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THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 22, 2017

## **Former Virginia Tech Professor Charged in Federal Indictment**

### **Yiheng Percival Zhang Charged with Seven Felonies in Relation to Federal Grants**

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA – A federal grand jury sitting in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Roanoke has charged a former engineering professor at Virginia Tech in an indictment returned yesterday, United States Attorney Rick A. Mountcastle announced.

Yiheng Percival Zhang, 46, of Blacksburg, Va., is charged with one count of conspiring to defraud the United States, three counts of making false statements within the jurisdiction of the United States, and three counts of making false claims to the United States.

Zhang, a former professor of Biological Systems Engineering at Virginia Tech, was also the Chief Scientific Officer of Cell-Free Bioinnovations (CFB). According to the indictment, CFB applied for grant funding available through the National Science Foundation (NSF) under the premise that the money would be used for research on certain projects. However, it is alleged that Zhang intended for the grant funds to be used for other purposes.

The indictment alleges that Zhang, in an email to a CFB employee, stated:

“What we expect here is to get this free money and use half of money to do what you want do to do – make sweeteners. Another half will be used to pay VT graduate students to finish this project.”

The grants that are the subject of the indictment total \$600,000.

The case is being investigated by the National Science Foundation – Office of Inspector General, the Department of Energy- Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Blacksburg Police Department and the Virginia Tech Police Department provided assistance in the execution of search warrants. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Randy Ramseyer

A Grand Jury Indictment is only a charge and not evidence of guilt. The defendant is entitled to a fair trial with the burden on the government to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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**Component(s):**

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