

## 4. A FLEETING RAY OF HOPE (CAI DELIN, 1992-1996)

The experience of selecting the post-Tiananmen leaders at SZU taught the upper levels of government several valuable lessons. First, university administrations that are viewed by members of the campus community as lame ducks are unlikely to achieve reforms of a lasting nature. Young, dynamic leadership is preferred over a retiring, sloganeering administration. Second, new leadership should not be hampered by a political agenda, especially one imposed on them from outside the campus. Politics plays an important role, but it is not a substitute for administration and scientific management. Third, it is desirable for new leaders to be familiar with the social and economic environment of both the university campus and the region which it serves. On-the-job training for university leaders incurs costs such as inefficient administration, delayed planning, and an overall ineffective management, at least for the first years an administration is in office. Finally, university leaders should push a positive and progressive program. Administrations that are seen as “opposing the past” rather than “striving for the future” are unlikely to be effective. Positive is better than negative; proactive is better than responsive.

Given these lessons, it is not surprising that the upper levels chose as the next SZU president a man who had over 30 years of experience in Chinese higher education, most recently as a vice-president of a comprehensive university. The individual chosen, Cai Delin, was the vice-president of Anhui University in Hefei, Anhui. In his mid-fifties, Cai could remain SZU president for ten years or longer, 65 being a respectable retirement age for university presidents. Cai would not be stigmatized as lame-duck. He would inherit Wei-Wu’s political work *fait accompli*. He could choose to fine tune it, but for the most part the political agenda was completed.

### ***Cai’s route to SZU***

When hired, Cai was not familiar with Shenzhen, and this is precisely why the upper levels insisted that he do a year-long internship at SZU. Cai transferred to SZU as vice-president and vice-Party secretary in the fall of 1991. He was recommended to the province and city by Wang Jisheng, an old personal friend and a high-ranking cadre with the SEdC. As the central level’s candidate, Cai was not indentured to either the municipality or province, so he was acceptable to both. At the time he arrived at SZU, it was clear to members of the university community that Cai would succeed Wei as

president. His appointment as vice-president carried with it no assigned areas of supervision, a sort of minister without portfolio. As “president-in-waiting,” Cai spent a full year meeting municipal officials, learning how the school worked, familiarizing himself with the SEZ, and developing relationships among staff and government officials. It became customary for university sub-leaders to respond to staff requests as follows: “Yes, that’s a good idea. We will talk to Mr. Cai about it and when he becomes president, perhaps it can be done.” From September 1991 until November 1992, when Cai formally assumed the presidency, much management was put in a state of suspended animation. Both Wei and Wu were exercising their prerogatives as outgoing leaders to take as many foreign trips as permitted; both had disengaged from management decisions and attended meetings only in their nominal positions.

According to his official biography Cai Delin was born in 1935 in Chenghai, Guangdong, a town located in the province’s Chaozhou dialect-speaking area in the east.<sup>1</sup> The entire area is often referred to as Chaozhou (in Cantonese Chiu Chao) after its oldest inhabited town. Chenghai, where the most standard Chaozhou dialect is spoken, is now a city, but when Cai was growing up, it was only a relatively densely populated county. Cai attended Chenghai #1 Middle School, the best in Chenghai. He starting working in 1952 and then entered Beijing Teachers University, majoring in political education. He graduated in 1956 with a *benke* degree and joined the CCP. He received a masters degree in philosophy in 1958. Philosophy at the time was limited to Marxism, so Cai’s education did not acquaint him with the philosophical theories or works of traditional Chinese or Western masters. Cai was assigned to the teaching staff of Anhui Hefei Normal College and later Anhui University (AnDa), also located in the provincial capital, Hefei. There he worked his way up through the ranks until he became an associate professor in 1978 and a full professor in 1986. Cai spent his academic career researching Marxism, Chinese contemporary political thought, and the thoughts of Mao Zedong, his special field of expertise. From 1978 with resumption of post-graduate degrees, Cai tutored AnDa post-graduates majoring in Marxism; he also served as a part-time professor at Zhongshan University.

Cai headed the AnDa Philosophy Department and became the deputy head of the university’s education college. He then became the Party vice-secretary of AnDa and later assumed the vice-presidency. He participated in a number of academic associations, including ones on Chinese Marxist Philosophy, Mao Zedong Philosophical Thoughts Research, Chinese Social-

ism research, China Educational Auditing. He served as vice-head of the Anhui Province Philosophy Association, Anhui Province Educational Association, as well as head of the Mao Zedong Philosophical Thoughts Research Association. His name is listed in various published *Who's Who* type volumes, such as *China's Contemporary Famous People*, *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese Scholars in Social Science*, *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese Famous Cultural People*, *International Famous Intellectuals* and *Accomplished Famous Men* (both published in Cambridge, U.K.).

By the early 1990s Cai Delin was restless. His job as vice-president and Party vice-secretary was unchallenging. All the major decisions concerning the university rested with either the university's president or its Party secretary, who had better ties with provincial leaders than Cai, an outsider from Southern China, had. His position as AnDa vice-president was a dead-end job; he believed that he could not be promoted within Anhui Province. According to several AnDa teachers who knew Cai, he felt frustrated and believed he deserved a better job. Thus, he turned to his old SEdC friend Wang Jisheng, who suggested Cai take the presidency of Shantou University, a university in the Shatou special economic zone. Cai raised two objections to this transfer. First, he did not want to go back to his hometown. In such a position of power, he would be under constant pressure to respond to requests of his "hometown fellows." These requests might include admitting students with low examination scores through irregular channels, what is known in Chinese as the "back door" (*hou men*). Cai had spent most of his adult life perfecting the art of *guanxi* (personal relationships); he did not want to become known as one who turned down personal favors from friends, friends of friends, friends of friends of friends, etc. The other drawback to the appointment related to the nature of Shantou University, a unique institution in China. Shantou University, which is one year older than SZU, was founded by Hong Kong entrepreneur/investor, Li Ka-shing. Li, who operates the Hong Kong company Hutchinson Whampoa, is among the wealthiest Hong Kong billionaires, with an estimated net worth of U.S. \$5.8 billion.<sup>2</sup> Li was also a leader among the many compatriot and overseas Chinese who have made major philanthropic gifts in the PRC. In fact, Shantou University is fully-funded by Li Ka-shing. Unlike SZU, it receives no city funding. Cai Delin confided to close associates that, as a Marxist theorist working for such a renown capitalist, he feared that he could not be effective. For these two reasons, he turned down the Shantou job. As a fall-back, his friend Wang Jisheng came up with the SZU job, where municipal and provincial officials were searching in vain for a suitable candidate who would

accept the post (Several potential candidates from famous universities had flatly refused to even consider the job).

### ***What Cai inherited***

It is difficult, at least from published documents, to assess when exactly Cai began to exert influence at SZU. The major blueprint for SZU development, the 10-year Development Plan, was published just after Cai's arrival; he thus exercised negligible influence on it.<sup>3</sup> The Plan set development targets (e.g., 5,800 students by the year 2000) and suggested the inclusion of a teachers college within SZU and the addition of a dozen new specializations, many of them vocational/technical in nature. In attempting to broaden the scope of SZU, the Plan was consistent with SEdC policy which strove to de-specialize higher education, which in this regard was still suffering the legacy of Soviet influence. The Plan set the goal of getting SEdC approval for post-graduate courses, including Ph.D.s, by 1996. The document emphasized more foreign exchanges, and it included a major section on preparing graduates to work in the SEZ. Certain majors were to be emphasized: computer, electronics, foreign trade, architecture, English and accounting. All in all, the plan reflected the municipal government's educational concerns, and it appears to be a document more prepared *for* the University than one prepared *by* the university. It is the document that Cai Delin inherited; as such it was the state of policy when he arrived at SZU.

In a waning period after political order had been established, the Wei-Wu administration had turned to academic issues, especially focusing more energy on research.<sup>4</sup> Academic and scholarship issues had been on the back burner since 1988, when the first big push to move research forward had occurred. At that time several research institutes were established and assigned permanent ("fixed") staff, and existing ones were expanded. By 1991 the university had approved research institutes with fixed staff on new energy, SEZ economics, communication technology, new technology, applied nuclear technology, life sciences, bio-chemistry, petroleum research and Hong Kong law. Institutes without fixed staff were set up to study population research, higher education, and Chinese culture. Also, in 1991 Wei-Wu required all academic departments to submit revised teaching plans, a laborious exercise for teachers and staff which was to provide an ancillary benefit of departments' rethinking their curricula. In fact, not much revision occurred, but for the first time in years there was discussion about overlapping courses, the need for prerequisites, and the benefits of using updated teaching materials. Wei-Wu also advised departments to set up teaching-research

offices, an administrative layer that existed in other Chinese institutions of higher education. Luo had specifically opposed establishing these units because he felt they wasted scarce human resources and did not improve the quality of research. Nevertheless, these offices were now being put in place. Thus, when Cai arrived in 1991, SZU was just starting to refocus on issues of teaching and research, subjects that had been largely ignored for the previous two years.

