

Report on Research Compliance Volume 20, Number 6. May 25, 2023 RRC E-Alerts: May 4, 2023

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Lieber Sentenced to Two Days Already Served, Fined

On April 26, U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel sentenced Charles Lieber, former Harvard University chair of the Chemistry and Chemical Biology Department, to two days in jail, time he already served, and six months of home confinement as part of two years of supervised release. The sentence, which also included a payment of \$83,600, ends one of the most high-profile cases in the government's "China Initiative" that sought to protect research from untoward foreign influences but was criticized for unfairly targeting scientists of Asian descent. Cases against other investigators have been dismissed or resulted in convictions on far fewer charges with no jail time. Unlike Lieber, most of those investigators were not paid by a foreign university or talent program.

Lieber was convicted in December 2021 on six charges related to lying to FBI investigators and hiding payments from Wuhan University of Technology (WUT) and his affiliation with a Chinese talents program. Lieber signed a three-year contract with a talents program in 2012 and, according to the government, "performed many of the duties and responsibilities required of him under that contract, and been paid a substantial salary by WUT in exchange for his work. Specifically, the terms of Lieber's three-year Thousand Talents contract with WUT entitled Lieber to a salary of up to \$50,000 per month, living expenses of up to \$150,000 and approximately \$1.5 million to conduct joint research at WUT." His sentence includes a fine of \$50,000 and \$33,600 in restitution to the IRS for failing to file reports of foreign bank and financial accounts, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts. "The government recommended a sentence of 90 days in prison and a \$150,000 fine," the office said.

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