

Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education

National Association of Scholars
www.nas.org/ConfuciusInstitutes

Overview

Since 2004, the Chinese government has planted Confucius Institutes that offer Chinese language and culture courses at colleges and universities around the world—including more than 100 in the United States. These Institutes educate a generation of American students to know nothing more of China than the regime’s official history.

Outsourced to China, a new report by the National Association of Scholars, is a study of the 12 Confucius Institutes in New York and New Jersey. It examines China’s soft power influence through American higher education, and reveals new data on Confucius Institutes’ funding, hiring, and academic freedom policies.

The Facts

- **Chinese Oversight.** A Chinese government agency, the Hanban, provides operating funds, screens and pays Confucius Institutes’ Chinese teachers and staff members, provides textbooks, and approves Confucius Institute courses, which are often offered for credit.
- **Focused on the USA.** The United States has 103 Confucius Institutes and 501 Confucius Classrooms—38% of all Confucius Institutes and Classrooms worldwide, and more than any other country.

The Findings

- **Weapons of Soft Power.** Confucius Institutes avoid Chinese political history and human rights abuses, portray Taiwan and Tibet as undisputed territories of China, and tend to respect China’s censorious speech preferences.
- **Intellectual Freedom Compromised.** Official Hanban policy requires Confucius Institutes to adhere to Chinese law.
- **Unmentionables: Tiananmen, Tibet, Taiwan.** Multiple people connected to Confucius Institutes reported taboos on topics censored in China, such as the Tiananmen Square massacre.
- **No Transparency.** None of our 12 case study institutions publicly releases copies of its contracts with the Hanban or partner Chinese universities.
- **Entanglement.** In addition to providing funding and free textbooks and teachers, Confucius Institutes help attract full-tuition-paying Chinese students, fund scholarships for American students to study abroad, and are the conduit by which college presidents and administrators enjoy trips to and state dinners in China.

Recommendations

- Colleges and universities with Confucius Institutes should either **shut them down** or take specific steps to **distance themselves from the Chinese government**:
 - **Provide Transparency.** Disclose all contracts between the university and the Hanban and Confucius Institute budgets.
 - **Don't Outsource.** Confucius Institute classes should not count for college credit. Only the university should select instructors teaching for-credit courses.
 - **Curb Freeloading.** The Hanban acquires legitimacy from universities' reputations. Separate Confucius Institute events, classes, and projects from regular university programs.
- Federal and local governments should also exercise oversight to **determine whether Confucius Institutes pose a threat to national security and human rights.**

Detailed recommendations are laid out in the full report.

Download the full report: www.nas.org/ConfuciusInstitutes

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About the National Association of Scholars: The National Association of Scholars is a network of scholars and citizens united by their commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in American higher education. It upholds the standards of a liberal arts education that fosters intellectual freedom, searches for the truth, and promotes virtuous citizenship.