

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
*of* SCHOLARS

# Corrupting the College Board

Confucius Institutes and K-12 Education



Rachelle Peterson

September 2020

# *Corrupting College*

Confucius  
and K-12

A report by the

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
*of* SCHOLARS

420 Madison Avenue, 7th Floor  
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# *the* *Board*

Institutes  
Education

Authored by

Rachelle Peterson  
Senior Research Fellow

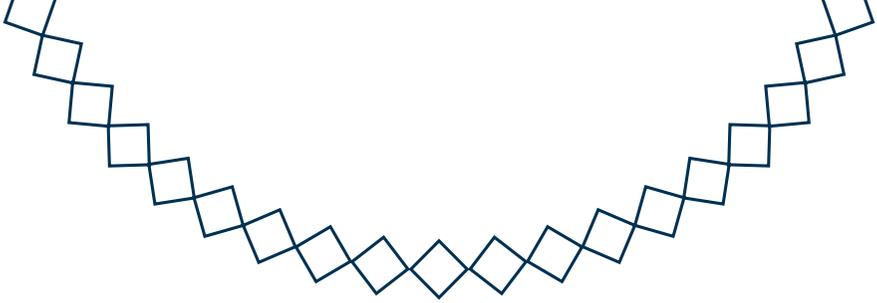
Introduction by

Peter W. Wood  
President,  
National Association of Scholars

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The National Association of Scholars is an independent membership association of academics and others working to sustain the tradition of reasoned scholarship and civil debate in America's colleges and universities. We uphold the standards of a liberal arts education that fosters intellectual freedom, searches for the truth, and promotes virtuous citizenship.

## What We Do

We publish a quarterly journal, *Academic Questions*, which examines the intellectual controversies and the institutional challenges of contemporary higher education.

We publish studies of current higher education policy and practice with the aim of drawing attention to weaknesses and stimulating improvements.

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*Critical Care*. 2020.

*The Lost History of Western Civilization*. 2020.

*Social Justice Education in America*. 2019.

*Separate but Equal, Again: Neo-Segregation in American Higher Education*. 2019.

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# Introduction and Acknowledgments

Peter W. Wood

President

National Association of Scholars

China's intrusion into American institutions is front page news nearly every day. As this report went to press, the State Department ordered the closure of China's Houston consulate, which was a hub for coordinating the theft of American intellectual property. A few days later, news broke of undercover Chinese military personnel enrolled as graduate students at American universities, where they spied on and stole American technology and research.<sup>1</sup> Several hundred researchers—many of them U.S. citizens—are also under investigation for participation in China's Thousand Talents Plan, which lures scholars into sharing sensitive research. Dozens have been arrested and face serious charges. Several have been convicted.

This report is about the College Board, itself the subject of a Chinese government influence campaign. Most Americans know the College Board as the force behind the SAT and the AP exams. Few know that it has partnered closely with the Chinese government not only in the development of the AP Chinese Language and Culture exam, but in multiple ongoing programs and projects, including an annual conference.

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<sup>1</sup> "Researchers Charged with Visa Fraud After Lying About Their Work for China's People's Liberation Army," The United States Department of Justice, July 23, 2020. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/researchers-charged-visa-fraud-after-lying-about-their-work-china-s-people-s-liberation-army>. Accessed August 4, 2020.

This report grew out of a larger project, “Purchasing Influence,” that we at the National Association of Scholars began in 2015. With support from the Achelis and Bodman Foundation and from the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation, we set out to examine how Middle East Studies centers, the anti-Israel Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement, and Confucius Institutes reflect attempts by adversarial foreign powers to gain influence over American colleges and universities. As often happens, the project did not go exactly as we planned. We started with Confucius Institutes because we viewed these Chinese centers on American campuses as the least complicated of the three objects of inquiry. Confucius Institutes appeared to be a “soft power” effort by the Chinese Communist government to project a more benevolent image of itself on foreign campuses. We began our inquiry thinking of it as a warm-up exercise.

It didn’t take long to discover that Confucius Institutes were a lot more intrusive and engaged in a lot more doubtful activity than we had ever imagined. That story was told in Rachelle Peterson’s report, *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education* (2017).<sup>2</sup> The report became the most important publication in NAS’s thirty-some-year history. It helped set off investigations by the FBI and the State Department and several Congressional Committees. Rachelle’s ability to move along with the other parts of the “Purchasing Influence” project was hampered by the continuing demands on her time from people wanting to know more about China’s involvement in American higher education.

This report on the College Board is one of several follow-ups to *Outsourced to China*, made possible by support from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation. Rachelle early on turned up a surprising connection between the Hanban—the Chinese agency that ran the Confucius Institutes—and the College Board. We put this on the back burner for a

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<sup>2</sup> Rachelle Peterson, *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*, National Association of Scholars, 2017. <https://www.nas.org/reports/outsourced-to-china>. Accessed August 4, 2020.

while, but as it became clear that the Hanban's connection to the College Board entailed real consequences for American higher education, we judged that a short report of Rachele's findings would be useful.<sup>3</sup>

While we were in the midst of drafting this report, *The National Pulse* beat us to the punch with a short article on the College Board's ties to the Hanban.<sup>4</sup> *The National Pulse* noted the College Board's Chinese Guest Teacher Program, which funnels Hanban teachers to American K-12 schools, as well as the Chinese Bridge Delegation and the National Chinese Language Conference, both of which offer professional development to American school principals and teachers of Chinese.

