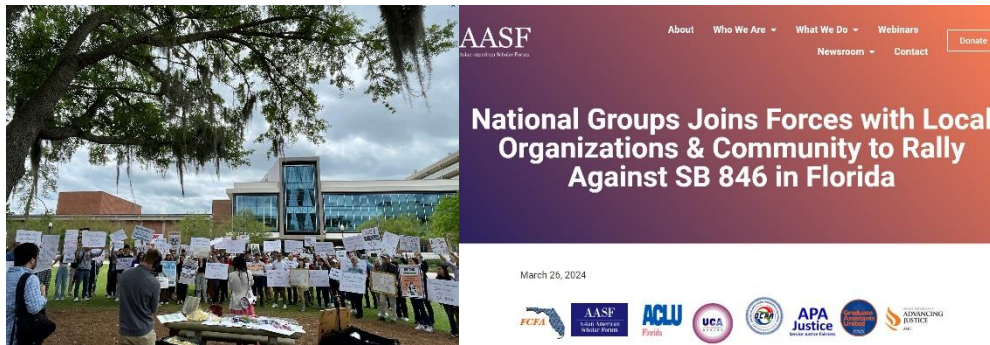


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## Updates on Florida Rally and Lawsuit Against SB 846



According to the *Independent Florida Alligator*, as protest speakers climbed one by one atop a picnic table to address a crowd of 200 gathered in the Reitz Union courtyard on March 26, 2024, their words were met not with claps or cheers, but with the sound of plastic whistles blasting.

The Florida Chinese Faculty Association (FCFA) organized the protest in response to the Florida Board of Governors meeting taking place at the University of Florida in the Reitz Student Union. The FCFA gathered to denounce Senate Bill (SB) 846, which bans “partnerships,” including recruitment programs, between state universities and any non-U.S. citizen living in one of seven countries of “concern:” China, Iran, Venezuela, Russia, Cuba, Syria and North Korea. The state law was passed in May and went into effect December 1.

Before the event, organizers passed out plastic bags holding yellow whistles reading “WE BELONG.” The protestors clutched the whistles alongside signs bearing phrases like “We make UF, you make the crisis” and “Education without borders.” Protestors ranged from students wearing jeans to faculty in suits and loafers. An oak tree offered shade from the 77-degree weather as protestors gathered underneath it to hear a slate of about 20 speakers.

FCFA Secretary and UF materials science and engineering professor **Jiangeng Xue** and his colleagues have already noticed two main effects of the law in the months since it’s been passed. The first is a discriminatory environment. The law will also lower the quality of graduate students at UF. “We’re not going to be seeing the impact right away,” Xue said. “But three, four

or five years down the road, we're going to be seeing a decline in the research quality that ultimately is going to affect the reputation of the university.”

Others who spoke out in the *Independent Florida Alligator* report include

- **Nathan Arndt**, a 24-year-old UF materials science and engineering Ph.D. student and member of UF Graduate Assistants United said, “We like having co-workers that are the best at what they do. Not only is this law racism and xenophobia disguised as national security, it’s also anti-education.”
- **Jay Xie**, a 20-year-old UF accounting sophomore and president of the UF Chinese Student Association, said, “I don’t see any people really being harmed or hurt by graduate students doing academic study here, and I just feel like that’s kind of nonsense. I feel like national security is just a golden phrase they can use on anything.”
- **Arash Fahim**, an FSU math professor, tried to tell fellow faculty to go ahead and recruit as usual if they didn’t receive any policy from their university. “One of them was shaking his head and told me, ‘Actually, we did not have any applicants from those [countries],’” Fahim said. “They already know politicians don’t like them in Florida.”
- **Gisela Perez Kusakawa**, civil rights attorney and executive director of the Asian American Scholar Forum, said AASF came together from a need to give Asian American scholars a voice against laws like SB 846. “We must make a stand here in Florida and ensure that this is not replicated in other states across the country. We must remain vigilant to make sure that history is not repeated and that Asian Americans and Asian immigrants do not continue to be scapegoated as threats.”

Read the *Independent Florida Alligator* report: <https://bit.ly/3VSTMpt>.

Additional media coverage:

2024/03/27 AsAmNews: [Chinese Students at University of Florida Declare “We Belong”](#)

2024/03/27 WUFT/NPR: [Protestors at UF reject SB 846, call for education without borders](#)

2024/03/26 WFUT/NPR: [NEWS First at Five](#) (video)

## Vincent Wang Speaks at Rally



**Vincent Wang**, Co-Organizer of APA Justice, spoke at the rally at Gainesville, and provided the following report:

"I was extremely encouraged by the successful event today. The professional organizations at the University of Florida and other colleges worked very hard for a month to pull it off. Gisela did a lot of work to coordinate with national organizations and [media outreach](#).

