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Analysis and Reflections on the Group Characteristics of Presidents of Double First-Class Universities

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ABSTRACT
University presidents, as the highest leaders of university administrative affairs, play a crucial role in the realization of good governance in universities. Double First-Class universities, to some extent, represent the highest level of universities in China; researching the group characteristics of the presidents of Double First-Class universities is of important theoretical and practical significance. This paper takes the presidents of 42 Double First-Class universities as the research subjects and conducts a survey and analysis of the current situation using basic characteristics, educational and academic background, and appointment situation as the main indicators of their group characteristics, in an attempt to provide a reference for the future selection of university presidents in China.

University presidents are the “leaders” of a university. As the highest executive in charge of university affairs, the president is not only the CEO of the university but also its soul (Sun, 2010). They represent the spirit of the university and determine the direction of the university’s reform and development. In recent years, an increasingly competitive and complex external environment has intensified the demand for strong leadership in universities. At the same time, there are great drawbacks in the current selection and appointment system of presidents in China, and the “multiple identities” of presidents have been highly questioned.

As the benchmark of Chinese higher education, Double First-Class universities play a leading role. Therefore, researching and analyzing the current group characteristics of presidents of Double First-Class universities, and proposing constructive suggestions to improve the selection methods of university presidents based on China’s national conditions, are of great practical significance for improving the current governance of Chinese universities, enhancing the core competitiveness of Chinese university

presidents, and advancing the development of world-class universities.

Therefore, this study collects case studies of 42 university presidents in China, analyzes their educational background and positions, answers current doubts about the multiple identities of Chinese university presidents, and puts forward policy recommendations based on the analysis.

Ⅰ. Research Subjects and Data Sources

This research is based on the Notice on Announcing the List of World-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines and the List of Their Construction Disciplines, jointly issued by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the National Development and Reform Commission on September 21, 2017. That document announced the first batch of universities included in the "Double First-Class" construction initiative, totaling 137 institutions: 42 World-Class University construction institutions and 95 World-Class Discipline construction institutions.

Compared to the World-Class Discipline construction universities, the World-Class University construction universities better represent the level of China's top universities. Therefore, this paper selects the current presidents of 42 World-Class University construction institutions as the research subjects. The research data were obtained mainly through channels such as the official websites of each university, Xinhua News, and People's Daily, with a data collection cutoff of November 2020. A small amount of missing information was supplemented by author information in journal papers found via CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure).

II. Empirical Analysis

(1) Basic Characteristic Analysis

The basic characteristic analysis of the president group mainly includes four aspects: gender, age, place of origin, and political affiliation.

Gender: According to Table 1, out of 42 Double First-Class university presidents, only 2 are female, accounting for 4.8%. This is significantly lower than the data showing that 15% of the top 100 universities in the world have female leaders (Liu, 2018). The proportion of women in China's top university president group is severely low.

The low proportion of female presidents is mainly due to three reasons. First, the overall social status of women is relatively low. In the division of social labor, women's roles and status are usually lower than men's. In terms of occupations, women often engage

only in social service work, while men mainly engage in economic and social fields, making it more difficult for women to enter high-level technical management levels (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Second, women's social status was low, so the proportion of women receiving higher education was low (Reis & Grady, 2019). Third, career and family conflicts arise: compared to men, women bear more family responsibilities, and with limited energy and time, they tend to choose relatively easier or more flexible job opportunities (Couzy, 2012).

Age: In China, the age range of the 42 Double First-Class university presidents is 51–65 years, with an average age of 59. The age differences among presidents are not obvious (see Table 1). The remaining years until retirement for these presidents are mostly concentrated in the 3–12 year range, with the highest proportion (16.7%) having five years until retirement (see Table 2).

Both sets of data indicate that Chinese Double First-Class university presidents are all in their late middle age or senior years, and from a physical standpoint, they possess a relatively stable psychological state and ample experience. They are quite energetic, and the stability of their continued tenure as president is high.

Place of Origin: In studies of political elites at home and abroad, there are three different criteria for determining regional attributes: "place of birth," "place of early growth," and "place of career concentration" (Jin, 2018). This study mainly uses the place of birth as the criterion. Chinese top university presidents are largely concentrated in the central region of China, as well as the northern and southern coastal areas. Among these, Shandong Province has the most, accounting for 14.6%, and Jiangsu Province ranks second at 12.2%. This suggests that the level of education is related to the local economic level. Moreover, the higher the level of education in a region, the greater the probability that the region produces top university presidents.

