



Prof Chen Shimin's

CEIBS MBA Journey

■ By Lei Na

Despite his many years working as CEIBS MBA Programme Director, Prof Chen Shimin sticks to his scholarly habits. His office door is always closed, though he has assured his colleagues that they may knock and come in whenever the light is on. Prof Chen believes in the importance of democracy and efficiency in running the MBA Department; so he listens to all suggestions before making decisions and regularly communicates with students to better understand them and their needs. Although administrative work takes up a lot of his energy, Prof Chen is still unwaveringly dedicated to teaching and research. Last year, he published a paper in one of the 50 journals used by *Financial Times* to compile business school research rankings. This

year, another one of his papers was accepted for publication by a highly-regarded Australian journal. And he co-authored a paper, published by the American Accounting Association, which won the 2017 Journal of Management Accounting Research (JMAR) Best Paper Award.

Like most scholars, Prof Chen's office is packed with material from the world of academia. Stacks of books and documents cover his desk, allowing him to readily switch between administrative and research work. There are a few paintings on the wall. One was a gift from an EMBA participant, and another – a landscape of horses on the prairie – was a gift from a colleague. The paintings add colour to the room and reflect Prof Chen's easy-going and warm personality.

He has been a university professor for most of his life, and he has obviously enjoyed this academic journey over the years. In 1978, he began studying accounting at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and stayed on to teach after obtaining his master's degree. Eight years later, he left China to get his doctorate at the University of Georgia in the US. Then he taught at Clarion University of Pennsylvania and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, obtaining tenured professorships at both universities. Prof Chen taught in Hong Kong for eight years, on and off, and in 2008 he gave up a tenured professorship at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to join CEIBS.

Prof Chen's path to CEIBS began

in 2001 when he met Prof Ding Yuan – who was then working in France – at an academic conference. At the time Prof Chen was teaching in both Hong Kong and America. In 2004, Prof Ding began working at CEIBS and, while he was on a business trip to Hong Kong, the two professors ran into each other again. Prof Ding invited Prof Chen to join CEIBS. “Ding Yuan was not Dean at the time, but he played an active role in recruiting professors for the school,” explains Prof Chen. While visiting his family in Shanghai, Professor Chen visited CEIBS to see if the school was somewhere he could work. He enjoyed stimulating conversations with other professors and was charmed by the school's atmosphere. He decided to join the CEIBS

community. “It seemed a little risky at the time,” he said with a smile, “but I love challenges.” That may be because he is no stranger to overcoming hurdles.

Born in Shanghai, Professor Chen worked as a farmer in Fengxian District in his youth. He was among the second batch of students to attend university following China's restoration of college entrance examinations after the Cultural Revolution. After years of moving between the East and West, he returned to his hometown to join the CEIBS faculty, where he has taught for an unforgettable nine years. He has seen many positive changes in the prosperous city, and in the school, which leave him hopeful and confident about the future.

Earlier this year, the *Financial Times*'



2017 ranking of global business schools was released, and CEIBS' MBA programme was ranked #11 globally and #1 in Asia. This achievement is hardly surprising because over the last 13 years the CEIBS MBA Programme has consistently been ranked within the *Financial Times'* Top 25 global business schools, in line with other world-class institutions. As he has done in previous years, Prof Chen sent out an email thanking the CEIBS faculty and relevant departments. He believes that this achievement is the result of the coordinated efforts of the entire school, and is indicative of the overall accomplishments of the CEIBS MBA Programme.

Prof Chen beams with pride whenever he talks about the Programme that he has led for five years: "It's a flagship programme at CEIBS. It represents CEIBS' academic and teaching standards globally. We are very lucky; the school doesn't financially rely on the programme at all," he explains. "Instead, it provides abundant resources to support its development. CEIBS' vision is to build a world-class business school, and in order to achieve this goal we must build a first-rate full-time MBA Programme. Our entire team is working towards this goal."