Our report adds to the facts reported by *The National Pulse*. We examine other, so-far unreported partnerships between the Hanban and the College Board, including the Hanban's involvement in the AP Chinese Language and Culture test. We offer a more detailed look inside the Hanban's programs. And we offer policy recommendations aimed at rooting out Chinese government influence in American K-12 schools.

First, though, it is helpful to step back and remind ourselves that, although the nation is waking up to the extent of China's mischief against the American economy and American security, many of our colleges and universities have laid out a welcome mat for China. Some forty-five colleges and universities have closed their Confucius Institutes and publicly rebuffed Hanban influence—but many have gone on to explore other, more hidden ways to coordinate with the Hanban. And some seventy-plus Confucius Institutes remain in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

3 The Hanban has just announced it will rename itself the Ministry of Education Center for Language Exchange and Cooperation. As part of this rebranding effort, it is reorganizing Confucius Institutes under a new Chinese government-backed entity, the Chinese International Education Foundation. Throughout this report, we continue to refer to the Hanban by its original name, because that is the name under which it has influenced and partnered with the College Board.

4 Natalie Winters, "EXCLUSIVE: US College Entrance Exam Board Gets Chinese Communist Party Cash To Push Propaganda," *The National Pulse*, July 13, 2020. <https://thenationalpulse.com/news/us-college-board-ccp-funding/>. Accessed August 3, 2020.

5 National Association of Scholars, "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?" National Association of Scholars. Originally published April 9, 2018, last updated July 1, 2020. <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how-many-confucius-institutes-are-in-the-united-states>. Accessed August 4, 2020.

Higher education has succumbed to Hanban influence for several mingled reasons. First, the Hanban pays colleges and universities to host Confucius Institutes, and augments these payments by bearing most of the costs of teaching Chinese on the host campuses. Second, the Hanban or its surrogates treat the administrators of cooperating universities as pampered pets, with honors and expensive trips. Third, the Hanban and its surrogates draw cooperating American colleges and universities into running programs in China, which become lucrative overseas extensions ripe for additional relationships with American academics. Fourth, China controls the flow of Chinese students enrolling in American universities, and these students generally pay full tuition. Income from Chinese students became a major source of funds for many of the participating universities.

These four factors together *entangled* American colleges and universities in China's designs. They also gave rise to the spectacle of American college and university officials stoutly defending the wholesomeness of China's involvement on their campuses. These testimonies, which continue at several universities, come despite the numerous reports from Chinese students that the Chinese government is engaged in surveillance of their activities and despite the wave of arrests of researchers connected to China's programs in the U.S.<sup>6</sup>

In the midst of all this, the College Board has developed its own warm and cordial relationship with the Chinese government. The report that follows provides the details.

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<sup>6</sup> John David, "Cracking Down on Illegal Ties to China," National Association of Scholars. Originally published May 29, 2020, last updated July 29, 2020. <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/cracking-down-on-illegal-ties-to-china>. Accessed August 4, 2020.

# The Report

## The Report

Confucius Institutes, the Chinese government-sponsored centers in American colleges and universities, have generated national alarm. FBI Director Chris Wray has warned that Confucius Institutes are part of China’s “whole-of-society” threat to American freedoms.<sup>7</sup> This year, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designated the Confucius Institute U.S. Center as a “foreign mission” of the People’s Republic of China, calling it “an entity advancing Beijing’s global propaganda and malign influence campaign on U.S. campuses and K-12 classrooms.”<sup>8</sup> Last February, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations concluded in a 96-page report that Confucius Institutes operate as “part of China’s broader, long-term strategy” to develop “soft power” and “export China’s censorship” to college campuses.<sup>9</sup>

Colleges and universities—the main partners of the Hanban, the Chinese government agency that runs Confucius Institutes—are facing unprecedented scrutiny. More than 40 colleges and universities have made the decision to cut ties with the Hanban and close their Institutes.<sup>10</sup>

But Confucius Institutes have another key partner that has gotten relatively little attention: the College Board.

The College Board, best known for the SAT and Advanced Placement Tests, has worked closely with the Hanban and strongly promoted

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- 7 Josh Rogin, “Waking up to China’s Infiltration of American Colleges,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/waking-up-to-chinas-infiltration-of-american-colleges/2018/02/18/99d3bee8-13f7-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/waking-up-to-chinas-infiltration-of-american-colleges/2018/02/18/99d3bee8-13f7-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5_story.html). Accessed July 28, 2020.
- 8 Michael R. Pompeo, “Designation of the Confucius Institute U.S. Center as a Foreign Mission of the PRC,” August 13, 2020, U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-the-confucius-institute-u-s-center-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/>. Accessed August 15, 2020.
- 9 Staff Report, *China’s Impact on the U.S. Education System*, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, United States Senate. Rob Portman, Chairman, and Tom Carper, Ranking member. February 2019. <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/PSI%20Report%20China’s%20Impact%20on%20the%20US%20Education%20System.pdf>. Accessed July 28, 2020.
- 10 National Association of Scholars, “How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?” National Association of Scholars. Originally published April 9, 2018, last updated July 1, 2020. <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how-many-confucius-institutes-are-in-the-united-states>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

Confucius Institutes. The College Board has launched at least 20 Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in the United States and partnered with the Chinese government to develop an AP Chinese Language and Culture Course. It recruits and brings American school teachers and district administrators to Hanban-sponsored trips to China and partners with the Hanban to provide professional development and other teacher training.