At the same time, in this survey, we also compiled the provinces of each president's place of origin and workplace. The data analysis shows that 11 presidents (26.8%) serve in their home province (i.e., their place of origin and workplace are the same). These cases of serving in their home region are mainly in provincial local universities, including Shandong University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, etc., showing a characteristic of localized appointments. 31 presidents serve outside their place of origin (their birthplace and workplace differ), in line with the main characteristics of cross-regional cadre appointments. Most of the presidents serving outside their home region come from China's first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Therefore, the reason that the localized appointment of presidents is not obvious is that the presidents of all 42 Double First-Class universities are appointed by the government rather than through open competition.

Political Affiliation: among the current presidents of Double First-Class universities in China, 38 are members of the Chinese Communist Party, accounting for as high as 90.5%, with 2 being non-partisans and 2 belonging to democratic parties. Among them, 19 presidents who are Party members also concurrently hold the position of Deputy Party Secretary, being responsible for party-related work.

The reason for this phenomenon lies in the fact that Chinese universities currently implement the system of "president responsibility under the leadership of the Party committee" (The General Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2014). The political affiliation of a president can, to a certain extent, reflect their values and political leanings. In order to uphold the socialist orientation of university education, assessing a president's political inclination is important, and being a Communist Party member has become one of the key selection criteria for presidents.

(2) Educational and Academic Background Characteristic Analysis

1. Education Background Characteristics: The analysis of presidents' educational background mainly includes their highest degree, disciplinary background, relationship with their current university, and overseas experience (see Table 3).

Graduating Institution: This analysis is mainly based on the universities from which the presidents obtained their highest degrees. In the case, 37 presidents (88.1%) graduated from key institutions under the national "985 Project," which are top universities in China. Only one president graduated from a "211 Project" university, and one from a regular university, each accounting for 2.4%. In addition, 3 presidents hold doctoral degrees from well-known foreign universities, and there is even one president with dual doctoral degrees (one from abroad and one from China). All presidents of Double First-Class universities graduated from top universities at home or abroad, which once again confirms the significant positive correlation between the caliber of a university and the quality of its talent cultivation. Prestigious universities have more outstanding faculty, deeper institutional heritage, a better academic atmosphere, and more advanced facilities, which collectively have a more positive impact on an individual's development. The reasons for using an excellent educational background and the halo of a prestigious alma mater as criteria for selecting presidents are mainly twofold. First, educational attainment can to some extent measure a person's overall ability. Earning a high degree is a long and arduous process during which a president's learning ability, cognitive ability, and analytical thinking skills are continuously honed. Second, the people that a university president manages include undergraduate students, master's and doctoral students, university faculty, and administrative staff—groups that differ from typical corporate personnel structures. They possess a certain knowledge base and, on average, higher ability and quality. Therefore, when faced with such a special group of people to manage, a leader must

have a more complete knowledge structure, richer experience, broader insight, and a higher vision.

Disciplinary Background: This analysis is based on the types of disciplines in which the presidents obtained their highest degrees. According to the 1997 Catalogue of Disciplines and Specialties for Awarding Doctoral and Master's Degrees and Training Postgraduates issued by the state, disciplines are divided into 13 broad categories such as philosophy, economics, etc. However, due to the lack of information on National University of Defense Technology's president Lei Xiang, the author only compiled discipline data for the other 41 Double First-Class university presidents, and two conclusions were drawn from the analysis.

First, Chinese top university presidents are mostly academic elites with science and engineering backgrounds. The data show that 20 presidents have engineering backgrounds, accounting for 47.6%, and 12 have science backgrounds, accounting for 28.6%. Other disciplines such as economics, agriculture, and medicine are also sporadically represented. Furthermore, by reviewing the presidents' master's degree experiences, it was found that the disciplines chosen during their master's and doctoral stages highly overlap with their undergraduate disciplines—38 presidents pursued graduate studies in the same field as their first degree, and only 4 presidents chose a different discipline for higher degrees. This phenomenon fully demonstrates the existence of a "engineer" or "scientist" model of governance in Chinese universities. Second, there is a high degree of alignment between the disciplinary background of Chinese top university presidents and the type of university. That is, in China's 10 science and engineering oriented Double First-Class universities, all presidents have science or engineering backgrounds. The presidents of the two agriculture-focused and one normal (teacher-training) Double First-Class universities also come from corresponding backgrounds in agriculture or education. Comprehensive universities that lean towards science and engineering also predominantly have presidents with science and engineering backgrounds. This phenomenon clearly shows that there is a significant industry identity and "threshold" effect in the selection of university presidents in China.

