

Report on Research Compliance Volume 19, Number 7. June 23, 2022 As Ang Heads to Prison, Reports Offer Tactics to Enhance Foreign-Related Enforcement Actions

By Theresa Defino

A little less than seven months after pleading guilty to one charge of making a false statement, Simon Saw-Teong Ang, a former University of Arkansas (UA) engineering professor, will report to prison for a one-year-and-a-day term for lying to federal agents about patents he received in China.^[1] His 2019 indictment on dozens of counts of wire fraud was unsealed in July 2020.^[2]

Ang's case is one of a few brought as part of the government's China Initiative to result in a prison term. The sentence came as two federal agencies—the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO)—issued new reports to help federal research funding agencies beef up enforcement of universities' compliance with disclosure requirements related to foreign support and with export control laws. Interestingly, OIG found that failures to disclose were common. Of 609 awardee institutions that responded to a survey from October 2020 to January 2021, 428 did not meet all NIH "disclosure requirements for financial interests or support from foreign entities."^[3]

A 32-year UA employee, Ang was arrested in May 2020 on an initial, single count of wire fraud; at the time he was director of its High Density Electronics Center. The Department of Justice said the guilty plea was to "count 58 on a superseding indictment charging him with making a materially false and fictitious statement and representation to an FBI Special Agent."

Ang is alleged to have "24 patents filed in the People's Republic of China," which he was required to report to UA. Additionally, UA "policy provided that it, not individual inventors, would own all inventions created by those subject to the policy." However, when questioned by the FBI, "Ang denied being the inventor, despite knowing he was. In addition, Ang also received numerous talent awards from the [People's Republic of China], which he did not list on the university's annual conflict of interest disclosure forms," the government said.

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