The increased focus on education coincided with continued condemnation of teachers' pursuing non-academic work. The Wei-Wu administration recognized what was quite apparent: that teachers were starting to disengage from the university. This disinvestment began around 1990 when teachers and staff realized that they needed to save funds for downpayments for flats that would be offered as part of a new home-ownership scheme for municipal employees. A housing shortage for SZU staff had been present since the university's inception. Luo had wanted to build housing for teachers on campus, but this idea had been rejected by municipal planners. Eventually, a plot of land in downtown Shenzhen was allocated for faculty/staff housing; piling started in December 1990 and occupancy for 335 households was expected by the end of 1992. When Cai Delin arrived, finishing construction and distributing this housing was a top priority for staff. As soon as he became president, Cai himself would personally intervene in the assigning of housing, taking that job away from a vice-president, against whom numerous complaints of favoritism had been raised.

Cai Delin inherited a strife-ridden university, with much dissension occurring between the Party and administrative tracts. Given his experience, Cai believed that the only way to avoid this type of confrontational politics was to unify the Party and administrative leadership into a single individual. He wanted to be that individual. The city government, however, did not favor such unity. Government officials, especially Lin Zuji, had witnessed what they considered an arrogance of power when Luo Zhengqi held both titles. They feared this might reoccur unless the checks and balances inherent in the dual tract system were allowed to exist. At the time Cai was appointed vice-president and Party vice-secretary, a political cadre named Wang Songrong also arrived at SZU. Along with Cai, Wang was appointed a Party vice-secretary, as well as vice-secretary of the SZU CCP Disciplinary Inspection Commission, a Party organ that oversees probity and investigates corruption. Nine years Cai's junior, Wang had graduated from Huanan Agricultural College in Guangdong, where he had risen through the Party ranks (secretary of the Youth League, director of ideological educa-

tion, deputy director of moral education, head of student affairs, and eventually vice-president). Over his career he had received various awards and citations for political correctness, including 1981 excellent provincial Youth League cadre, 1982 provincial excellent teacher, and 1989 excellent security manager. Wang was the province's appointment at SZU. He was a potential rival of Cai, but the campus community generally viewed Wang as an uninspiring political functionary, lacking vision as well as the abilities to motivate or to lead. In the course of a year, Cai Delin was able to convince Lin Zuji and other city officials that it would be in everybody's interests if he held both titles. In what many observers considered a "hard sell" that portended ruthlessness, Cai lobbied for members of the campus community to oppose Wang and support Cai himself as Party secretary, as well as president. Eventually, when Wu retired in early 1994, Cai not Wang assumed the Party secretaryship. Wang remained vice-secretary under Cai.

### ***Putting his stamp on SZU***

Any new administration, whether in business, politics or educational management, wants to be known for its own achievements. It is during this initial "honeymoon period" when most important innovations are initiated.<sup>5</sup> During his early months at SZU, Cai had kept a low profile, rarely even mentioned in the university's *niebu* journal. By August, a few months before Cai was appointed president, the *niebu* journal published his comprehensive reform plan.<sup>6</sup> Cai's policy agenda was contained in 10 Measures on Comprehensive Reform, which began circulating in various public forms as early as July 1992.<sup>7</sup>

### **Ten measures of comprehensive reform**

In an ideological offensive against his conservative reformist allies, Deng Xiaoping visited Guangdong, including Shenzhen, in February 1992 in what became known as his Southern Inspection (*nan xun*). The paramount leader, then in declining physical health but still mentally alert, was attempting to set a pro-reform climate for the Fourteenth CCP Congress scheduled for later that year. Cai Delin, in his preamble to his discussion of the 10 Measures, referred to Deng's inspection tour and his admonition that Guangdong Province should catch up with the Asian Little Dragons (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea) within the following two decades. According to Cai, Deng's directive translated into building SZU within five years into an "advanced, high quality, modernized socialist university" that could supply

the human resource needs of the SEZ. The five-year time frame was not chosen accidentally. The year 1997 was the year of Hong Kong's retrocession to China. It was also the year that Cai would be in his early sixties and seeking renewal of his employment with SZU.

Cai's 10 Measures were presented in a clearly organized, analytical, and well-written manner. They were positive and proscriptive; they did not incorporate the emotionally charged, negative rhetoric used by Wei-Wu. Most of Cai's proposals built on existing policy. The documents used verbs such as "to further" "to develop," "to perfect," and "to adjust," "to enhance," "to better," and "to improve." Some proposals reestablished Luo's policies; only a few were new initiatives. The proposals had a dual audience: university staff and teachers, as well as the upper levels, which supervised university management. They were first formally presented to the staff and teachers at their annual representatives' conference. The first two measures were directed specifically to them.

- Measure #1: *To perfect the employment system and develop a better team structure.*

This was to be accomplished with the Three Fixed [Things]: fixed staffing, fixed positions and fixed responsibilities. Staff should be employed on a two-way choice basis. With high qualification went high salary; low qualification brought low salary. Salary would rise with promotion. Sub work-units (e.g., academic departments and administrative offices) would get fixed salary, regardless of the number of employees they actually employed. Work-units could decide not to employ as many as the approved plan called for, but that number should not be fewer than 15% below plan. Competitive hiring and salary based on performance were ideas that had been around since the university's inception. The notion of allocating fixed amounts for salary by department had been in practice, in theory, since 1987.<sup>8</sup> In reality, the importance of fixed staff—permanent state employees approved by the upper levels and eligible for housing, health and retirement benefits—could not be undermined by regulatory reform. Departments had little discretion in spending funds from the salary budget line; they operated under a quota given by the upper levels. Staffing at SZU was fixed in another aspect; in practice, staff were rarely negatively evaluated and dismissed. Once hired, a staff member was fixed unless s/he chose to leave. In sum, this "reform" measure could have no impact on existing policy, as it validated the status quo. It was certainly acceptable to university staff, which is probably why it appeared as the first in the list.

- *Measure #2: De-emphasize money-making practices of various departments while increasing teacher/staff payments from school-run enterprises.*

The previous administration had on numerous occasions condemned staff for private activities that had caused them to participate less in teaching and scholarship. Cai carried on with this theme because he recognized staff disengagement to be a major obstacle in the reform path. Unlike his predecessors, however, he attempted to strike a bargain with the teachers. Cai said, in effect, “You spend more time on your teaching and research and I will find sufficient money to make it unnecessary for you to moonlight and pursue other activities.” Staff found this approach more acceptable than the blanket condemnation that had come from Wei-Wu.

For his end of the bargain, in 1992 Cai gave staff and teachers a ¥300 (US \$54) per month “on campus subsidy” as well as an additional ¥100 for books. These amounts, which would increase with time—by 1996 teachers were receiving a ¥700 per month payment—came not from municipal funds. Rather, the money came from the School Fund, which was largely funded from contributions remitted to the university by departments and SZU-run enterprises.<sup>9</sup> The departments were required to turn over to the school about 30% of the tuition fees they collected from their courses that were offered outside of the state-approved plan (e.g., night school). Departments also remitted a percent of profit generated from research or by providing consultancy. In a sense, Cai’s proposal can be viewed as a sort of income redistribution. Since his ¥300 subsidy was across-the-board, rich departments such as Architecture would subsidize poorer departments. Staff approved of this method of increasing wages.

Cai recognized income redistribution between departments to be only a stopgap measure. It was important for the SZU-run enterprises to provide their profits for subsidies. Enterprise heads had told Cai “We need autonomy from SZU; in exchange we will provide welfare for your staff.” To bolster his argument that teachers should stick with teaching, Cai cited a remark that Li Ka-shing allegedly made to his Shantou teachers: “Can you do better in business than me? No, you should be good teachers, write books, etc.” Paraphrasing Deng Xiao Ping’s policy on Hong Kong, Cai advocated “one school, two systems.” “I worked in an inland university for 34 years, and I did my best to make side-profits, but it was difficult. Now, I hope all comrades can understand.”