Relationship with Current University: Alumni are a valuable resource and asset to a university, capable of providing various support in terms of human resources, material resources, and financial resources. Statistical analysis shows that as many as 17 presidents, or 40.5%, graduated from the university they currently serve. This indicates that to some extent, the selection of presidents for Double First-Class universities in China tends to be "localized." The reason alumni have advantages that outsiders cannot match is that, compared to external candidates, alumni understand their alma mater's traditions and culture better, and can leverage their academic and social resources as well as personal networks to more effectively plan and lead the university's

development.

Overseas Experience: Having overseas experience is an important measure of the internationalization of China's universities. Overseas experience includes study or research abroad, overseas collaborative research visits, holding visiting professorships, and other types. Statistics show that although 5 presidents have experience studying abroad, accounting for 12.2%, 28 presidents have overseas visiting or research experience, accounting for as high as 66.7%. This indicates that the number of university presidents with "localized" (domestic-only) careers has been decreasing under the influence of higher education internationalization. The selection of university presidents now incorporates an international vision and perspective as one of the criteria.

2. Academic Background Characteristics: The academic (or career) background represents the academic level and professional caliber of a university president, and is one of the important bases for president selection. This paper collected data on two aspects: professional title and academic titles/ honors (see Table 4). Due to incomplete information for National University of Defense Technology's president Lei Xiang, the academic background characteristics of only the other 41 Double First-Class university presidents are discussed here.

Professional Title: By collating the data in Table 4, we find that all Double First-Class university presidents hold the title of Professor and also serve as doctoral supervisors. Nowadays, the criteria for selecting presidents have gradually risen from a purely administrative level to a combination of administrative and academic levels, requiring that a president not only possess administrative management skills but also take on the important responsibility of talent cultivation.

Academic Titles and Honors: Academic titles and honors are important indicators of a president's academic standing, representing the outstanding contributions a president has made in their field. The main academic titles for university presidents include Academician titles, "Changjiang Scholars Program" Distinguished Professor, "New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project," "National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars," etc. According to statistical analysis, 24 presidents have an Academician title, accounting for 57.1% (10 are academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and 14 of the Chinese Academy of Engineering). 9 have the title of Changjiang Scholars Distinguished Professor, accounting for 21.4%. 12 have been funded by the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars, accounting for 28.6%. 12 have been selected for the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project, accounting for 28.6%.

Furthermore, in terms of when these titles and honors were obtained, the vast majority were earned before assuming the presidency. It can be concluded, therefore, that having

a high level of academic achievement and prestige is one of the important conditions for selecting a university president, which once again confirms China's developmental path of "those excelling in scholarship will become leaders" (Jiang, 2010).

3. Analysis of Appointment Status: The appointment status mainly includes four aspects: the start date of the appointment, the method of appointment, the nature of previous work units, and social roles. These elements, to a certain extent, symbolize the identity and status of university presidents. (Due to the lack of available information on Li Xiang, President of the National University of Defense Technology, this analysis covers only the other 41 presidents of Double First-Class universities.)

Age at Appointment and Term of Office: The current average age at which presidents assume office at China's 41 Double First-Class universities is 54.8 years—about four years younger than the average age of all presidents. A total of 37 university presidents, accounting for 88%, assumed office between the ages of 51 and 60, indicating a high degree of uniformity in appointment age.

However, the document titled *"Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Establishing a Retirement System for Veteran Cadres"* clearly stipulates that principal officials at the provincial and ministerial level generally should not exceed 65 years of age, while deputy officials should not exceed 60. This means that many university presidents in China, after enduring long professional journeys to reach their positions, are already approaching retirement age when they are appointed—resulting in a relatively short tenure in office.

