

Insights: Publications

## Academic Espionage: How International Trade Law Can Protect Higher Education (Note)

*49 Ga. J. Int'l & Compar. L. 211*

June 8, 2021

Written by

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In Atlanta, Georgia, neuroscientist Li Xiao-Jiang was at the peak of his professional career when his employment with Emory University was unexpectedly terminated in the summer of 2019. Before Xiao-Jiang's employment was terminated, he worked with his wife and lab co-leader at Emory University for twenty three years, conducting research related to Huntington disease. Xiao-Jiang, a tenured professor known nationally for his research and leadership within his lab, worked alongside committed postdoctoral students engaged in creating pig and mouse models to study Huntington disease. In May 2019, however, XiaoJiang's career came to a sudden halt when the school notified him of his termination of employment. According to Xiao-Jiang's fellow researchers, university officials seized Xiao-Jiang's lab and confiscated computer files and documents while Xiao-Jiang was on leave in China. Xiao-Jiang was stunned. In a statement following his termination, Xiao-Jiang exclaimed, he "was shocked that Emory University would terminate a tenured professor in such an unusual and abrupt fashion and close [their] combined lab consisting of a number of graduates and postdoctoral trainees without giving [him] specific details for the reasons behind [his] termination." Emory claims it followed the direction given by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in a statement aimed at combating the "unacceptable breaches of trust and confidentiality that undermine the integrity of U.S. biomedical research."