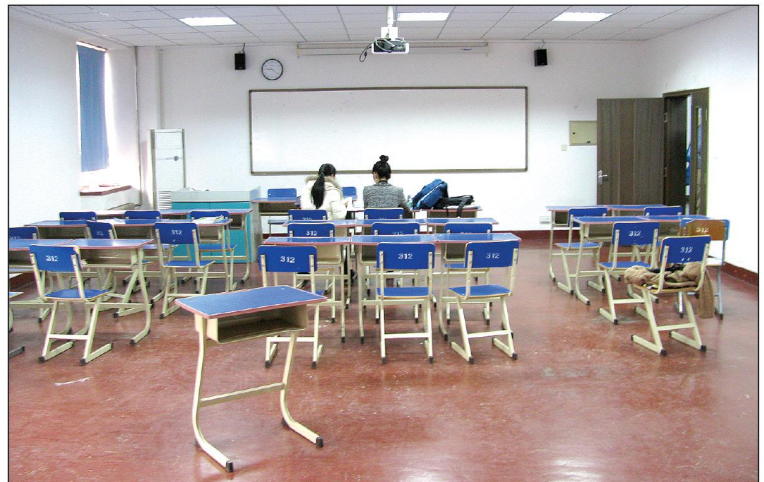
- One university reported receiving nearly 500 acres of land and a commitment from the Chinese provincial and local governments to spend about \$240 million for construction and development of facilities. The U.S. university said its Chinese partners were covering all direct expenses for the institution, including paying directly for maintenance, capital expenses, faculty and staff salaries, housing subsidies, and travel allowances. According to university administrators, in academic year 2016-2017, the institution in China will begin reimbursing the U.S. university for curriculum development, which university officials said could amount to almost \$1 million in the first year.
- One university stated that 25 percent of the budget for its institution in China came from the government of the city where it was located, including subsidies for Chinese students' tuition.
- Some U.S. universities noted that their institutions in China are entirely owned and operated by the Chinese universities, which have assumed financial responsibility, and that the U.S. universities provide primarily academic guidance to the institutions. One of these U.S. universities said its Chinese university partner committed to invest nearly \$40 million to construct and equip a new building to house the institution. Another said that all costs incurred by the U.S. university during the institution's establishment—including faculty and staff time and travel—were covered by the Chinese partner university.

In their questionnaire responses, two universities reported receiving financial support from Chinese government entities ranging from \$1.5 million to over \$15 million. Several other universities described the support provided, including classroom space, campus facilities, and student scholarships, but they did not report its monetary value. Figure 2 shows examples of facilities at the U.S. universities with institutions in China.

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<sup>9</sup>Although all 12 universities responded to our questionnaire or provided other documents about their funding sources, less than half reported specific funding amounts for Chinese sources. Funding amounts in this report are based on the subset of universities that reported such information.

Figure 2: Examples of Facilities at U.S. Universities' Institutions in China, 2016



Source: GAO staff photos. | GAO-16-757

Three universities also reported receiving nonmaterial support such as guidance and introductions to contacts in the Chinese government. For example, one university said its Chinese partner university provided assistance in obtaining the Chinese government approvals needed to establish the institution. Another university said the provincial government's education bureau provided advice, introductions, and occasional facilitation support. Finally, two universities said the Chinese

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## Funding from Private Sources in China Appears Limited

national government provided advice and introductions to help establish and maintain their institutions in China.

A few universities told us they received funding from private sources in China, such as donors, to operate their institutions in China. For example, one university responding to our questionnaire reported receiving less than \$100,000 from private sources in China in academic year 2014-2015. Another reported that 15 percent of its China institution budget came from private philanthropy and programs for executives but did not specify whether the private sources were U.S. or Chinese. Several universities said they were not aware of the sources of financial aid that their Chinese students may have received. A few universities reported receiving nonmaterial support, such as advice, from Chinese private sources; one university noted that private individuals in China serve on its advisory board, and another said several Chinese companies host students from its institution in China and provide career assistance.

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## Fewer Than Half of the Universities Reported Receiving Funding from the U.S. Government

### Five of 12 U.S. Universities in China Reported that U.S. Students Received Federal Financial Aid

Education does not provide funding or guidance to help U.S. universities establish institutions overseas, including in China, but U.S. students may use federal financial aid for their studies in China under some circumstances, according to Education officials.<sup>10</sup> As figure 3 shows, 4 of the 12 universities reported in their questionnaire responses the total amounts of federal financial aid that U.S. students at their institutions in China received in academic year 2014-2015, ranging from \$1,800 to about \$870,000. One additional university said its U.S. students received federal financial aid, but the university did not report the amount. Most of

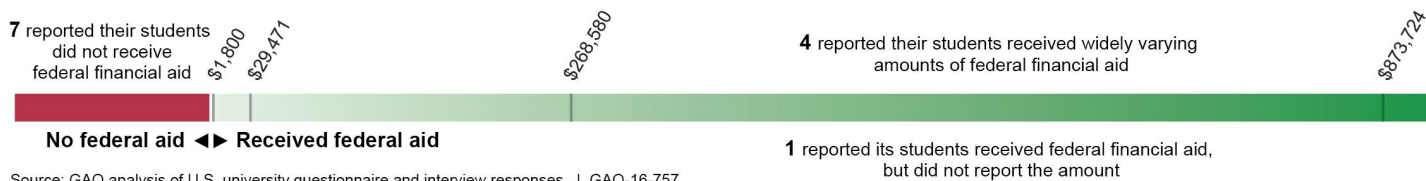
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<sup>10</sup>Of the 12 U.S. universities we reviewed, 5 have reported their locations in China to Education, as they are required to do before disbursing Title IV aid to U.S. students enrolled at those locations, according to Education officials. Officials noted that some universities, including those that do not plan to disburse U.S. financial aid to students in China, are not required to report their programs in China to Education. In addition, about 25 other U.S. universities that we did not review have reported their locations in China to Education.



the remaining universities reported that only Chinese and international students are enrolled, with no U.S. students who could be eligible for federal financial aid.

**Figure 3: Federal Financial Aid to U.S. Students Reported by 5 of 12 U.S. Universities in China, Academic Year 2014-2015**



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. university questionnaire and interview responses. | GAO-16-757

### Two Universities Also Reported Funding from Other U.S. Federal Government Agencies

Two of the universities that reported that some of their U.S. students in China received federal financial aid from Education also received funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development and State. The U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad provided funds totaling more than \$12.5 million over a number of years to one of the universities for its library, according to agency officials. In addition, State officials said that although they do not provide funding to help U.S. universities establish institutions in China, a small number of their grants may go toward these institutions. For example, State reported that its Gilman program for undergraduates funded five U.S. students to study at a U.S. university institution in China in academic year 2014-2015.<sup>11</sup> In addition, two universities responding to our questionnaire reported that the U.S. embassy and consulates in China provided nonmaterial assistance, including advice, introductions, occasional facilitation support, and career assistance to students.

### Universities Reported Limited Funding from U.S. State Governments and Private Donors

Most U.S. universities we reviewed reported contributing their own funds and resources to establish and operate their institutions in China, such as funds to pay for staff time, travel costs, and legal expenses, and material resources such as classroom equipment. However, although the six public universities we identified as having institutions in China receive

<sup>11</sup>Established under the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program provides scholarships of up to \$5,000 to U.S. undergraduates with financial need. However, according to State officials, students at U.S. universities in China generally are not eligible for State grants and fellowships, such as the Fulbright, which focus on studies at Chinese universities.

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ongoing state funding for their domestic campuses, most of these universities told us they require their institutions in China to be self-sufficient and not rely on state government resources. For example, one public university said its board of governors approved the use of state funds to establish the China institution with the understanding that all funds used would be reimbursed, and the university reported that the initial investment has been recaptured several times over. Another reported that its institution was funded strictly through tuition and fees paid by students in China. Nonetheless, two universities reported receiving some funding from their respective state governments in academic year 2014-2015.

Four universities reported receiving funding for their institutions in China from U.S. private sources in academic year 2014-2015, including for financial aid. One university reported receiving more than \$1 million from these sources, and another stated that 15 percent of its China institution's budget came from private philanthropy and programs for executives. A few of these universities also noted that U.S. private sources provided nonmaterial support such as advice and student career assistance, including internships and job recruitment.

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### Almost All Universities Reported Their China Institutions Generated Net Revenue or Had Neutral Impact

Half of the universities we reviewed reported that their institutions in China generated, or they expected them to generate, net revenue for the U.S. university. Of these, four universities reported that on net, their institutions in China had provided funds to the U.S. university. Two additional universities reported that they expect net gains in future years. However, some universities noted that they did not view the net gains as profits. As one university explained, it did not consider its institution in China to be a moneymaking operation because it reinvests net revenue in its programs in China rather than in its campuses in the United States. In addition, four other universities said their institutions in China had neutral impact on their budgets.

Of the 12 universities we reviewed, only 1 university reported that its campus in the United States provided net revenue to its institution in China to cover, for example, ongoing programmatic and oversight costs to ensure quality and architectural standards during construction. Officials said that the university agreed to proactively invest in its institution in China to ensure that it conformed to university standards and ensure its success. As such, officials considered these expenses to be worthwhile investments. Figure 4 shows the reported impact of U.S. universities' institutions in China on the universities' budgets.

**Figure 4: Reported Financial Impact of China Institutions on U.S. University Budgets**



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. university questionnaire responses. | GAO-16-757

Note: One of the 12 universities did not respond to the question.

