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## 5 Coming in from the Cold

### US-China Academic Relations after COVID-19

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**Abstract**

Academic relationships between Chinese and foreign higher education institutions have flourished for a generation, building upon intermittent outward-looking strategies since the late 19th century. International academic collaborations are an established practice for American institutions. Despite the urgency of the COVID-19 global pandemic, those with China are being challenged on national security grounds as the preferred method for state-directed acquisition of sophisticated science and technology, and other concerns. For US institutions founded on traditions of academic freedom, shared governance, and reciprocity, to be accused of negligence and naivete while China engages in such violations is a devastating affront both to the purpose of the university as known in the West and to the reputations and self-worth of many who work in them. More crucial than ever, US-China academic collaborations are facing heightened restrictions. Solutions to reforge and redefine this complex but enduring academic relationship in the post-COVID-19 era are discussed.

**Keywords**

international education, international exchange, research collaboration, higher education, China, US-China relations, study abroad, education policy

**Introduction**

The novel coronavirus that caused the COVID-19 global pandemic was perhaps the one thing able to bypass border restrictions and walls, ignore tariffs and trade barriers, evade surveillance by state and big tech corporate actors, and shut down the mobility of people and supply chains worldwide. In an age sometimes described in terms of unfettered and borderless *hyperglobalization* (Murray, 2006), the virus reminded people worldwide of the fragility of what had seemed irreversible triumphs of globalization.

COVID-19 and global higher education have a similarly vivid story, particularly the near cessation of student and scholar mobility. Closer

examination of recent trends tells a more nuanced story of when this slowdown in international educational exchange began, however (Fischer, 2019), particularly in the relationship between the two largest economies and most powerful states in the world: United States and People's Republic of China. The response to the pandemic tended to be a nationalist one, even though the crisis itself was global and international institutions arguably being the most efficient mechanisms to solve it (Richardson, 2020). Little public discussion occurred in the United States on how American institutions of higher education could work with Chinese or other foreign counterparts collaboratively. Whereas academics in China called for greater collaboration towards a more global scientific community able to tackle the pandemic and other challenges (Li, 2020), there was not a similarly urgent national discussion in the United States despite decades of advanced international partnerships.

Whether as one aspect of global great power rivalry (Colby & Mitchell, 2020), or as pawns in an emerging new Cold War (Layne, 2020), academic relationships between the United States and China had taken on a decidedly frostier tone before the pandemic. COVID-19 laid it bare. Why did this occur and what can be done to resolve it? This chapter seeks to provide insight into the enduring and complex academic relationship between China and the United States and provides considerations for reforging and redefining it towards new normalcy.

### **US-China Higher Education at a Crossroads**

Global higher education is fundamentally about *education*. Done right, internationalization of higher education supports and transforms curricula through meaningful interactions of culture and language (Knight, 1994); it contributes to students' intellectual and academic development (McKeown, 2009; McKeown et al., 2021); it enables scholars and researchers to collaborate productively on the most effective solutions to global challenges (Xie & Freeman, 2021); and can extend higher education institutions beyond national borders towards their broader and more excellent forms (de Wit & Hunter, 2015).

Higher education institutions also reside within states. They are organizations incorporated inside borders of countries whose laws they are subject to, often founded by governments and resourced through political processes, and typically constructed to serve the interests of the state. Although they may have relative degrees of autonomy depending on the form of government where they operate, they are regulated by the state and typically exist in order to contribute to the prosperity of the nation's population and economy (Cantwell et al., 2018). While universities in the United States have arguably held a less clear acknowledgment of their role vis-à-vis the state (Pusser, 2018), and have been largely autonomous to pursue international interests free from significant government interference, those in China are very much under state control in general and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) direction in particular (Cai & Yan, 2017). While there are different university models in

China, with varying degrees of national control, it is nevertheless true that all Chinese institutions of higher education must follow state goals and objectives, including CCP political supervision (Lai, 2010) with incentives to develop graduates in strategic fields for key industries (Lau, 2020).

This “asymmetry in Sino-American exchange” (Hoover Institution, 2018), particularly the different governance structures and perceived academic objectives of US and Chinese higher education, underlies much of the recent criticism facing Chinese universities in their dealings with American counterparts. Seen this way, China is tactically exploiting gaps in an otherwise open system of collegial exchange with the United States. American institutions may not always be aware of what their faculty are doing overseas, for example, or the extent to which their researchers collaborate with Chinese state-run operations. Such lack of oversight is not typically what American institutions encounter from the Chinese government when working in China, however, what the Director of the FBI called “naivete on the part of the academic sector” (U.S. Senate, 2019).

Tough policies have been implemented because of this suspicion. The United States began revoking Chinese student and scholar visas over suspected ties to China’s military, and some visiting Chinese scholars funded by their government were forced to leave the United States. On American campuses, administrators received sternly-written directives from the federal government, including a letter co-signed by the Secretaries of State and Education warning universities to “examine carefully” all China-related activities, to “push back against efforts to infiltrate and divide us,” and that the “authoritarian influence” of the “CCP’s totalitarian regime” should be guarded against (U.S. Departments of State and Education, 2020).

