

Research on the Enhancement Path of High-Level Talent Attraction In Local Application-Oriented Undergraduate Universities

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of China's "Strengthening the Nation through Talent" strategy and the superimposed "Matthew Effect" (Matthew Effect) of the "Double First-Class" initiative, local application-oriented undergraduate universities face structural challenges in attracting and cultivating high-level talent. This study systematically analyzes the components of university attractiveness to high-level talent, examines four macro-level dilemmas—geographical competition, resource constraints, institutional adaptation, and outdated concepts—and proposes an integrated five-pronged approach consisting of "Precision Talent Acquisition - Categorized Management - Platform Empowerment - Ecological Optimization - Brand Building," aimed at constructing a talent gravitational field deeply integrated with regional industries. Finally, it establishes a long-term guarantee mechanism from four dimensions: organization, funding, supervision, providing theoretical references and practical paradigms for addressing the talent predicament in local application-oriented universities.

KEYWORDS

Local application-oriented; Undergraduate universities; High-level talent; Talent attractiveness

1 Introduction

Local application-oriented undergraduate universities, as a major component of China's higher education system, bear the mission of serving regional economic development and cultivating high-quality application-oriented talent. Currently, under the national "Strengthening the Nation through Talent" strategy, universities under the "Double First-Class" initiative have formed a significant "siphoning effect" in talent team development. This competitive landscape places local application-oriented undergraduate universities in an awkward position regarding the recruitment of high-level talent.

This study proposes a new "talent attractiveness" paradigm, emphasizing that talent attractiveness is not merely about salary competition but involves a systematic integration of career platforms, institutional environment, cultural identity, and regional ecology. This paradigm shift requires local application-oriented universities to build a talent development community that "coexists and thrives together" with regional industries.

2 Components of Talent Attractiveness in Local Application-Oriented Undergraduate Universities

Systematically constructing and enhancing talent attractiveness cannot rely solely on the improvement of individual elements; it requires building a multi-level, three-dimensional attractiveness model.

2.1 Basic Attraction Layer: Compensation and Material Security

The basic attraction layer serves as the material foundation that meets the essential survival and development needs of talent. If there are significant shortcomings at this level, higher levels of attractiveness will be unattainable. This includes not only a base salary that is regionally competitive but also performance-based incentive pay. Universities need to establish a flexible compensation system of "setting salary by position, rewarding based on performance," with preferential treatment toward high-level talent such as distinguished teachers, research backbones, and program leaders. In addition, this should also include housing benefits, spousal employment placement, healthcare services, and other aspects.

2.2 Core Attraction Layer: Development Platform and Career Space

When material needs are basically met, high-level talent will pay greater attention to the realization of personal value and long-term career development. The core attraction layer determines whether talent can be "effectively utilized" and achieve self-transcendence. This aspect includes diversified promotion pathways for professional titles, a robust system for teacher training and further education, as well as high-level teaching and research platforms, such as key disciplines and distinctive program clusters.

2.3 Value-Added Attraction Layer: Institutional Environment and Cultural Atmosphere

The value-added attraction layer represents the soft environment within the organization. Although intangible, it profoundly influences talent's work experience, sense of belonging, and creativity, serving as the key to forming lasting attractiveness. This includes scientific teacher evaluation systems, efficient administrative processes, open, inclusive, and respectful academic culture, as well as harmonious and collaborative interpersonal relationships. By creating a fair, comfortable, and dignified soft environment, the value-added attraction layer tightly binds the emotional connection between talent and the university.

2.4 External Attraction Layer: Regional Industry and Urban Livability

Universities are not isolated entities; the urban functions and industrial environment of their location constitute macro external factors influencing talent decisions. For teachers in local application-oriented universities, the presence of a developed industrial cluster in the region directly affects whether their research outcomes can be translated, whether there are sufficient applied research projects, and whether student internships and employment are convenient. A dynamic industrial environment can provide a broad practical arena for "Dual-Qualified Teachers" (possessing both theoretical literacy and practical experience), making their academic research more applicable and practically meaningful, thereby enhancing their professional fulfillment. The city's natural climate, transportation networks, commercial amenities, and medical and educational resources can enhance the overall life satisfaction and retention willingness of talent.

3 Macro-Level Dilemmas Faced by Local Application-Oriented Universities in Talent Acquisition

In translating the theoretical elements above into practical attractiveness, local application-oriented undergraduate universities face multiple challenges arising from the macro environment and their own conditions. These dilemmas are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, forming a systematic challenge to their talent recruitment and retention efforts.

3.1 Geographical Competition Dilemma

Geographical disadvantage is an objective obstacle that local application-oriented universities must face and one that is difficult to overcome. Under China's pattern of high concentration of high-quality resources in central cities and urban agglomerations, talent mobility exhibits a strong "Matthew Effect."

Most local application-oriented universities are located in non-provincial capital cities or ordinary prefecture-level cities, which are inferior to first-tier cities in terms of economic dynamism, information accessibility, and richness of cultural resources. This places universities at a disadvantage in "first impressions" when attracting high-end talent.

3.2 Resource Constraint Dilemma

Resource shortage is a long-term, fundamental constraint commonly faced by local application-oriented universities. Compared to national ministries-affiliated universities or provincial key universities, their funding sources are more singular. Against the backdrop of pressured or slowing regional economic growth, universities find themselves "willing but unable" to provide competitive compensation, research startup funds, and build high-end platforms. Due to relatively weak research capabilities and social reputation, local universities have limited capacity to compete for major national research projects, secure high-level applied research funding, and attract social donations; their self- "onomatopoetic" function is insufficient. This further exacerbates their dependence on limited financial resources, forming a vicious cycle.