Even as colleges around the country close down their Confucius Institutes, the College Board has forged ahead with new Hanban-sponsored programs. This year, the College Board planned to launch in July 2020 a Hanban-sponsored Chinese Language Assessment Institute to bring Chinese language teachers to a 10-day program in China.<sup>11</sup> Although the coronavirus pandemic postponed the launch of the program until 2021, the College Board shows no signs of reevaluating its relationship with the Hanban.

A 2014 statement from College Board CEO David Coleman indicates the depth of the College Board's relationship with the Hanban. Speaking before the National Chinese Language Conference in Los Angeles—a conference organized annually by the College Board, Asia Society, and the Hanban—Coleman summed up: “Hanban is just like the sun. It lights the path to develop Chinese teaching in the U.S. The College Board is the moon. I am so honored to reflect the light that we’ve gotten from Hanban.”<sup>12</sup>

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11 “2020 Chinese Language Assessment Institute,” College Board. <http://eventreg.collegeboard.org/events/2020-chinese-language-assessment-institute/event-summary-4e5cb293a4d2419e8bdcb5db9e-290d9e.aspx>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

12 David Feith, “China’s Beachhead in American Schools,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 2014. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/david-feith-chinas-beachhead-in-u-s-schools-1401124980>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

## AP Chinese

In 2003, just as the Hanban was developing the plans for Confucius Institutes, the College Board announced that it would create an Advanced Placement Chinese Language and Culture test with support from the Chinese government. China would cover about half of the \$1.37 million cost of developing the course.<sup>13</sup>

At that time, the College Board offered only three AP language tests: Spanish, French, and German. It planned to create four more: Italian, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese. The AP Italian test was the first AP test ever to receive support from a foreign government, with the Italian government chipping in \$300,000. The Chinese test was the second. It was much more expensive, eliciting a substantially larger contribution from China: \$685,000.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to offering funding, China also offered teachers and textbooks to teach AP Chinese, an offer similar to the one Hanban would make colleges and universities that launched Confucius Institutes: funding plus teachers and textbooks.<sup>15</sup> The first Confucius Institute in the United States launched at the University of Maryland in 2005, one year before the AP Chinese Language and Culture Course launched.

Early critics of the AP partnership expressed concern that the College Board had behaved inappropriately by making a foreign government a stakeholder in its course design. Bob Schaeffer, public education director for the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, asked, “What is the Chinese or Italian government buying for their sponsorship? Will they

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13 Jay Mathews, “China to Help Create Classes for U.S. Schools,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 2003. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/12/06/china-to-help-create-classes-for-us-schools/e9d-f3c60-1e3d-4841-bfeb-45ef0b189c30/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

14 Tamar Lewin, “College Placement Program Expands Language Offerings,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2003. <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/06/us/college-placement-program-expands-language-offerings.html>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

15 “College Board Develops China Courses,” *Washington Times*, December 5, 2003. <https://www.washington-times.com/news/2003/dec/5/20031205-104452-6128r/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

be able to specify or influence the content of the exam, which is, in turn, designed to drive the AP course curriculum? Can they, for example, urge the inclusion of reading passages from the ‘Little Red Book’?”<sup>16</sup>

College Board CEO at the time, Gaston Caperton, dismissed Schaeffer’s concerns as “foolish.”<sup>17</sup> The Hanban may not have been so overt as to demand students read quotations from Mao Zedong. But it did conform to Chinese government preferences in other ways.

The AP test asks students to learn simplified Chinese characters, a more basic set of brush strokes imposed by the Chinese government in the 1950s and 1960s, with particular fervor during the Cultural Revolution. The PRC praised simplified characters as a boon for literacy: easier characters meant more people could master Chinese, a language notoriously difficult to write even for native speakers. But the promotion of simplified characters also served a political purpose. It prevented readers from accessing the older, traditional Chinese literature that Mao sought to supplant, leaving readers reliant on newer materials put forth by the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party. Contemporary readers of simplified characters are likewise cut off from much of traditional Chinese literature, as well as materials coming from Taiwan and Hong Kong—including dissident literature—where traditional characters remain in use.

Perhaps, in choosing simplified characters, the College Board simply decided that ease of reading was paramount. But regardless, the College Board has aided the Hanban in rendering traditional Chinese literature increasingly inaccessible—leaving readers more and more reliant on post-Mao materials.

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16 Mathews, “China to Help Create Classes for U.S. Schools,” *Washington Post*.

17 *Ibid.*

## AP Programs

Since the creation of the AP Chinese Language and Culture test, the College Board has gone on to create deeper and more elaborate partnerships with the Hanban, exposing students to Hanban influence in the guise of academic enrichment, and simultaneously enabling the Hanban to wield continued influence over the College Board.

Following the launch of the AP Chinese Language and Culture test, the College Board worked with the Hanban to develop additional programs for AP teachers and students. In 2015, the College Board advertised the “AP® International Leadership Program,” a three-week “education and professional exploration opportunity in Beijing, China.”<sup>18</sup> The College Board described the program as “overseen and administered by Confucius Institute/Hanban.” College students who had taken the AP Chinese Language and Culture exam and who were currently enrolled in Chinese courses at their university could apply through the College Board. The College Board would review applications and recommend candidates to the Hanban, which would make final admissions decisions.