Strenuous policy guidance (U.S. Department of State, 2020) critical of Chinese Confucius Institutes, at one time totaling more than 500 on university campuses worldwide including in the United States before recent closures, were issued in 2020. Confucius Institutes are mutually agreed-to language and cultural centers staffed and funded by Chinese universities, hosted by partner universities. They have become lightning rods for criticism and scrutiny in the United States as “essentially political arms of the Chinese government” (U.S. Senate, 2019) operating on American university campuses. This reflects a chilling concern for US higher education regarding China: undue influence by the Chinese state on American campuses. It is particularly acute in sensitive technological and scientific research, free speech and academic freedom issues, and on-campus operations. Joint research collaborations between universities, a tradition of academic exchange and mobility programs, are now criticized as the “preferred method” (Hoover Institution, 2018) for Chinese state-directed acquisition of sought-after technologies from the United States. Seemingly harmless on-campus clubs and social groups under the Chinese Student and Scholar Association (CSSA) banner are seen as a “ready channel and entry point” (Hoover Institution, 2018) for intelligence gathering, as well as to stifle academic freedom by keeping in line Chinese campus peers through monitoring and reporting on those who stray from official CCP narratives

on controversial topics like Tibet's autonomy, persecution of minorities in Xinjiang, democracy activists in Hong Kong, and the status of Taiwan.

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened official US rhetoric, blaming China for missteps managing the virus and bringing to the surface simmering disputes and grievances that impact the foundation of US-China academic relations. It also has raised concerns for US higher education and international education professionals that they and their universities are expected to be part of the official state apparatus designed to exclude, restrict, and monitor international partners rather than embrace, expand, and enrich what had until recently been considered a mutually beneficial exchange, perhaps confirming after all that even in the United States "(h)igher education is an inherently political activity" (Cantwell et al., 2018).

### **China's Unique Position**

China's higher education sector has been on an accelerating modernization and internationalization process over the past two decades. It has grown through similar state-directed and state-funded agendas as other economic sectors, with the goal to improve academic offerings, expand research capacity and expertise, diversify and internationalize personnel (particularly in English language proficiency), and overall to become globally competitive.

The Chinese government has not hidden its efforts to include higher education in its engagement with and opening up to the world, indeed in many ways it has been explicit in its educational goals since its post-Cultural Revolution opening in 1978 ("Principal Documents," 2005). Further, the US government, still ensconced in the Cold War with the Soviet Union at the time of official recognition, understood that American technological and academic superiority made for an advantageous exchange relationship, including "the great reservoir of knowledge and ability in science and technology existing in American colleges and universities," and it was understood at the time that the thousands of students and scholars that China planned to send to the United States, almost all in science and technology disciplines, were something to include in its first formal diplomatic dialogues with China (Jimmy Carter Library, 1979). This effort occurred alongside China's overall economic growth and modernization strategy following guidance from global economic institutions including the World Bank (Ma, 2014).

Today the Chinese government encourages and funds international educational collaborations not just with the United States but worldwide, particularly to advance science and technology, and it has generally found willing university partners at every turn. The rush to recruit students from China, build academic and research linkages in China, and receive funds and institutes from China can be seen, therefore, as deliberate actions on the part of independent-minded, globally conscious US and other foreign universities. Whether because of ambition for global prestige and rankings, the necessity

for additional financial and academic resources, or well-meaning naivete, the view from China might very well be that these US and other foreign universities were willing actors in a mutually beneficial, harmonious, win-win situation for both sides. By one measure, in the latest pre-pandemic data, over 372,000 students and over 47,000 visiting scholars came to the United States from China, dwarfing the number from any other country and comprising fully one-third of the total in the United States (IIE, 2020).

While clearly an important player in terms of scientific and technological development during a period of profound economic growth, as well as for massive delivery of educational opportunities during a period of immense societal transformation, higher education modernization and internationalization in China should be seen unequivocally as having been directed by the state. With that direction comes the assumption of centrality, power, and recognition that the resulting university system would serve the state, enforce its priorities, avoid unwelcome foreign influences, and preserve unique Chinese characteristics. This has included partnerships with American higher education which, again, was well understood by the US government at the time of recognition and diplomatic opening, particularly that “the Chinese would like to acquire the Western technology and equipment, master the ability to replicate and improve it, adapt it to their own needs, and remain independent of the West” (Jimmy Carter Library, 1979).