He added, "Each MBA student has his own career goals. They are all here because they have encountered development bottlenecks or because they hope to change their career path or start a business. We must support them in achieving their career goals." Thanks to China's economic development and the MBA Departments' career development team – which Prof Chen lauds as "#1 in Asia" – CEIBS' MBA Programme offers numerous career opportunities for both Chinese and international students. According to the CEIBS MBA2016 Career Report, the school's Career Development Centre (CDC) was instrumental in making students aware of more than 800 positions available at 319 companies during the 2015 to

2016 recruitment season. Within three months of graduation, 93.4% of the MBA2016 graduates reported having received at least one job offer and 92.7% accepted. Almost 81% of graduates successfully changed their career paths after their MBA. Graduates have also seen a noticeable uptick in their salaries with almost 70% earning RMB300,000 – RMB600,000 per year, a 92% increase, on average, over what they earned

before their CEIBS MBA. In fact, the percentage salary increase of CEIBS MBA graduates was ranked 4th globally in 2016, and their weighted salary was ranked 14th.

A full-time English-language-taught international programme, CEIBS MBA is on par with those offered by other world-class business schools. Prof Chen attributes this to CEIBS' world-class faculty which has ensured the quality of the programme. "Global Breadth" is a vital aspect of the curriculum; for instance, every MBA student must take part in international exchange programmes or overseas elective modules. They may also choose

to take dual degree programmes with Cornell, Johns Hopkins and Tufts universities in the US.

"China Depth" is the other core element of the programme. CEIBS MBA classes are already using a large number of cases from the Chinese market, professors teach management ideas based on Chinese practices, and most of the students' internship and consulting projects are China-based. The school has started a mandatory course, "China within the World", to help students understand the country's role and responsibilities in the fields of global politics, economics, society, and culture. Chinese language courses are also offered to international students to help improve their competitiveness in the Chinese market. In recent years, many international students have chosen to stay in China



We must support them in achieving their career goals.





MBA Department's Major Achievements during Prof Chen Shimin's Tenure:

- Consolidated CEIBS MBA Programme's leading position in reputable global rankings. The programme has been ranked within the Top 25 global business schools in the *Financial Times'* annual survey for 13 consecutive years; was ranked first in Asia by *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg Businessweek* and *Forbes* in 2015 and regained the first place in Asia in the 2017 *Financial Times* rankings.
- Added entrepreneurship courses to the programme in 2013, set up eLab in 2015 and strengthened CEIBS' focus on entrepreneurship.
- Helped streamline the requirements for all MBA students to attend international exchange programmes or overseas elective modules, signed dual degree programme agreements with Cornell University, which strengthened the CEIBS MBA programme's international dimension. Further enhanced the MBA programme's international dimension through mandatory international experience for all students and signing the dual degree agreement with Cornell.
- Launched a leadership module to help students further develop leadership skills.
- Offered the "One-Year Option" in 2014, which made the programme more flexible for students who return to their previous employers or the family business.
- Launched the Dishuiquan loan project in 2016, which provides low-interest loans to Chinese and international students.
- Launched the MBA Bootcamp in 2014, providing opportunities for potential candidates to understand CEIBS at a deeper level.
- Initiated mutual-benefit cooperation in placement services with world-famous business schools including HBS, LBS, INSEAD, IESE and IE Business School.
- Helped students host extra-curricular activities including the renowned TEDXCeibs and VCIC East Asia Regional Finals.
- Promoted communication between MBA and EMBA alumni via annual alumni activities, Mentoring Programme, recruitment, and internship activities.

“

*CEIBS is indeed
an excellent
platform.*

”



to work with Chinese companies – an impressive result of globalisation. “Internationally, we are the business school with the best knowledge of China; and in China, we are the most international business school,” Prof Chen emphasises.