The program was funded almost entirely by the Hanban, with students paying a \$200 application fee and minimal travel costs to a U.S. international airport hub. The Hanban would cover international airfare, Chinese visa fees, admission fees to all tourism sites, and all travel, accommodations, and food within China.

Students on the trip could choose between two tracks: Language and Culture, which focused on “traditional and contemporary Chinese culture, history and society,” and Business, which offered programs on business and economics. Language and Culture students would study at Beijing Language and Culture University, while Business track students

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18 “AP® International Leadership Program,” College Board, 2015. <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese/ap-international-leadership>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

would have their programming at the University of International Business and Economics. All students had the opportunity to “collaborate closely with a Chinese academic advisor on a field project.”<sup>19</sup>

The program leaned heavily on its ability to convey prestige—a prestige that would come almost entirely from the College Board’s imprimatur. It advertised to students an opportunity to “be part of a community of young, aspiring international leaders,” who could “network with students from across the US and China in a fully immersive, international setting.” It also promised to show how knowledge of Chinese would be helpful “in a variety of international career paths,” presumably career paths that could draw the United States and China closer together.<sup>20</sup>

## Developing Confucius Institutes

The College Board also helped to set up Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms as part of a “College Board/Hanban Confucius Institutes and Classrooms network.”<sup>21</sup> Most Confucius Institutes operate at colleges and universities, which sometimes serve as sponsors of additional “Confucius Classrooms” at K-12 schools. The College Board helped the Hanban develop some of the first Confucius Institutes at the K-12 level. In 2014, at the National Chinese Language Conference, College Board CEO David Coleman and Hanban Director General Xu Lin announced the creation of five new Confucius Institutes and fifteen new Confucius Classrooms.<sup>22</sup>

The Confucius Institutes were set up at Broward County Public Schools in Florida, Houston Independent School District in Texas, Davis

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19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 “Confucius Institute,” East Central Ohio Educational Service Center. <https://www.ecoesc.org/ci/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

22 Cindy Liu, “US to Get More Confucius Institutes,” *China Daily USA*, May 9, 2014. <http://124.127.52.76/a/201405/09/WS5a2fa4a7a3108bc8c6727f1b.html>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

School District in Utah, Clark County Public Schools in Las Vegas, Nevada, and the East Central Ohio Educational Service Center. All five are still in operation, and some have expanded to host additional College Board/Hanban programs.

The Houston Confucius Institute helps to oversee six Confucius Classrooms, three of which enjoy support not just from the College Board and the Hanban, but also from a third sponsor, the Asia Society.<sup>23</sup> In 2015, Broward County Public School district took 17 students on a two-week Hanban-sponsored trip to China. Students visited “historically and culturally significant locations”—including the Confucius Institute headquarters.<sup>24</sup>

Confucius Institutes have come under intense scrutiny in recent years, as FBI Director Christopher Wray,<sup>25</sup> Secretary of State Mike Pompeo,<sup>26</sup> multiple members of Congress,<sup>27</sup> scholars, and journalists have exposed the way the Chinese government uses Confucius Institutes as tools of soft power and influence. The National Association of Scholars’ own report, *Outsourced to China*, helped launch a national conversation about the problems with Confucius Institutes. Since then, more than 40 colleges and universities have closed their Confucius Institutes. Yet the College Board has shown no signs of reconsidering its participation.

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23 “Confucius Institute (CI),” Houston Independent School District. <https://www.houstonisd.org/confucius>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

24 “BCPS Confucius Institute Students to Visit China,” *Fort Lauderdale Connex*, July 7, 2015. <https://www.fortlauderdaleconnex.com/local/29589-bcps-confucius-institute-students-to-visit-china.html>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

25 Rogin, “Waking up to China’s Infiltration of American Colleges,” *Washington Post*.

26 Pompeo, “U.S. States and the China Competition,” Speech at the National Governors Association.

27 E.g. “Following Discussion with FBI Director Wray, Senator Hawley Asks Missouri Universities to Reconsider Their Partnerships with the Chinese Government,” U.S. Senator Josh Hawley, July 24, 2019. <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/following-discussion-fbi-director-wray-senator-hawley-asks-missouri-universities-re-consider-their>. Accessed July 29, 2020. “Blackburn Leads Effort to Distance American Universities from Confucius Institutes,” U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn, March 12, 2020. <https://www.blackburn.senate.gov/blackburn-leads-effort-distance-american-universities-confucius-institutes>. Accessed July 29, 2020. Letter to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos from U.S. Representatives Jim D. Jordan, Virginia A. Foxx, Michael D. Rogers, Frank D. Lucas, Devin G. Nunes, Mac Thornberry, Michael T. McCaul, May 4, 2020. <https://republicans-edlabor.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter-fdi-higher-education.pdf>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

## Cornering the K-12 Market

With help from the College Board, the Chinese government has sought to corner the market on overseas instruction in Chinese language and culture. In the short-term, it provides native Chinese speakers to teach in American schools. In the long-term, it trains the Americans who will become the core of Chinese language instruction in the United States.