Particularly in the area of research collaborations, the Chinese government through its Ministry of Education has provided generous funding for experiences by visiting scholars abroad, most notably to the United States. As cited earlier, these relationships have been particularly controversial. While such funding priorities driven by state economic imperatives might imply a massive coordinated strategy worthy of suspicion, a closer look at how these Chinese scholars pursue their activities abroad, and how those state-funded experiences and skills are employed once they return to China, suggests that strong linkages are not always evident. After their time in the United States, Chinese scholars do not typically report working closely on their home institution’s internationalization efforts or otherwise contributing directly to strengthening their global competitiveness once back in China (McKeown, 2021) and, in general, there has not been a wholesale copying or modeling of US and Western higher education structures in China despite the extent of academic collaboration and mobility (Liu & Scott Metcalfe, 2016).

This misunderstanding both undervalues the considerable soft power advantages held by the United States, as it continues to draw talented students and scholars from around the world, and likely overstates the emphasis on Chinese educational and cultural exchange with the United States as being part of a realist competition and ideological conflict as both strive for greater global influence (Lynch, 2013). Nonetheless, increasingly many consider a new Cold War between the two as either inevitable or already underway (Marginson, 2019) and whether higher education will be consumed by it.

## **Five Points to Reforge and Redefine US-China Academic Relations**

The arrival of COVID-19 and the global tightening of borders, as well as the urgency to develop effective vaccines and ensure supply chains, has made US-China academic collaboration more difficult and more crucial than ever before. Due to the steady backsliding of what a short time ago was a lively, productive, and voluminous relationship, there are prudent and realistic ways to imagine global higher education in general and the US-China relationship in particular in order to restart in a more sustainable manner.

### ***Point #1: The State Matters***

At the first meeting I ever attended at the Ministry of Education in Beijing, what struck me was not the specifics of that day's meeting but rather the thoroughness of Chinese government involvement and preparation. The Ministry of Education (MOE) official had a list of all the agreements with all the universities that mine had previously signed in China, matched program by program and degree by degree, with our Chinese partners. That would never happen in Washington, DC. In retrospect, I was just a typical representative of a form of entrepreneurial and largely unregulated international education enterprise easily undertaken at that time. With respect to China at least, I would argue that those days are over.

American higher education professionals do not typically consider themselves to be directly part of a national security apparatus. As stated earlier in this chapter, a case can be made that just like universities worldwide US institutions have always been a part of their state structure. At the very least, *vis-à-vis* China, it is time to recognize that they are. The story of my first Beijing meeting certainly suggests that the Chinese government views university international relations as such.

For many US higher education professionals, especially those with a tradition of agnosticism regarding the relationship with the federal government, recognizing the role of the state more deliberately could bring about an important change in posture. We live in a democratic society with well-run institutions of government (recent concerns notwithstanding). As educators and professionals we will continue to be vigilant, proactive, and above all to advocate for our students and scholars, performing our work as we define it and intersect with the state as it requires us, no more and no less, giving to the state what is the state's: responsibility for matters of law enforcement, counter-espionage, surveillance of visiting scholars and students, and so forth, much of which has accelerated in recent years. As we delineate even more clearly than before the state's interest in and control over these activities, whether or not we agree with the policies responsible for them, it has the potential to relieve dedicated professionals from undue worry over accusations of negligence, naivete, or complicity as some recent criticisms hold.

If harnessed properly, this reformed role can allow us to relinquish what I would argue in retrospect were improperly developed and inaccurately

held beliefs about our own agency as institutional actors on the global stage in the first place. We can be informed and in compliance regarding federal regulations and policies, not necessarily fervent and certainly not intimidated. We can be assured even if not entirely comfortable that in order for US-China academic relations to re-set properly it is for the best, and our counterparts in China will accept that as well. The joy and fulfillment lie in our academic collaborations and intercultural learning, regardless of any national security backdrop that ultimately is not our direct concern.

### ***Point #2: Relationships Matter***

An early career lesson I received from a seasoned mentor was that, essentially, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a foreign university is not worth the paper it is printed on, but real relationships endure. Given the speed with which many academic relationships are being severed between higher education institutions in China and the United States, one has to wonder how deep and meaningful those relationships ever were. Looking back on the recent robust period of US-China academic exchange, it seems fair to say that for many institutions MOUs were signed that were unable to be enforced due to national and jurisdictional incongruities, oftentimes filled with vague and superfluous language exalting the indubitable benefits of an international exchange without tangible outcomes or mutually agreed-to procedures.

It might be helpful to recognize better how our Chinese counterparts think. Chinese universities have their own goals, state-driven and party-controlled, as part of a well-established but dynamic national structure. What may be less understood outside of China is that as their country has developed at a rapid pace, they have ambitious new generations to educate and assuage. China's youth of today, born after the tumultuous Tiananmen Square period, is well aware of US culture and society and is generally favorable and open to experiencing it, sometimes motivated by China's recent history. However, China's youthful generations are not immune from, or always in disagreement with, CCP narratives and official positions on China's role in the world.

