

Shanghai has boasted the highest attraction index for talent in China for several years. The excess of talent available to the city has allowed it to become inactive in the work of attracting new talent. So what has made the city adopt these urgent stimulus measures? The answer, beyond doubt, is fierce competition. Over the past few years, the most important element of China's urban development has been to bring in new enterprises, which were expected to increase overall employment and the growth rate of GDP and tax revenue. However, in today's situation, talent attraction has become more prominent, and talent is now seen as the most essential factor in the development of cities and commerce.

There are clear signs that China's traditional first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen) are facing strong challenges from the so-called "new first-tier cities" (Chengdu, Wuhan, Nanjing, Xi'an, etc.) in terms of drawing talent. In 2017, those cities launched several programs to attract talent both at home and abroad, which is definitely a sign of "brain drain" for traditional first-tier cities that are now troubled by the problems mentioned above, such as the high cost of housing and challenging conditions for incoming migrants.

According to the spring 2018 "Research Report on the Job-Hopping Index of White-Collar Workers" issued by a domestic website focused on human resources, Chengdu, Hangzhou and Wuhan (among other new first-tier cities) for the first time surpassed the traditional first-tier cities in bringing in talent, which is exemplified by the fact that more and more white collar workers are job hopping to new first-tier cities.

The intense scramble to acquire talent has even spread to second- and third-tier cities, and even institutions at the district and county level have entered this fierce competition. The Xiaoshan District of Hangzhou, for example, has issued an announcement that winners of key awards such as the Nobel Prize and the Turing Award, and world-class scientists (including academicians from the United States and the United Kingdom, and academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering) can receive a grant of up to RMB 100 million (USD 15.9 million), among other benefits.

China's intensified effort to attract talent is clearly good news for its colleges and universities, which are the major participants in the country's plan to build world-class universities and first-class disciplines.

Universities in China are offering competitive salaries, often commensurate with what could be expected in the UK or the US.

Treatment like this for high-level talent is commonly seen in China-not counting accommodation subsidies, research startup funds, and children's educational arrangements. That makes sense, because as the fundamental source for urban talent, colleges and universities are also the most important reservoir of top talent for the country. Propelled by the "Double-First Class" plan, colleges and universities have become more and more eager to acquire top experts. That fact, combined with the talent-attraction

policies of major cities and corresponding projects implemented by local governments, has brought a "halo effect" to the attraction campaign.

However, apart from the necessary requirements of a doctoral degree, colleges and universities are more concerned with whether talent meets or almost meets the standards of the Thousand Talents Plan and the Thousand Youth Talents Plan.

The Thousand Talents Plan, also known as the "Recruitment Program of Global Experts", is closely tied to China's national development strategy and aims at attracting thousands of experts to national key innovation projects, disciplines and laboratories, as well as central enterprises, state-owned financial institutions, and various high-tech industrial parks, for the purpose of making major breakthroughs in key technologies, developing high-tech industries, and advancing emerging disciplines. The "Recruitment Program for Young Professionals," a division of the Thousand Talents Plan, mainly targets those under 40 years of age who hold a Ph.D. in the field of natural science or engineering technology granted by prestigious overseas universities; work experience of more than three years with overseas teaching and research institutions is required. It should be noted that, if accepted, current employees of overseas universities, scientific institutions and enterprise development laboratories should return to China to work on a full-time basis. The "Recruitment Program for Foreign Experts," another part of the Thousand Talents Plan is a long-term program focusing on non-Chinese foreign experts who can work more than nine months per year in China for three consecutive years.

According to statistics, since the implementation of the Thousand Talents Plan in 2008, talent-attraction programs in all regions and departments have brought in more than 50,000 top experts from overseas, the highest number recorded since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

From China's central government to down to the municipal level, from colleges and universities to scientific research institutions, everyone has reached a consensus: Talent is China's most important resource. With the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the consistent promotion of human-resource development there, talent-attraction programs are now in a much more prominent position. To quote a recent headline in one of China's mainstream newspapers: "Talents, Coming for the Best Times!"

Certainly, since talent acquisition policies in China are changing quickly, a huge information gap between employers and overseas talent cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, AcaBridge, China's most professional platform promoting employment and entrepreneurship for high-level talent both at home and abroad, would love to bridge this gap. Those interested in working in China can contact us at [consultant@acabridge.edu.cn](mailto:consultant@acabridge.edu.cn). We provide a "one-stop" service, so you can learn about open positions in China, contact employers there, and communicate with people who can help you get here. For more information, please visit [www.edu.cn/jjrcxm](http://www.edu.cn/jjrcxm).