

# RESEARCH SECURITY GUIDANCE

## Indicators of Suspicious Behavior Visiting Scholars

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In recent years, national security and law enforcement agencies have issued alerts to the U.S. higher education sector, highlighting potential risks associated with visitors tied to foreign governments. These individuals may seek to exert influence, disrupt operations, or unlawfully acquire scientific research and intellectual property within campus settings. Such warnings emphasize the critical need for colleges and universities to maintain vigilance and proactive measures in protecting research security. Below are indicators of suspicious behavior to monitor when hosting visitors on campus. It's important to handle these signs with sensitivity and discretion, as not all may indicate malicious intent. However, if multiple red flags arise or genuine security concerns emerge, promptly reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities for further investigation and action is crucial.

1. **Unexplained Interest in Sensitive Areas:** If a visiting scholar shows a keen interest in accessing or acquiring information related to sensitive areas such as national security, critical infrastructure, defense technologies, or classified research topics without a clear academic or research justification, it could be a cause for concern.
2. **Attempts to Gain Unauthorized Access:** This includes trying to access restricted areas, computer systems, or data repositories without proper authorization or attempting to bypass security protocols.
3. **Erratic or Secretive Behavior:** Scholars who are overly secretive about their research activities, refuse to share details about their work, or exhibit erratic behavior that is inconsistent with their stated research objectives may raise suspicion.
4. **Unexplained Source of Funding:** If a visiting scholar's source of funding is unclear or appears to originate from sources with potential ties to illicit activities, it could indicate a security risk.
5. **Failure to Comply with Institutional Policies:** Visiting scholars who repeatedly fail to comply with institutional policies or research protocols, especially those related to security and confidentiality, may warrant further scrutiny.
6. **Inappropriate Requests for Information:** Requests for sensitive information beyond the scope of their research, especially if they are not forthcoming about their reasons for needing such information, should be carefully evaluated.
7. **Unusual Communication Patterns:** Anomalies in communication, such as attempts to communicate using encrypted or untraceable channels, frequent contact with individuals of concern, or sudden changes in communication patterns, may indicate efforts to conceal illicit activities.
8. **Behavior Inconsistent with Field of Expertise:** If a visiting scholar's behavior or research interests seem inconsistent with their stated academic background or expertise, it could be a warning sign.
9. **Possible Intellectual Property Theft:** Signs of unauthorized copying, downloading, or dissemination of sensitive research data or intellectual property should be thoroughly investigated, as they could indicate espionage or intellectual property theft.