Almost all of the universities that responded to our question about student tuition said it was an important source of revenue for their institutions in China, and several said their China institutions relied on tuition to a greater extent than their programs in the United States. The extent of reliance on tuition varied. Some universities said their China institutions' operating budgets were entirely or almost entirely supported by tuition, while another university stated that about 60 percent of its budget came from tuition.

## Agreements between U.S. and Chinese University Partners and Other Policies Generally Outline Protections for Academic Freedom, but Fewer Address Internet Access or Other Freedoms

Most U.S. universities we reviewed include provisions in written agreements with their Chinese partners or other policies intended to uphold academic freedom or U.S. academic standards. In addition, we found that a few universities' written agreements and other policies include language indicating that the members of the university community will have access to information, which may suggest protections for Internet access, while about half include language addressing access to physical and online libraries. About half of the universities that we reviewed address at least one of the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion or worship in university policies.

**Most Universities Include Provisions Intended to Uphold Academic Freedom or U.S. Academic Standards in Their Written Agreements or Other Policies**

Most universities we reviewed include language in their written agreements or other policies that either embody a protection of academic freedom or indicate that the institution in China will adhere to academic standards commensurate with those at their U.S. campus.<sup>12</sup> Table 1 displays the extent to which the written agreements or other policies of universities in our review include language related to protections of academic freedom for their institutions in China.

**Table 1: Inclusion of Language in U.S. Universities’ Written Agreements and Other Policies Related to Academic Freedom for Institutions in China**

<b>The university’s written agreement or other policies:</b>	<b>Number of universities<sup>a</sup></b>
Include language indicating protection of academic freedom	6
Include language indicating institution in China will adhere to U.S. academic standards	3
Include language indicating protection of academic freedom and possible restrictions to academic freedom	1

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. university agreements and policies. | GAO-16-757

<sup>a</sup>Two of the universities we reviewed are not included in the table, as one university provided a written agreement that did not include language relating to academic freedom, and one university did not provide documents.

Six universities in our review include language in either their written agreements or other university policies that indicates a protection of academic freedom, such as permitting students to pursue research in relevant topics and allowing students to freely ask questions in the classroom. For example, one university’s agreement states that all members of and visitors to the institution in China will have unlimited freedoms of expression and inquiry and will not be restricted in the selection of research, lecture, or presentation topics. Another university’s agreement states that the institution will be centered on open inquiry and flow of information, while a third university’s student handbook states that the university will guarantee the right to pursue academic topics of interest. One additional university has language in a faculty handbook that indicates both a protection of and potential restriction to academic

<sup>12</sup>Of the 12 U.S. universities that participated in our review, 11 provided documentation of arrangements related to academic freedom and other key freedoms. Specifically, nine provided all or a portion of the written agreement with their Chinese partner universities; eight provided other policy documents such as student or faculty handbooks; six provided both the written agreement and some policy documents; and one did not provide any documentation. See appendix I for a more detailed discussion of these documents.

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freedom. This institution's faculty handbook includes language that protects academic freedom but also encourages self-censorship to prevent externally imposed discipline.

Another three universities' written agreements include language indicating that the institution in China will adhere to academic standards commensurate with either the U.S. campus or the university's accrediting agency or other authoritative bodies. For example, one university's agreement states that the academic policies and procedures at the institution in China shall comply with those of the U.S. university, while another university's agreement states that the institution in China will conform to the requirements of the accreditation commission with jurisdiction over the university. The accrediting agencies responsible for the universities in our review all have language in their standards regarding academic freedom. Finally, one university's written agreement does not mention academic freedom.

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### About Half of Universities Address Access to Information, but Few Agreements and Other Policies Include Internet Protections

About half of the universities we reviewed have agreements or policies that address access to information by outlining responsibilities for themselves and their Chinese partners for providing access to physical or digital libraries. In addition, universities' documents vary in whether the U.S. or Chinese university partner will provide access to this information. Chinese university partners that provide access to the library or Internet and other technological resources may be subject to Chinese government restrictions. For example, one university's student handbook affirms that the U.S. university will provide on-campus access to digital libraries and computers for homework and academic use. Another university's written agreement states that the Chinese partner will provide requisite learning resources, such as textbooks, classrooms, computer labs, and library facilities.

A few universities' written agreements and other policies include language indicating that members of the university community will have full or complete access to information. Such language may suggest protections for Internet access. For example, one university's student handbook states that students will be active learners guaranteed the right to pursue academic topics of interest, with full access to information and relevant scholarship. However, these universities do not discuss in written agreements or other policies if Internet access on campus is subject to Chinese government censorship. Moreover, through our visits to universities in China, we found that one of the universities that include

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language suggesting uncensored Internet access would be provided did not have such access on campus.

A few universities' documents include language that indicates possible Internet constraints. For example, one university's student handbook outlines student responsibilities such as appropriate use of the Internet according to the regulations of the institution in China, further stating that browsing illegal websites is forbidden. In addition, a few universities include language that prohibits the use of technology and resources for activities prohibited by law. Such provisions are a reminder that university students may face difficulty when conducting academic research in China due to government censorship on search engines, news outlets, and social media websites.

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### About Half of Universities Address at Least One of the Freedoms of Speech, Assembly, and Religion or Worship

About half of U.S. universities address at least one of the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion or worship at their institutions in China. Written agreements and policies for about half of the universities we reviewed include language that suggests a protection of at least one of the freedoms—speech, assembly, and religion or worship—though the number of universities addressing each freedom varies. One other university includes language that suggests a possible restriction on speech. Table 2 shows examples of statements included in written agreements or other policies to illustrate either protections or restrictions of these freedoms.

**Table 2: Examples of How Universities’ Written Agreements and Other Policies Address Freedoms of Speech, Assembly, and Religion or Worship**

Indications of protections	Indications of restrictions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the university community will not be restricted in formal or casual speech.</li> <li>• Faculty members can voice concerns related to their rights and interests.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to form student clubs and organizations.</li> <li>• Faculty and students may join faculty and student unions of the Chinese partner university.</li> <li>• Student organizations can invite outside speakers.</li> <li>• Students can lawfully protest off campus.</li> <li>• Students are offered places of worship on-campus.</li> <li>• Students are provided with services to help locate places of worship off-campus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty are advised to proceed carefully when broaching topics on religion or politics in the classroom.</li> <li>• Faculty are reminded that Western ideals of freedom of expression are not protected in China.</li> </ul>

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. university agreements and policies. | GAO-16-757

Regarding freedom of speech, student and faculty handbooks at a few of these universities contain language indicating that students have the ability to discuss sensitive topics. Regarding freedom of assembly, a few U.S. universities state in policy documents that faculty or students may form unions or other groups, but one of these universities specifies that the student union will coordinate with, or be administered by, the Chinese partner university. Regarding freedom of religion or worship, none of the university’s agreements or policies contains language indicating a restriction on individuals’ ability to practice their religion. Moreover, several of the universities include language in their policy documents indicating that religious practices will be protected. For example, one university’s student handbook states that the institution in China recognizes the importance of spiritual life for members of the community and will assist members in locating a place of worship off campus. In contrast, one university’s faculty handbook notes that faculty should proceed carefully when broaching the subject of religion in the classroom.

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## U.S. University Members Generally Indicated They Experienced Academic Freedom, but Internet Censorship and Other Factors Posed Constraints

Faculty, students, and administrators we interviewed generally indicated that they experienced academic freedom at U.S. universities' institutions in China, but they also indicated that Internet censorship, self-censorship, and other factors presented constraints. The institutions' legal status may be correlated with greater academic and other freedoms experienced on campus. Universities have indicated they are monitoring a new Chinese law regulating foreign non-governmental organizations and have outlined varying approaches to address possible infringements to academic freedom at the institutions.

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## Faculty, Students, and Administrators Generally Indicated They Experienced Academic Freedom at U.S. Universities in China

### Faculty and Student Perspectives on Academic Freedom

The more than 130 faculty and students we interviewed from seven universities' institutions in China generally reported that academic freedom has not been restricted (see app. I for more information on the numbers and types of faculty and students we interviewed). Faculty we interviewed told us they did not face academic restrictions and could teach or study whatever they chose. For example, several faculty members asserted that neither they nor their colleagues would tolerate any academic restrictions, and one faculty member told us he and his colleagues intentionally introduced class discussions on politically sensitive topics to test whether this would trigger any complaints or attempted censorship. Other faculty members told us that they had never been told to teach or avoid certain subjects or that their experiences of teaching in China and the United States were comparable. Several faculty members who had also taught at Chinese universities not affiliated with a U.S. university noted that students and teachers could not talk as freely at the Chinese university, with one faculty member noting he had specifically been told not to discuss certain subjects while at the Chinese university.

Students also generally indicated that they experienced academic freedom and could study or discuss any topic. Similar to faculty we



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interviewed, some students who had also studied or knew others who studied at Chinese universities contrasted their experiences. For example, students noted that they could have interactive dialogue with faculty, discuss sensitive topics, and freely access information at the U.S. institution in China but not at a Chinese university. In addition, potentially sensitive topics seemed to be freely discussed at some of the institutions we visited, based on our meetings with students and faculty. The topics included Tiananmen Square, protests in Hong Kong, Taiwan, abortion, prostitution in China, and legalization of drugs. We also observed classes at one institution where students and teachers discussed ethnic minorities in Chinese society, U.S.-China relations, the U.S. military presence in the South China Sea, and China's increasing use of ideological and information controls.