Regarding average tenure, the current average for presidents of China's Double First-Class universities is 3.7 years. In contrast, university presidents in the United States serve for an average of seven years. This relatively short tenure in China reflects, to some extent, the more frequent turnover of university leadership

Scope and Method of Appointment: At present, the selection and appointment of university presidents in China is coordinated by the Central Organization Department of the Communist Party and the Ministry of Education, among other relevant authorities. This study categorizes the methods of presidential appointment into four types: Lateral Transfer (Across Universities): Transfers between universities at the same administrative level; Lateral Reassignment (From Party Secretary to President): Transferring from the role of Party Secretary to University President within the same institution; Promotional Appointment: This includes internal promotion (within the same university) and external promotion (from another university); Promotion with Transfer: Appointment of individuals from government administrative roles or research institutions to university presidencies.

It is evident that the selection of presidents at China's Double First-Class universities carries strong administrative overtones. Promotional appointments constitute the largest share, with 28 individuals (68.3%). Among these, 12 were promoted internally within their universities, while 16 were promoted from external universities. Additionally, there were 11 cases of lateral transfer, one case of lateral reassignment (Party Secretary to President), and one case of promotion with transfer from a government or research institution. This reflects a narrow scope of appointments: most university presidents are selected from within the existing circle of Double First-Class institutions. Upward mobility for presidents of lower-tier universities is extremely limited. Moreover, the pathway to appointment is highly uniform, with promotion from deputy positions being the primary route.

Nature of Former Employers: The professional backgrounds of presidents at China's Double First-Class universities primarily fall into four sectors: public universities, government agencies, research institutes, and the military. Among them, 25 presidents have worked exclusively in universities, accounting for 61% of the total. Another 18 have experience in both universities and research institutes, making up 44%. One president has worked in both a university and the military, while one has experience in the corporate sector.

Overall, the career paths of Chinese university presidents tend to be relatively homogeneous, with most rising through the academic or research institute systems. They are typically top-performing scholars from these institutions. Their lack of broader social or professional experience reflects a long-standing tradition in Chinese higher education that emphasizes academic scholarship over practical or managerial skills.

III. Selection Recommendations

Chinese universities currently implement a system of president responsibility under the leadership of the Party committee, wherein the president, as the core, is responsible for managing many aspects of the university's teaching, research, and student affairs. The group characteristics and quality structure of university presidents are crucial for achieving a model of good university governance. Based on the above analysis of the group characteristics of Double First-Class university presidents, and in combination with research findings from home and abroad as well as China's current national conditions, this paper offers a few suggestions for the selection and appointment of university presidents in Double First-Class universities.

(1) Pay Attention to Selecting Female Presidents

Drew Faust once pointed out that female leadership styles tend to emphasize collaboration and consensus-building, which makes them particularly well-suited to educational institutions. She highlighted that the approaches of "bringing people along with you" and "quietly making it happen" exemplify this style of leadership (Ignatius, 2018). In fact, there is no significant difference between men and women in either academic ability or leadership ability, and there should be no discrimination. On the contrary, women have unique advantages in becoming presidents. First, women's innate maternal characteristics make them more affable and tolerant, and they tend to show more concern for their subordinates in their actions. Second, the inclusion of female presidents can enrich the management concepts of the presidential group and diversify management styles. Women think differently from men, and when formulating an educational plan, women can break through the limitations of male presidents' thinking. The joint participation of both genders allows more factors to be considered, making aspects such as the formulation of educational plans or the setting of teaching philosophies more complete.

To this end, we should increase the proportion of female presidents through the following measures. First, provide institutional and policy guarantees for women to enter the presidential ranks—for example, introduce welfare and security policies favoring female presidents and encourage women to participate in leadership competitions. Second, intensify the promotion of gender equality concepts and encourage men to share family duties with women to reduce women's burdens. Third, improve training systems for women to enhance their management participation capabilities.

(2) Appropriately Relax Presidents' Age and Term Limits

Professor Wang Hongcai of Xiamen University once said that it generally takes more than 10 years for a university president to truly achieve results in running a university (Wang, 2007). However, current statistics show that the golden period of service for most Chinese university presidents is only about 10 years. This means some presidents—whose school performance was outstanding and who managed to achieve rapid development for their universities in a short time, and whose own physical condition and health could still fully handle the job—are stepping down solely because of age and term limits. Whether their successors can continue to implement their educational philosophy and reforms is uncertain. This is undoubtedly a huge waste of the valuable resources that outstanding university presidents represent.

