September 14th, 2020

Dear students, faculties, and staff members,

We are a coalition of Chinese students seeking to continue our studies in the United States, and we are writing to express our concerns over the difficulties we have confronted with. Back in May, President Trump issued a proclamation to block certain Chinese students from obtaining visas and entering the United States, on the ground that they have ties with the so-called "Military-Civil Fusion Programs" in China. Up until now, this has resulted in many new students denied for visas and continuing students’ visas revoked in the past week. Confounded over stress, we are striving to voice our hope for support from our universities, the communities that we trust in and value.

It must be clarified that the "Military-Civil Fusion Programs," though defined as a threat to national security by the proclamation, does not involve most students from China. Receiving primary education in one’s home country does not entail any connection with or access to classified information. However, the vague phrasing of the proclamation extends the scope of the affected students, denied visas or having their visas revoked, to an alarming level. Many of them had to give up offers from top US universities and seek opportunities elsewhere.

The impact of this proclamation is rampant. As visa appointments in China keep getting canceled, with no foreseeable solutions for students who have not obtained their visas, many of them are traveling to other countries for visa interviews in hope of arriving on campus on time. However, there were rarely cases of approval, and more than half of the applicants have been rejected under the abuse of the proclamation, without any chance to explain their situations.

This proclamation, along with continuous allegations against Chinese students and scholars, has caused many of them to be severely harassed when entering or leaving the United States. Since May 31, many Chinese students were detained for hours and interrogated with soliciting questions by law-enforcement officers, their personal belongings and electronic devices unreasonably searched or confiscated with the presumption of guilt. As the next step, over 1000 Chinese students’ visas have been unjustly revoked. Many of these students are put in danger of potential removal and the past years of their time and work invested all nullified. Others, although not affected yet, cannot help considering these shocking moves only to be a start of more to come.

The negative impact on Chinese students will also adversely affect the universities. Historical data from the Institute of International Students (IIE) suggest that Chinese students in the United States contributed more than $15 billion to the universities and local communities during the past academic year. They made a meaningful portion of revenues supporting the education industry. Moreover, the unjust treatment of Chinese students and scholars violates the faith in academic freedom and the pursuit of equity, which have been long deemed valuable by institutions in the US. Many US institutions are reputed and respected for their values of diversity; their commitment to maintaining an intellectually motivated environment attracted talents from all over the world, including many of the brightest from China. The recent proclamation as well as its groundless execution jeopardizes the core values sustaining these
A Joint Letter of Appeal from Chinese International Students

communities of academics from the US, China, and across the globe, who wish to stay connected. These actions against Chinese students and scholars are now escalating to lead towards a drastic decrease in intellectual productivity in the United States, where an open and collaborative atmosphere cannot be achieved with foreign scholars threatened under false accusations and forced to leave.

We hope that you will share our concerns and take actions upon this proclamation and the consequently increasing racist and xenophobic incidents on campus, as it has been reported that some Chinese students encountered letters of threats and assaults in the US. We have the following appeals: First, we hope that the universities unite efforts to have this proclamation rescinded or modified to ensure that students unrelated to this proclamation will not be affected. Second, we hope that the universities can provide legal guidance and support for Chinese students whose visas were revoked and join in bringing more social attention to the matter. Third, we request help and understanding from the universities to facilitate the students’ needs when most of them have no choice but to stay overseas, and communicate with departments about the difficulties that Chinese students are facing. We appreciate the continuous support our schools have exhibited during these unsettling and trying times, and it is our sincere wish that the universities can recognize the severity of our situation and take necessary actions before things escalate in near future.

The proclamation and its execution have caused a significant disturbance in the lives and future of each one of us. We genuinely hope that our university would carry forward the spirits of equality to stand with us, to help build bridges and tear down the walls. We will be immensely grateful for our questions and concerns to be addressed with the cooperation from our universities and the larger society.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Zetao Jia  
Yale University

Yutong Nie  
Yale University

Haoran Cao  
Yale University

Weiyi Li  
Yale University

Yongxi Long  
Yale University

Hejinyan Qi  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Zejun Jiang  
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Yifei Chen  
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Yiyang Zhang  
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Ziyi Hu  
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Jiawen Zhang  
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Yueyan Gu  Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
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Shimeng Huang  University of Wisconsin-Madison
Yiting Liu  University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Yutong Wang  University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Jiayi Chen  University of Wisconsin-Madison
Zheng Hou  University of Wisconsin-Madison
Cesi Deng  University of Wisconsin-Madison
Ruoxi Li  University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Zhaoqing Li  University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Ye Liu  University of Washington
Ryan Lin  University of Washington
Yi Zhang  University of Washington
Xin Liu  University of Virginia
Tianhao Wu  University of Virginia
Piao Shengyuan  University of Virginia
Yuchen Lin  University of Virginia
Jia Li  University of Virginia
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Jie Zhang  University of Rochester
Jianhao Li  University of Rochester
Yutong Yang  University of Rochester
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Wenzhou Sun  University of Pittsburgh
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<td>Jianqiu Cao</td>
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Within Feng  University of Florida
Yunxiao Chen  University of Florida
Qingchen Yuan  University of Florida
Congyue Zhang  University of Florida
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Yukun Ma  Northwestern University
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Yue Teng Indiana University Bloomington
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Mingxi Xia Illinois Institute of Technology
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A Joint Letter of Appeal from Chinese International Students

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This letter is courtesy of the students named, and used with permission. The students’ names are alphabetically ordered by their schools. Please do not disclose their personal information without consent.