Those US institutions sincerely interested in working with Chinese counterparts should be mindful of this tenuous balance and consider carefully the expectations we have and the postures we embrace. Our standards, sometimes based on our own official or collegial narratives, may hold, for example, that our more open, liberal, democratic academic systems are superior and must therefore not be compromised in any context or in any way when working with Chinese partners. This may not be workable in a holistic sense, but achievements can be made on more transactional things. MOUs should be written and agreed to accordingly, explicit and detailed about what they seek to accomplish and only that. To seek overly broad engagements based on vaguely written MOUs built on universalistic approaches assumes an agreed-to goal for global higher education that is not universally shared.

Controversial as this may be to some well-meaning and sincere among us, by not adopting this posture, are we willing to risk cutting off academic



collaboration and engagement with Chinese institutions? Clearly, this would not be in anyone's long-term interest, Chinese or American. Further, if we insist on enforcing our standards on Chinese (or indeed any foreign) institutions, is that not in some ways similar to the superior-minded, condescending mindset out of another century, believing that China must somehow change on terms we think best and otherwise be *opened*? At the very least, those US higher education professionals seeking to engage with Chinese counterparts might benefit from knowing that this is how they could be perceived. Student flows, research collaborations, artistic and academic endeavors can flourish, but must be planned, should be purposeful, and respectful of a partner who is an equal. This limited but clear academic relationship is preferable, even at the expense of more typical, unfettered collaborations based on academic freedoms that others, including our Chinese counterparts, may not recognize or be able to adopt fully at this time.

### ***Point #3: US Soft Power Advantages Matter***

I was fortunate to have had a giant in the field of international education as a professor during my undergraduate study abroad program. His name was less important than how he referred to himself: as “the doorman,” literally opening doors for us to understand a country and a culture with otherwise inaccessible insights. For US academics recently jaded by domestic and world events, it should not be underappreciated how much our open and free system of higher education attracts and retains not only talented students and scholars but also encourages building and maintaining tight professional bonds internationally throughout careers and lives. That is an enormous soft power advantage that should be celebrated and reinforced. American cultural, political, and economic power still holds great advantages vis-à-vis China. America's creativity and vitality, embrace of cultural diversity and, generally speaking, support for immigration has kept it economically competitive and innovative at a level and scale other societies have not attained. All this said, it may take longer than anyone thought previously for the United States and China to come to mutually agreeable terms on many things.

If it is useful for us to recognize the importance of the state and how our Chinese academic counterparts see the world, it is also useful to understand how national security experts see us. US counter-espionage services consider China's visiting researchers and scholars to be non-traditional collectors of intelligence, and its considerable investment in *talents* initiatives, such as the recent Thousand Talents Program, to be deliberately designed to transfer knowledge and sensitive intellectual property to China, taking advantage of the relatively open and collegial academic research environment in the United States (OSAC, 2020).

This is understandable and depicts a worrisome challenge to US economic and geopolitical power. However, change seems to happen in China only incrementally and typically over a long period of time. If the United States is sincere about seeking a more open, democratic, and globally integrated



China, it might do well to remember that its greatest strength is its unequivocal embrace of freedom, confident in what it stands for and, therefore, attractive to others yearning for similar freedoms. We know that other nations have evolved from seeking higher education as only a tool of economic growth and power towards more cultural and enlightened purposes, and we know that the flow of Chinese students and scholars into the United States dwarfs the number in reverse (MOE, 2019). Despite the apparent near-term threats, it seems evident that China seeks as much to learn from and enjoy harmonious relations with the United States as it does to gain advantages. If the US plays to its advantages, in the long run, the opportunity remains to solidify its position not only with China but the rest of the world. Higher education can play an important part in that.

#### ***Point #4: Fixing US Higher Education Matters***

For US higher education professionals, the COVID-19 pandemic not only brought home the insufficient status of national preparedness and coordination, but other existential domestic concerns including broad mistrust of scientific expertise and the urgency of addressing racial inequality in pursuit of social justice. For some powerful and influential political and media leaders, what began as blaming China for American economic and strategic decline seemed to morph myopically and uncritically into blame for the containment and management of the virus, manipulation of international organizations, and to some extremists for creation of the virus itself. Despite the unilateral US withdrawal of scientific and disease control experts from joint projects in China (Buckley et al., 2020), as well as American withdrawal from climate, trade, and other international accords and organizations, to blame China alone for the multitude of national crises seemed to some as possibly racist in its impunity to those laying the blame and its overarching completeness towards not just a government but an entire nation and people, including Americans of Chinese descent (Lee, 2020). At the very least, it seemed a too-convenient, hollow narrative designed to shift attention from what ailed the United States at home.

One of America's greatest needs is a better, more inclusive, and successful higher education system that graduates more of its students into productive careers and lives, in turn bringing economic prosperity to families and progress to communities. Quality and rankings of America's most selective institutions are unquestionable, yet so too are high costs and debt burdens, elitist perception, and overall lack of accessibility and inclusion representative of a diverse nation. The challenges of pandemic response can push us towards deeper questions: are we who lead and participate in global higher education contributing the way it is needed most, or are we isolated in silos? This is relevant for the US-China academic relationship because without a strong core there will be no sustainably successful outreach across borders. Remembering that China seeks to build and improve its universities for their own sake, not merely to compete with the United States; if American universities do

likewise, and renew commitments to access, teaching, mentoring, advisement, and improving graduation rates, especially in the newly urgent remote and virtual learning space, and only then seek to renew and expand outward engagements, I believe we will be performing our international functions on firmer footing. Even experienced international educators often left out of these broader conversations should consider the urgency of this need and get involved right now.

