

Two-decade Development of the Hundred-Talent Program

Launched in 1994, the Hundred-Talent Program is a major initiative of CAS to speed up its cultivation of disciplinary pacesetters and bridge the generation gap of scientific personnel. As a pioneering move of its kind in this country, the Program is noted for its ambitious goals, high standards and strong support.

The original goal of the Program was to bring in 100 or so young talents from domestic and overseas institutions and help them to become academic pacemakers at CAS by the end of the 20th century. Over the past 20 years, however, the number of recipients of the Program's award has increased remarkably. By the end of 2013, it had supported a total of 2,145 scholars on a competitive basis. Most of them were young at the time of selection, with an average age of 37. Among them, over 90% were from foreign countries, with one third from world's top 100 universities or top 59 renowned research institutes.

The Program has achieved remarkable success over the past two decades. First, a group of young leading scientists have emerged. Among the recipients, 28 were later elected as Members of CAS or CAE (Chinese Academy of Engineering), 524 won support from the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars, many are engaged as leaders of projects of national S&T programs (such as "973 Program" or "863 Program"), and some hold senior positions in China's top universities (such as Peking University and Tsinghua University) or governmental departments. Second, a large number of important research results have been attained. With the support of the Program, young scientists are engrossed in innovative studies at the frontiers of world science and in line with national strategic demands. For example, research progress in iron-based high temperature superconductivity, the demonstration of pluripotency of iPSCs, the discovery of anomalous quantum Hall effect, and the observation of electron-antineutrino disappearance. Third, optimization of the research contingent is being promoted. The participation of the Program awardees in CAS further enhances the leadership and professional excellence in CAS's research strength, greatly improving the academic background and age spectrum of the innovative research professionals at CAS. In 2004, after the first decade of the Program, the average age of research professors at CAS fell to less than 50, successfully bridging the generation gap. In addition, in the recent decade, this approach has brought about burgeoning development in superior and newly emerging disciplines, such as quantum communication, stem cells, brain science and supercomputing. Fourth, the Program has played a demonstrative role for different talent programs in China.

With the advances over the past two decades, an outstanding research contingent has been developed at CAS. In the future, CAS will implement its New Hundred-Talent Program, with the objectives of building the Program into an important brand for recruiting high-caliber professionals, an important arena for training the next generation scientists, and an important platform for conducting high-level international cooperation.

To mark the 20th anniversary of this important program, we invite its winners in different periods to share their stories, in an effort to present a spectrum of its track over the years.