

Jiaotong University: one of China's top schools

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Shanghai's Jiaotong University is one of China's top schools, with a reputation for turning out a steady supply of scientists and engineers to contribute to the nation's development.

The university built its reputation on its engineering and science departments -- still considered its strongest -- and has 31 departments in all, covering subjects ranging from design to Marxism.

It has compiled its annual "Academic Ranking of World Universities" since 2003, listing what it sees as the 500 best schools in the world.

It uses criteria such as the number of Nobel prizes and Fields medals won by staff and alumni, the number of highly cited researchers on staff, and the number of articles by staff published in Nature and Science magazines.

In China, Jiaotong is best known for its most famous graduate, former Chinese president and Communist Party secretary Jiang Zemin, who graduated from the electrical machinery department in 1947.

Qian Xuesen, the founder of China's space programme, was another graduate.

Last year's rankings put Jiaotong in the top five of mainland universities, though below Peking University -- considered China's Harvard -- and Tsinghua University, widely referred to as China's MIT.

The classical Chinese gate at the entrance of the original campus, which is still in use alongside four newer ones, offers a glimpse into the history of Jiaotong.

The university dates back to 1896, when it was established by the edict of China's emperor. It was among the first national institutions of higher learning in China.

Unlike some other schools of the period, Jiaotong had no foreign missionary background.

Originally established as the Nanyang School, it was founded by Qing Dynasty official Sheng Xuanhuai, who would later serve as transport minister.

Jiaotong's reputation for grooming top engineers dates to the 1930s, before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, yet it has upheld that tradition.

Students are considered to be smart and hardworking yet are stereotyped as being socially awkward, one graduate said.

Jiaotong has nearly 18,000 undergraduates and more than 24,000 post-graduate students, according to figures provided by the school.

"The male versus female ratio was seven to one, so there are really lots of guys in the school," said Phil Wu, who did both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in physics at Jiaotong.

"Students usually study very hard. Many of them spend lots of time in research labs, but focus less on developing people skills."

The school has nearly 1,600 international students, many studying

Chinese language.

The full-time faculty numbers more than 3,000 with over 800 professors.

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