#### Administrator Perspectives on Academic Freedom

Through interviews and responses to our questionnaire, university administrators reported that academic freedom was integral to their institutions in China. Administrators at several universities told us that academic freedom was nonnegotiable, while others noted that the same curriculum used in the United States also applied to their institution in China. Most universities reported that academic freedom was not at all restricted for faculty or students.<sup>13</sup> Several, however, reported that they either did not know the extent of academic freedom at their institution in China or that it was slightly restricted. For example, administrators from one university, which reported that students' academic freedom was slightly restricted and freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion or worship were moderately restricted, noted that its students were Chinese citizens and subject to all applicable rules and regulations intended for Chinese students.

In addition, U.S. universities reported that they generally controlled curriculum development and led or influenced faculty hiring. All 12 universities we reviewed reported that they led or played a leading role in curriculum development, with most reporting that they effectively controlled this process. Several universities noted that the curriculum used for their institution in China was the same as the curriculum used on their U.S. campus, while several others noted that they designed and

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<sup>13</sup>The question included response options of "not at all," "slightly," "moderately," "very," and "extremely" restricted, and "don't know".

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developed a new curriculum or modified their existing curriculum specifically for the institution in China. At several universities we visited, selected courses addressed the U.S. Constitution's relevance to China, comparative Chinese-American legal cultures, American foreign policy in Asia, and the Cultural Revolution. With regard to faculty hiring, most universities indicated that they either exerted more authority than their Chinese partner over faculty hiring, including in some cases recruiting, vetting, and recommending candidates for hire, or played a collaborative role in the process. For example, administrators from one university told us that faculty candidates were interviewed first by a committee at the university's U.S. campus and again at the institution in China, while administrators from another university told us that they entirely controlled faculty recruitment. Administrators from several universities noted, however, that while they controlled or influenced processes related to faculty hiring, an official from their Chinese partner university technically had final faculty-hiring authority.

More broadly, administrators identified various goals related to establishing their institution in China. For example, administrators from at least half of the universities we reviewed reported that goals included providing U.S. students with an international education experience, providing Chinese students with an American education experience, enhancing U.S.-Chinese research collaboration and knowledge exchange, strengthening U.S.-Chinese relations, attracting Chinese students to further studies at the U.S. university's U.S. campus, and providing faculty additional locations for teaching and research.

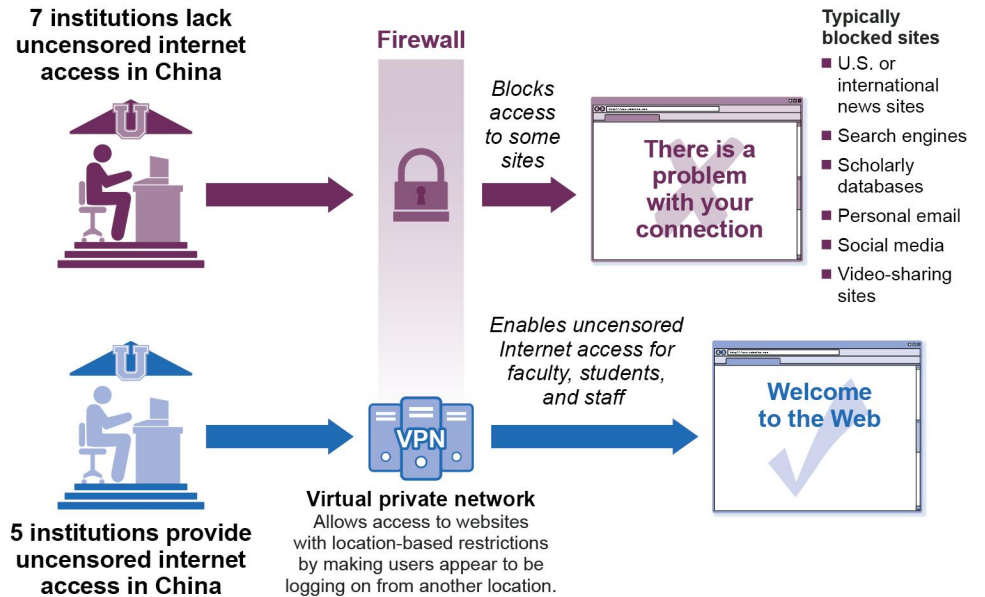
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### Internet Censorship, Self-Censorship, and Other Factors Create Obstacles to Learning at Some Universities

Fewer than Half of Reviewed Universities Have Uncensored Internet Access

Five of the 12 U.S. universities in China that we reviewed reported uncensored Internet access, generally through use of a virtual private network. As figure 5 shows, the remaining universities reported that they do not have complete access to uncensored Internet content in China.

**Figure 5: Fewer than Half of U.S. Universities in China GAO Reviewed Have Reported Uncensored Access to the Internet**

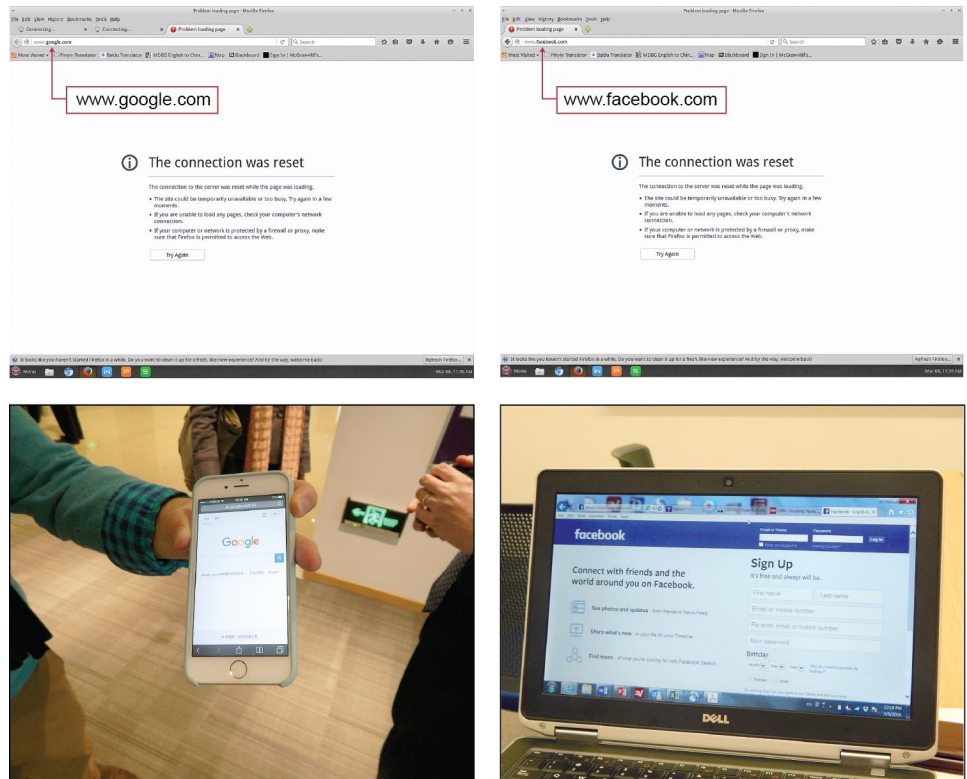


Source: GAO analysis of campus visits, interviews, questionnaire responses, and other records. | GAO-16-757

We visited universities that had uncensored Internet access and universities that did not. Correspondingly, as is shown in figure 6, we observed university members accessing search engines, newspapers, and social media sites that have been blocked in China—such as the New York Times, Google, and Facebook—at some universities but not others.

**Figure 6: Internet Access Varies at Different U.S. Universities in China**

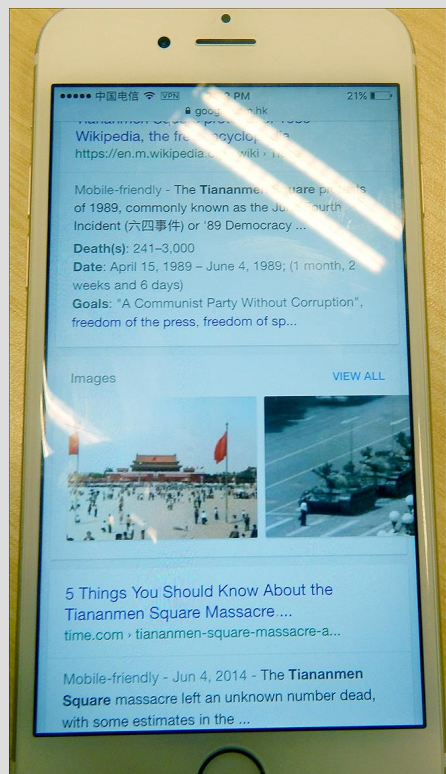
*Access to Google's search page and Facebook were blocked at one university...*



*...but both Google and Facebook were accessible to students using the school's Internet connection at two other universities we visited.*

Source: Screenshots provided by the university, and GAO staff photos. | GAO-16-757

Administrators at the three universities we visited that have uncensored Internet access told us that uncensored access was available to all university members throughout campus and was an integral aspect of their institution in China. An administrator at one of these universities, however, told us that the university is required by the Chinese government to track and maintain records for several months of faculty, student, and staff Internet usage, including the Internet sites visited by faculty and staff. The administrator added that, to date, no Chinese government official had asked for these records. Administrators at other universities we visited told us that they were either not required to track Internet usage of faculty or students or that they were unaware of any such requirement.