***Point #5: This Moment Matters Because Academic Decoupling Is Unimaginable***

In early April 2020, as the realities of COVID-19 were ravaging New York, a brief story appeared in my local newspaper describing a video conference call between doctors and researchers at SUNY's Upstate Medical University in Syracuse and counterparts in Wuhan, China, where the first outbreak occurred. "Those on the call shared information about early identification and diagnosis, radiological exams, experimental drug use and other issues... (and) that the virus can be spread by people who do not have symptoms" (The Post Standard, 2020). That same SUNY hospital is home to a leading research institute whose director, a former US Army officer with global experience combating Zika, Ebola, and other devastating global diseases, was selected as the lead principal investigator worldwide for the development of one of the first COVID-19 vaccines (Mulder, 2020).

What would the world be like if international academic relationships such as those between the hospitals in Syracuse and Wuhan did not exist? If doctors and researchers had not built relationships and worked collegially so that, when a crisis hit, they were just a phone call away? What would the United States be like if its military officers, doctors, pharmaceutical innovators, research scholars, and academic professionals were not performing their work globally, constantly expanding networks and expertise? If the global spread of the virus taught us anything it is that national borders at best provide only an illusion of control; the world is a small and interconnected place. The new Cold War logic that too quickly entered the global dialogue is incompatible with responsible international academic relations post-pandemic. It is not an "either-or" world where one must choose the Chinese way or the American way, friendship with China or with the United States. Indeed researchers have concluded that academic decoupling with China would likely reduce and diminish US scientific output due to reduced collaboration with Chinese researchers (Lee & Haupt, 2020), which is not in America's long-term interests.

There are divergent views on how to proceed in the US-China academic context. Well-informed and experienced people in both countries, some of whom have spent their careers focused on this, find themselves at a crossroads along with their nations. That must be recognized and respected in this discussion. There are deep misunderstandings and misgivings in the United

States of Chinese organizational structures and systems, particularly how the state and the party influence Chinese universities, and there is great concern about how the Chinese government treats its minority populations in places like Xinjiang and Tibet, its censorship and opaque legal system, and more. There is deep suspicion in China of US policies and actions that are sometimes perceived as designed to perpetuate its global dominance, using its definitions of human rights and democratic ideals to solidify its own power. There are also deep social challenges in both countries. Despite this, the power of academic mobility and the mutual advantages resulting from this academic exchange have not diminished and, as the above story affirms, are more important than ever.

For academia, the US-Soviet Cold War was stifling in its restrictions on people-to-people interaction and intellectual collaboration. Thankfully that has not yet come to pass between the US and China, but tensions and restrictions have grown. While it is tempting to think in retrospect of some positive outcomes of the Cold War's intense global rivalry, such as the development of the internet and monumental achievements in space, the situation is different now. Global supply chains and financial markets are integrated, travel and communications have become faster and simpler, and information as well as a liberal education more attainable. If a Cold War metaphor is useful then let us consider it productively to rebuild ourselves not just to confront China, to focus on other moonshot goals for our country and all of humanity, and focus on "whole of society" progress, not just threats. With respect to the sober and divergent opinions on this consequential and strained matter, the question is not between being pro-China or anti-China, pro- or anti-American, it is understanding that China and the United States are both here, will be here, and how best to engage. Higher education can play a crucial role.