3.3 Institutional Adaptation Dilemma

The management systems of local application-oriented universities often lag behind the actual needs of their application-oriented transformation and talent development. Many universities still adopt evaluation systems homogenized with research universities, which are severely misaligned with the application-oriented universities' positioning that emphasizes achievement transformation, technical services, and industry-education integration. This makes it difficult for teachers dedicated to applied research to receive fair evaluation and promotion opportunities, dampening their motivation. Administrative models involve cumbersome processes and low efficiency, consuming a significant amount of teachers' time and energy. In areas such as resource allocation, team formation, and fund utilization, teachers have limited autonomy; academic power often yields to administrative power, and the "delegating power, improving regulation, and upgrading services" reform has not been fully implemented, thereby inhibiting the innovative

vitality of talent.

3.4 Outdated Concepts Dilemma

Ideology is the precursor to action. Some local application-oriented universities harbor cognitive biases in their educational philosophy and talent recruitment concepts, which represents the deepest level of dilemma. Some institutions fail to firmly adhere to the application-oriented educational positioning. They blindly follow academic universities in discipline construction and talent recruitment standards, pursuing the recruitment of "highly productive in papers" PhDs instead of "Dual-Qualified Talent" who possess both theoretical literacy and practical experience. This vague positioning leads to a disconnect between recruitment direction and the university's development strategy, resulting in recruited talent not meeting the needs of the university's application-oriented talent cultivation. Universities invest more resources in external talent recruitment while neglecting the cultivation of existing internal talent, weakening the sense of belonging and loyalty of on-campus faculty.

4 Systemic Measures to Enhance High-Level Talent Attractiveness

4.1 Strategic Restructuring: Precision Talent Acquisition

Collaborate with economic and information departments to map out a "Regional Industrial Chain - Talent Demand Spectrum," conduct technical decomposition of core industrial chains, identify key technical links and urgently needed talent, and formulate a "Catalog of Urgently Needed and Scarce Talent." Implement the "Characteristic Disciplines Building Nests to Attract Phoenixes" project, select 2-3 disciplines highly aligned with the local economy, implement separate talent recruitment quotas, prioritized funding guarantees, and "case-by-case" resource allocation. Establish a "talent pre-recruitment" mechanism, intervene in cultivating outstanding doctoral candidates and senior enterprise experts several years in advance, providing visiting allowances and platform support to shorten the post-employment adaptation period.

4.2 Institutional Innovation: Categorized Management

Establish multiple types of promotion channels such as teaching-oriented, application research-oriented, and technology promotion-oriented. Appropriately reduce research achievement requirements and increase teaching achievement requirements for teaching-oriented personnel; increase conditions such as applied research project funding and technology transfer for application research-oriented personnel; for technology promotion-oriented personnel, incorporate the number of enterprises covered by technical services, training person-times, and standard formulation into core evaluation indicators. Implement a dual-track compensation system of "basic annual salary + achievement rewards." Explore university-enterprise co-recruitment, involving local governments, enterprises/industries, and universities three-party shared using and joint evaluation and assessment.

4.3 Platform Empowerment: Physical Integration

Focus on local pillar industries or strategic emerging industries, concentrate resources to build several distinctive and advantageous discipline platforms or application-oriented science program clusters. Alternatively, instead of recruiting a single individual, build an innovation team "tailor-made" around a leading figure, including research staffing, postdoctoral quotas, and assignment of young teachers to achieve "recruit one, drive many." Universities can strengthen university-enterprise integration, jointly establish joint laboratories, technology centers, or industrial research institutes with local governments and leading enterprises. These platforms are directly oriented toward industrial needs, can provide talent with ample applied research projects, application scenarios, and opportunities for achievement transformation, and are highly attractive. Universities should shift from the previous practice of relying on "positions, treatment to seek people" and form a "platform attracts people" pattern.

4.4 Ecological Optimization: Full-Cycle Services

Optimizing the talent ecological environment fundamentally entails treating talent as a complete, dynamically developing individual, providing continuous, precise, and humanized support throughout the entire process—from the initial contact with the university, through compensation negotiation, integration into teaching and research work, to career development—including initial settlement, spouse employment, and children's school enrollment and other supporting services in the early stage. In the mid-to-late career stages, it should also include the enhancement of teaching and research capabilities, professional title and position promotions, team building, and other aspects; all must

keep pace.

4.5 Brand Building: Word-of-Mouth Fission

Establish a "talent-attracts-talent" fission mechanism, grant successfully recruited talent recommendation rights, and provide certain rewards for each recommended and recruited peer-level talent. Activate alumni resources, establish an "Alumni Entrepreneurs Talent Fund," where alumni donate specific resources for talent recruitment, and donors enjoy priority rights for children's priority enrollment and priority technology demand alignment. Strengthen regional brand tagging dissemination, focus on 2-3 distinctive fields to continuously host industry summits, and enhance national influence in niche fields.

5 Guarantee System for the Long-Term Attractiveness Mechanism

5.1 Organizational Guarantee

Establish a talent work leading group with the Party Secretary and President at its core; hold regular talent work meetings to discuss talent recruitment policies, recruitment directions, and quantities; incorporate recruitment effectiveness into the annual assessment weighting of secondary colleges.

5.2 Funding Guarantee

Closely connect with national, provincial, and municipal talent programs at all levels and actively apply. Once selected, talent can receive national/local special talent allowances. Universities should set up a "talent work special fund" in their annual budgets, managed centrally at the university level, and it should be prioritized to ensure a stable and continuous "fund pool" for talent recruitment work.

5.3 Supervision Guarantee

Commission third-party institutions to conduct annual anonymous surveys on talent policies, focusing on evaluating the satisfaction, retention rate, and performance output efficiency of various secondary colleges in talent recruitment, and implement "red-yellow-blue" warning.

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