**Internet Search Results in China May be Filtered by Language**

Search results can also be filtered depending on the language used. An English language search of “Tiananmen Square” on one search engine references what the State Department has characterized as the Chinese government’s violent suppression of protests in and around Tiananmen Square in 1989, as shown above; however, an image search in Chinese language on the same search engine instead provides mostly tourist images about Tiananmen Square.

Source: GAO. | GAO-16-757

At several universities that lacked access to uncensored Internet content, students and faculty told us that, as a result, they sometimes face challenges teaching, conducting research, and completing coursework. For example, one faculty member told us that she sometimes asks others outside of mainland China to conduct Internet research for her because they can access information she cannot. A student at one university told us she needed to access a certain scholarly database typically blocked in China, while several students at another university told us their ability to conduct academic research was constrained by the Internet limitations. Students at one university told us that the educational software used in some classes relied on tools developed by a search engine provider blocked in China and that this software would therefore sometimes not function. Individuals at several other universities noted that faculty had to adapt to the Internet restrictions, for example, by accessing websites comparable to those censored in China, such as sites comparable to YouTube for sharing videos or to Gmail for sending email. Administrators, faculty, and students at several of these universities told us that individuals often used virtual private networks to mitigate Internet restrictions, but some students and faculty told us that these networks had limitations. For example, students and faculty at one university in China told us that the U.S. university provided access to its virtual private network but that it was not always reliable. Some students and faculty noted that they had purchased access to their own virtual private networks. At the time of our visit, however, some students told us that some of these commercial networks were operating poorly, causing them to revert to using the university’s network.

Several universities we reviewed not only faced Internet censorship but also experienced restricted service. For example, at one university Internet service is unavailable in certain buildings, and some students cannot use the Internet in dormitories after 11 p.m, according to university administrators. In addition, several individuals told us that Internet access is sometimes blocked or significantly slowed at night, speculating that this was due to the university network’s bandwidth being taxed by the number of students playing video games during those hours.

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University library services may offset Internet restrictions to some degree. All five universities we visited provided university members access to the university's main online library, which included access to research journals and other publications that may otherwise have been blocked in China. Universities' on-campus libraries varied in size and offerings. Two universities we visited featured libraries that were recently built or renovated and that enabled students to browse or select books directly from the shelves.<sup>14</sup> As figure 8 shows, one of these libraries contained books on topics such as Taiwan, Tibet, and Tiananmen Square, which may be banned or difficult to obtain in China. The other library had more than 120,000 books, including both English and Chinese.

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<sup>14</sup>Administrators at one university told us that most Chinese universities do not provide students direct access to library materials and instead limit direct access to library staff.



**Figure 7: Libraries at Several U.S. Universities in China Provided Access to Books That May Be Difficult to Obtain Elsewhere in China**



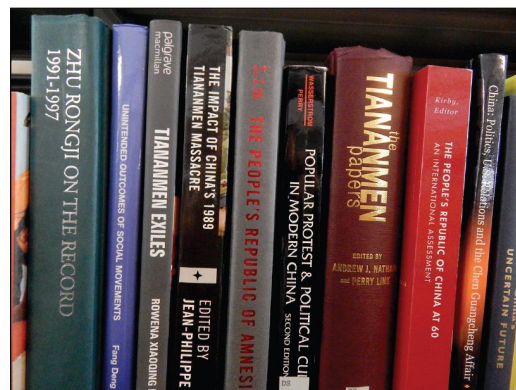
Both libraries we visited offered students direct access to browse and select books. One of these libraries currently holds more than 120,000 titles.



Source: GAO staff photos. | GAO-16-757



At one library we visited, we found books on such topics as Tiananmen Square, Tibet, and Taiwan, that may be difficult to access in other locations in China.



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## Self-Censorship and Other Factors Create Obstacles to Learning

Administrators at both of these universities told us that no book had ever been removed from the library by Chinese government officials, though one of them noted that, in the past, Chinese Customs officials confiscated some books intended for the library. To compensate, faculty traveling from the United States to China had occasionally brought books for the library in their personal luggage. In contrast, a former student at another university we visited told us the only library available was that of the Chinese university and said a study room intended for U.S. students contained a limited number of English language titles.

We found that several factors can create obstacles to learning at universities we reviewed, including self-censorship, constraints specific to Chinese students, and restrictions beyond campus borders.

- *Self-censorship:* While we were told of examples of self-censorship—choosing to not express an idea or thought that may offend others or cause other problems—at universities we reviewed, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this occurs. Several faculty members we interviewed noted that it is ultimately not possible to know whether, when, or the extent to which self-censorship takes place. For example, individuals may self-censor unconsciously or may knowingly self-censor but not acknowledge doing so. Moreover, self-censorship can occur in any number of settings and with different motivations. Nonetheless, administrators, faculty, and students representing more than half of the universities we reviewed gave examples of self-censorship, including some cases where individuals were advised by their teachers or others in positions of authority to avoid certain topics. For example, an administrator at one university noted that he believed it was advisable, as a guest of China, to refrain from insulting China, while an administrator at another university noted that the university advises teachers to avoid discussing sensitive subjects in class. Several professors at one university told us that they avoid certain political topics or topics that may make others uncomfortable. At another university, faculty told us they try to be respectful of the host country in treating certain academic subjects, and one professor told us he believes he should not discuss Tiananmen Square. One professor told us he advised students to avoid presentations on sensitive topics, while a few students from a few universities told us they had been advised to avoid certain sensitive topics, such as Tiananmen Square or China’s relationship with Taiwan. Other students at several universities told us they avoided certain topics for various reasons—for example, to avoid starting arguments with their Chinese classmates or out of concern that raising certain topics may



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cause other problems. Several other students reported to us that they specifically avoided discussing religion or political topics because they thought it might be inappropriate or cause trouble. In addition, several faculty members noted that self-censorship may affect research efforts given that publishing articles on certain topics may jeopardize the researcher's ability to obtain a visa to visit or work in China.

- *Constraints specific to Chinese students:* Some conditions specifically affecting Chinese students may constrain their academic experience. Faculty and students from various universities observed that in general Chinese students participated in classroom discussions less often than students from other countries. Some suggested that Chinese students may be uncomfortable with Western teaching methods or inhibited by language limitations; however, some noted that Chinese students may know or suspect that their Chinese classmates are government or Communist Party monitors and will report on whatever the students say. Moreover, an administrator at one university told us that he assumes there are Chinese students and faculty in the institution who report to the government or the Communist Party about the activities of other Chinese students. Faculty members at several universities also told us that they understood there were Chinese students in class who intended to report on the speech of faculty or Chinese students. Several faculty members told us they had adopted various teaching approaches to circumvent these constraints and encourage greater participation among Chinese students. One professor told of constructing classroom debates in which students were required to argue both sides of a sensitive political issue regardless of their nationality or belief; he believed that this enabled Chinese students to speak more freely about these topics. We found other examples of certain conditions Chinese students face that could constrain their academic experience. For example, one university provides only non-Chinese students access to its main university web portal, which provides uncensored Internet access. In addition, according to university administrators, only Chinese students must complete military training and take certain courses, such as on Chinese political thought. A student at one university told us Chinese students had a curfew and Internet restrictions while international students did not.
- *Restrictions off campus:* Administrators, faculty, and students at several universities emphasized that they have certain freedoms on campus, such as the ability to teach or discuss whatever they want, but not off campus. They offered examples of how some typical activities in an American college setting are not possible in China. For example, a faculty member at one university told us she once brought

her class to a coffee shop adjacent to campus, but the public location stifled discussion. Students at another university told us that they ended a classroom discussion that had been continued on a social media site because some classmates believed the discussion was inappropriate. One student noted that one Chinese student considered reporting the discussion to Chinese censors.

### Universities' Legal Status May Be Correlated with Academic Freedom

The three universities we reviewed that are approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education as having independent legal status share characteristics that may be correlated with greater academic and other freedoms on campus. We found that these universities had campuses built specifically for the joint institution that were located relatively far away from their Chinese university partner's campus, generally controlled their own day-to-day operations, had uncensored Internet access, offered extensive campus and student life programs, and sought to engage with Chinese entities beyond campus. In contrast, as table 3 shows, the other nine universities we reviewed did not consistently share these characteristics. Moreover, we found various examples from these other universities indicating that Chinese entities exert a greater degree of influence over their institutions than over institutions with independent legal status.

**Table 3: Selected Characteristics of U.S. Universities in China with and without Independent Legal Status**

Characteristic	Universities with independent legal status	Other universities we reviewed
<b>Campus location</b>	Universities' campuses in China were built specifically for the institution and at some distance—in one case about 400 miles away—from the Chinese partner university.	Most institutions operate within or next to the Chinese university campus, with several using Chinese university classroom space. One administrator told us his university is a guest on the Chinese partner's campus.
<b>Control over operations</b>	U.S. universities generally manage their institutions in China. Administrators told us that their Chinese partners have limited involvement in day-to-day operations, particularly regarding academic affairs. Administrators also told us they had negotiating leverage in establishing the institution and could either adjust terms of the partnership or would leave if conditions were not met.	Administrators from several universities told us that the institution was controlled by Chinese university partners; in one case the U.S. university was unable to provide student enrollment information maintained by the Chinese university. At several institutions, faculty employment contracts or agreements include restrictions imposed by Chinese entities limiting speech or the promotion of religion or criticism of China's policies on religion. At one university, Chinese administrators require advance submission of public speeches. We were unable to visit two universities due to decisions made by Chinese university or government entities.
<b>Internet</b>	All universities have uncensored Internet access.	A few of the nine universities have uncensored Internet access.