"Multiple racial groups participated in the rally. There were many Chinese and Iranian professors. The impact on them is real and now. Many cannot hire international students and/or researchers, or have to cancel their offers already extended before the law. Some prospective international students who received offers are hesitating on whether to come, or move on to elsewhere. A lot of young students have become activists calling out the harmful SB 846.

"Participants from different backgrounds came together in condemning the detrimental and chilling effect of SB 846, and the lack of transparency and clarity by the colleges and universities. The overarching sentiment is that their academic freedom and their access to educational opportunities were being violated, and the politicians making the law were out of touch and made decisions without input from those in the field. They resented the disregard of their fundamental rights for education and research and well being by politicians who weaponized national security for politician gains.

"The yellow whistles helped people connect each other effectively and efficiently, and developed a sense of belonging and solidarity. It was a wild success."

## Lawsuit Against Florida SB 846



According to [Florida Politics](#), [AP](#), and other media reports, a Chinese professor and two Chinese graduate students are suing in federal court to stop a new law that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) says unfairly targets Chinese international students and others from working as graduate assistants for academic research projects.

**Zhipeng Yin** and **Zhen Guo**, doctoral students from Florida International University, joined

University of Florida professor **Zhengfei Guan** in filing the lawsuit over SB 846 in the U.S. District Court's Miami Division. The plaintiffs are represented by the [ACLU Foundation of Florida](#), the [Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance \(CALDA\)](#) 华美维权同盟, and [Perkins Coie LLP](#).

"This law is unfair, unjustified, and unconstitutional," said **Daniel Tilley**, legal director for the Florida chapter of the ACLU. "Everyone in the United States is entitled to equal protection under our laws, including citizens of other countries. The discriminatory policies pushed by the DeSantis administration will not go unchecked."

The complaint names Florida Department of Education Commissioner **Manny Diaz Jr.**, State University System Chancellor **Ray Rodrigues** and members of the Board of Governors.

The case is [Yin v. Diaz \(1:24-cv-21129\)](#). APA Justice has created a web page to track the development of the lawsuit at <https://bit.ly/43CIGGD>

## AASF Updates from March APA Justice Monthly Meeting



During the APA Justice monthly meeting on March 4, 2024, **Gisela Perez Kusakawa**, Executive Director, Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF), provided the following updates of AASF activities:

Gisela expressed deep thanks to Director **Arati Prabhakar** and **Cole Donovan** for meeting with AASF researchers and leaders at the Capitol, along with **Erika Moritsugu**, Deputy Assistant to the President; Principal Advisor **Ting Wu**, and **Krystal Ka'ai**, Executive Director of the White House initiative. Gisela looks forward to working further with the White House on how AASF can lift up Asian American scholar contributions in our country and work together towards ensuring a more welcoming and inclusive environment that helps Asian Americans and scholars thrive.

AASF conducted political appointment training early on and continues to encourage the community to consider working in public service with the Biden Administration and with Federal agencies. It is critical that we not only have a seat at the table, but continue to be engaged in our country.

AASF will be meeting with the new NIH director, **Dr. Monica Bertagnoli**, to create a bridge between our community and administration officials to ensure that the community's voices are heard. The meeting is closed door. Gisela encourages outreach to her and AASF on your concerns so that she can communicate them directly to NIH leadership.

Regarding the release of the CJS joint explanatory statement without the China initiative language, AASF is in the process of reviewing the new language and will be releasing our analysis as a resource for the community.

AASF has been working with Nature on a portfolio. It featured **Gang Chen, Jenny Lee, George Karniadakis, Yu Xie, Kai Li, Steven Chu, and Yiguang Ju**. It highlights the loss of talent and scrutiny that academics are facing at the border and lifts up the AASF data report.

AASF continues to monitor the impacts of a Florida law that recently went into effect, which restricts Florida's public colleges and universities from hiring researchers and graduate assistance from several countries of concern which includes China and Iran. AASF has a brief explainer for what this legislation means, and it is working to provide more educational resources for the community. AASF is working with Florida professors and students on the ground to see how AASF can support them.

AASF is also monitoring the DETERRENT Act, which passed the House and has been introduced in the Senate. AASF is working to hear more about the timeline for conferencing.

A summary for the meeting is being prepared at this time. The virtual monthly meeting is by invitation only. It is closed to the press. If you wish to join, either one time or for future meetings, please contact one of the co-organizers of APA Justice - **Steven Pei** 白先慎, **Vincent Wang** 王文奎, and **Jeremy Wu** 胡善庆 - or send a message to [contact@apajustice.org](mailto:contact@apajustice.org).