BIRTH OF CEIBS ELAB

During an academic visit to Israel four years ago, Prof Chen was impressed by a local incubator there and came up with an idea to build one at CEIBS. After returning to China, he shared his idea with school leaders and gained their support. In April 2015, the CEIBS MBA Entrepreneurship Lab (eLab) was launched at CEIBS Shanghai Campus. Prof Chen has great expectations of the eLab, which is now overseen by Professor Vincent Chang. The eLab’s mandate is to create an environment in which entrepreneurs can flourish by accessing the knowledge and resources needed to navigate and succeed in the real world.

The IDEA Challenge Programme, a CEIBS eLab initiative, was launched in November 2015 under the guidance of Prof Chang. IDEA represents four stages of a start-up project: Idea, Design, Evaluation and Acceleration. To date, the programme includes 40 start-up teams and is strongly supported by venture capital funds including the alumni company ChairMan Capital and the alumni-initiated Prosperity Fund.

The eLab began in a small corner of the second floor of the CEIBS Canteen. To Prof Chen’s delight, after two years of development it has now grown into a distinctive entrepreneurial platform on the Shanghai Campus. It has received strong support from large swathes of the CEIBS community, for example alumni company Mohen Chao Design



Don't think about the reward when you are making a contribution.



Associates sponsored its interior design, a signature style that has become synonymous with the eLab's much larger, ultra-modern new location near the MBA dorms. The incubator has also given back to the business community. It has provided specialised courses and Entrepreneurship Bootcamps to more than 50 companies so far. With Prof Chang at the helm MBA students who get into the incubator and/or volunteer to be part of its service team are among the main drivers behind the eLab's day to day operations. In 2016, the eLab welcomed its new hosts – the MBA2018 freshmen batch, a quarter of whom have experience in starting new companies. At night, the CEIBS campus is quiet and peaceful, but the eLab is abuzz with the sounds of budding entrepreneurs gathered for brainstorming sessions. Twenty-two years ago CEIBS, now a world-renowned business school, grew out of an entrepreneurial vision and today CEIBS'

entrepreneurial and innovative gene is bearing new fruit through the eLab.

A NEW CHALLENGE

Over the past 5 years, Prof Chen has been involved in pushing forward the development of the MBA Department. It is no exaggeration to say that he is one of the best practitioners of CEIBS' motto "Consciousness, Innovation and Excellence". July 2017 marks the end of Prof Chen's term in his current role with the MBA Department; he will soon face a new challenge – filling the role of Director of the CEIBS Case Centre. Back in July 2013, the Shanghai Municipal Government, after careful consideration, selected CEIBS to build the "Shanghai MBA Case Development and Sharing Platform" which focuses on management in the Chinese context and aims to help business schools across the world gain in-depth knowledge of China's economic environment. Following three years of hard work, the platform has begun to take shape. "In the past few years, thanks to efforts made by Professor Liang Neng and Research Fellow Dr Raymond Xu, the Case Centre has done a lot of work and has provided its successors with a solid foundation," says Professor Chen. "The CEIBS Case Centre has a vision, which is that when Chinese cases are mentioned in an international context, listeners will first think of CEIBS."

Looking back on his career path,

Prof Chen calls himself "a lucky man". His wishes have been and continue to be fulfilled with the passing of time. He has a successful career, a happy family, and his two children are doing well in their studies. However, behind the so-called "luck" is his hard work from 8 in the morning to 6 every evening – and his insightfulness. "I often tell younger colleagues that they should do their best to take ownership of whatever they do. In retrospect, this is the approach I take when dealing with most issues. Don't think about the reward when you are making a contribution. When the time is right, your hard work will pay off," he says.

He adds, "CEIBS is indeed an excellent platform. All the great achievements made either by me or my colleagues are closely related to the platform. Without CEIBS, as individuals, we would not have been able to achieve so much." Looking back on his time with the CEIBS MBA, Prof Chen is full of gratitude, "I have to say special thanks to Yvonne Li, Ma Ning and the entire MBA team. Working with them over the last five years has been a very enjoyable experience. Although we may not have reached a consensus on every issue, we have generally been a very harmonious team and have accomplished a lot together. I hope CEIBS will continue to excel and that the MBA programme will scale new heights."