Characteristic	Universities with independent legal status	Other universities we reviewed
<b>Student and campus life</b>	Each university supports student clubs and publications and has, or plans to develop, a student government. Each university hosts outside speakers or panel discussions that have addressed topics such as U.S.-China relations, the relationship between political parties and the state in China, censorship on social media in China, and policies regarding Taiwan. At one university, some speaking events are open to the public and promoted on social media.	Most universities reported that their Chinese partner has more control over student life and campus events. Several institutions took steps to limit campus events and activities. An administrator from one university told us student activities were generally confined to classrooms. At another university, foreign employees were advised not to initiate public gatherings that could be construed as political and faculty and students on campus should avoid activities that breach limitations of speech, religion, and assembly that exist elsewhere in China. A faculty member from a different university told us there were few campus speaking events when she taught there. One university has not allowed student publications out of concern that printed materials about the institution would circulate outside the institution.
<b>Engagement with China beyond campus</b>	Universities have advised the Chinese government on higher education. Administrators at two universities said they intend to work with the Chinese government or local communities on various efforts. For example, one university has partnered with a local public library to hold public events.	Administrators at one university noted they made efforts to maintain a low profile within the community and to not be noticed by Chinese authorities or others outside of campus. For example, administrators reported restricting visitor access and advertising campus events through a physical bulletin board rather than email, which could be intercepted.

Source: GAO analysis of campus visits, interviews, questionnaire results, and other records. | GAO-16-757

**Universities Indicated They Will Monitor Impact of Chinese Law and May Take Different Actions Should Academic Freedom Be Impaired**

University administrators told us they are aware of, and monitoring, a new Chinese law regulating foreign non-governmental organizations. After the law's passage, the U.S. Secretary of State issued a statement noting that, while the final version of the law included improvements from prior drafts, it could nonetheless negatively impact foreign non-profit non-governmental organizations, and their Chinese partners. We asked universities we reviewed to comment on the law and its potential impact on their institutions in China. The six universities that responded indicated either that they believed the law would not have an impact or that it was unknown or too early to tell, while several noted that they would continue to monitor the law's implementation. According to a State official, it is too soon to tell what, if any, impact the law may have on universities.

Universities may take different actions if Chinese law or other factors create infringements to academic or other freedoms. University administrators and faculty members have outlined ways individuals could raise concerns to respond to potential infringements on academic and other freedoms, such as by contacting university administrators based in the United States or China, speaking directly with institution directors, or raising concerns through the student government or academic senate. Administrators at several universities asserted that they would

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discontinue their institution and leave China if they encountered problems related to academic freedom that they were unable to resolve. Academics have made other recommendations to protect academic freedom, including that universities make public their agreements with Chinese partners, ensure these agreements state that cooperative education institutions will be terminated if academic freedom is compromised, and establish an office to investigate and report on academic freedom infringements.

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## Concluding Observations

In recent years, a growing number of U.S. universities have established degree-granting institutions with Chinese partners in an environment, as characterized by the Department of State, of worsening human rights and academic freedom conditions in China. We found that universities generally emphasize academic freedom at their institutions in China and, in most cases, include language seeking to protect these or other freedoms in written agreements and other documents. Nonetheless, the environment in which these universities operate presents both tangible and intangible challenges. In particular, Internet censorship presents challenges to teaching, conducting research, and completing coursework. However, it is much more difficult for universities to know the degree to which faculty or students self-censor or how this may affect academic freedom. Moreover, given that motivations to self-censor can be deeply rooted in individual concerns and shaped by long-established conditions in China, universities have limited ability to prevent self-censorship in the classroom or on campus.

Members of universities we reviewed indicated they have freedoms on campus that do not exist beyond it, suggesting that they operate within a protected sphere in China. But the universities clearly vary in this regard, with a few seeming to be less subject to influence from Chinese entities than others. As Department of State officials have noted, it is too soon to tell whether the recent passage of a Chinese law regulating foreign nongovernmental organizations could signal tightening restrictions on universities.

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## Agency Comments

We are not making recommendations in this report. We provided a draft of this report to the Departments of Education and of State for comment. The agencies responded that they had no comments.

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As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report's date. At that time, we will send copies to the appropriate congressional committees and to the Secretaries of Education and State. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at [gootnickd@gao.gov](mailto:gootnickd@gao.gov) or 202-512-3149. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Gootnick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

David Gootnick  
Director, International Affairs and Trade

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# Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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In this report, we reviewed (1) funding and other support provided by the U.S. government and other sources to U.S. universities to operate in China; (2) the treatment of academic and other key freedoms in arrangements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners; and (3) the experience of academic and other key freedoms by faculty, students, and staff at selected U.S. universities in China.

To address these objectives, we reviewed the 12 U.S. universities that we identified as having partnered with Chinese universities to establish degree-granting institutions in China: Carnegie Mellon University, Duke University, Fort Hays State University, Johns Hopkins University, Kean University, Missouri State University, New York Institute of Technology, New York University, Northwood University, Rutgers University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pittsburgh. To identify universities, we reviewed several information sources, including the Department of Education's list of U.S. universities with locations in China and the Chinese Ministry of Education's data on U.S. universities approved to operate cooperative education institutions and cooperative education programs in China. (See app. II for these Ministry of Education lists.) We determined that we did not intend to review the more than 130 U.S. universities that have established individual education programs in China but rather the universities that, at the time of our review, were approved to operate cooperative institutions. The results we report are therefore not necessarily generalizable to all U.S. universities that have partnered with Chinese universities to establish cooperative education programs. During our review, two other universities were also approved to operate cooperative education institutions in China. Because of the status of and extent of completed work for our review of the 12 universities, we did not include these universities in our review. In addition, we reviewed documents of independent organizations that list, review, and outline standards for higher education partnerships abroad and interviewed officials from several of these organizations. One of these organizations maintains a list of "international branch campuses." We reviewed this list, discussed it with its authors, and found that it was generally consistent with the Chinese Ministry of Education's list of approved cooperative education institutions. In addition, we interviewed university administrators to better understand the characteristics of their institutions in China. As a result of these interviews, we decided to include in our review one additional university that was not included on the Chinese Ministry of Education's list of approved cooperative education institutions. We also interviewed officials from several organizations associated with international higher education to better understand types of overseas higher education programs, including those in China; trends in U.S.-

Chinese educational cooperation; standards for international higher education; and academic freedom protections at such programs, among other topics. In our reporting information about the 12 universities, we did not attribute information or statements to them by name. We used the following terms to report the results of our review of these universities: “most” represent 8 to 11; “about half” represent 5 to 7; and “several” or “a few” represent 2 to 4.

We sent a questionnaire to administrators of all 12 universities in our sample asking about a variety of topics. As part of the questionnaire development, we submitted the questionnaire for review by a GAO survey specialist. To minimize errors that might occur from respondents interpreting our questions differently than we intended, we pretested our questionnaire with administrators from three universities. During the pretests, conducted by telephone, we asked the administrators to read the instructions and each question aloud and to tell us how they interpreted the question. We then discussed the instructions and questions with them to determine whether (1) the instructions and questions were clear and unambiguous, (2) the terms we used were accurate, (3) the questionnaire was unbiased, (4) the questionnaire did not place an undue burden on the officials completing it, and (5) the identification of potential solutions to any problems detected was possible. We noted any potential problems. We modified the questionnaire based on feedback from the pretests and internal GAO review as appropriate. We sent the Microsoft Word form questionnaire and a cover email to the universities on February 26, 2016, and asked them to complete the questionnaire and email it back to us within 2 weeks. We closed the questionnaire on June 3, 2016. Eleven universities provided detailed responses on the questionnaire form; one university provided useful narrative responses but did not answer the questionnaire itself. Therefore, the overall response rate for the questionnaire was 92 percent. Some universities declined to answer some questions, especially about financial information, so the item-level response rate varies by question. Because we are not trying to generalize the results of the questionnaire to other universities outside that sample, there was no questionnaire sampling error. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, differences in how a particular question is interpreted, the sources of information available to respondents, how the responses were processed and analyzed, or the types of people who do not respond can influence the accuracy of the questionnaire results. We took steps in the development of the questionnaire, the data collection, and the data analysis to minimize these nonsampling errors

and help ensure the accuracy of the answers that were obtained. For example, a social science survey specialist designed the questionnaire in collaboration with GAO staff with subject matter expertise. Then, as noted earlier, the draft questionnaire was pretested to ensure that questions were relevant, clearly stated, and easy to comprehend. The questionnaire was also reviewed by an additional GAO survey specialist, as mentioned above. Data were manually entered from the Word questionnaires into an Excel spreadsheet that was then imported into a statistical program for analyses. All data entry was checked and any errors corrected. We examined the questionnaire results and performed computer analyses to identify missing data, inconsistencies, and other indications of error and addressed such issues as necessary, including through follow-up communications with the universities. Quantitative data analyses were conducted by a GAO survey specialist using statistical software, and a review of open-ended responses was conducted by the GAO staff with subject matter expertise. An independent GAO data analyst checked the statistical computer programs for accuracy.

