

Report on Research Compliance Volume 20, Number 1. January 02, 2023

First Charged Under China Initiative, KU Researcher Faces Sentencing; Suit Settled

By Theresa Defino

In August 2019, Feng “Franklin” Tao, then an associate professor of chemical engineering at the University of Kansas (KU), became the first academic researcher arrested under the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) “China Initiative,” which was intended to keep U.S. research safe from inappropriate foreign influences. Later this month, Tao will be sentenced on the single charge remaining of eight, following a combination of a jury and a judge’s acquittal of the others.

The remaining charge is making a false statement, which stems from Tao’s institutional responsibilities form, in which he did not declare his affiliation with Fuzhou University in China. In April, a jury handed Tao a split verdict, acquitting him on four charges and finding him guilty on four.^[1] In September, Julie A. Robinson, senior district judge for the District of Kansas, dismissed three of those four.^[2]

In a related development, Sherry Chen, formerly a hydrologist with the National Weather Service who was charged in 2014 with spying in a case the government later dropped, recently accepted a \$1.8 million settlement to end litigation for wrongful prosecution and loss of employment.

Whether he receives a prison sentence of up to five years or probation, Tao and his family will never recover, Peter Zeidenberg, Tao’s attorney, told RRC.

This document is only available to subscribers. Please log in or purchase access.

[Purchase](#) [Login](#)