

University of Hong Kong (in Shenzhen).

Why is Shenzhen favored by China's top universities? The figures tell the story. The city's fiscal budget for education in 2018 is RMB 63.4 billion (USD 9.3 billion), accounting for about 16% of the city's fiscal expenditure, an increase of 25% over 2017. On the official website of the Shenzhen Science and Technology Innovation Commission, a public list of funding for 2018 scientific research indicates that projects supporting local universities in Shenzhen, plus famous universities and scientific research institutions at home and abroad cooperating with Shenzhen (including 17 foreign Project 985 universities, one Project 211 university, and six Hong Kong universities), account for about 70% of funded projects. Tsinghua University and the Harbin Institute of Technology in Shenzhen have received nearly RMB 30 million (USD 4.4 million) in grants. The graduate school and research institute of Peking University in Shenzhen have received more than RMB 25 million (USD 3.65 million). The Shenzhen Institute of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has received RMB 13.3 million (USD 1.9 million).

These figures certainly explain why local universities in Shenzhen are developing so rapidly. The research funding for Shenzhen University is nearly RMB 90 million (USD 13.1 million), and Southern University of Science and Technology is receiving more than RMB 30 million (USD 4.4 million). Most remarkably, Shenzhen Institute of Information Technology, a vocational college, receives a research grant of up to RMB 10.8 million (USD 1.6 million), which is higher than the funding for many Project 985 colleges and universities in Shenzhen.

These figures confirm an aphorism that applies to the development of colleges and universities: "Money may not be omnipotent, but no money makes things impossible." Of course, Shenzhen's success in this area cannot be simply attributed to money, but rather to Guangdong Province and Shenzhen's forward-looking strategic vision and various supporting policies, including funds, talent acquisition, and scientific research.

Thinking globally, acting locally

China officially proposed to build world-class universities and first-class disciplines in 2015. In April of that year, Guangdong had taken the lead in launching the construction of high-level universities in science and engineering in China (referred to as "Double High" for short), uniting the formation of national Double First-Class universities with that of Double-High universities, and dealing quickly with all aspects of organization, funding, and project management. The province invested more than RMB 30 billion (USD 4.4 billion) in Double-High universities in three years. The speed of this implementation is undoubtedly amazing. By contrast, three years later, there are still many provinces in China that are more than willing to construct Double First-Class universities, but lack the necessary resources. In these provinces, the greatest asset is undoubtedly their talent recruitment policy. However, with no high-level personnel handling hardware and material accumulation, the policy amounts to little more than a "castle in the air."

Last year, Guangdong issued the document "Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Mechanisms for Talent Development System Implementation," and proposed a series of measures to promote the establishment of a globally competitive talent system and accelerate the construction of special areas where talent can live and work. Shenzhen has been formulating more active and open

talent policies, ranging from the "1 + 6" policy for high-level professionals, to the "Peacock Plan" for introducing highly skilled talent from overseas, to the Ten Thousand Talents Project and the Talent Work Regulations. The "four beams and eight pillars" of the talent policy have been continuously improved and perfected, and more policy refinements are underway. Under these policies, the number of high-level experts in Shenzhen is now over 10,000, and the total number of professionals in the city exceeds 5.1 million.

Thanks to well-organized and firm implementation, the talent development policies have achieved excellent results. The most direct proof of this is that Zhongshan University, South China University of Technology, Jinan University, Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and South China Normal University are now listed as Double First-Class universities, making Shenzhen seventh in the country in terms of the number of these institutions.

By May 2017, 545 state-level experts and 371 provincial experts had been acquired by Shenzhen's Double-High universities; 50 disciplines had entered the top 1% of the Essential Science Indicators (ESI) database, with five subjects entering the top 1%; and 2,024 projects had been funded by the National Natural Science Foundation, with a growth of 10%. The number of approved projects in eight of Shenzhen's universities ranked among the top 100 in the nation's colleges and universities, marking the greatest achievement in the city's history.

Recognizing local universities

Local universities in Shenzhen have also benefited enormously. In March 2017, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education announced funding of RMB 1.5 billion (USD 220 million) for high-level university construction during that same year. According to the announcement, Shenzhen University received nearly RMB 30 million (USD 4.4 million) in financial subsidies, with nearly RMB 20 million (USD 2.9 million) in award funds. It should be said that this is in line with the rapid speed of the city's growth. Shenzhen University has six disciplines that have entered the top 1% of ESI's global rankings. This swift increase in academic rankings at home and abroad reflects the fact that this young university, founded only 35 years ago, is now in full vigor. According to media reports, Shenzhen will strengthen cooperation with prestigious universities at home and abroad on the basis of its effectively managed local universities, including Shenzhen University and Southern University of Science and Technology, and strive to develop several top-notch universities as well as more high-level, distinctive disciplines and professions. By 2025, the number of colleges and universities in Shenzhen is projected to reach 20, with full-time students numbering more than 200,000, three to five colleges and universities ranking among China's top 50, and more than 30 disciplines entering the top 1% of the ESI global rankings, making it one of the strongest cities for higher education in China.

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