Therefore, we can implement flexibility in the tenure of university presidents. We can conduct democratic evaluations and metric assessments of a university president's

performance in running the school. Presidents with excellent evaluation results should have the opportunity to continue in their post without being subject to age or term restrictions. For example, the Education Bureau of Jintan District in Jiangsu recently pointed out that for principals who have reached the statutory retirement age but have outstanding school performance and enjoy high reputation at the provincial or municipal level, they may be rehired after retirement based on work needs (Wang & Ding, 2015).

(3) Broaden the Horizon of President Selection and Use Multiple Selection Methods

Currently, the limited vision in selecting presidents of Double First-Class universities in China is mainly reflected in two aspects. First, the selection pool for Double First-Class university presidents is narrow: it is primarily carried out within Double First-Class universities and presidents are uniformly appointed by the government. The most commonly used method is internal promotion (within the same university or system), followed by transfers between universities. While this method of selecting personnel is conducive to the government's unified management of Double First-Class universities, it has significant drawbacks. One, many elite managerial talents from universities outside the Double First-Class group are lost to those top institutions. Two, it is not conducive to motivating presidents at lower-tier institutions, as it is very difficult for lower-level university presidents to have the opportunity to move up to higher- level universities. Three, the opaque process of government appointment can affect the level of trust in the president. Second, among Double First-Class university presidents, the phenomenon of "alumnus as president" is common. Whether they are faculty, administrators, or from education authorities, to some extent people tend to choose presidents who have ties to the university. Alumni, comparatively, understand the school's traditional culture, operational model, and characteristics better, so their transition into the role of president is smoother and their adjustment period easier. However, having an alumnus as president also presents many problems. One, such presidents may find it hard to break from entrenched thinking formed by tradition and environment, and thus may not be comprehensive or objective enough in planning the university's development. Two, when an alumnus serves as president, they may be easily influenced by past complex personal relationships, which can interfere with their decision-making.

For these reasons, we should first appropriately expand the selection pool and not limit ourselves to the higher education system. We should explore elite individuals from various sectors, focusing on assessing their abilities in strategic planning and public relations management. Second, we should gradually realize the open and transparent

selection of presidents. Just as in 2011 when an open selection of presidents for Ministry-of-Education-affiliated universities was piloted at home and abroad, we should allow various stakeholders to participate, forming an open and transparent selection system to choose suitable candidates from multiple fields (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012).

(4) Accelerate the Professionalization of University Presidents

The Several Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Deepening the Separation of Management, Operation, and Evaluation in Education to Promote the Transformation of Government Functions, promulgated on May 6, 2015, pointed out the need to "actively create conditions to gradually abolish administrative rankings for schools. During the tenure of university leaders, they should devote themselves to school management; party secretaries and presidents generally should not serve as the primary person in charge of research projects (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015)." The introduction of this document aims to foster university presidents who focus on management and service—an educator-type president. A university president is not only an educator, but also the leader and manager of the school. Therefore, besides being an outstanding scholar, a president should also meet the criteria of being "understanding of education, adept in management, and capable of public activity (networking)".

However, currently, the presidents of China's Double First-Class universities are still far from this standard, for three main reasons. First, the disciplinary backgrounds of China's top university presidents have become homogenous, predominantly in science and engineering, and not a single university has a president from an education discipline. The academic part-time positions they hold are also within their own professional fields, which greatly limits the breadth of their knowledge in education (Yu, Dong, de Jong & Yue, 2024). Second, the field in which university presidents work is almost exclusively academia; their work experience is lacking in breadth and they have little connection with other sectors, leading to a clearly insufficient ability to secure external resources (Ruan, Cai & Stensaker, 2023). Third, presidents have only short practical experience in absorbing advanced educational philosophies from abroad and learning from the governance experience of world-class universities, with low levels of overseas study or training; their international vision and experience in university management need improvement (Lin, Zhang, Liu, & Lyu, 2024).

