

Florida Cracks Down on Foreign Government Involvement in Research

Four University of Florida faculty members leave their jobs as a state committee that formed last month pledges to investigate individual researchers and institutions.

Jan 15, 2020

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Florida is launching a statewide investigation into US research exploitation after four University of Florida faculty members and six employees of Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa failed to disclose ties to foreign programs, reports the *Tampa Bay Times*. The crackdown will be the first of its kind on the state level, according to *Science*.

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At the University of Florida, three academics resigned and one was fired after an inquiry from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and an internal review found evidence of foreign meddling in research and funding. The NIH gives \$30 billion in funding to scientists and universities per year and has launched 180 inquiries at 70 institutions related to potentially systematic stealing of US research, according to the *Tampa Bay Times*.

An internal investigation at Moffitt resulted in the dismissal of CEO Alan List and five other employees after it was revealed that they had not disclosed their participation in Thousand Talents, a recruitment program by the Chinese government that targets researchers abroad, reports *Science*. Moffitt is designated as a top cancer center by the National Cancer Institute, part of the NIH.

See “US-China Tensions Leave Some Researchers on Edge”

The Florida investigation is led by a bipartisan legislative committee created last month by Florida House Speaker José Oliva (R-110th district). It has the authority to “examine any further improper or illegal activities involving Florida’s research universities, medical research facilities, and individuals associated with such institutions,” says Oliva, according to *Science*. Its first hearing is scheduled for January 21.

“The problem with universities is that there is no front door,” State Representative Chris Sprowls (R-65th district) chair of the committee, tells *Science*. “There are lots of ways that researchers interact with colleagues around the world. And while I think that scientific collaboration is important, the reality is that university research is at risk from interventions by foreign governments. And we know they are already doing it.”

See “Academia to FBI on Monitoring Chinese Scientists: ‘Tread Carefully’”

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Keywords:

careers, China, Florida, foreign government, government, National Institutes of Health, nutshell, policy, research, research ethics, research integrity, universities