To identify funding and other support the U.S. government and other sources have provided to U.S. universities to operate in China, we analyzed responses to the questionnaire we sent to administrators, interviewed administrators from all 12 universities, and reviewed university documents. The questionnaire included questions about the sources of funding and nonmaterial assistance used to establish and operate the institutions in China, about financial aid to students, and about the financial relationship between the U.S. university and the institution. We also interviewed university administrators about the funding and other support their institutions in China received. Because of differences in the ways universities tracked and reported on their funding sources, we were not able to report funding amounts for each university or to calculate the percentage of each university's institution budget funded by Chinese government entities, private donors, and other sources. However, by combining information we obtained from the questionnaire, interviews, and university documents, we were able to identify the types of support provided. We also obtained information and interviewed officials from the Department of Education (Education) and reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations, including those related to



financial aid under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.<sup>1</sup>

To determine the treatment of academic and other key freedoms — specifically freedoms of speech, information, assembly, and religion or worship—in arrangements between U.S. universities and their Chinese partners, we reviewed written agreements and university policies submitted by the U.S. universities. University policies include faculty and student handbooks as well as other planning documents for the institutions in China. Of the 12 U.S. universities that participated in our review, 9 provided either all or a part of the written agreement with their Chinese partner universities, and 8 provided university policies. In total, 11 of the 12 universities we reviewed submitted either their written agreement or other university policies pertaining to their programs in China. We conducted a content analysis of the written agreements and other policies to identify instances in which the U.S. universities address academic freedom and other key freedoms. To define academic freedom, we derived our definition from the American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, to which hundreds of U.S. universities adhere. We also identified freedoms of information, speech, assembly, and religion or worship as other key freedoms relating to universities operating in China given the significance of these freedoms to universities in the United States and reported restrictions related to these freedoms in China. We derived our definition for freedom of information from the United Nations' 2011 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, which designates Internet freedom as a basic human right. In addition, we derived definitions for the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion or worship from the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which outlines these freedoms as basic human rights. In addition, in our questionnaire we asked university administrators to identify the extent to which their universities' written agreements or other policies address academic freedom and other key freedoms. We also interviewed administrators from all 12 U.S. universities that participated in our review to learn how these U.S. universities developed written agreements with their Chinese partner universities. For the content analysis, we compared the definitions

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<sup>1</sup>20 U.S.C. §§ 1070-1099d and 42 U.S.C. §§ 2751-2756b.

of each freedom with all the agreements, handbooks, and other official publications provided by the universities to assess whether and how the freedom was referenced in those documents. One GAO analyst conducted this analysis, coding the information based on how universities referenced the freedom and entering it into a spreadsheet, and another GAO analyst checked the information for agreement. Any initial disagreements in the coding were discussed and reconciled by the analysts.

To learn about the experiences of academic freedom and other key freedoms by faculty, students, and administrators at selected U.S. universities in China, we interviewed administrators from all 12 universities. We also visited five universities in China, where we met with administrators, faculty, and students. In addition, we interviewed faculty and students who had previously studied or taught at six of the universities and were currently living elsewhere. All interviews were conducted in English. Overall, we interviewed more than 190 administrators, faculty, and students, including the following:

- More than 70 administrators from 12 universities, including university presidents and other executive officials as well as staff from various offices such as those supporting student life and other student services, libraries, and information technology.
- More than 35 faculty members from seven universities, including more than 30 U.S. citizens, several Chinese citizens, and one citizen from another country. The faculty members we interviewed included both those sent from the U.S. campus to teach at the institution in China on a temporary basis and those hired specifically to teach at the university institution in China.
- More than 95 students from six universities, including interviewing roughly an equal mix of U.S. and Chinese citizens on campuses in China, and several students from other countries. Our interviews with students included a mix of one-on-one interviews and discussion groups. In addition, nearly 40 of these students that we interviewed from two universities also completed a written questionnaire. We asked them to complete the questionnaire because we believed some students might be more willing to answer candidly on an anonymous questionnaire than during an oral interview. To maintain their anonymity and to encourage candid responses students were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was in English, and students were asked to respond in English, as they were enrolled in courses taught in English. The

questionnaire addressed the same general topics that were used to guide our student interviews and discussion groups. We analyzed responses to the written student questionnaires alongside our analysis of student interviews and discussion groups.

In selecting universities to visit, we included both public and private universities; universities with institutions in different locations within China; universities that established institutions in China at different points in time; and universities with institutions having varying student demographics, including several with predominantly Chinese student bodies and several with a mixture of students from the United States, China, and other countries. We also planned to visit two additional institutions, but our visits were declined by, in one case, the Chinese university partner and, in the other case, by the provincial ministry of education with jurisdiction over the institution. In addition to conducting interviews during our visits to these universities, we also reviewed campus facilities including classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, and dormitories.

In our discussions with faculty members and students, we addressed topics such as the reasons they chose to work or study at the programs in China, the extent to which they may be constrained from teaching or studying certain topics, their experience of Internet access in China, campus life and student activities, any differences they have perceived or experienced between U.S. and Chinese faculty and students, and other topics relating to their experience at the program particularly as it relates to academic and other freedoms. To mitigate possible limitations of testimonial evidence from individuals in China regarding their experience of academic and other freedoms, we

- interviewed both U.S. and Chinese students and faculty;
- interviewed faculty and students currently in China as well as faculty and students currently in the United States who had formerly taught or studied at the university in China;
- requested that faculty and students participate in our interviews on a voluntary basis; and
- offered students the option of completing an anonymous written questionnaire.

We also analyzed university administrator responses to our questionnaire applicable to their university in China, including questions relating to curriculum and faculty hiring; faculty and student experiences of academic freedom, freedom of information, freedom of speech, freedom

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of assembly, or freedom of religion or worship; and how, if at all, standards and protections for these freedoms differ between U.S. and Chinese students or in comparison with those to the university's U.S. campus, among others. The information on foreign law in this report is not the product of GAO's original analysis but is derived from interviews and secondary sources.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2015 to August 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: U.S. University Cooperative Education Institutions and Programs in China

The Chinese Ministry of Education has approved 13 U.S. universities to operate 16 cooperative education institutions, according to the ministry.<sup>1</sup> Table 4 provides a full list of these 13 U.S. universities and their institutions. As the table indicates, two universities operate more than one cooperative education institution. We did not review the cooperative education institutions approved for the University of Illinois and the University of Miami, as these two institutions were approved subsequent to the start of our review. Although we reviewed Johns Hopkins University’s institution in China, it is not included in table 4 because it was established before the Chinese Ministry of Education established its approval process for Sino-Foreign cooperative institutions and programs.

**Table 4: U.S. Universities Approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education to Operate Cooperative Education Institutions**

U.S. university	Chinese partner university
Carnegie Mellon University	Sun Yat-Sen University
Duke University	Wuhan University
Fort Hays State University <sup>a</sup>	Shenyang Normal University; Sias International University (Zhengzhou University); University of International Business and Economics
Kean University	Wenzhou University
Missouri State University	Liaoning Normal University
New York Institute of Technology	Communication University of China
New York University	East China Normal University
Northwood University <sup>b</sup>	Jiangnan University; Jilin University
Rutgers University	Northeast Normal University
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign	Zhejiang University
University of Miami	Henan University
University of Michigan	Shanghai Jiao Tong University
University of Pittsburgh	Sichuan University

Source: GAO analysis of Chinese Ministry of Education data. | GAO-16-757

<sup>a</sup>Approved to operate three cooperative educational institutions.

<sup>b</sup>Approved to operate two cooperative educational institutions.

<sup>1</sup>This reflects the data captured as accessed on the Chinese Ministry of Education’s website on April 19, 2016.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, 133 U.S. universities have been approved by the ministry to operate 225 cooperative education programs in partnership with Chinese universities.<sup>2</sup> Such cooperative education programs can take various forms, such as joint or dual degree programs. Table 5 provides a full list of these programs. This list is based on information taken directly from the Chinese Ministry of Education’s website. We did not review these programs or verify that all of them are currently operating.

**Table 5: List of U.S. Universities Approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education to Operate Cooperative Education Programs**

U.S. university	Cooperative education program
Alfred University	Guizhou Nationalities University and Alfred University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Digital Media Arts
Alliant International University	Zhujiang Institute of Tianjin University of Finance and Economics and Alliant International University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Internet of Things Engineering
Arcadia University	Jiangsu University and Arcadia University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Applied Mathematics
Arizona State University	Shanghai National Accounting Institute and Arizona State University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Financial Oriented Senior Management Business Administration
Arizona State University	Shanghai National Accounting Institute and Arizona State University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Accounting
Auburn University	Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture and Auburn University Cooperative Program, Water Supply and Drainage
Auburn University	Taiyuan University of Science and Technology and Auburn University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Engineering
Auburn University at Montgomery	Hubei University of Economics and Auburn University at Montgomery Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Information Management and Systems
Auburn University at Montgomery	University of South China and Auburn University at Montgomery Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing
Auburn University at Montgomery	Central South University of Forestry and Technology and Auburn University at Montgomery Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Science
Bellevue University	Zengcheng College of South China Normal University and Bellevue University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Logistics Management

<sup>2</sup>This reflects the data captured as accessed on the Chinese Ministry of Education’s website on April 19, 2016.