- *Measure #3: Adjusting majors.*

This policy continued the logic of the previous administrations and was consistent with the 10-year Development Plan. It recognized that SZU could not compete with established, inland universities which had been offering and



perfecting certain majors over many years. Rather, SZU should have its own majors, such as real estate development, enterprise culture, or tourism. The latter two were offered by the Chinese Department, which had moved away from teaching language, literature and culture.

- *Measure #4: Furthering foreign exchanges.*

The goal of developing intellectual exchanges with foreign universities had been started by Luo and promoted especially hard by Wei Youhai, who himself had made nine foreign trips, covering 24 weeks and passing through all but two of the globe's continents.<sup>10</sup> Cai, in 35 years of university administration, had rarely traveled abroad. Once at SZU, however, he became a world traveller, taking the permitted two trips abroad each year while he served as SZU president. Cai had coined the phrase to describe SZU as a "a special zone university, a window university, and an experimental university." Delegation foreign travel enabled the university leaders to pass in and out of the window and was strongly supported by Lin Zuji, Shenzhen's vice-Party secretary and Cai's mentor among municipal officials. The former Party head of Shenzhen education, Lin himself saw the educational importance of first-hand travel and accompanied several SZU delegations abroad, including representing the city administration on one of SZU's annual two-week U.K. pilgrimages.

- *Measure # 5: Enhancing competition in teaching and study.*

This measure marked the return to part of the flexible curriculum setting that had existed in the Luo years, as characterized by double-degrees, early/late graduation, and double majors. Two keys to Luo's policy, however, were never resurrected. Neither changing majors after admission nor receiving credit for part-time jobs was reinstated. Cai shared the Wei-Wu view that part-time work was inconsistent with full-time study. In the reform document, Cai specifically mentioned that optional courses "with SEZ characteristics" had been stopped because the teachers involved had not taken them seriously. In fact, optional courses were always relatively unimportant in terms of credits generated. Departments preferred to focus on requirements and generally did not provide courses to non-majors, the type of class that was usually an optional course. Cai's policy was ambiguous on the issue of whether SZU should have the type of open curricula that characterized American general education or should follow the European (and former Soviet) model that was more geared toward specialization. Cai never confronted these educational issues directly; his credit system reform in 1993 reconfirmed the existing system that preferred specialization to general education. In discussing teaching and study, Cai reprimanded students for lacking a good foundation. "Inland students find it hard to adapt themselves to the workplace, but they have

strong foundations; SZU graduates are just the opposite.” Specifically, he criticized students’ writing abilities. “The calligraphy of most SZU students is horrible,” he noted. Student’s oral English was very good, he said, but their English writing was below that of their peers in inland universities.

- *Measure #6: Improve academic research and increase academic achievements.*

From 1989 for several years, the research output of SZU faculty had declined dramatically. In attempting to reverse this trend, Cai formulated a policy that would tie promotion more closely to publications. He also established three new research entities that would not have ties to teaching. These included architecture/construction, communications/electronics, and bio-chemistry.

- *Measure # 7: Improve adult education.*

This policy attempted to narrow the quality gap at SZU which existed between regular university education (where students were mostly admitted according to examination scores) and adult education (where students in certain programs were admitted through various channels). Cai proposed using the credit system for night school students and for expanding regular adult education to include special programs in which *zhuanke* graduates could top off their certificates with more courses, thus achieving a *benke* bachelors degree. Wei-Wu had attempted to rectify adult education by consolidating three departments and ensuring that the certificate offered had some value. They contended, in a report filed with the city in spring 1992, that they had remedied the situation in which “academic merchants” had engaged in “rampant certificate-giving” in both adult education and side-courses that fell outside the state-approved plan.<sup>11</sup> At that time, the most fragrant abuses had stopped, but the adult education degree was still held in low regard, especially when compared to degrees offered in most other institutions. During Cai’s tenure, however, the SZU system began to conform with the China-wide adult education system, in which students had to take standard exams on completion of each subject.

- *Measure # 8: Initiate share-holding among school-run enterprises.*

This proposal was part of a larger, multi-year plan initiated by Wei-Wu that had set forth how SZU-run businesses related to the university. Wei-Wu had reorganized SZU’s enterprises, some of which were unable to recover financially from the post-Tiananmen economic downturn. They separated four enterprises from SZU and closed 14, including two enterprises, an architectural magazine and a museum/restaurant, whose leaders had been closely tied to Luo. Cai reestablished these two businesses, but otherwise continued the

policies he had inherited. Regulations were published which specified how much profit had to be remitted to SZU. Wei-Wu had proposed that the links between SZU-run enterprises and teaching be strengthened so that the businesses provided more opportunities for students' job practice.<sup>12</sup> This was never accomplished, and the initiative was abandoned after Wei and Wu retired.

- *Measure #9: Universalize contract campus services.*

SZU's campus services over the nine years before Cai Delin's arrival had been provided university subsidies while being encouraged to become more self-sufficient through user charges. The postal service, bank, canteens and local stores were subsidized to a certain degree by the fact that the student employees were on the university payroll and the university did not charge rent on facilities used. Academic support units such as the library, computer center, clinic and audio/visual center all received school subsidies; none depended heavily on user charges. Services under the control of the General Affairs Office (GAO) were subsidized in various ways, but they also returned their profits to the university. These included the canteens, transportation unit, school nursery, and the water/power unit. Over the years, policy had steadily shifted toward these units' becoming self-supporting. They were becoming more efficient and were, in the words of the GAO head, ridding themselves of the ideology that it was good to have a "big shade under a big tree."<sup>13</sup> (In other words, work situations in which employees can enjoy shade provided by others.)

Cai's policy was designed to remove SZU from any direct financial involvement in campus services. About 45% of the recurrent operating funds that SZU received from Shenzhen went for campus services, and Cai hoped that services could be contracted out to lessen, if not eliminate, funds that were required of the university. Much of this issue related to accounting. Published budget figures did not show how much of the 45% (¥9 million [US \$1.6] in 1992) came back to the university in the form of remitted profit. It is unlikely the canteen could ever become self-sustaining if it had to pay rent and if its employees who were part of the SZU fixed staff had to reimburse the city government for various housing and welfare subsidies. Cai's policy called for contracting out campus services and, presumably, continuing to provide the contractors with various hidden subsidies. The extent to which this policy was actually a real reform cannot at present be accessed.

- *Measure # 10: Seek more autonomy and favorable policies from government.*

The last of the ten measures was directed to the city, province and central governments. With the most general of brush strokes, Cai sought seven fa-

avorable policies for SZU: (1) permission to enlarge recruitment; (2) ability to set majors; (3) power to recruit graduate students from the SEZ; (4) measures to control the transferring of teachers; (5) the ability to evaluate senior professional qualifications; (6) permission to supervise adult education; (7) a lessened tax burden on staff and teachers. This tenth measure was a potpourri of suggestions, any of which required approvals from different agencies at different levels of government. The president did not put forth arguments in support of these policies; there is little documentary evidence that the policies had been thought out by SZU administrators. Cai actually was presenting tastes of what future policy directions might entail, in the event SZU was able to build a case for them. It also appears that trial ballooning of such a sweeping, general nature was really a request to the city government to waive its rights in deciding these issues. It was unlikely that education officials in Shenzhen would ever agree to waive their rights, but why not ask anyway? SZU administrators long relished the day when city bureaucrats would remove themselves from negotiations, making necessary only conversations with provincial authorities who oversaw the first six of these items.

### Focusing on education

The 10 Measures articulated Cai's shotgun approach to reform. Cai took aim at a lot of targets, not singling out any one in particular. This approach suited Cai who, unlike some of his predecessors, was not a "detail person." He preferred to come up with grand designs which lower levels, in this case departments, were told to implement. With so many irons in the fire and with two months of each year occupied with foreign travel and entertaining incoming delegations, however, Cai had little time to follow-up on his reforms. As time passed, Cai's speeches began to focus on what he perceived to be his broad achievements. His biography on the SZU homepage summarized his accomplishments:<sup>14</sup>

He has led teachers and students of the whole school to correct and unite teaching principles and to adhere to the principle of 'teaching is the fundamental aspect of the school.' SZU should emphasize scientific research and work out a balance between the market economy and educational principles. There should also be an equalization between practical teaching and study and the building of foundational knowledge. We should balance specialization with general education norms, upgrade teaching quality and research levels, and raise the standard of educational layers and educational training. Cai Delin has made a prominent contribution in making SZU into a first grade special zone university, which trains first grade people; a window university that promotes international, cultural, educational and technological exchange

and cooperation; and an experimental university that explores reforms for other Chinese institutions of higher learning.

