



CCP in the Heartland

Representative John Moolenaar (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Select Committee on China, has sent a [letter](#) to the United States Heartland China Association (USHCA) requesting verifiable assurances that the organization is not acting as an unregistered agent of the People's Republic of China or facilitating covert foreign influence in the United States. Moolenaar's letter, addressed to Robert Lee Holden, Jr., chairman and president of USHCA, also expresses concern that the organization is an instrument of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) United Front Work Department, which directs CCP influence operations worldwide. He refers Holden to the Select Committee's 2023 report on the United Front Work Department (UFWD) titled [United Front 101](#).



United States Heartland China Association/X

Holden, a former Democratic governor of Missouri (2002-2005), is joined on the USHCA board of directors and board of advisors by a bevy of pro-Beijing former governors, diplomats, academics, and business men and women, such as Susan A. Thornton (CFR, formerly of the State Department, currently with Brookings Institution); former Democratic governor of Oklahoma Brad Henry (2003-2011); former Democratic governor of Mississippi Ronnie Musgrove; former Republican governor of North Dakota Edward Schafer; former president of the US-China Business Council Craig Allen; and Dan Wright, who served as U.S. Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson's managing director for China and the Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), which facilitated the disastrous U.S.-China trade expansion under Republican President George W. Bush.

Chinese Nationals on USHCA Staff

What should be of particular national security concern is the large number of Chinese nationals serving on the United States Heartland China Association's boards and staff who grew up in Communist China, attended CCP-run universities, have family in China, and frequently visit the People's Republic (PRC). Among them are:

- **Dr. Yawei Liu**, director of the China Program at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, adjunct professor at Emory University, and associate director of the China Research Center in Atlanta. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and still holds research and teaching positions at the CCP-controlled Fudan University and Shanghai Jiaotong University.
- **Qiaoni "Linda" Jing**, who serves as president, CEO, and a board member of Illinois-based Genective, one of the world's largest genetically modified-seed companies. She plays a major business role in the Midwest and nationally, with the *St. Louis Business Journal* honoring her as one of the "Most Influential Business Women" in 2019. She epitomizes the USHCA's stated



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mission to build a “positive, productive, and mutually-beneficial relationship” between the U.S. heartland region and China — except that the “mutually-beneficial relationship” is lopsidedly in Beijing’s favor.

- **Qun “James” Xue**, deputy director of the liberal-left, Illinois-based Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy, is a former professor at China’s Renmin University. He is the founder of the China-based CANbridge Pharmaceuticals Inc., and currently serves as chairman and CEO of the company. He is also deputy director general of both the Shanghai Foundation for Rare Disease and China’s Alliance for Rare Disease (CHARD).
- **Min Fan**, executive director of USHCA, got her education/indoctrination at Peking University before jumping into the U.S. corporate world (Hewlett Packard) and then to nonprofits promoting “bridge building” between the PRC and the United States, always aimed, of course, at obtaining targeted technologies and investments for Beijing. As executive director/chief operating officer of the US China Innovation Alliance (UCIA), she recruited more than 100 U.S. companies to visit China on sponsored trips.

Arm of the CCP

Like many other Chinese groups operating throughout our country — the US-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA), the China-America Friendship Association (CAFA), the National Committee on US-China Relations (NCUSCR), the US-China Education Trust (USCET), the US-China Business Council, and the US-China Chamber of Commerce (USCCC) — the United States Heartland China Association is almost certainly an important arm of the CCP’s United Front Work Department, whose work is directed by the Ministry of State Security (MSS), China’s version of the KGB.

The USHCA partners with the China-U.S. Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), founded by Tung Chee-hwa, former vice chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a principal arm of the CCP’s United Front system. Chairman Moolenaar of the House Select Committee on the CCP sent a letter to the acting president of Columbia University in 2025 alerting her to intelligence information that the CUSEF is funded by the CCP and should be considered a “malign influence” with which Columbia should not be associated.

Chinese Students in America

USHCA notes that it plays a facilitating role in bringing Chinese students to America. There were 76,710 PRC students and scholars attending heartland universities in 2022. According to [Statista](#), around 266,000 Chinese graduate and undergraduate students were enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities in the 2024-2025 academic year. By contrast, fewer than 900 U.S. students were studying in China during the same period. But the USHCA does its best to connect U.S. students, teachers, business leaders, and politicians to the indoctrination experts at CCP-run businesses and universities.

Guided Tour

The [Heartland Leaders Delegation](#) organized by USHCA took local leaders to China for a 10-day tour in November 2025. Among the stops on their itinerary were visits to Zhejiang University, West Lake University in Hangzhou, Hubei University, and Tsinghua University. The photos and commentary about the trip on the USHCA website paint a glorious picture of Chairman Xi Jinping’s regime. The delegation, led by Mayor Kim Norton of Rochester, Minnesota, included Mayor Deborah Feinen of Champaign, Illinois; Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey of La Crosse, Wisconsin; Mayor Dan Gibson of Natchez,



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Mississippi; State Senator Hillman T. Frazier of Mississippi's 27th District; and Commissioner Erika Sugarmon of Shelby County, Tennessee; as well as Dr. Michael Prendergast, a vascular surgeon from Chicago.

But, behind the smiling faces, VIP treatment, and carefully staged propaganda excursions is the steel-fisted control of the CCP and MSS. It isn't likely that the pampered delegates are aware of the fact that since 2023 the CCP has implemented unprecedented control and surveillance over colleges and universities throughout China, integrating Marxist-Leninist theory, Mao Zedong thought, and Xi Jinping's guiding ideology into all academic and administrative functions. (See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).) But, perhaps these Beijing bobbleheads would remain obstinately oblivious to the danger they are embracing even if they were presented with the hard, cold truth.

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