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
Benedictine University	Shenyang University of Technology and Benedictine University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Enterprise Management
Benedictine University	Shenyang Jianzhu University and Benedictine University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Information Management
Benedictine University	Dalian Medical University and Benedictine University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Public Health
Bowling Green State University	Tianjin University of Commerce and Bowling Green State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Management and Systems
Bryant University	Beijing Institute of Technology, Zhuhai and Bryant University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
California Baptist University	Changchun Institute of Technology and California Baptist University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Food Science and Engineering
California State University–San Bernardino	Soochow University College of Applied Science and California State University-San Bernardino Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Internet of Things Engineering
California State University–San Marcos	Anhui University and California State University-San Marcos Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Art Design (Innovative Design)
Carnegie Mellon University	Nanjing University of Science and Technology and Carnegie Mellon University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Pattern Recognition and Intelligent Systems
Central Michigan University	University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and Central Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Management and Systems
Central Michigan University	Shanghai Institute of Technology and Central Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
Central Michigan University	Shanghai Institute of Technology and Central Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
Central Michigan University	Anhui Jianzhu University and Central Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Design
Central Michigan University	Guangxi University and Central Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
City University of New York–Baruch College	Southwest University of Finance and Economics and City University of New York-Baruch College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
City University of Seattle	Beijing University of Technology and City University of Seattle Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
City University of Seattle	University of International Business and Economics and City University of Seattle Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
Clark University	Shandong University of Science and Technology and Clark University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Management and Systems
Clark University	Shandong University of Science and Technology and Clark University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
Clark University	Hefei University of Technology and Clark University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Colorado State University	Central China Normal University and Colorado State University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Regional Tourism and Environment
Columbia College Chicago	Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University and Columbia College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education
Columbia College Chicago	Hankou University and Columbia College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Art Design
Concordia University	Hebei University of Economics and Business and Concordia University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources Management
Concordia University	Hebei University of Economics and Business and Concordia University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Marketing
Delaware State University	Ningbo University of Technology and Delaware State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
Delaware State University	Sanming University and Delaware State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education (Sports Management)
Delaware State University	Changchun University of Science and Technology and Delaware State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Science and Engineering
D'Youville College	Guangxi Traditional Chinese Medicine University and D'Youville College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
East Tennessee State University	Shandong Normal University and East Tennessee State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Financial Management (Business Finance and Investment)
Eastern Illinois University	Shenyang Urban Construction University and Eastern Illinois University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Architecture
Eastern Michigan University	Tianjin University of Commerce and Eastern Michigan University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Human Resource Management
Erikson Institute	East China Normal University and Erikson Institute Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Child Development and Early Childhood Education
Fashion Institute of Technology	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University and Fashion Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Fashion and Design Engineering
Fashion Institute of Technology	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University and Fashion Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Art Design
Florida Institute of Technology	Shijiazhuang Tiedao University and Florida Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
Florida Institute of Technology	Wuhan Institute of Technology and Florida Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Energy and Power Engineering
Florida Institute of Technology	Hubei Second Normal University and Florida Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Information Science and Technology
Florida International University	Beihang University and Florida International University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Computer Science
Florida International University	Tianjin University of Commerce and Florida International University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management



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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
Florida International University	Qingdao University and Florida International University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Spanish Language (Latin American Business)
Frostburg State University	Hunan University of Commerce and Frostburg State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance
George Mason University	Southwest Jiaotong University and George Mason University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Economics
Georgia Institute of Technology	Shanghai Jiaotong University and Georgia Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering
Georgia Institute of Technology	Tianjin University and Georgia Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering
Georgia State University	Southwest Jiaotong University and Georgia State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Biological Engineering
Johns Hopkins University	Tsinghua University and Johns Hopkins University, Doctorate in Public Health
Johnson University	Anhui Normal University and Johnson University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Modern Education Technology
Kean University	Wenzhou University and Kean University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language
Kean University	Wenzhou University and Kean University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Economics
Kean University	Wenzhou University and Kean University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Technology
Kean University	Wenzhou University and Kean University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Keuka College	Tianjin University of Science and Technology and Keuka College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Keuka College	Jimei University and Keuka College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Keuka College	Jimei University and Keuka College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
Keuka College	Hebei Medical University and Keuka College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
Keuka College	Yunnan University of Finance and Economics and Keuka College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Lawrence Technological University	Shanghai University of Engineering Science and Lawrence Technological University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electronic Information Engineering
Lawrence Technological University	Shanghai University of Engineering Science and Lawrence Technological University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
Lawrence Technological University	Shanghai University of Engineering Science and Lawrence Technological University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Traffic and Transportation
Lawrence Technological University	Shanghai University of Engineering Science and Lawrence Technological University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Automation

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
Maharishi University of Management	Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture and Maharishi University of Management Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer and Information Science
Maharishi University of Management	Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture and Maharishi University of Management Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Management
Michigan State University	Beijing Forestry University and Michigan State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Pratacultural Science
Michigan State University	Sichuan Agricultural University and Michigan State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Pratacultural Science
Michigan State University	Northeast Agricultural University and Michigan State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Pratacultural Science
Middle Tennessee State University	Ningbo University and Middle Tennessee State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Applied Mathematics
Muskingum University	North China Institute of Science and Technology and Muskingum University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Safety Engineering
Nazareth College	Shandong Normal University and Nazareth College Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance
New England College of Optometry	Wenzhou Medical College and New England College of Optometry Cooperative Program, Doctorate in Optometry
New Jersey City University	Changzhou University and New Jersey City University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Applied Chemistry
New Jersey City University	Jilin HuaQiao University of Foreign Studies and New Jersey City University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance
New Jersey Institute of Technology	Beijing University of Technology and New Jersey Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master of Science
New York Film Academy-Los Angeles	Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University and New York Film Academy-Los Angeles Branch Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Visual Communication Design
New York Institute of Technology	Communication University of China and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Animation and Visual Special Effects
New York Institute of Technology	Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Digital Media Technology
New York Institute of Technology	Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering
New York Institute of Technology	Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Technology
New York Institute of Technology	Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Financial Management
New York Institute of Technology	Shandong Technology and Business University and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Human Resource Management

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
New York Institute of Technology	Shandong Technology and Business University and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management
New York Institute of Technology	Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics and New York Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
New York University	East China Normal University and New York University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Management Studies
New York University	East China Normal University and New York University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Tourism Management
New York University	East China Normal University and New York University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Interactive Creative Engineering
New York University	East China Normal University and New York University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Social Work
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University	Henan Polytechnic University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University	Henan Polytechnic University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
North Dakota State University	Shandong Jianzhu University and North Dakota State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Engineering Management (Construction Management Mathematics)
Northern Arizona University	Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications and Northern Arizona University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Information Engineering
Oakland University	Changchun University of Technology and Oakland University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and Automation
Oakland University (Michigan)	Changchun University of Technology and Oakland University (Michigan) Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Engineering
Ohio University	Beijing University of Athletics and Ohio University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Sports Management
Oklahoma State University	China Agricultural University and Oklahoma State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Business Management (Agricultural Business)
Pittsburg State University	Harbin University of Science and Technology and Pittsburg State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Automotive Engineering
Portland State University	Changchun University of Technology and Portland State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and Automation
Portland State University	Changchun University of Technology and Portland State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Technology
Portland State University	Jilin Jianzhu University and Portland State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering
Purdue University-Calumet	Anhui University of Technology and Purdue University-Calumet Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Power Engineering and Thermodynamics

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
Queens College of the City University of New York	University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and Queens College of the City University of New York Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language
Rider University	Sanda University and Rider University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Rochester Institute of Technology	Beijing Jiaotong University and Rochester Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Management and Information Systems
Rutgers University	Northeast Normal University and Rutgers University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance
Sam Houston State University	Huaiyin Normal University and Sam Houston State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education
San Diego State University	China University of Geosciences (Wuhan) and San Diego State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Statistics
Shorter University	Huanghe Science and Technology College and Shorter University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Shorter University	Huanghe Science and Technology College and Shorter University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Technology
Sotheby's Institute of Art	Tsinghua University and Sotheby's Institute of Art Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Arts Management
Southern Illinois University	Northeast Normal University and Southern Illinois University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
Southern New Hampshire University	Wuhan Donghu University and Southern New Hampshire University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Visual Communication Design
Southern Oregon University	Henan Normal University and Southern Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management
Southern Polytechnic State University	Northeast Normal University and Southern Polytechnic State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Technology
Southern Polytechnic State University	Northeast Normal University and Southern Polytechnic State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language
Southern Polytechnic State University	Northeast Normal University, School of Humanities and Southern Polytechnic State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language (Technological Exchange)
Southern Utah University	Wuhan Polytechnic University and Southern Utah University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Engineering Management
Southern Utah University	Wuhan Polytechnic University and Southern Utah University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Advertising
State University of New Jersey	Dalian University of Technology and The State University of New Jersey Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
State University of New York	Beijing University of Chemical Technology and State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Bioengineering

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<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
State University of New York–Albany	Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications and State University of New York–Albany Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Software Engineering
State University of New York–Cobleskill, College of Agriculture and Technology	Jinling Institute of Technology and State University of New York Cobleskill, College of Agriculture and Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Gardening
State University of New York–New Paltz	Chongqing Second Normal University and State University of New York–New Paltz Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education
Stevens Institute of Technology	Central University of Finance and Economics and Stevens Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Management Studies
Stevens Institute of Technology	Beijing Institute of Technology and Stevens Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Telecommunication Management
Stevens Institute of Technology	Beijing Institute of Technology and Stevens Institute of Technology Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Microelectronics and Photonics
Stony Brook University	Beijing University of Chemical Technology and Stony Brook University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Science and Engineering Management
Temple University	Tsinghua University and Temple University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Law
Temple University	Beijing National Accounting Institute and Temple University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Information Technology Auditing
Thomas University	Wenzhou Medical College and Thomas University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing
Thomas University	Guangzhou College of South China University of Technology and Thomas University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Gem and Material Technology
Thomas University	Jiangxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Thomas University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing
Thomas University	Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities and Thomas University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing
Troy University	Qingdao University of Science and Technology and Troy University Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Applied Chemistry
Tulane University	Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Tulane University Cooperative Program, Master’s Degree in Financial Management
University of Alabama	Tianhua College of Shanghai Normal University and University of Alabama Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education
University of Arizona	Ocean University of China and University of Arizona Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Law
University of Arkansas	Soochow University and University of Arkansas Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Logistics Management
University of Bridgeport	Zhejiang University of Science and Technology and University of Bridgeport Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Economics
University of Bridgeport	Zhejiang College of Zhejiang University of Technology and University of Bridgeport Cooperative Program, Bachelor’s Degree in Industrial Design