Cai Delin wanted to be known as the education president of SZU. Luo Zhengqi had been the university's architect; Wei-Wu were its political reformers. Cai's role, as he continued to define it, was to raise the quality of teaching and learning, by putting additional resources into these areas and by raising teachers' salaries.

Cai's greatest achievement was his success at guiding SZU through an accreditation by the SEdC. In 1995, the state began an accreditation process in which all universities established in the post-Mao reform period would be closely examined. Some of the 400 institutions in this group were small, with only a few hundred students. Some had been converted from existing teachers colleges or in some cases from high schools. It was these types of institutions, many of them under-resourced by the cities which funded them, that were expected to come under intense scrutiny. SZU was placed in the first batch of 100 chosen for evaluation.<sup>15</sup> There was never much doubt that SZU would pass, given the generosity of the Shenzhen government which provided an additional ¥10 million to ensure a successful accreditation. The only possible hitch was the requirement that students be tested in select areas. The specific grades and subjects to be tested were not supposed to be known before the examinations were given. In order for students to prepare for these tests, regular education at SZU was suspended for fall semester 1995 so that all students could cram for exams that they might possibly be given in November. A week before the exams, an official from the SEdC phoned SZU to inform the university leadership exactly which classes would be tested in which subjects. During the following week, while students who were not to be tested returned to their regular curriculum, students facing tests spent their entire schedules on the subjects on which they were to be examined. They took repeated practice exams and had evening tutorials. Teachers from Mathematics, for example, were required to work overtime tutoring students. Whether students needed this extra attention is unclear; each group passed the tests, some by wide margins. The university received accreditation.

### Carry-over issues

Certain issues carried over from the Wei-Wu administration. Chief among them were security and student management.

## Security

Under Cai Delin, campus security continued its decline. Financial crimes did not abate. In December 1992 Shenzhen Public Security cracked a ring that offered short courses in the name of the Shenzhen City *Rencai* Training Center. At the end of the same month, the university Security Office caught a man who had stolen ¥170,000 from the Finance Department of the Reflective Materials Factory the previous month.

The most notable crimes in the university's history occurred in spring 1993. First, on 26 February 1993 a night school student had a disagreement with his girlfriend, who apparently had jilted him. In the lobby of Penglai guest house—a dorm that at the time provided accommodation to foreign students, night school students and campus visitors—the man stabbed the woman to death with a paring knife (the case became known as the fruit knife murder). In an attempt to commit suicide, he then jumped from his second floor dorm room, but only broke his leg. This story appeared in the leading Shenzhen newspaper about two weeks later, with most of the report focusing on the actual details of his injury.<sup>16</sup> As soon as the man's leg mended, he was tried, sentenced to death and executed, all within a few days.

The second crime of the spring 1993, known as the Cuckoo's Hill case, was even more notorious.<sup>17</sup> It occurred on the evening of 4 May, coincidentally the day following a lengthy article in the *Shenzhen Tequ Bao* entitled "SZU Standing on the New Starting Line: An Interview with President Cai."<sup>18</sup> Eleven men, who had been drinking at a local campus restaurant near the roller rink, slew another man, dragged him across the campus road, and buried him in an on-campus forested area (Cuckoo's Hill) that, ironically, had been used as an ancestral cemetery in the centuries before the campus was built. The perpetrators returned the next night, exhumed the body, and doused it with sulfuric acid. Several of the young men quickly confessed to Public Security; all accomplices were rounded up within the next two days. Rumors of this crime appeared on campus on the morning of 6 May, and the burial site became a sort of morbid tourist attraction, to which thousands of students over the next few days flocked for a view. The story remained in the SEZ rumor mill until it was confirmed in Hong Kong newspapers around the middle of June.<sup>19</sup> In an accompanying editorial, one Hong Kong paper criticized SZU's school management, especially the "loose administration of Luo Zhengqi" and his "subordinates which Luo brought from the North," and complained that Luo's influence could not be extinguished.<sup>20</sup> It continued:

Local people find a major fault with the [current] SZU administration in that it does not have clear guidelines regarding the type of students it should produce. The original socialist education mode of SZU is no longer practical, yet a new education system has not been established. A lot of students are lost.

The Cuckoo's Hill incident was reported in many of the several dozen Hong Kong dailies as well as by the electronic media. Even *Wen Hui Bao*, a paper seen as generally pro-Beijing, covered the incident, reporting that 13 men, not 11, had participated in the murder.<sup>21</sup> Then, three weeks later—a full two months after the original incident—a Shenzhen paper carried the story, offering the most detailed account to date and naming the victim and the 13 other individuals involved.<sup>22</sup> An apparent last word on the incident came from the national *neibu* newsheet, *Quick Daily Reference (Meiri Quaihao)*, that noted that the SZU murder plot gossip had strayed far from the facts. It suggested that relevant departments finish the case as soon as possible.<sup>23</sup>

In the years that followed, it was believed that SZU experienced several suicides, at least three rapes and one mayhem/murder. None of these was reported in the press or listed in the annual reports of the campus Security Office, but the persistency of the rumors suggested that the incidents indeed occurred. Furthermore, the suicide was verified by a teacher who had found the suicide note and was searching for the girl at the very moment she jumped off the roof of the library. She had told her classmates she was despondent because of a failed love affair. The body of the mayhem/murder victim was seen by a passing jogger, a teacher who witnessed Public Security Officers whisk a mutilated body into a vehicle and speed off campus. At the same time, some female students mentioned that one auditor from their class had mysteriously vanished and no one had ever heard from her again. Presumably, hers was the body that Public Security whisked away.

### **Student management**

Student management became a major concern to Cai Delin, especially after the spring 1993 murders. These incidents, although hardly ever officially mentioned, were in the back of everyone's minds. In a December 1993 report, Cai noted that an effective student management system had still not been established.<sup>24</sup> Dorm regulations were often breached. Part-time jobs for students—which presumably kept them out-of-trouble—had shrunk because of the employment of temporary workers. In one of the few public mentions of the murder, Cai reported that the Cuckoo's Hill murder had exposed problems and weak links of management and said "this lesson is very painful." Cai's bottom line was that problems were the result of loose disci-

pline. Like Wei-Wu, and in contrast to Luo, Cai did not advocate self-discipline. He supported tighter enforcement of regulations.

One way to improve student management became the comprehensive evaluation of students. From the beginning of the university, students completed self-evaluations. This endeavor became more serious after Tiananmen. During SZU's middle years, self-evaluation forms were discussed among an evaluation group of students appointed by department leaders for each class, then reviewed by the political tutor and the department head, and forwarded to the Student Affairs Office. Students were permitted to comment on the reviews. During Cai's tenure the evaluation (which was under the portfolio of Wang Songrong, the vice-president in charge of students) acquired a high level of detail.<sup>25</sup> Scores were computed on a 100 point basis (20% for moral quality, 70% for academic achievement, 30% for physical prowess). Instructions were issued to prevent students' from inflating their marks, and the number of points was specified for various activities. Contests that students won at the city level, school level or department level, for example, received 8, 5, and 2 points, respectively. If SZU awarded a student by publicizing his/her name, 2-5 additional points were accrued. An early pass of Band 4 (the province-wide test of English which was a graduation requirement for non-English majors) achieved 3 points; Band 6 earned 6 points. Good deeds like "fighting hooligans," "rescue work during a natural disaster," "finding and returning property," or "helping the handicapped or wounded" could result in 1-10 additional points. Conversely, points were deducted for bad deeds. Being criticized by SZU or a department brought a 2-5 point deduction. A Party or Youth League reprimand cost 10 points, a serious warning -15 points, a bad record -20 points; probation -40 points; expulsion from the CCP, -60. Damaging public property resulted in 5-10 points' deduction. Students lost 2 points if they were caught being absent from public activities such as tree planting or Lei Feng-type activities, but if they belonged to an arts or athletic team they earned 3-5 points. Students with good evaluations were encouraged to show them to prospective employers.