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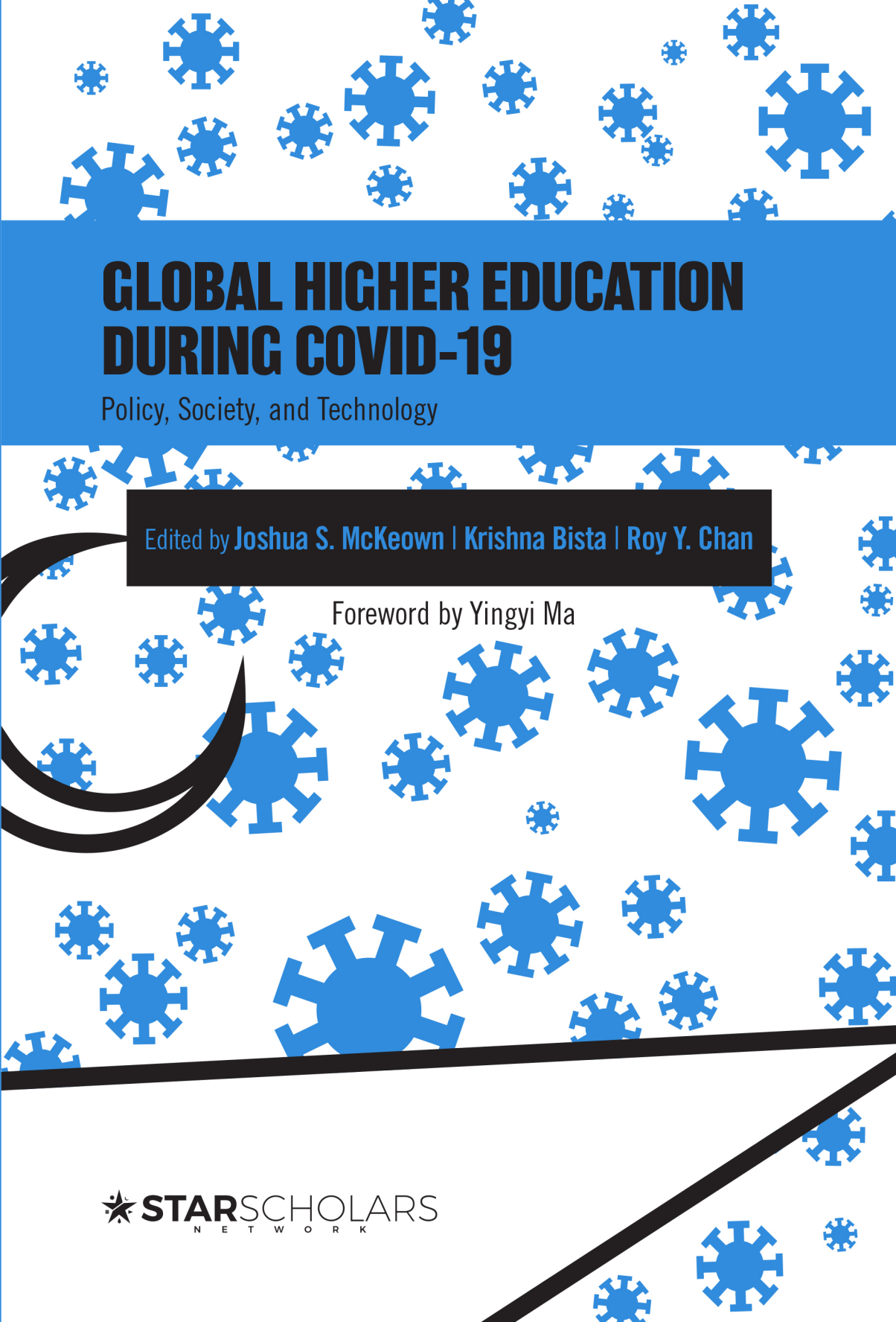
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# GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Policy, Society, and Technology

Edited by **Joshua S. McKeown** | **Krishna Bista** | **Roy Y. Chan**

Foreword by Yingyi Ma



## Praises for this volume

COVID-19 pandemic and digital innovation are making unprecedented disruption to the global higher education landscape. These disruptions have increased academic discussion on how to reimagine the future of higher education after post-COVID 19. Thus, the book, *Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* problematized these realities from a global policy context with policy recommendations on issues of racial justice, funding, technology among others. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the editors: *Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy T. Chan* for this excellent publication.

*Dr. KS Adeyemo, Senior Lecturer, University of Pretoria,  
South Africa*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe. Not only does this book provide invaluable insights from higher education institution policymakers, educators, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also offers useful suggestions on dealing with possible challenges and seeking opportunities in future higher education.

*Dr. Misty So-Sum Wai-Cook, Centre for English Language  
Studies, National University of Singapore*

It's a timely book reporting the most recent responses of international higher education across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides providing the theoretical contributions, the book also offers practical implications for stakeholders, including policymakers, education managers and practitioners, international students, and parents.

*Dr. Hiep Pham, Director, Center for Research and Practice on  
Education, Phu Xuan University, Vietnam*

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is timely and relevant providing a critically engaged reflective account of geographically diverse higher education institutions' response and practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. This book illuminates some of the current

impediments to higher education internationalization within the context of COVID-19 and provides insights into shared learning experiences that address new challenges to internationalisation imposed by the pandemic. A must read for international higher education specialists, practitioners, scholars and researchers.

*Dr. Tasmeeera Singh, Advisor, International Office,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

A worldwide phenomenon: Strategies and inspiration to address the challenges and opportunities for the new normal in the field of global higher education. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

*Dr. Daisy Kee Mui Hung, Associate Professor,  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

The movement of people across borders furthered the spread of Covid-19. This inevitably impacted international higher education, which although not reducible to student mobility is its primary form. *Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* is therefore a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education. The collection will be valuable to current and future scholars of higher education, offering an important snapshot of policy and practice during the pandemic.

*Dr. Will Brehm, Lecturer of Education and International  
Development, UCL Institute of Education, UK*

With the COVID-19 crisis having upended higher education around the world, this timely book provides a deep and much-needed analysis of the roles and responsibilities of universities going forward. It sheds light not only on the shared challenges countries have faced, but also reveals how the impact of the pandemic has varied in important ways across countries.

