

ASBMB Statement on U.S. Sen Tom Cotton's remarks on Chinese students in the U.S.

The following is a statement from Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology:

“The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology condemns the remarks made over the weekend by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., suggesting that Chinese students should not be allowed to earn science-related advanced degrees from U.S. universities.

The U.S. depends greatly on talented and skilled graduate students and postdoctoral researchers from all parts of the world to maintain its position of global leadership in biomedical research. The U.S. must continue to attract and train the very best and brightest minds if it is going to grow its research enterprise and find the technologies, therapies and cures that will improve and save American lives.

A globally sourced scientific workforce here in the U.S. fosters international partnerships and collaborations, supportive research environments and information sharing. These [three components of research are necessary](#) to advance scientific discoveries and innovation. Without the exchange of scientists, ideas, and research, science as we know it would come to a screeching halt.

Foreign-born students make essential contributions to education and research in America. Students from all over the world enrich the learning experiences of their peers. In addition, [according to the National Science Foundation](#), a majority of foreign students receiving post-graduate training in the U.S. choose to stay and become members of the exemplary and talented U.S. scientific workforce.

Foreign-born scientists push scientific fields forward by bringing new ideas and experiences with them to our shores. According to the [Science & Engineering Indicators 2016 report](#), foreign-born individuals in 2013 made up 27 percent of the United States' college-educated scientific workforce. In addition, [two-thirds of the total U.S. postdoc population](#) is foreign-borne, according to the National Institutes of Health. As of 2019, eight Nobel Prizes awarded to U.S. scientists have been awarded to those of Chinese background. It is vital to the standing, productivity and potential of the American research enterprise to continue to attract scientific talent from all over the world.

Chinese scientists and Chinese American scientists are [already under pressure](#) from federal funding agencies and federal investigators concerned with foreign influences in U.S. research. This pressure erodes the collaborative nature of scientific research that yields new discoveries and medicines. Cotton's remarks will, no doubt, deepen the divide and further discourage researchers with ties to China.

Finally, it's especially important to safeguard international experts and students and scientific research during a public health emergency that requires experts to constructively work together to ensure the safety and health of people everywhere.”