### New initiatives

Several ideas had been discussed at SZU in cadre meetings for some months, and they had been outlined by a Propaganda Department employee, Yang Yiyi, in a March 1993 article in one of China's key educational journals.<sup>26</sup> A few months later, in May, Cai was proposing these initiatives for improving the systems of teaching, administration and investment. The proposals bore



Cai's name when they appeared in an article about SZU in a leading Shenzhen newspaper.<sup>27</sup> Some of his 10 Measures of comprehensive reform were included in his list of six major reforms, but the first three items of the list were new. Cai listed his six goals as follows:

- to establish a board of trustees, drawing on the strength of the community in order to more closely link teaching with society.
- to adopt a system of colleges which, linked to relevant government departments, would overlay existing teaching departments and run independently.
- to work out a method to run the school as an enterprise, to set up technology industries owned by the school and to convert the results of the school's scientific research into productive forces through these enterprises.
- to broaden the opening-up policy and actively explore ways to cooperate with other institutes of higher learning both in China and abroad.
- to carry out a contracting system of support services and gradually realize socialization by our own efforts.
- to take research as the first step, then steadily adjust specialties and subjects.

#### Four keys

Cai attempted to develop the university's academic reputation by constructing Four Keys. These were key courses, key subjects, key labs and key teachers to be trained.<sup>28</sup> The concept of key (*zhongdian*) is found throughout Chinese education. High schools which send large numbers of graduates to college become key high schools, and they receive preferential funding by cities. The nomenclature of key primary and junior secondary schools was abandoned by SEdC edict in the early 1980s, although *de facto* key schools still exist at these levels. At the university level, of course, key is an important tag, setting high admission standards. Key institutions receive superior teaching and research facilities that attract the highest quality of the nation's intellectuals. Key status also defines prestige in terms of the way the public recognizes the values of various institutions' diplomas. Degrees from Beijing University or Qinghua University are *ipso facto* the best in China.

The concept of key carries with it an implied degree of stratification. When initially presenting his proposals, Cai admitted, "Since our foundation is weak, only if we first obtain the keys, can we improve the whole situa-

tion.” This is a commonly accepted notion in China, a massive country with one-quarter of the earth’s population. It was part of Deng Xiaoping’s reform philosophy that some people will get rich before others. It is capsulized in the Chinese idiom: *ti gang xie ling*, which refers to grasping an entirety by first taking the most important part. The idiom specifically relates to grabbing a coat by first hooking its tag. Cai’s idea was to identify outstanding teachers as “key teachers for training.” They would be given special salaries and book funds and also permitted special leaves for study abroad. This proposal coincided with Cai’s policies to upgrade all teachers’ salaries and his regulations that permitted most teachers to travel abroad for conferences or research. All teachers were better off, just some were becoming better off than others.

At the department level, Cai suggested that certain “fist” (*quan tou*, implying the power of a fist ready to strike) majors, “fist” subjects and “fist” courses be identified. They were to receive special attention and special departmental allocations, which totaled ¥250,000 in 1993. The best teachers were to be assigned to teach them. SZU identified key courses in each department and sought eventual provincial recognition of the quality of these courses. The improvement of teaching was also tied to these key courses.

### **International exchange**

SZU’s reputation, it was widely believed, would be enhanced by international exchange. Since 1986 SZU had had a relationship with Lancashire Polytech, which in the 1990s became known as University of Central Lancashire, when the U.K. upgraded polytechnic institutions to university status. About a half dozen SZU students and teachers had gone to Lancashire for research or study. SZU had faculty or student exchanges with other schools, including Manchester University (U.K.) and Kumamoto University of Commerce (Japan), but most of the over 30 cooperation agreements did not result in exchanges of students or faculty. Generally, cooperation involved the exchange of visiting delegations of leaders. Cai continued Wei’s goal of expanding international exchanges, which emphasized delegation travel. In 1992-93, cooperation agreements were signed with 16 foreign institutions. During the same period SZU received 2,400 visitors from abroad, most of whom were given campus tours by the Foreign Affairs Office. In addition, several major exchange programs were embarked upon. They resulted in several dozen students going from SZU to Edmonds Community College, Seattle, and to Lancashire. Another large-scale “twinning program” involved Victoria University of Technology, in Melbourne.<sup>29</sup>

Cai had inherited from his predecessors a university that was held in low esteem, both locally and across China. The situation continued to deteriorate under his tenure. In terms of academics, the university's repute fell. Freshmen's entrance exam scores had peaked in 1989, when 70% of the recruits qualified for admission at China's key universities. By 1995, the figure had dropped to below 45%, suggesting SZU could no longer attract the best high school graduates of the Province, or even in Shenzhen. In terms of social order, the university's reputation also fell. The spring 1993 murders had received international publicity. Shenzhen papers carried several exposés on the university. Despite the regulations and rules imposed by Wei-Wu, campus order collapsed. Cai's stated attempts to improve SZU's status notwithstanding, the university's reputation continued to plummet, in large part because the Cai administration itself was perceived as extremely corrupt and self-serving. The issues of reputation and corruption will be handled in later chapters. Suffice it to say, SZU was in a funk—before and during Cai's tenure, which ended with his forced retirement at age 60 in 1996.

### ***The Cai legacy***

Cai's various policies, as set forth in documents and regulations, may lack a stated, recognizable theme, but several motifs nevertheless appear. First, money. Second, an emphasis on enhancing institutional and personal reputation through developing relationships and face. Public relations work was enhanced. Third, high degrees of self-service and corruption, viewed as excessive even in an environment that tolerated a moderate degree of both.

### **Money**

Cai was more successful at raising money than any of his predecessors. Not only did he manage to get the Shenzhen government to double its amount of support, but he captured various private donations (see Table 4.1, next page). The groundwork for getting entrepreneur Yu Yuanping to give HK \$10 million toward constructing the Yuanping Sports Center had preceded Cai, but many other donations occurred during his watch. In addition to the donations listed in Table 4.1, Cai had obtained in 1994 a HK \$14 million commitment from Hong Kong philanthropist Tin Ka Ping to help build the Tin Ka Ping Commercial College. This was to supplement a ¥6 million investment from SZU. The university later withdrew its request for Tin Ka Ping funds, after being told by upper levels that state regulations prohibited universities from naming building after overseas donors. (Yu Yuanping had

made his donation before the regulations were promulgated.) Although this condition would have not likely affected Tin's donation—much of his philanthropy in the PRC does not have his name attached—SZU chose not to request that he drop his name from the building. As explained by one informant, Cai felt such a request would cause Cai himself to lose face and he would rather forego the donation than to suffer that fate. In any case, plans for the commercial college were scrapped. Even under Cai, however, donations did not take on the significance they did at other universities. Li Kashing had donated Hong Kong \$1.7 billion to Shantou University; Wuyi University had received HK \$180 million from Hong Kong and Macau compatriots. Like the leaders who preceded him, Cai relied on the Shenzhen government for most of the university's funding.

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**Table 4.1: Private donations to SZU ( in millions)** <sup>30</sup>

<b>donor</b>	<b>use</b>	<b>US \$</b>
Shao Yifu (Runrun Shaw)	chemistry equipment testing center	.3
Yu Yuanping	sports center	1.3
Hu Yingxiang (Gordon Wu)	student management center	.7
Zhu Shuhao	teachers activity center	1.2
Yu Pengnian	new technology research center	.2
Liang Guoxun	assisting study money	.1
Pan Wangjiu	culture and media college	1.7
SZ Investment Management Co.	accounting computer room	.1
IBM China branch	CASE center	.5
Epson	CAI experimental (in kind)	.6

Note: amounts are in US \$ equivalency.

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### Public relations work

Cai Delin devoted energy to developing ties with the local and national media to ensure that favorable stories about the university and himself appeared in the press. During his tenure, SZU averaged two newspaper or magazine stories per week, only a handful of which were critical of Cai or his administration. A master at public relations, Cai took his case for reforming SZU to the public by way of the local media. The president admitted the university had some problems, and he proposed solutions for them. Cai used the analogy of SZU being but a child: "At the maximum, SZU is only a child, not even ten years old. So it is usual that it makes mistakes in exploring its

way,” President Cai is quoted as saying in one article.<sup>31</sup> “Moreover, on the whole university is exploring a road of reform. It is worth paying some price.” The reporters noted that Cai

pointed out that since the school met some adversities, many of the teaching staff have felt depressed and have been in low spirits. The Party Committee and the government of Shenzhen City firmly support SZU’s reforms and highly praise the school’s achievements. Not long ago, the deputy secretary of the city’s Party Committee Lin Zuji said when he was giving a speech to SZU’s teachers and students that the school’s reform was part of the city’s reform, the achievements of the city contained SZU’s efforts and contributions. The speech has greatly inspired the teachers and students.