**Appendix II: U.S. University Cooperative  
Education Institutions and Programs in China**

<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
University of Bridgeport	Ludong University and University of Bridgeport Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Biology
University of Bridgeport	Anhui Science and Technology University and University of Bridgeport Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
University of Bridgeport	Wuhan University of Science and Technology and University of Bridgeport Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Information Engineering
University of Cincinnati	Chongqing University and University of Cincinnati Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Manufacturing Design and Automation
University of Cincinnati	Chongqing University and University of Cincinnati Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
University of Colorado (Denver)	China Agricultural University and University of Colorado (Denver) Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
University of Colorado (Denver)	China Agricultural University and University of Colorado (Denver) Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Communication
University of Dayton	Shanghai Normal University and University of Dayton Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electronic Information Engineering
University of Dayton	Shanghai Normal University and University of Dayton Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
University of Detroit Mercy	Beijing University of Chemical Technology and University of Detroit Mercy Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
University of Detroit Mercy	Yancheng Institute of Technology and University of Detroit Mercy Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Automotive Engineering
University of Detroit Mercy	Anhui Polytechnic University and University of Detroit Mercy Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
University of Florida	Zhengzhou University and University of Florida Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
University of Florida	Zhengzhou University and University of Florida Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
University of Florida	Zhengzhou University and University of Florida Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Radio and Television Journalism
University of Florida	Zhengzhou University and University of Florida Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry
University of Houston	Hunan University and University of Houston Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Science
University of Idaho	Wenzheng College of Soochow University and University of Idaho Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
University of Indianapolis	Zhejiang University Ningbo Institute of Technology and University of Indianapolis Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language
University of Indianapolis	Zhejiang University Ningbo Institute of Technology and University of Indianapolis Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance

**Appendix II: U.S. University Cooperative  
Education Institutions and Programs in China**

<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
University of Indianapolis	Zhejiang University Ningbo Institute of Technology and University of Indianapolis Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
University of Maryland	University of International Business and Economics and University of Maryland Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Administration
University of Maryland	Nanjing Normal University and University of Maryland Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Criminal Justice
University of Memphis	Jining Medical University and University of Memphis Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
University of Memphis	China Three Gorges University and University of Memphis Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management
University of Michigan–Dearborn	Tongji University and University of Michigan–Dearborn Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Automotive Systems Engineering
University of Michigan–Dearborn	Chongqing University and University of Michigan–Dearborn Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Automotive Systems Engineering
University of Minnesota	China University of Political Science and Law and University of Minnesota Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Law
University of Minnesota	Sun Yat-sen University and University of Minnesota Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
University of Missouri	Communication University of China and University of Missouri Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Communication
University of Nebraska–Lincoln	Northwest Agricultural & Forestry University and University of Nebraska–Lincoln Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Food Science and Engineering
University of New Haven	Sanjiang University and University of New Haven Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering and Automation
University of New Orleans	Putian University and University of New Orleans Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration
University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill)	Tsinghua University and University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Engineering Management (Global Supply Chain Leader)
University of North Carolina–Pembroke	Harbin Normal University and University of North Carolina–Pembroke Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in English Language
University of North Dakota	University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and University of North Dakota Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
University of Northern Iowa	Shanghai Dianji University and University of Northern Iowa Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
University of Northern Iowa	Nanchang Hangkong University and University of Northern Iowa Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Electronic Information Engineering
University of San Francisco	Xiamen University and University of San Francisco Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Environmental Management
University of Southern California	Shanghai Jiaotong University and University of Southern California Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
University of St. Thomas	Harbin Finance University and University of St. Thomas Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance

**Appendix II: U.S. University Cooperative  
Education Institutions and Programs in China**

<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	Changsha University of Science and Technology and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering
University of Texas–Arlington	University of Science and Technology Beijing and University of Texas–Arlington Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
University of Texas–Arlington	Tongji University and University of Texas–Arlington Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
University of Texas–Austin	Xi'an Jiaotong University and University of Texas–Austin, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
University of Toledo	Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics and University of Toledo Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Marketing
University of Utah	Shanghai Normal University and University of Utah Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management
University of Wisconsin–Madison	East China University of Political Science and Law and University of Wisconsin–Madison Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Law
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee	Hubei University of Technology and University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Art Design
University of Wisconsin–Platteville	South Central University for Nationalities and University of Wisconsin–Platteville Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in English Language Education
Utah State University	Beijing Institute of Technology and Utah State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics
Utah State University	Beijing Institute of Technology and Utah State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology
Utah State University	Northeast Dianli University and Utah State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Utah State University	Northwest University for Nationalities and Utah State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Business
Valparaiso University	Dalian Jiaotong University and Valparaiso University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering
Valparaiso University	Dalian Jiaotong University and Valparaiso University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering
Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology	Shanghai Jian Qiao University and Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Design Manufacturing and Automation
Washington University in St. Louis	Fudan University and Washington University in St. Louis Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Senior Management Business Administration
Weber State University	Shanghai Normal University and Weber State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Economics
Webster University	Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and Webster University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
Webster University	Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and Webster University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Webster University	Electronic Science and Technology University and Webster University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration



**Appendix II: U.S. University Cooperative  
Education Institutions and Programs in China**

<b>U.S. university</b>	<b>Cooperative education program</b>
West Virginia University	Tianjin University of Finance and Economics and West Virginia University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Finance
Western Illinois University	Heilongjiang Institute of Technology and Western Illinois University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Geographic Information Science
Western International University	Beijing University of Technology and Western International University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Business Science
Western Michigan University	Guizhou University of Finance and Economics and Western Michigan University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
Western Oregon University	Tianhua College of Shanghai Normal University and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education
Western Oregon University	Yantai University and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Law (Regional Criminal Information Analysis)
Western Oregon University	Xuchang University and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Dance
Western Oregon University	Xuchang University and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering
Western Oregon University	Guangxi Medical University and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration
Western Oregon University	Guangxi Arts Institute and Western Oregon University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Music
Winona State University	Hebei Foreign Studies University and Winona State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education
Winston-Salem State University	Hubei University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Winston-Salem State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Nursing
Wright State University	Capital University of Economics and Business and Wright State University Cooperative Program, Master's Degree in Business Administration
Wright State University	Dalian Institute of Science and Technology and Wright State University Cooperative Program, Bachelor's Degree in Information Engineering

Source: GAO analysis of Chinese Ministry of Education data. | GAO-16-757

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# Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

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## Staff Acknowledgments

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# Appendix IV: Accessible Data

## Accessible Text

### Accessible Text for Figure 1: Timeline of U.S. Universities and Their Chinese University Partners Establishing Cooperative, Degree-Granting Institutions in China, through 2015

1986: Johns Hopkins University (Nanjing University)

1999: Northwood University (Jilin University Lambton College)

2000: Fort Hays State University (Sias International University) and Missouri State University (Liaoning Normal University)

2002: Northwood University (Jiangnan University North American College)

2003: Fort Hays State University (Shenyang Normal University)

2006: University of Michigan (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)

2011: Kean University (Wenzhou University)

2012: New York University (East China Normal University)

2013: Duke University (Wuhan University)

2014: Carnegie Mellon University (Sun Yat-sen University) and New York Institute of Technology (Communication University of China)

2015: Rutgers University (Northeast Normal University) and University of Pittsburgh (Sichuan University)

Source: GAO analysis of Chinese Ministry of Education and U.S. university data. | GAO-16-757

### Accessible Text for Figure 3: Federal Financial Aid to U.S. Students Reported by 5 of 12 U.S. Universities in China, Academic Year 2014-2015

- 7 reported not receiving federal financial aid
- 4 reported receiving widely varying amounts of federal financial aid:
  - \$1,800
  - \$29,471
  - \$268,580
  - \$873,724
- 1 reported receiving federal financial aid but did not report the amount

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. university questionnaire and interview responses. | GAO-16-757

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**Accessible Text for Figure 4: Reported Financial Impact of China Institutions on U.S. University Budgets**

- 6 Generated or expect to generate net revenue
- 4 Had a neutral budget impact
- 1 Lost net revenue

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**Accessible Text Figure 5: Fewer than Half of U.S. Universities in China GAO Reviewed Have Reported Uncensored Access to the Internet**

Seven institutions lack uncensored internet access in China

- At those institutions, a firewall blocks access to some sites
  - Typically blocked sites include: U.S. or international news sites; Search engines; Scholarly databases; Personal email; Social media; and Video-sharing sites

5 institutions provide uncensored internet access in China

- At those institutions, a Virtual private network (VPN) allows access to websites with location-based restrictions by making users appear to be logging on from another location.
  - The VPN enables uncensored Internet access for faculty, students, and staff

Source: GAO. | GAO-16-757

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