*Dr. Rajika Bhandari, Author/Advisor,  
STAR Scholar Network, USA*

Case studies provide valuable baseline information for practitioners of higher education as the world begins to emerge from the pandemic. A must-read for those looking to understand how various regions reacted, and how institutional systems changed their models to survive.

*Dr. L. Amber Brugnoli, Assoc Vice-President and  
Executive Director for Global Affairs  
West Virginia University, USA*

This book presents a comprehensive and rigorous worldwide account of Covid-19 impact, challenges and new opportunities. It stands out as a ground-breaking valuable companion for all those involved in the future of internationalization in higher education.

*Dr. Elena de Prada Creo, Vice Dean for International Affairs  
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Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and  
Technology

*Joshua S. McKeown, Krishna Bista, and Roy Y. Chan*

# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

## **Policy, Society, and Technology**

*Global Higher Education During COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology* explores the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for institutions of higher education worldwide. Specifically, this book responds to the growing need for new insights and perspectives to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19. The sub-theme that runs through this book concerns the changing roles and responsibilities of higher education leaders and the demand to rethink global higher education post-COVID. Topics in this book include: international student experiences, pedagogical innovations through technology, challenges to existing organizational cultures and societal roles, international academic relations, and shifting national policy implications for global higher education.

With the increasing threat of COVID-19 on all aspects of the global economy and workforce, this book serves as an opportunity for teacher-scholars, policymakers, and university administrators to reconsider and reimagine their work and the role of higher education in a global context. The ultimate goal of this book is to provide a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges brought by COVID-19 and how tertiary education systems around the world learn from each other to address them.

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# **Global Higher Education During COVID-19**

Policy, Society, and Technology

**Editors**

**Joshua S. McKeown**

**Krishna Bista**

**Roy Y. Chan**





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In memory of those who lost their lives during the COVID-19 global pandemic (as of August 2021):

**4.38 Million**

And to the 204 million heroes worldwide who recovered from the disease.



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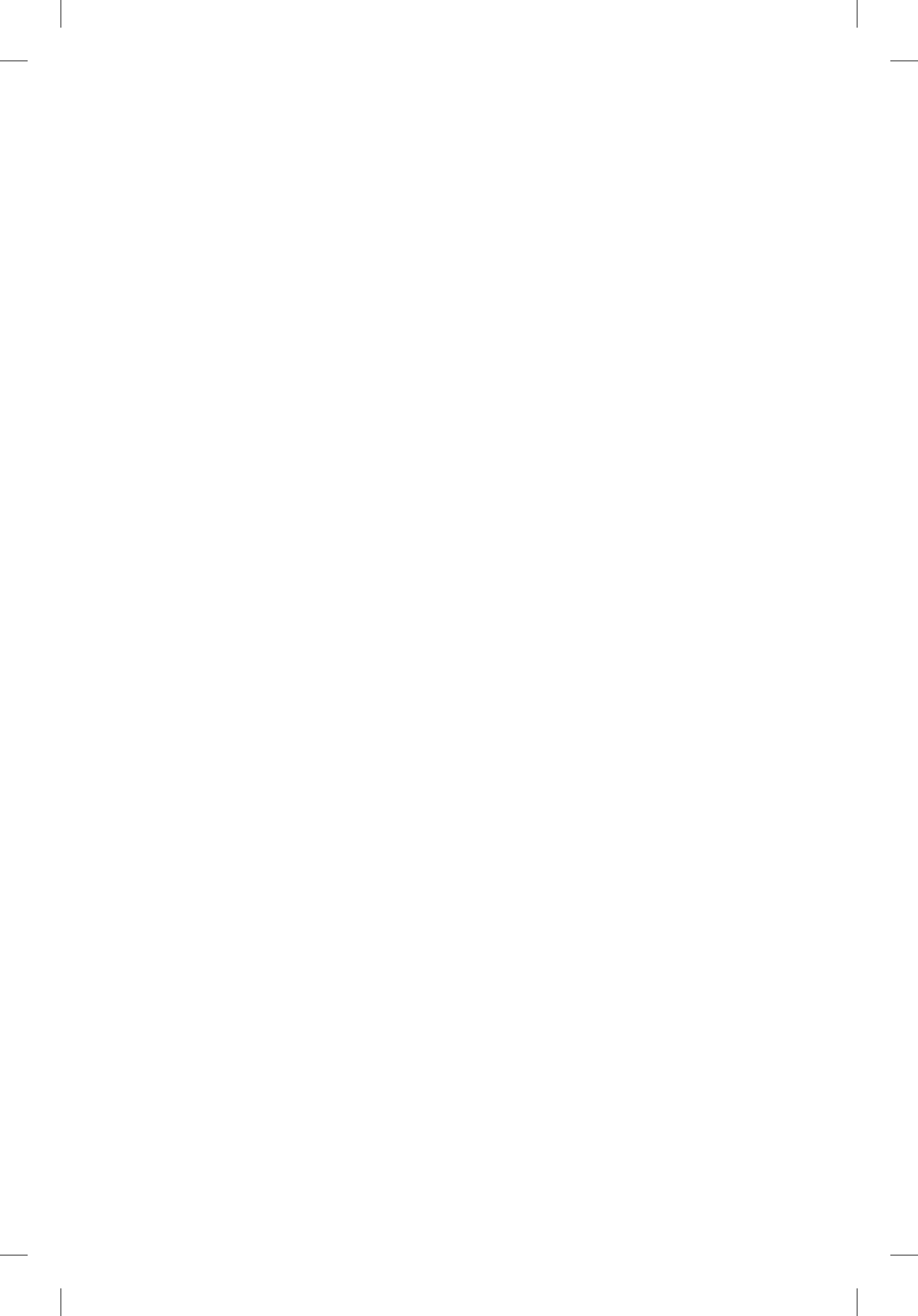
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# Foreword