In the contrast with the harsh rhetoric of the previous administration—words that had appeared on campus but had not been picked up by the local media—Cai seemed to offer an open, honest, reasonable approach:<sup>32</sup>

In my opinion, we should treasure the useful experiences and also bear in mind the mistakes and lessons. Only in this way can we make full use of the reform policy and strive for more achievements...We should admit that in such an environment like Shenzhen, where the commodity economy is fairly developed with a brisk stock market and the temptation of money is rather strong, running a school is quite difficult. We didn’t realize this before and therefore did not take enough measures to deal with it. To a certain degree, there appeared some unhealthy tendencies in teaching and studying. Some teachers even abandoned teaching to do business.

## Reputation

Reputation was important to Cai. In a speech that appeared on the SZU homepage, Cai said:<sup>33</sup>

An international city requires a famous, well-known university. SZU is located in the frontier of reform. We have the ingredients and responsibility to build SZU into a first rate post-secondary educational institution, internationally influential.

Cai Delin’s main endeavor during his tenure was an attempt to establish a good reputation for the university. Form became as important as substance, if not more important. A construction program began. SZU made an alliance with a local high school that had been affiliated to the South China Oil Company. The university was responsible for supervising the school’s remodeling and a SZU teacher was appointed as principal, but the university was not involved in other aspects, content with only lending its name. The

high school, which was located about 15 km. from SZU, was renamed Shenzhen University-affiliated High School. Cai oversaw the construction of two campus buildings—a sports center and a student activities center—and developed plans for building a teachers college and a college of the arts. Construction on the latter, which was to be funded with a ¥10 donation from Pan Wangjiu, a Guangxi Province businessmen, was stopped after only the basement was dug. The donation never materialized, and for five years the has remained only a hole in the ground.

Cai embarked on setting up a system of colleges and schools because he considered these to be a structural prerequisite for SZU's becoming a famous university. Cai wanted the college system to be his legacy; he wanted to be remembered for expanding SZU into a larger, more comprehensive university that offered masters and doctoral programs. In public speeches, Cai envisioned SZU's selection as a key-level university, one of the nation's 100 élite that were to be included into the state's 211 program (standing for 100 universities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century). This goal was never realistic, as the whole of Guangdong Province was expected to be awarded only three or four 211 institutions. SZU was not even a key university as its freshmen college admission test scores fell below the threshold required of élite universities. Nevertheless, the 211 goal was pushed by both Cai and the Shenzhen government, but the bold attempt to be included into the highest strata of Chinese universities produced more ridicule than respect. With support from the upper levels, Cai established a Board of Directors, whose members were titans of the local business community and were supposed to enhance the university's reputation as well as to raise funds. Cai also discussed SZU with Luo Zhengqi, who still lived on campus, and he re-implemented some of Luo's systems although he never fully understood them. Foremost among these was the university's credit system, which resembled its North American counterpart in form, but not in substance.<sup>34</sup>

### **Tenth anniversary celebration**

Cai viewed the university's tenth year anniversary celebration as an opportunity to help improve SZU's reputation. As requested, Premier Li Peng wrote an inscription in commemoration: "May SZU train more talented people for China's open and reform cause." SZU appeared on the cover of the central level *Chinese Higher Education*, with an accompanying article of praise.<sup>35</sup> A local newspaper printed a full-page color spread for free distribution on campus.<sup>36</sup> A weekend of celebrations, surrounding a Saturday morning ceremony, was planned. The Foreign Affairs Office invited a half-dozen key

“foreign friends” to represent schools with which SZU had ties. These guests were housed (at university expense) off campus at the four-star Shenzhen Bay Hotel instead of at the campus guesthouse, the Yuehaimen Hotel which, as one foreigner joked, was a “minus two star hotel.”<sup>37</sup> Local political leaders from both the city and province attended, as well as the vice-chancellor of Hong Kong’s newly built University of Science and Technology. Departments were encouraged to draw back their alumni for open houses. The main anniversary program included a press briefing, a buffet for invited guests, the official ceremony, the dedication of the almost completed Yuanping Sports Center, and a 36-booth exhibit of the university’s research output. Total costs, according to the General Affairs Office, amounted to ¥ 637,000 (US \$76,000) which, the Finance Office pointed out, contributed to the year’s ¥5 million plus deficit.<sup>38</sup>

Cai set up a three-person committee (the head of the CCP Propaganda Office, the Student Affairs Office and the President’s Office) to oversee the anniversary festivities and to generate interest among the alumni. Alumni affairs had been on hold since Luo’s removal and the Alumni Organization, which had its own charter granted by the municipality, refused to have any dealings with Luo’s replacements. SZU had attempted unsuccessfully to have the city revoke the Alumni Organization’s charter and had been unable to set up a new organization to replace it. In 1993, the university lacked an office of alumni affairs and had only a five-year old directory of alumni. To generate alumni support, the committee decided to let alumni relations be handled by individual academic departments. It also empowered a “SZU pictorial editing committee” under the SZU publications center to contact alumni. For its part, the committee sent out a mailing to all alumni for which it had five-year old work addresses. Given graduate mobility—both in the Shenzhen workplace and in terms of emigration—probably 60% of these addresses proved invalid. Nevertheless, the less transitory alumni received an invitation letter from the anniversary organizing committee. The letter, however, was not sent with the primary purpose of welcoming back graduates to their *alma mater* for the celebrations. Instead, it invited them to buy space in the university’s pictorial that SZU would publish for the anniversary. The invitation read, in part:<sup>39</sup>

Since we have received many alumni requests to show their deep affection for the mother university, we are allowing you to celebrate the university’s anniversary by appearing on your own behalf in the *SZU 10 Year Pictorial*. You may celebrate in two ways. First, you may list your name in the book, grouped by years, at the cost of ¥125 per alumnus. Each person will get one

free book, priced at ¥60, plus a SZU souvenir. Those with listed names, please show up for the celebration Sunday, 26 September 1993, and go to Room 540 Office Building with this notice, to receive your pictorial and gifts. Second, you may have celebration comments printed, handwritten with signature and personal introduction, priced at ¥8,000 per full page.

Thus, for a ¥8,000 (US \$960) “celebration fee” graduates would get their picture in the pictorial’s section entitled “Cradle of Entrepreneurs,” receive an official invitation as a VIP guest, and receive 10 free books, which were to be actually sold for ¥228 (US \$27), plus “three precious gifts,” suggesting an anniversary souvenir like a key chain or inscribed ball-point pen. As a result, SZU sold one full-page (to Giant Company founder Shi Yuzhu) and eight half-page ads to alumni who managed or owned various companies involved in real estate, software, share-holding, hotel, textiles, and a small restaurant chain.<sup>40</sup>

A graduate listing of ¥125 (US \$15) contributors never materialized; apparently, few or no alumni were interested. One alumnus, who on his own initiative contacted me after receiving the solicitation for funds, explained the low participation:

I have been out of school five years, and the school leaders have not communicated with me even once. The school cares about a few famous and rich alumni, not us ordinary ones. How do they have the nerve to ask for money for a picture book? All this school cares about is money. I am disgusted.

Other alumni who reviewed the ad had similar reactions; several dozen alumni I contacted at the time about returning for the anniversary said they were not interested. Rather, they said they felt embarrassed to be alumni of “Murder U.”

Indeed, the Cuckoo’s Hill murder on 4 May had caused alumni, as well as many SZU leaders, to loose enthusiasm for the tenth anniversary. As the event approached, the campus was suffering a collective state of depression. This despondency was reinforced by a 12,000 character front-page in-depth report that appeared in the *Shenzhen Legal Daily* just a week before the celebration. It was critical of many aspects of the university, questioning the quality of students, teachers and administrators. It quoted school leaders as confessing that “we did prepare a big celebration but sadly the 4 May case happened so we have to reduce the scope.”<sup>41</sup>

The event was also marred by events totally outside the school’s control. Typhoon Dot, a storm that had been heading toward Hainan Island, made an abrupt change of course and redirected itself back toward Hong Kong. The



storm swept over the celebrations, dropping several inches of rain within a few hours. Fewer than expected high level political dignitaries appeared at the rain-swept ceremony. About one hundred alumni returned that Saturday for a visit, not the thousand anticipated, and afternoon events had to be canceled altogether. The official ceremony was held in the unwallied, rain-swept amphitheater that was designed by Liang Hongwen and her students. Invited dignitaries as well as the heads and deputy heads of departments sat on the stage in rows that ran three persons deep. As is customary in events with crowded platforms, the attendants chat among themselves rather than paying attention to the speaker. The rain compounded the poor acoustics of the open-air amphitheater. The event took on a surreal nature, with few in the audience listening to what was being said. Those who paid attention, however, heard various telegrams of congratulations; representatives of absent municipal and provincial officials also delivered statements. Giant Group founder Shi Yuzhu, SZU's favorite alumnus and most famous occupant of SZU's "Cradle of Entrepreneurs," gave a speech in which he described his personal success. For those few minutes the audience sat quietly in awe as Entrepreneur Shi listed the accomplishments of his multi-million yuan company.