To accomplish the first goal, the Chinese government has put together a network of Chinese nationals available to teach in American K-12 schools. The Chinese Guest Teacher Program, as described on the College Board's website, is "made possible through a collaboration between College Board and Hanban." It boasts of being "the largest Chinese visiting teacher program in the U.S.," reaching "tens of thousands of U.S. students." The College Board says that since 2007, it has worked with the Hanban to bring more than 1,650 Chinese teachers to the United States.<sup>28</sup>

The guest teacher program leans heavily on its ability to bring "authentic" Chinese language and culture to American schools. It boasts that Chinese guest teachers can "assist in curriculum development, program expansion, and partnership creation"—plus "lay a foundation" for AP Chinese classes.<sup>29</sup>

The program may serve as an on-ramp to the development of a Confucius Classroom. (Confucius Classrooms develop closer ties between school districts and the Hanban. They also have additional benefits, such as more funding from China and priority in requesting teachers through the Guest Teacher Program.) As with Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, the Chinese Guest Teacher Program brings Chinese nationals vetted by the Hanban as full-time teachers for one to three years, with payroll support from the Hanban.

28 "Chinese Guest Teacher Program," College Board. <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese/guest>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

29 *Ibid.*

Chinese Guest Teachers, like Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom teachers, are screened by the Hanban, which develops a pool of candidates from which schools may select. For the Guest Teacher Program, the College Board plays a role as well, reviewing and vetting candidates who have passed the Hanban's initial review. The College Board says it "does not accept" applications from teachers, but rather the "Hanban collects the applications from teachers in China." Chinese teachers are "approved by their home institution" and by their "provincial government," then "selected by Hanban," and finally "evaluated and approved by College Board and NCSSFL [National Council of State Supervisors for Language]." The College Board then accepts applications from U.S. schools and districts and matches them with Chinese teachers.

Local school districts and the Hanban share in the program's operating costs. The Hanban provides each teacher with a \$13,000 stipend, which school districts are required to supplement such that the Chinese teacher's total pay is "consistent" with that received by "a U.S. teacher with similar responsibilities and similar education teaching full-time at the same institution." Host institutions must also provide free housing and transportation for the first month of the teacher's stay, and "assistance" in obtaining long-term housing and transportation. Schools must also pay an "administrative fee" of "approximately \$3,600 per new teacher and \$2,700 per renewing teacher" to cover visa and health insurance fees.

Host institutions must also provide two mentors per teacher, a "cultural mentor" whose job is to help the teacher "get oriented and settled into the community" and arrange social and cultural outings, and an academic mentor who must be another teacher at that school.

As with Confucius Classrooms, guest teachers focus on Chinese language but have the opportunity to teach other subjects that help shape students' attitudes toward China. "Guest teachers may also serve

as cultural resources to facilitate other subjects such as social studies, art, music, international studies, etc.,” the College Board advises. Some schools assign their Guest Teacher to an immersion classroom, in which students study all subjects in Chinese—including history, politics, economics, and other subjects in which the Chinese government may take a particular interest.

The College Board says that guest teachers may bring course materials with them, and while the College Board distances itself from these materials (“College Board does not provide or endorse any textbooks”), it encourages schools to ask their guest teachers for “assistance in identifying suitable teaching materials for their program.”<sup>30</sup>

The Hanban and College Board work with several other organizations to bring the teachers to the United States. The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages helps the College Board select and train guest teachers. The Institute of International Education serves as the J-1 visa sponsor.<sup>31</sup>

## Bridge Delegations

To encourage schools to sign up for the Guest Teacher Program and other initiatives of the Chinese government, the College Board and Hanban put together the Chinese Bridge Delegation program. The College Board describes the delegation as a “weeklong program in China to help educators start or strengthen their institution’s Chinese programs and partnerships.” It aims to help attendees “establish meaningful partnerships with Chinese local schools” and “gather resources to build and support Chinese language and culture programs.” It advertises

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30 *Ibid.*

31 “Guest Teacher FAQs,” College Board. <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese/guest/faq>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

the opportunity to “experience the rich traditional culture set against stunning modern development.”<sup>32</sup> The College Board contracts with the Hanban to recruit and identify candidates for these trips.

The Bridge Delegation targets those with the authority to pursue partnerships with the Chinese government: the Hanban gives “selection priority” to “K-12 district administrators, school leaders, and other education decision-makers” who are “actively seeking to develop new and expanded Chinese programs.” Participants are “expected” to be “actively involved in and able to speak about” their institution’s Chinese language and culture program. Perhaps in a nod to the Hanban’s efforts to develop long-lasting, and therefore more powerful, relationships with K-12 decision-makers, it encourages the return of “former delegates,” who are “welcome to apply” again.

The Hanban has invested heavily into these Bridge Delegations. The College Board’s notice for the 2019 Chinese Bridge trip advised that participants were to cover their own travel insurance, visa and passport fees, and possibly their own international airfare, depending on the airport hub. But participants would pay nothing for hotels, ground transportation, group meals, or site visits. The College Board’s website acknowledges, “This program is made possible by Hanban, committed to the development of multiculturalism and providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources worldwide.”<sup>33</sup>

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32 “2019 Chinese Bridge Delegation to China,” College Board. <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese-bridge-delegation?excmid=VT-00093>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

33 *Ibid.*

## Training American Teachers

The Hanban also seeks to train Americans to teach Chinese, recognizing a key opportunity to influence and help to define the people, institutions, and standards that will shape Chinese studies in the United States for years to come.

To that end, the Hanban has invested in two programs targeting American teachers of Chinese: the Chinese Language Assessment Institute and the National Chinese Language Conference.