To accelerate the professionalization of university presidents, we can proceed in the following two ways. First, improve the market-driven competitive mechanism for the university president profession. On the basis of implementing a qualification accreditation system for university presidents, establish a talent mobility mechanism

for university presidents. Second, establish and improve the education and training system for university presidents. Various forms such as forums, workshops, and training programs can be adopted to develop training across all aspects of presidents' leadership abilities and management skills.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Table 1. Age Structure of Current University Presidents

Age Range (years)	Number	Percentage (%)	Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
51~55	14	33.4	Male	40	95.2
56~60	18	42.9			
61~65	10	23.8	Female	2	4.8
Total	42	100	Total	42	100

Table 2. Remaining Years to Retirement of Current University Presidents

Years until retirement	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Number of presidents	1	4	3	7	1	4	4	4	6	4	3	1
Percentage (%)	2.4	9.8	7.3	17.1	2.4	9.8	9.8	9.8	14.7	9.8	7.3	2.4

Sources: Websites of each university

Table 3. Education Background of Presidents of Double First-Class Universities

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Peking University	Hao Ping	Peking University	Ph.D.	Political Science	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley (USA)
Tsinghua University	Qiu Yong	Tsinghua University	Ph.D.	Science	Yes	
Renmin University of China	Liu Wei	Peking University	Ph.D.	Economics	No	
Beihang University	Xu Huibin	Berlin Institute of Technology (Germany)	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Ph.D. from Berlin Institute of Technology (Germany); Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Munich (Germany)
Beijing Institute of Technology	Zhang Jun	Beihang University	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	
China Agricultural University	Sun Qixin	China Agricultural University	Ph.D.	Agriculture	Yes	Visiting Scholar at Colorado State University (USA)

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Beijing Normal University	Dong Qi	Beijing Normal University	Ph.D.	Science	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the University of Sydney (Australia)
Minzu University of China	Huang Taiyan	Renmin University of China	Ph.D.	Economics	No	
Nankai University	Cao Xuetao	Second Military Medical University (China)	Ph.D.	Medicine	No	
Tianjin University	Jin Donghan	China Ship Research Institute	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	
Dalian University of Technology	Guo Dongming	Dalian University of Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Professor at Chuo University (Japan); Visiting Scholar at Oregon Institute of Technology (USA); Served as Professor at the University of Melbourne (Australia),

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
						conducting academic research
Jilin University	Zhang Xi	Jilin University	Ph.D.	Science	Yes	Jointly supervised doctoral student at Jilin University and the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany)
Harbin Institute of Technology	Zhou Yu	Harbin Institute of Technology, University of Portsmouth (UK)	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Scholar at Hokkaido University (Japan)
Fudan University	Xu Ningsheng	Aston University (UK)	Ph.D.	Science	No	Ph.D. from Aston University (UK); engaged in research and teaching at Aston University (UK)

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Tongji University	Chen Jie	Beijing Institute of Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Visiting Researcher at Tokyo Institute of Technology (Japan); Visiting Scholar at California State University (USA)
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Lin Zhongqin	Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the University of Sydney (Australia)
East China Normal University	Qian Xuhong	East China University of Science and Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Engaged in postdoctoral research in the United States and Germany
Nanjing University	Lu Jian	Nanjing University	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the University of Manchester (UK)

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Southeast University	Zhang Guangjun	Tianjin University	Ph.D.	Science	No	Advanced study at North Dakota State University (USA)
Zhejiang University	Wu Zhaohui	Zhejiang University	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Studied at the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence
University of Science and Technology of China	Bao Xinhe	Fudan University	Ph.D.	Science	No	Visiting Scholar at the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society (Germany)
Xiamen University	Zhang Rong	Nanjing University	Ph.D.	Science	No	Conducted collaborative research at the University of Maryland and the University of Wisconsin (USA)

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Shandong University	Fan Liming	Research Institute for Fiscal Science, Ministry of Finance (China)	Ph.D.	Economics	No	Senior Visiting Scholar at Duke University, Sanford School of Public Policy (USA)
Ocean University of China	Yu Zhigang	Ocean University of China	Ph.D.	Science	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Marine Chemistry and Biogeochemistry, University of Hamburg (Germany)
Wuhan University	Dou Xiankang	University of Science and Technology of China	Ph.D.	Science	No	Ph.D. in Remote Sensing Physics from Paris Diderot University (France)
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Li Yuanyuan	South China University of Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Visitor at Berlin Institute of

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
						Technology (Germany)
Central South University	Tian Hongqi	Central South University	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Scholar at the National University of Singapore
Sun Yat-sen University	Luo Jun	Institute of Geodesy and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Ph.D.	Engineering	Yes	Visiting Professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder (USA)
South China University of Technology	Gao Song	Peking University	Ph.D.	Science	No	Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Portsmouth (UK)
Sichuan University	Li Yanrong	Chinese Academy of Sciences	Ph.D.	Science	No	Senior Visiting Scholar at Arts et Métiers ParisTech (France)
University of Electronic Science and Technology of China	Zeng Yong	Tsinghua University	Ph.D.	Management	No	