SZU's reputation to a large extent lay outside of Cai's control. The spring 1993 murders were a public relations disaster. Across China SZU became known as "Murder University." I learned this fact when I attended a conference on English language teaching in Guilin, Guangxi Province, in July 1993. College teachers from across China often remarked on the murders when they saw my SZU red, rectangular lapel badge, the type worn by university teachers. Even a secondary school English teacher in a remote Zhuang minority town some distance from Nanning, the provincial capital of Guangxi Province, could recite the details of the murder, defacing and burial. The teacher told me that his principal had discussed SZU at a staff meeting.<sup>42</sup> The principal had told his teachers that he had once been invited to go to SZU for a two-week management training course. He had declined, and he told his staff that he was glad he had not gone. "We can do without SZU management techniques here," he said. He then proceeded to report the grisly details of the spring murders. Ensuing staff discussion focused on what lessons could be learned from SZU so that crimes of this nature could be avoided in their remote Zhuang town (which had experienced no recorded homicides in 3,000 years).

Perhaps because of the murders, Cai stepped up the media blitz of articles intended to restore SZU damaged reputation. In March 1994, for exam-

ple, four articles about SZU appeared with titles such as: “To Produce a Nationally First-Class University,” and “SZU to Implement General Reform and Continue Seeking New Methods for International Cooperation in Education.”<sup>43</sup> The PR work was carried out by the university’s Propaganda Office under the CCP, and its *de facto* arm, the university’s Higher Education Research Institute.

## Corruption

A later chapter discusses corruption at SZU. Suffice it to say here that the later years of Cai’s administration were beset with charges of favoritism, theft, and various corrupt practices. An exposé along these lines appeared in *China Spring*, a leading Chinese language monthly magazine that is published in the U.S.<sup>44</sup> The article questioned how Cai, who arrived at SZU in a state of poverty, could afford to buy a luxurious apartment after being in Shenzhen for just a year. It recounted the favoritism Cai showed to his “hometown fellows” from Chaozhou and told about the president’s personal intervention to allow the child of a high municipal official to enroll at SZU despite an entrance exam score well below the threshold. It discussed Cai’s keeping of a mistress, explored his cover-up of an embezzlement by the leaders of the Foreign Language Department, and mentioned various bribes. Most of these stories had widely circulated around the SZU campus in 1994, and I had heard about them from first- or second-hand accounts during the years I taught at SZU; later, I was able to find independent sources who verified most of the anecdotes. These stories, however, were apparently only the tip of the iceberg. I have heard about other incidents of corruption that have gone unreported. For example, a Shenzhen businessman reported to me about a meeting he had with Cai Delin in which his company was bidding for a university contract. In the meeting, in which no other university representatives were present, Cai told the businessmen that the president’s “consultant’s fee” for awarding the company the project would be 2% (or about ¥20,000). It would have to be given him before the contract was formally awarded, would have to be paid in cash and could not be referred to in any document. Fees of this nature are not rare in Shenzhen. Many alumni who worked in the import/export sector have reported that they rely on such “commissions” to supplement their base salaries. It is not unusual—in fact it appears to be customary—that factories pay salesmen when big export orders are achieved. But the informant found Cai’s demands “too bold” and bordering on extortion. I was told: “There is a difference between standard

practices and corruption. Corruption is excessive. Cai Delin was excessive.”

### A drifting administration

After Cai was appointed president, he lacked a clear agenda. Both the Luo and Wei-Wu administrations had offered definite, if vastly different, visions for SZU. Initially, Cai Delin offered none. In a four-hour interview with him on a Saturday afternoon just a week after his formal appointment as president, he presented to me an unclear vision of the future. He lacked specific goals and talked in platitudes, mentioning issues like reform and development of education, improving the level of teaching, making SZU a competitive university and ensuring that it remain a university with special characteristics. If Cai had a vision at the time, I was unable to discern it from the long passages of rhetoric he presented. Cai's written words do not provide much light on what vision, if any, he initially had for SZU. Unlike during the 1989 leadership change, the university administrative transition in 1992 was not accompanied by an abrupt set of policy changes. The yearbooks published for 1989-1990 and 1992-1993 blur policy differences, mixing the old with the new. Separate yearbooks, in fact, were not published for these years. In both transitions, the incoming leaders felt they did not have sufficient time to publish an annual for their first partial year in office; instead they both combined two years into one annual. Understandably, the new leaders did not want to become accountable for their predecessor's policies. The scholar who is not served by such blurring must nevertheless live with it.

Cai's self-proclaimed accomplishments according to the SZU homepage, as extracted at pages 96-7 above, were presented in a vague and broad manner. Specific data were rarely presented by Cai to show the extent to which the achievements have actually been realized. What criteria, for example, prove that SZU may call itself a “first rate” university? The standard evaluation criteria in China are admission scores, but such scores have always ranked SZU in the middle ranks of Chinese universities. Nor is SZU a key university, the classification that usually defines the nation's prestigious universities. Furthermore, it was unlikely to be admitted into the select 100 universities in the 211 program. One of Cai's major achievements, however, was guiding SZU through a successful accreditation exercise by the SEDC in 1995. Accreditation, however, is a base-line which can determine which institutions should be closed or greatly reformed. Accreditation does not automatically place a university among China's best, which is the claim Cai Delin implicitly put forth in many of his speeches after SZU received ac-

creditation. The other legacy was the establishment of a Board of Directors and installing the college system. By the time Cai was forced into retirement in 1996, both of these initiatives had just begun. Their lasting results, if any, could not be ascertained at such an early date.

### ***The ouster of Cai Delin***

When he first arrived at SZU, Cai had expected to remain at the university until the year 2005, when he was to reach his mid-sixties. But corruption and favoritism so marred his administration that by early 1995 rumors circulated the campus that Cai was on his way out.

### **Foreign Language cover-up**

Cai lost the support of the campus CCP, both its mid-rank and upper-rank officials. The president had pushed a policy of recruiting more CCP members; the ranks had swelled but the quality had dropped. The Party was starting to lose control over its own operations; many members believed that the President was manipulating the CCP for his own gain. The CCP Disciplinary Commission, the organ which was empowered to investigate charges of corruption, had its hands tied. The case that did much to cause the campus community to lose its respect for Cai involved the Foreign Language Department (FLD). An investigation and audit by a committee appointed by the department's staff and faculty had confirmed the widely-held suspicion that the leadership had mismanaged FLD finances. About ¥100,000 could not be accounted for—amounts that should have been earmarked to teachers and students. Juniors from the class admitted in 1989, for example, were supposed to get ¥140 in subsidies for “social investigation,” organized field trips which were required of all third-year students. The SZU Finance Office had given the leaders of each academic department a per capita allocation to subsidize the students' travel and other expenses during their investigations with the directive to pass it on to the students. The 1989 FLD juniors, however, were given only about ¥40; they became suspicious when their peers in other departments reported they had received the full ¥140.

In addition, Foreign Language teachers felt that the department leaders were not sharing the department's profit with them. The investigating committee went back to original receipt books that recorded tuition that was taken in from fee-paying students in out-of-plan courses. For classes for which receipt books were missing, computations of income were made based

on admissions lists. In such a way the committee came up with a ¥100,000 bottom-line figure of embezzlement.

The report was forwarded to the president in 1993. He refused to act on it. The investigating committee contacted various campus offices as well as upper levels of government, both of which put pressure on Cai and forced him to assign the report to the SZU audit office, which carried out an investigation of its own. Because the FLD did not use standard bookkeeping procedures, SZU's Audit Office was unable to substantiate the level of embezzlement. It prepared a report on the FLD leaders' practices of financial mismanagement and forwarded it to the CCP Disciplinary Commission, which prepared its own report. Cai intervened and prevented the Disciplinary Commission from releasing the report. He insisted, in the words of a knowledgeable informant, that the Commission "water down" the report. He also insisted that the report remove the names of the leaders involved, specifically all reference to his close friends, Tan Zaixi and Gao Litian, the head and deputy-head of the FLD, respectively, who were being held accountable for embezzlement.