## CSIS Report: US-China Scholarly Recoupling



**U.S.-China Scholarly Recoupling:  
Advancing Mutual Understanding  
in an Era of Intense Rivalry**



On March 27, 2024, the Center for Strategies & International Studies (CSIS) published a report titled "U.S.-China Scholarly Recoupling: Advancing Mutual Understanding in an Era of Intense Rivalry."

According to the CSIS announcement, "The United States and China have avoided outright scholarly decoupling, but the over-securitization of every element of the relationship is restricting a more comprehensive recoupling of ties, a vexing situation which is stifling research, limiting overseas study, reducing mutual understanding, and harming the national interest of both countries.

"These are the key conclusions of this report, which is the culmination of a two-year initiative led by CSIS and Peking University. The 27 essays in this volume, contributed by American and Chinese scholars from a wide range of disciplines, explain the benefits of U.S.-China scholarly cooperation to the two societies and the world at large, identify the obstacles to greater exchanges, and outline practical strategies for overcoming these challenges.

"Although the U.S. and Chinese governments must play a central role in creating a stronger foundation for relations in general and scholarly cooperation in particular, it will be up to the scholarly community itself—professors, researchers, administrators, editors, funders, and students—to ensure that their principles are protected and their mission furthered."

A webinar was held to launch the report on March 28, 2024.

Download and read the CSIS report: <https://bit.ly/49brHMR>. Listen to audio brief: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Miq4NGzDNc8> (4:21). Read the *South China Morning Post* report: <https://bit.ly/3xeYZ0p>

## **Expert Panel Talks Effects of The China Initiative on Academic Freedom**



Courtesy of Melanie Tanielian.

According to *Michigan Daily*, the University of Michigan Faculty Senate held a panel discussion on the China Initiative and its aftermath. The China Initiative was created by the Department of Justice in 2018 to combat Chinese national security threats by identifying and prosecuting people involved with trade secret theft, hacking and economic espionage.

Since the China Initiative's implementation in 2018, the rate of Chinese scientists leaving the U.S. has skyrocketed. Eighty-one percent of the scientists targeted through the China Initiative identify as Asian and 72% of Chinese scientists report feeling unsafe as an academic researcher in the U.S. The China Initiative was terminated in 2022, but investigations into Chinese scientists have persisted.

At the event, the panelists condemned the initiative as having negative impacts on Chinese scientists in the United States and discouraging scientific collaboration between the U.S. and China. A major topic of discussion for the panel was how investigations stemming from the China Initiative contain misunderstandings of basic scientific procedure and federally funded grant agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health, encourage universities to terminate employees being investigated for minor or unintentional infractions.

Speakers at the event include

- **Gang Chen**, professor of power engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **Peter Zeidenberg**, attorney
- **Ruixue Jia**, professor of economics at the University of California, San Diego
- **Ann Chih Lin**, professor of public policy, University of Michigan

Senior **Eli Chapman** said Chen’s story was particularly interesting to him. “You can hear statistics and you can read about things, but hearing from a person who actually went through this experience really added a different element to it that made it very personal,” Chapman said. He believes spreading the word about stories like Chen’s is important in creating discourse about the China Initiative.

“The more publicization, the better,” Chapman said. “If we can hear stories like Chen’s, then people start to realize how messed up it has been. If we let the government control the narrative, that’s when the bad sentiment is going to really start.”

Read the *Michigan Daily* report: <https://bit.ly/3vI9COJ>

## News and Activities for the Communities

### 1. APA Justice Community Calendar

APA Justice Public Events

Today March 2024 Print Week Month Agenda

Today Friday, March 29 Print Week Month Agenda

Sun 25 Mon 26 Tue 27 Wed 28 Thu 29 Fri Mar 1 Sat 2

9pm Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall meeting

1:55pm APA Justice Monthly Meeting

4:30pm Racially Profiled for Being A Scientist: A Discussion of th

6:30pm Corky Lee's Asian America: Fifty Years of Photographic

Appeals Court Hearing on Florida SB 264

Committee of 100 Annual Conference and Gala

AAGEN 2024 Executive Leadership Workshop

Events shown in time zone: Eastern Time - Detroit

#### Upcoming Events:

- 2024/04/07 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/04/08 APA Justice Monthly Meeting
- 2024/04/17 Racially Profiled for Being a Scientist: A Discussion of the US DOJ's China Initiative
- 2024/04/18 Corky Lee's Asian America: Fifty Years of Photographic Justice
- 2024/04/19 Committee of 100 Annual Conference and Gala
- 2024/04/19 Appeals Court Hearing on Florida SB 264
- 2024/05/02 AAGEN 2024 Executive Leadership Workshop

Visit <https://bit.ly/45KGyga> for event details.



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