*Yingyi Ma*

COVID-19 is upending daily life, and its impact on global higher education (HE) is seismic. How to understand the impacts and improve policy and practice in the field of international HE during and post-COVID? Colleges and universities around the world are wondering about the above questions, and this book has provided a much-needed discussion for those questions.

The editors of this book have done a tremendous job in assembling a wide range of in-depth studies, both in terms of substantive topics and geographic regions. The topics range from the role of HE in society, crisis and innovation through technology in HE, international student experiences navigating the pandemic, national policies, international academic relations, public and private university responses, and the innovative engagement efforts of global HE institutions. Despite the expansive topics, various articles share the theme of exploring the traditional and changing roles of HE in society. Part I presents a few studies grounded in diverse national contexts that show how HE operates and adapts to society changed by the pandemic.

I commend the editors for their efforts to include a wide variety of contexts of HE institutions in different countries. While the impacts of COVID-19 on HE may be uncertain, what is certain is the increasing inequality among countries in dealing with the pandemic due to the unequal access to resources, technologies, and public health management. Part II in this book, in particular, focuses on the Global South (lower-income countries). The studies have shown the devastating impact on HE in countries of the global south due to the faltering economy during the pandemic as well as the incredible resilience of faculty and students in these countries to lessen the hardship through impressive innovations.

Technology-powered online education has been the quintessential innovation of 21st-century HE. Technology is liberating as much as limiting. COVID-19 has forced global HE to confront, leverage, and manage the power of technology to engage with students, experiment, and explore new pedagogy. The editors of this book have presented a wide range of empirically based studies in different HE settings to show that technology is indeed the double-edged sword, and it is incumbent on global HE leaders and educators to figure out innovative ways to use technology well, while fully recognizing and managing its limitations. Part III has been devoted to this theme.

This book is for anyone who is interested in HE in the global world, including but not limited to scholars, teachers, administrators, and students, and for any concerned citizens to reimagine and redesign the global HE in a new era.

## **Bio**

**Yingyi Ma** is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Asian/Asian American Studies. She is the Provost Faculty Fellow on internationalization at Syracuse University (New York), carrying the term between 2020 and 2022, where she leads and supports culturally responsive pedagogy and programs for international education and partnership. She received her Ph.D. in sociology from Johns Hopkins University in 2007. Ma's research addresses education and migration in the U.S. and China and she has published about 30 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, in addition to books. She is the author of *Ambitious and Anxious: How Chinese College Students Succeed and Struggle in American Higher Education* (Columbia University Press, 2021). This book has won multiple awards from the Comparative and International Education Association and has been featured in national and international news media such as *The Washington Post* and *Times Higher Education*. She is the co-editor of *Understanding International Students from Asia in American Universities: Learning and Living Globalization* (2017), which has won the honorable mention of the Best Book Award from the Comparative and International Education Association's Study Abroad and International Students Section.

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We are most grateful to colleagues at the STAR Scholars Network. We also appreciate the support of colleagues with whom we have worked over the years at the Open Journals in Education, a consortium of the professional journals, the Comparative and International Education Society's Study Abroad and International Students SIG, and the *Journal of International Students*.

We would also like to acknowledge the help of all the scholars who were involved in this project and, more specifically, to the authors and reviewers that took part in the review process. Without their support, this book would not have become a reality. At Morgan State University, Dr. Bista would like to thank his colleagues for their encouragement and support including graduate students and graduate assistants in the Department of Advanced Studies, Leadership and Policy. At Lee University, Dr. Chan would like to thank his Ed.D. students for their comments and feedback in this project.

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“Global Higher Education during COVID-19: Policy, Society, and Technology is a timely edited collection that begins to unpack the multifaceted impact the pandemic has had on higher education worldwide. It adds to the growing conversation on reimagining higher education.”

—**Dr. Will Brehm**

*UCL Institute of Education, UK*

“This book is a highly recommended resource for higher education institution policymakers and educators around the globe.”

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