

**Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA**  
**September 3, 2013**

**An Open Letter To:**

**Dr. Wang Enge, President of Peking University**  
**Dr. Sun Qixiang, Dean of The School of Economics**  
**Dr. Zhu Shanlu, Chair of The University Council**

Dear President Wang, Dean Sun, and Dr. Zhu:

On June 14, 2013, Dr. Wang Enge, the president of Peking University, and Dr. H. Kim Bottomly, the president of Wellesley College, signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing a formal academic relationship between the institutions that involves “exploring a range of possible exchanges between our institutions, including students and faculty” and “exploring possible research collaborations.” As members of the Wellesley College faculty, we are very enthusiastic about the prospect of working with our colleagues at Peking University.

The Memorandum signed by Presidents Wang and Bottomly represents one of the most important initiatives that our college has undertaken in more than a century of academic connections with China. We fully support the idea of exchanges and collaborations that are of mutual benefit to students and faculty at both institutions and that build upon our shared dedication to excellence in higher education and scholarly inquiry.

We are pleased to read President Wang’s declaration on the Peking University English-language website that “with our democratic administration laying great emphasis on academic freedom and scientific research, we have proudly produced a great number of scholars in various areas of concentration and specialty.”

Likewise, we greatly appreciate the statement by the Dean of the School of Economics, Dr. Sun Qixiang, on her school’s English website that “independence, democracy, freedom, skepticism, and criticism are regarded as the essence of a university and the beauty of the university spirit. There is no doubt that such a spirit is a necessary element for one’s personality as well as an engine for innovation and creation.”

However, it has come to our attention that Professor Xia Yeliang of the Peking University School of Economics is facing dismissal for exercising his right of free speech on issues related to democracy, the rule of law, and individual freedom. We were distressed to learn that the faculty of the School of Economics will hold a vote in September on whether to remove Professor Xia from his position for reasons unrelated to his scholarly work, but based solely on his political and philosophical views.

We, the undersigned faculty of Wellesley College, are writing to you to affirm our commitment to the principle of academic freedom, which holds that scholars must be able to pursue their research and teaching free from ideological pressure, and that their jobs should never be in jeopardy because of their political views.

We are sensitive to the differences between Chinese and American society and our approaches to higher education. Yet, the principle of academic freedom is the very foundation of our liberal arts institution, Wellesley College.

We believe that dismissing Prof. Xia for political reasons is such a fundamental violation of academic freedom that we, as individuals, would find it very difficult to engage in scholarly exchanges with Peking University. If he is dismissed, we will encourage Wellesley College to reconsider our institutional partnership.

As fellow scholars, we ask you not to hold the vote on Professor Xia's status at Peking University and to uphold the noble principles and aspirations expressed so eloquently by President Wang and Dean Sun in their public statements regarding Peking University and the School of Economics.

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