The Chinese Language Assessment Institute, cosponsored by the College Board and Hanban, was scheduled to launch in July 2020. The program intended to “gather Chinese language educators” for a “10-day intensive program on the campus of Beijing Language and Culture University.” The program targeted AP Chinese teachers, who were to learn about the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) assessment, a Chinese government-developed language proficiency test, and to learn about “best practices in the field of Chinese language education in the USA, China and internationally.”<sup>34</sup>

The program gave a nod to the Chinese government’s efforts to define “authentic” Chinese culture, one stripped of minorities like the Uyghurs and religious groups such as Falun Gong: Hanban promised to “share and develop authentic and contemporary cultural teaching materials.” It also advertised its ability to “foster professional relationships and dialogue between Chinese language educators from the USA, China and other countries.”

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34 “2020 Chinese Language Assessment Institute,” College Board. <http://eventreg.collegeboard.org/events/2020-chinese-language-assessment-institute/event-summary-4e5cb293a4d2419e8bd9e290d9e.aspx>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

The Institute is canceled for 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, but the College Board shows no signs of nixing the Institute for the future.

As with the Chinese Bridge program, participants in the Chinese Language Assessment Institute were to pay for their airfare, passport, and visa. The host university would cover “all China-side expenses upon arrival, including housing, transportation, and meals for the duration of the program.”<sup>35</sup>

## National Chinese Language Conference

The National Chinese Language Conference has become the preeminent professional development experience for Chinese language teachers in the United States and perhaps the Hanban’s most effective investment in American education. The Hanban launched the conference in 2007. Five years later, in 2012, it found effective surrogates in the College Board and Asia Society, who became the primary public organizers of the conference, with the Hanban serving as the chief sponsor. Most conference programs feature three logos on the front covers: College Board, Asia Society, and Hanban. Inside, Hanban’s name is frequently listed in large font alongside its logo, and the Hanban is thanked as the primary sponsor. It was at the 2014 conference that College Board CEO David Coleman made his revealing comments about the College Board seeking to “reflect the light” of the Hanban.<sup>36</sup>

The National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC) is the largest annual gathering in the U.S. of teachers and others interested in Chinese language teaching. More than 1,300 teachers and school administrators

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Feith, “China’s Beachhead in American Schools,” *Wall Street Journal*.

attended the 2019 conference. Since the launch of the conference in 2007, 14,600 people have attended.<sup>37</sup> College Board and Asia Society describe NCLC as “a homecoming” for Chinese language teachers in the U.S.

Over the years, the conference has brought together an extraordinary number of key political figures. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel gave a keynote address in 2012.<sup>38</sup> In 2014, Australia’s former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave a keynote.<sup>39</sup> Neil Bush, the son of former President George H.W. Bush and brother of George W. Bush, spoke in 2017.<sup>40</sup> In 2018, Utah Governor Gary Herbert spoke, praising the Hanban’s work to launch Chinese language immersion programs in Utah public schools.<sup>41</sup>

Key figures in Chinese politics have addressed the conference as well. Xu Lin, director-general of the Hanban, spoke at least two years, in 2012<sup>42</sup> and 2015.<sup>43</sup> Zhang Yesui, ambassador of China to the United States, spoke in 2012.<sup>44</sup> Hao Ping, China’s vice minister of education, spoke in 2013.<sup>45</sup>

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37 “About the Conference,” National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/about-conference>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

38 “2012 National Chinese Language Conference,” National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/2012-national-chinese-language-conference>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

39 “2014 National Chinese Language Conference,” National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/2014-national-chinese-language-conference>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

40 “2017 National Chinese Language Conference,” National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/2017-national-chinese-language-conference>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

41 “2018 National Chinese Language Conference,” National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society, May 30, 2018. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/2018-national-chinese-language-conference>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

42 “State of the Field,” Program for the 2012 National Chinese Language Conference. <https://asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/N/NCLC12%20Program%20Book.pdf>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

43 “Pathways to Global Engagement,” Program for the 2015 National Chinese Language Conference. [https://asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/N/NCLC15%20Program%20Book\\_1.pdf](https://asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/N/NCLC15%20Program%20Book_1.pdf). Accessed July 29, 2020.

44 “State of the Field,” Program for the 2012 National Chinese Language Conference.

45 “Hao Ping, Vice Minister for the Ministry of Education in China, speaks at the 2013 National Chinese Language Conference, April 2013,” NCLC13, Center for Global Education at Asia Society, Flickr, April 7, 2013. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/26185287@N04/8653188476/in/album-72157633366364871/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

For a time, the National Chinese Language Conference enjoyed support from the U.S. federal government. During the Obama administration, senior staffers from the U.S. Department of State and Department of Education served on conference advisory committees. In 2012, the head of the Department of Education's international affairs, Maureen McLaughlin, spoke.<sup>46</sup> In 2014, the Department of Education was a conference sponsor.<sup>47</sup>

The program has drawn heavily on Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms. In 2014, just as Confucius Institutes were beginning to face their first wave of public criticism, the conference featured a session on "The Role of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in American Public Schools."<sup>48</sup> A few months before, University of Chicago Professor Marshall Sahlins had published "China U," a blistering article in *The Nation* criticizing Confucius Institutes,<sup>49</sup> and University of Chicago faculty had begun agitating for the university to close its Confucius Institute. (The university did so in September 2014, just after the National Chinese Language Conference in May.)

The conference program promised that "presenters will share their experiences" of working with "the support of a Confucius Institute and a Confucius Classroom," showing "how their Chinese programs have benefited." Perhaps attempting to deflect the critique that Sahlins and others were beginning to make, the program asserted "The primary role of the Confucius Institute (CI) and the Confucius Classroom (CC)" is merely "to expand" Chinese language programs.<sup>50</sup>

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46 "State of the Field," Program for the 2012 National Chinese Language Conference.

