University of Regina

Newsline	Research Security		
Week	Nov. 17 -Nov. 21, 2025		
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Executive summary: This week's developments show a research landscape striving to advance innovation while managing growing security threats. Countries are investing heavily in AI, quantum, and space, yet still face structural gaps in funding and commercialization. Geopolitical tensions continue to affect partnerships and student mobility, underscoring the need to protect intellectual property and researchers from espionage. At the same time, rapid AI adoption brings efficiency gains but heightens integrity and governance risks requiring stronger safeguards.

Key Points:

- **Major national investments in strategic sectors:** Canada announced a tenfold increase in its investment in the European Space Agency, committing $528.5 million to strengthen its space sector and global scientific presence. The investment signals Canada's intent to lead in sensitive aerospace technologies.

  What this means: High-value collaborations in sensitive domains require strong IP protection, export controls, and vetted international partnerships to mitigate foreign interference.
- **Systemic challenges in the Canadian research ecosystem:** A new report highlights that Canada's R&D intensity remains among the lowest in the G7, driven in part by weak private-sector investment. Despite strong talent and high levels of education, the commercialization gap continues to limit Canada's ability to translate research into innovation.
- **What this means:** An underfunded research system is a vulnerable one. Financial pressure can make researchers and institutions more susceptible to high-risk partnerships, exposing them to undue influence, IP theft, and breaches of research integrity.
- **Geopolitical tensions reshaping international collaboration:** The U.S. State Department plans to suspend 38 universities, including major institutions like Harvard and Stanford, from its Diplomacy Lab program over DEI policy concerns. This decision highlights how domestic political agendas increasingly shape research partnerships and cross-border academic relationships.

  What this means: Security-driven or ideological decisions can significantly disrupt international collaboration networks. This reinforces the need for institutions to diversify

their partnerships and monitor the geopolitical risks affecting research mobility and collaboration.

- **Growing focus on research security and espionage threats:** European experts are warning academics to exercise heightened caution during international travel because of growing risks of espionage, including fake conferences designed to extract sensitive information. Similarly, the UK's MI5 has issued alerts about covert Chinese intelligence campaigns using professional networking platforms like LinkedIn to target researchers and policymakers.
- **What this means:** These incidents demonstrate that foreign threat actors are increasingly sophisticated and persistent. Continuous awareness training, digital hygiene measures, and travel risk protocols are essential to protect researchers and institutional assets.
- **The double-edged sword of AI in research:** A global survey shows AI tools are now widely used in research offices for literature reviews, grant writing, and administrative tasks, but many administrators see them as the biggest threat to research integrity. The duality of efficiency and risk is becoming a key governance challenge.
  What this means: AI tools introduce new vulnerabilities—from data leakage to systemic biases—requiring tighter oversight, secure use guidelines, and controls on sensitive data inputs.
- **Evolving policies on intellectual property and talent:** New Zealand is introducing a significant policy shift granting researchers the first right to commercialize publicly funded work, an initiative aimed at boosting innovation ownership and economic impact. Meanwhile, the UK continues to face warnings that restrictive immigration policies could undermine its ability to attract and retain international students.
- **What this means:** Allowing researchers greater control over IP can strengthen security and promote innovation, while restrictive talent policies threaten long-term research capacity. Countries that fail to attract global talent risk falling behind in innovation and security resilience.

Conclusion: This week shows that research security is inseparable from economic, industrial, and foreign policy: investments in AI, quantum, and space must be matched with governance that secures supply chains, protects IP, and supports commercialization. Canada and its allies must align funding and partnerships with strong vendor and export controls, researcher travel and digital-hygiene protocols, and AI oversight that enables innovation while safeguarding integrity. Without a coordinated approach, investments may expand capability but leave significant vulnerabilities unaddressed.