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Chongqing University	Zhang Zongyi	Chongqing University, University of Portsmouth (UK)	Ph.D.	Engineering, Economics	Yes	Ph.D. from the University of Portsmouth (UK)
Xi'an Jiaotong University	Wang Shuguo	Harbin Institute of Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Visiting Scholar at the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society (Germany)
Northwestern Polytechnical University	Wang Jinsong	Tsinghua University	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Lanzhou University	Yan Chunhua	Peking University	Ph.D.	Science	No	Visiting Scholar at the University of Michigan (USA)

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
Northeastern University (China)	Zhao Ji	Jilin University of Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Engaged in research at Hokkaido University (Japan)
Zhengzhou University	Liu Jiongtian	China University of Mining and Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Hunan University	Duan Xianzhong	Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	Visiting Professor at the University of Manitoba (Canada)
Yunnan University	Lin Wenxun	Yunnan University	Ph.D.	History	Yes	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-

University	Name	Alma Mater	Highest Degree	Discipline	Alumnus	Overseas Experience
						Thousand-Talent Project
Northwest A&F University	Wu Pute	Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Chinese Academy of Sciences & Ministry of Water Resources	Ph.D.	Agriculture	Yes	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Xinjiang University	Yao Qiang	Zhejiang University	Ph.D.	Engineering	No	

Table 4. Academic Background of Presidents of Double First-Class Universities

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Peking University	Hao Ping	Professor	Yes	No	–
Tsinghua University	Qiu Yong	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars; Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Renmin University of China	Liu Wei	Professor	Yes	No	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Selected for the Cross-Century Excellent Talents Training Program; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Beihang University	Xu Huibin	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Beijing Institute of Technology	Zhang Jun	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program
China Agricultural University	Sun Qixin	Professor	Yes	No	Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Beijing Normal University	Dong Qi	Professor	Yes	No	–
Minzu University of China	Huang Taiyan	Professor	Yes	No	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Nankai University	Cao Xuetao	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	–
Tianjin University	Jin Donghan	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	–
Dalian University of Technology	Guo Dongming	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Selected for the Cross-Century Excellent Talents Training Program; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Jilin University	Zhang Xi	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	–
Harbin Institute of Technology	Zhou Yu	Professor	Yes	No	Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Fudan University	Xu Ningsheng	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Academician of the National Academy of Sciences	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Tongji University	Chen Jie	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Lin Zhongqin	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	–
East China Normal University	Qian Xuhong	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Nanjing University	Lu Jian	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Southeast University	Zhang Guangjun	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Zhejiang University	Wu Zhaohui	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Xiamen University	Zhang Rong	Professor	Yes	No	–
Shandong University	Fan Liming	Professor	Yes	No	–

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Ocean University of China	Yu Zhigang	Professor	Yes	No	–
Wuhan University	Dou Xiankang	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	–
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Li Yuanyuan	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	–
Central South University	Tian Hongqi	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	–
Sun Yat-sen University	Luo Jun	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program
South China University of Technology	Gao Song	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	–
Sichuan University	Li Yanrong	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
University of Electronic Science and Technology of China	Zeng Yong	Professor	Yes	No	Selected for the Cross-Century Excellent Talents Training Program
Chongqing University	Zhang Zongyi	Professor	Yes	No	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Xi'an Jiaotong University	Wang Shuguo	Professor	Yes	No	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Northwestern Polytechnical University	Wang Jinsong	Professor	Yes	No	Distinguished Professor of the Changjiang Scholars Program; National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Lanzhou University	Yan Chunhua	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	–
Northeastern University (China)	Zhao Ji	Professor	Yes	No	–

University	Name	Title	PhD Supervisor	Academician	Talent Programs
Zhengzhou University	Liu Jiongtian	Professor	Yes	Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project; Recipient of the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars
Hunan University	Duan Xianzhong	Professor	Yes	No	–
Yunnan University	Lin Wenxun	Professor	Yes	No	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Northwest A&F University	Wu Pute	Professor	Yes	No	National Candidate of the New Century Hundred-Thousand-Talent Project
Xinjiang University	Yao Qiang	Professor	Yes	No	–