47 "Building Capacity Coast to Coast," Program for the 2014 National Chinese Language Conference. <https://asiasociety.org/sites/default/files/N/NCLC14%20Program%20Book.pdf>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Marshall Sahlins, "China U.," *The Nation*, October 30, 2013. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/china-u/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

50 "Building Capacity Coast to Coast," Program for the 2014 National Chinese Language Conference.

That same year, another five conference sessions focused on Confucius Institutes. One promised to help participants “discover” the “value of utilizing Confucius Institutes and their Hanban teachers.” Another introduced the “advantages” of “new teaching resources developed by Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters.”<sup>51</sup>

Confucius Institutes have featured prominently in other NCLC programs. The 2012 conference featured a session on “Confucius Institute Scholarships.”<sup>52</sup> A 2015 session featured three speakers on “how their districts’ Chinese programs have grown through participation in Hanban–College Board collaborative programs such as the Chinese Bridge Delegation, Chinese Guest Teacher and Trainee Program, and Confucius Institutes and Classrooms.” Another, “The Cultural Activities of Confucius Institutes,” showcased “cultural activities conducted by the Confucius Institute Headquarters.”<sup>53</sup>

The conference also encouraged schools to use the Hanban’s Chinese Guest Teacher Program. One session from the 2015 NCLC vaunted the benefits of hosting a Hanban teacher who can “represent the modern culture in China” and “integrate the best of the U.S. and Chinese educational learning strategies.” In another from 2015, presenters discussed how their programs had expanded “through participation in Hanban/College Board collaborative programs such as the Chinese Bridge Delegation, Chinese Guest Teacher and Trainee Program, and Confucius Institutes and Classrooms.”<sup>54</sup>

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51 *Ibid.*

52 “State of the Field,” Program for the 2012 National Chinese Language Conference.

53 “Pathways to Global Engagement,” Program for the 2015 National Chinese Language Conference.

54 *Ibid.*

The 2020 National Chinese Language Conference was scheduled to take place on May 7-10 in Orlando, Florida. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the in-person events have been cancelled. Instead, the College Board helped to present a free livestream program on June 24-26.<sup>55</sup>

In recent years, the College Board has begun to downplay the Hanban's role in the National Chinese Language Conference. The canceled 2020 conference is described on the College Board's website as being "co-organized by the College Board and Asia Society."<sup>56</sup> At the Asia Society's website, the program shows logos for both the College Board and Asia Society, but not the Hanban.<sup>57</sup>

The decision to limit public recognition of Hanban may represent a political move designed to sidestep scrutiny as the Hanban and Confucius Institutes generate greater and greater controversy. Or it may simply indicate that the Hanban, having seeded the program in early years, has watched it grow to full bloom and turned it over to the operations of the College Board and Asia Society. To do so may sound, at first hearing, like a win for academic independence. But the Chinese government's goal in developing soft power has all along been to develop partnerships so strong and so subtle that the Hanban can shape and guide their development and then leave, sure that its influence will remain. Hanban only rarely interferes overtly. It prefers to infiltrate, nudge from within, and develop strength from inside the institutions already leading American society. That is precisely what soft power means.

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55 "The 2020 NCLC Updates," National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society, 2020. <https://asiasociety.org/national-chinese-language-conference/2020-nclc-updates>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

56 "National Chinese Language Conference," College Board. <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese/nclc>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

57 "The 2020 NCLC Updates," National Chinese Language Conference, Asia Society.

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

How far the College Board was nudged and how far it may have bent of its own accord is, to some degree, unknowable. The College Board's track record on AP tests is hardly impartial. Its 2014 revisions to the AP US History test presented America as an ill-conceived, hypocritical regime,<sup>58</sup> while its 2015 revisions to the AP European History test treated Europe as nothing more than an engine of oppression and imperialism.<sup>59</sup> That the College Board would now present China in sanitized, Chinese Communist Party-approved fashion may simply represent its own inclination to elevate America's rivals.

Financial relationships with the Hanban are not the only indication of the College Board's affinity for China. It has also willfully turned a blind eye to flagrant SAT cheating in China, where wealthy students not only pay off proctors and hire alternative test-takers,<sup>60</sup> but also access test questions in advance.<sup>61</sup> The College Board's lax security—including reusing entire tests at foreign test centers—has generated significant revenue. The College Board profits substantially from offering tests on which Chinese students know they can cheat.

For its own integrity and for the sake of the millions of American students who take College Board tests and use College Board materials, the College Board should immediately sever all partnerships with the Hanban. It should suspend the AP Chinese Language and Culture test. It

58 Peter Wood, "The New AP History: A Preliminary Report," National Association of Scholars, July 1, 2014. [https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/the\\_new\\_ap\\_history\\_a\\_preliminary\\_report](https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/the_new_ap_history_a_preliminary_report). Accessed July 29, 2020.

59 David Randall, *The Disappearing Continent: A Critique of the Revised AP European History Examination*, National Association of Scholars, 2016. <https://www.nas.org/reports/the-disappearing-continent-a-critique-of-the-revised-ap-european-history-examination>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

60 Peg Tyre, "How Sophisticated Test Scams From China Are Making Their Way Into the U.S.," *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/how-sophisticated-test-scams-from-china-are-making-their-way-into-the-us/474474/>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

61 Steve Stecklow and Renee Dudley, "College Board Tightens SAT Exam Security, but Key Risk Remains," *Reuters*, February 22, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-college-sat-security-idUSKBN1612AB>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

should cease sponsoring Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, and it should encourage school districts to cut ties with the Chinese Guest Teacher Program.

