

Xi-Biden summit: China and US pledge to revive academic ties in confidence-building push

- Education groups from both countries meet for the first time since the pandemic, promising to encourage exchanges
- China remains the biggest source of international students for the US but India is closing the gap

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Two top education bodies in China and the United States will reboot cooperation on academic exchanges as Beijing and Washington seek to ease strained relations.

In a joint statement on Monday, the China Education Association for International Exchange and the Institute of International Education said the two sides would encourage “their respective higher education institutions to re-engage as well as grow and deepen their cooperation”.

“The two sides affirm their commitment to support the two-way flow of students, teachers, scholars, researchers, and administrative staff from universities, as well as [to] leveraging short-term exchange programmes, internship opportunities, summer schools, cultural visits, and research fellowships,” it said.

They also vowed to build “greater confidence” among leading institutions and directly address “current and future challenges”. The association is a semi-official body overseen by China’s Ministry of Education and the US institute focuses on international academic exchanges. The institute opened its Beijing office in 2001.

The statement came after leaders from the two organisations held talks in the US in September, their first dialogue since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

They confirmed the next dialogue would be held in China next year.

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The announcement comes amid preparations for a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Joe Biden in San Francisco this week.

Other efforts at engagement through education include a visit to Shanghai in September by New York University president Linda Mills. Mills toured the NYU Shanghai campus and met Chen Jining, the city’s Communist Party boss.

Chen said Shanghai would continue to support NYU Shanghai and further China-US educational collaboration, adding that the city would “adhere to open-mindedness”.

In addition, Rice University’s David Leebron went to Tsinghua University in Beijing in September while Missouri State University president Clifton Smart made the trip to Southwest University in October.

Toddi Steelman, vice-president of Duke University, is visiting China this week. She met US ambassador to China Nicholas Burns on Monday and will visit Duke Kunshan University, a joint venture between Duke and Wuhan University.

Beyond higher education, the Chinese association also played host to a US delegation of primary and secondary school principals last month to encourage collaboration.

The US has lost its charm, maybe forever, to China’s brightest students

12 Oct 2023



Overall, China still accounts for the most foreign students at US universities, according to a study released by the US State Department and the institute on Monday.

But there are more Indian students than Chinese students in 24 US states, including Illinois, Texas and Michigan, which rank among the top destinations for international students.

“China remained the top-sending country in 2022/23, with 289,526 students studying in the US,” the study said.

“India, the second largest sending country, reached an all-time high of 268,923 international students in 2022/23, an increase of 35 per cent year over year.”

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16 Jul 2018



A 2021 survey of almost 2,000 US-based scientists by the Committee of 100 – an organisation of prominent Chinese-Americans in

business, government, and academia – found that 23 per cent of scientists of Chinese descent and 10 per cent of non-Chinese scientists had decided to stop collaborations with researchers in China.

They cited the China Initiative, which was launched by the Trump administration in 2018 to combat alleged economic espionage before it was discontinued by the Biden administration last year, as one of the reasons behind the drop.