

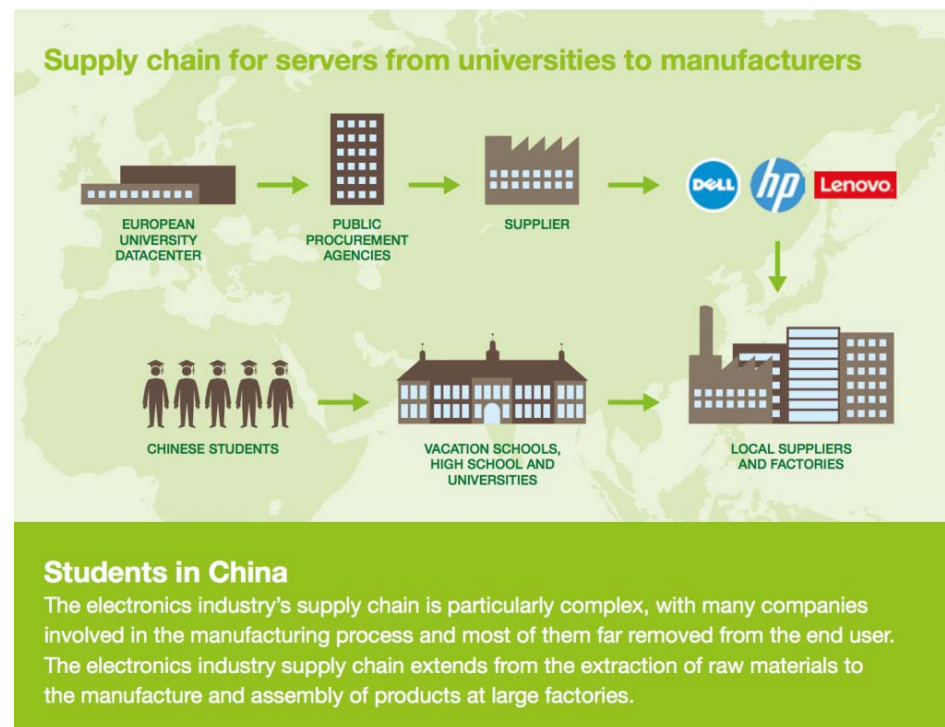


## Servants of servers: Forced student labor and rights abuses in Chinese factory that manufactures servers for Dell, HP, and Lenovo

Monday, October 5, 2015

On October 5, 2015, Danish independent media and research center Danwatch published the findings of an investigation, conducted in collaboration with China Labor Watch, of forced student internship programs in the Chinese supply chains of major IT companies. (The full report can be found [here](#).)

Entitled "Servants of Servers: Rights violations and forced labor in the supply chain of ICT equipment in European universities", the report details the case of the Wistron Corporation factory in Zhongshan, China, which produces servers for IT giants HP, Dell, and Lenovo, finding via student interviews that Chinese students are forced into compulsory internship programs that amount to mandatory five-month stints of repetitive menial labor on Wistron's assembly lines. Student interns are obliged to work overtime and frequent night shifts—performing the same work for the same hours as regular workers, amounting to ten- to twelve-hour workdays and six-day work weeks. This drudgery rarely relates to the student interns' fields of study, but students have no recourse if they want to graduate: Their universities will deny them their diplomas if they fail to complete the five-month "internships."



*This graphic is from the Danwatch report.*

All of this directly contravenes Chinese law and the International Labor Organization's Convention on Forced Labor, not to mention the IT companies' own policies. According to experts based in China and elsewhere, forced internship programs of this kind are nothing less than forced labor. Liu Kaiming, an expert in Chinese law and director of the Institute of Contemporary Observation in Guangdong province, said, "It is de facto forced labor if students are obliged to be interns at electronic factories in order to get their diplomas."



*Photo credit Danwatch.*

After being confronted by Danwatch with the findings of the new study, Dell and HP sent unannounced third party auditing teams to the Wistron Corporation factory in Zhongshan. Lenovo claims that it plans to conduct an audit of Wistron in the coming months. Dell's audits revealed that, in line with Danwatch's findings, students at Wistron were working overtime and night shifts, and that the students' work at the factory was rarely germane to their fields of study. HP's audit was more limited in scope, but they also admitted gaps in the internship programs, specifically regarding the implementation of responsible student management policies. Dell and HP have both decided to temporarily suspend the use of student interns on their server production lines.

*[Click here](#) to read Danwatch's full report.*

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