But it may be unrealistic to reform the College Board. Its partisan record on the AP US History and AP European History tests have prompted some—including the National Association of Scholars—to suggest that an alternative organization ought to develop nationally recognized, college-level subject matter tests for high school students.<sup>62</sup> The United States needs competitors to the College Board. It has effectively monopolized substantial portions of U.S. high school teaching and has proven itself unworthy of such power.

Further complicating any potential reform of the College Board is the fact that China is in the midst of a major rebranding effort aimed at disguising the Hanban's work. In June, China announced the Hanban would rename itself the Ministry of Education Center for Language Exchange and Cooperation. Funding for and oversight of Confucius Institutes will now be run through the Chinese International Education Foundation, a new organization that is technically a nongovernmental nonprofit, but will surely be a pass-through for Chinese government funding and oversight. The renaming and new division of labor will obscure the Hanban's influence, inviting its partners, including the College Board, to similarly reorganize and disguise their Hanban programs.

The upshot is that we should look skeptically at any reform the College Board may propose in the future. We should root out College Board/Hanban programs. And we should create alternatives that better support Chinese language teaching in the United States.

First, the Department of Education and Department of Defense, both of which fund Chinese language education throughout the country,

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<sup>62</sup> Randall, *The Disappearing Continent*.

should convene a working group to prepare an alternative high school Chinese language and culture test. These two departments should rigorously vet all group participants to screen out influence from the Chinese government. They should ensure that the test requires students to study not only traditional pre-Mao Chinese history and culture, but also modern Chinese history under the Chinese Communist Party. The test should not seek to prejudice students against China, but it should ensure they have an accurate, clear-eyed understanding of the Chinese Communist Party and its rule.

Second, the Department of Education should issue a warning to school districts, notifying them of the threat posed by Confucius Classrooms and the Chinese Guest Teacher Program. Congress should condition federal education assistance on the closures of all Confucius Classrooms and severing of all participation in programs connected to the Hanban or to the Chinese International Education Foundation, the new overseer of Confucius Institutes. School districts should be required to choose, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, between the funding they receive from Hanban and its ancillary organizations or the funding they receive from the U.S. government.

Third, Congress should condition federal funding to the College Board on the immediate severance of all partnerships with the Hanban or any of its replacement organizations. The College Board is a private organization, but it profits substantially from the federal government. The website [USAspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) shows nearly \$116 million in funding awarded to the College Board since 2008, coming from not only the Department of Education, but also the Departments of Justice, Defense, Homeland Security, State, and Interior.<sup>63</sup> The College Board should prove itself worthy of such funding before it continues to profit from the public purse.

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63 "College Entrance Examination Board," USA Spending, [https://www.usaspending.gov/#/keyword\\_search/%22College%20Entrance%20Examination%20Board%22](https://www.usaspending.gov/#/keyword_search/%22College%20Entrance%20Examination%20Board%22). Accessed July 29, 2020.

Fourth, the Department of Justice should open an investigation into the College Board's corruption by the Chinese government. Each year, millions of students take College Board-produced tests and study class materials aligned to College Board-dictated standards. Thousands of teachers train at College Board conferences and seminars, and hundreds of policymakers are swayed by their trust in the College Board, a trust betrayed by the College Board's dealings with the Hanban. Last year, the Justice Department went public with Operation Varsity Blues, an investigation into college admissions bribery and cheating. The College Board's corruption is far worse.

Fifth, the Department of Defense, which funds "Flagship" language programs in Chinese and other languages at universities throughout the country, should sponsor an alternative to the National Chinese Language Conference. The NCLC is past reform and must be replaced wholesale. Its entire conception and existence has been shaped by the Hanban. The conference organizing committee should be disbanded and replaced by scholars untainted by the Chinese government. The program should dedicate prominent sessions to exposing problems with Confucius Institutes and other Hanban programs. It should dedicate additional prominent conference time to Chinese dissidents and others whose voices the Hanban has quashed.

These measures may seem radical to some. If so, that is because the Hanban succeeded. China managed to build out an entire educational system before the public caught on to what was happening. It co-opted a prestigious, respected name—the College Board—and thereby side-stepped criticism. It gained an access it could never have earned outright by working from within organizations that Americans knew and trusted.

The College Board boasts that it is "dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education."<sup>64</sup> Its relationship with the Hanban says

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64 "About the College Board," College Board. <https://about.collegeboard.org/overview>. Accessed July 29, 2020.

otherwise. The United States is catching on to the game almost too late. But with effort we can roll back the Hanban's work and redeem the American educational system from Chinese government interference. It will be difficult, but worthwhile.

**I**n exchange for generous Chinese government funding, the College Board has given China strategic access to American K-12 education. Since at least 2003, the College Board has sponsored Confucius Institutes at K-12 schools, served as a recruiter for Chinese government programs, and helped the Chinese Communist Party design and gain control over American teacher training programs.

This report details the College Board's corruption by the Chinese government and outlines key policy changes to protect and restore the integrity of the American education system.

**Rachelle Peterson**, a senior research fellow at the National Association of Scholars, is also the author of *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education* (2017).