In 1994, to meet the demands of many FLD staff, Cai had removed Tan from FLD and reassigned him to head the Foreign Affairs Office, a face-saving gesture that turned out to give Tan much more power and prestige than he had had as head of Foreign Language. In his new position, Tan controlled foreign travel of SZU staff, made arrangements for delegation travel and controlled the money taken in from foreign students who came to SZU to study Chinese language. Cai, as Tan's patron, protected him. The Disciplinary Commission, which was headed by Cai's rival, vice-president Wang Songrong, would not waver. They insisted on issuing the report, but as a compromise, reduced the amount of embezzlement to several thousand yuan. As part of negotiations, it was further agreed that the report would not be released in such a way that Tan, Gao and Cai would lose face. Thus, when Tan was traveling with Cai on a delegation to the U.K., the report (known as SZU 1995 Document 121) was released in May 1995, and a copy was sent to each university department for official posting. Gao took three days of sick leave to save face; the report was relegated to the status of mere historical record by the time Tan and Cai had returned from abroad. Education authorities in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen had all become aware of the incident, and the alleged attempted cover-up of the investigation further deteriorated Cai's reputation.

Cai, however, could not be dismissed in the spring of 1995. His job was secure until he completed his major task—successful SEDC accreditation

scheduled for November. Another damaging article appeared in Hong Kong's Chinese- and English-language press a month before accreditation. With the blaring headline of "Campus with 'Sex for Sale'", the article pictured SZU as a den of vice, showing several pictures of prostitutes operating out of a school-owned hostel with the inappropriate name, Science and Technology Center. In the article the university was described as having a "first-grade environment, second-grade teaches and third-grade students."<sup>45</sup> After accreditation was approved, Cai launched a major offensive to stay in office. A petition was circulated among academic department heads which asked the upper levels to renew Cai's contract. The petition had the unanimous endorsement of department heads, each of whom had been appointed by Cai to his/her job. The petition, perhaps because the signatories were all part of Cai's *guanxi* network, was not effective.

### Enter Wu Jiesi

Cai's forced retirement can be largely attributed to the fact he lost support in the municipal government. Lin Zuji, Cai's supporter, was about to retire and no longer commanded power in the municipal government. The Party official now in charge of education was Vice-mayor Wu Jiesi. The following story about the vice-mayor circulated around campus in autumn 1995. Vice-mayor Wu, who had been a banker before entering municipal government, decided to assess SZU in a way different from the packaged inspection tours most upper level leaders take when they are evaluating subordinate units. Wu went to SZU incognito and unannounced. He walked around campus to see the university for himself. What jarred him the most was that SZU did not look like any university he had ever seen. There were stalls, stores and roadside businesses everywhere. One could hardly walk more than a few meters without approaching an advertisement for commercial products. Wu was confused. Weren't institutions of higher learning supposed to be about learning, not commerce? After soaking in the flavor of the campus for a few hours, Wu returned to City Hall. In his next meeting with Cai and SZU leaders, Wu laid on the table pictures of commercialism at SZU. He asked Cai how he could permit such activity. Cai confidently said that SZU was just modeling itself after Hong Kong. It was operating as universities in Hong Kong operated. Wu smiled. He had been prepared for this argument. He placed on the table photographs of various university scenes in Hong Kong. None showed food stalls, students selling tennis shoes, or vegetables for sale in front of the classroom building, as had been portrayed in the pictures of SZU. "Yes, SZU should look like universities in Hong Kong," Wu

is reported as saying. Shortly thereafter, Cai issued regulations that closed most campus stores and stalls and prohibited teachers and cadres from “being directly or indirectly involved in any business on campus or running a business entity under contract.”<sup>46</sup>

As he reached the age of 60, Cai Delin was retired. The decision came a few weeks after the *China Spring* article documenting corruption at SZU appeared. The new leadership arrived around 1 July 1996.

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1. For biographies of SZU leaders, see *1991 Yearbook*, p. 83.
  2. “Asia’s ethnic Chinese billionaires,” adapted from *Forbes*, 18 July 1994, in *Chinese Philanthropy*, ed. John J. Deeney, *Occasional Paper*, no. 4, Hong Kong America Center, Hong Kong, p. 4.
  3. “Ten-year plan of development and ‘8th five-year’ plan, October 1991 draft,” *1991 Yearbook*, pp. 11-8.
  4. “1991 work summary, 14 January 1992,” *1991 Yearbook*, p. 32.
  5. See Bunce, *Do New Leaders Make a Difference?*, 1981.
  6. *Shenda Tongxun* (1992, no. 18), pp. 2-10.
  7. These measures are repeated in three separate essays in the *1992-93 Yearbook*: “Ten measures on comprehensive reform,” pp. 31-41; Cai Delin, “Deepening the reform, strengthening management and promoting development, report to the teachers representatives conference, 17 December,” *1992-93 Yearbook*, pp. 60-1; “Ten measures to further deepen the reform at SZU, July 1992,” *1992-93 Yearbook*, pp. 77-81.
  8. “Financial management provisional regulations, 6 August 1987,” *1987 Yearbook*, p. 132.
  9. Budgeting is discussed in the next chapter.
  10. Wei was unable to visit South America or Antarctica.
  11. “Major points of SZU work report, 30 April 1992,” *1992-93 Yearbook*, p. 24.
  12. “1991-92 school year work-plan, 10 October 1991,” *1991 Yearbook*, p. 19.
  13. “General Affairs Office,” *1992-93 Yearbook*, p. 227.
  14. From <http://www.szu.edu.cn/cdl.html>, retrieved June 1996.
  15. Part of this book’s conclusion discussed evaluation. Also see Agelasto, *Educational Disengagement*, 1998.
  16. \_\_\_\_, “Shriek from a campus dormitory,” 1993, p. 8.
  17. This is covered in more detail in the chapter on reputation.
  18. Hu & Zheng, “SZU standing on the new starting line,” 1993.
  19. \_\_\_\_, “Killing the villain with overwhelming strength at karaoke,” 1993.
  20. \_\_\_\_, “Reform following western system,” 1993.
  21. \_\_\_\_, “Campus murder in Shenzhen,” 1993.
  22. Zhang & Luo, “Thunderbolt on campus,” 1993.
  23. Chen, “Shenzhen University murder plot gossip far from factual,” 1993.

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24. Cai Delin, "Deepening the reform, strengthening management and promoting development, report to the teachers representatives conference," *1992-93 Yearbook*, 17 December, p. 58.
  25. "Comprehensive evaluation of students, May 1992," *1992-93 Yearbook*, pp. 119-22.
  26. Yang, "New actions of SZU," 1993. Cai later appointed Yang, an experienced Party propagandist with no experience in research or scholarship, to head SZU's Higher Education Research Institute.
  27. Hu & Zheng, "SZU standing on the new starting line," 1993.
  28. Cai Delin, "Deepening the reform, strengthening management and promoting development, report to the teachers representatives conference," *1992-93 Yearbook*, 17 December, p. 60.
  29. These and other exchange programs are evaluated in Agelasto, *Educational Disengagement*, 1998.
  30. Sources: *1995 Yearbook*, 49. Pan traded as the Guangxi Yinhei Industrial Company. Only about ¥1 million of donation was ever received. Donations all came after 1992, except for the Runrun Shaw gift.
  31. Hu & Zheng, "SZU standing on the new starting line," 1993.
  32. Hu & Zheng, "SZU standing on the new starting line," 1993.
  33. From <http://www.szu.edu.cn/speech.html>, retrieved June 1996.
  34. See Agelasto, "Educational transfer of sorts," 1996.
  35. Di & Xu, "Adapting itself to the market economy," 1993.
  36. \_\_\_\_\_, "Shenzhen University Today," 1993.
  37. The same foreign friend wondered why SZU did not put the guests at the Nanhai hotel in Shekou, which at five stars, was at the top level of local accommodation.
  38. *1992-93 Yearbook*, p. 220, 224.
  39. Letter entitled "SZU alumni celebrating the tenth anniversary of their mother university," sent to alumni by Publishing Center, n.d.
  40. *Shenzhen University: Its First Decade*, pp. 84-8.
  41. Tang et al. "Will Shenzhen University be as shining as before?" 1993.
  42. The teacher who related this story was a member of the Zhuang minority who had attended a training program at one of China's key language institutes.
  43. Xu, "To produce a national first-class university," 1994; Liu, "Set up a congenial study and research environment," 1994; Qiu, "Produce a first-class university," 1994; Lu, "Shenzhen University to implement general reform," 1994.
  44. Bei, "Shenzhen University under the governance of Cai Delin," 1996.
  45. Shum, "Campus with 'sex for sale,'" 1995.
  46. "Decisions on further clearing out stores on campus, 17 October 1995," *1995 Yearbook*, p. 248.