

NATIONAL

Spying for China Is One Way to Pay for NYU Grad School

Three scientists working at New York University's Langone Medical Center are accused of leaking research funded by the National Institutes of Health to a rival research institute funded by the Chinese government. For one scientist, his compensation was pre-paid grad school tuition.

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Three scientists working at New York University's Langone Medical Center are accused of passing research funded by the National Institutes of Health to a rival research institute funded by the Chinese government. For one scientist, his compensation was pre-paid grad school tuition.

NYU hired Yudong Zhu, a 44-year-old "accomplished researcher and innovator" in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology, as an associate research professor in the school's radiology department in 2008. Zhu arranged for Xing Yang and Ye Li, both 31-years-old, to move from China to New York to work with him in 2010 after he had just been earned a \$4 million dollar grant from the National Institutes

of Health to conduct his MRI research for the next five years. They were research engineers, according to the university. Yang came to the U.S. on a student visa.

But according to the the U.S. Attorney for Manhattan, Preet Bharara, said in a statement the university was "inviting and paying for foxes in the henhouse." The three men are now being charged with commercial bribery conspiracy.

The three men were allegedly working for United Imaging, a Chinese company working in MRI research, and the Shenzhen Institute of Advanced Technology, a research institute working on MRI technology backed by the Chinese government. So how does that pay? Zhu allegedly received \$400,000 cash from a United Imaging executive who prosecutors said was a co-conspirator in the plot. Yang and Li were both granted free travel between New York and China. Yang also had his grad school tuition paid for, while United paid for Li's rent in New York City.

The university launched an independent investigation, including confiscating laptops, reading their emails, and installing cameras in their research space, after Li disclosed he had been secretly working for the rival Chinese institute. NYU caught them taking pictures of the school's equipment and discussing private information with their Chinese contacts. Zhu allegedly admitted working as a "co-lead investigator" for United Imaging since 2011 on a project he claimed was "synergistic" with his work at NYU after he was confronted by the university earlier this month. The three men have since been suspended by the university.

The three men each face up to five years in prison if convicted on the charges. Though, it should be mentioned, one may never face an American judge. Zhu and Yang were arrested on Sunday in their homes. Li flew to Hong Kong on May 10 and has yet to return to the U.S.

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