

INTENSE Program for international students a dream solution for Taiwan

Interviewee: Dr. Jywe Wen-yuh

Distinguished Professor at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, NTU



Faced with education enrollment decline because of fewer children and strong demand for skilled workers, an industry-academia cooperation program for international students has been launched.

The program is designed to attract the best-qualified foreign students to study in Taiwan and take up employment after graduation, in a program initiated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2023, with a budget of NT\$5.2 billion (US\$164.7 million) over 2024-2027.

Responsible for managing the program's operation from its conceptualization to implementation, Dr. Jywe Wen-yuh talked about how, as the program leader, he aligns expectations, goals, timelines, and the deliverables of each stakeholder.

Jywe plays a pivotal role in the program. The professor at National Taiwan University's College of Engineering has a long track record throughout his academic career of establishing successful university-industry collaborations and

advocating the learning of technical skills that are in demand for industry.

How it works

Recruitment, Jywe said, is aimed at young students from the nation's New Southbound Policy countries, European nations, and the United States. Candidates are accepted at domestic technical and vocational schools. These students usually have science, technology, engineering and math backgrounds and provide talent that is in demand and boosts the country's development.

The target students for enrollment are not limited to the countries where overseas offices are located. The program also aims to establish 10 overseas offices in four years to help carry out the mission, prioritizing countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines – as part of the New Southbound policy. The MOE will also organize a cross-departmental platform to coordinate resources from stakeholders for joint

support, aiming to enhance the functionality and mission of overseas offices.

Enrollment incentives for students, enterprises

The courses offered by universities and technical and vocational colleges can include bachelor's dual-degree programs, two-year bachelor's programs, two-year post-bachelor's programs, and two-year master's or doctoral programs. Priority will be given to fields related to STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), finance, and semiconductors. Universities will collaborate with enterprises to select outstanding local students at overseas offices, and jointly design customized curricula.

Jywe said the programs are available in either English or Chinese, with entry thresholds depending on the language of instruction. To assist students in overcoming the language barrier when studying in Taiwan, introductory courses in conversational Mandarin Chinese are offered before arrival.

The enterprise provides each student with a monthly living allowance of at least NT\$10,000. During their second year, students have the option to intern at enterprises associated with each individual university-industry program, with the enterprise offering paid internship positions during their studies.

To ensure students are equipped with the technical skills that are needed by industry, participating schools are required to plan curricula specifically around the required knowledge and skills.

"There is no quick fix to school enrollment decline and talent shortage in Taiwan," Jywe said. "In line with the National Development Council's (NDC) 'Strengthening Population and Immigration Policy' initiative, we work with the National Science and Technology Council, industry associations, universities and colleges to recruit international students to study in



Taiwan. This includes NDC funding of up to two years of scholarship worth NT\$100,000 per year per undergraduate or graduate student, one-way flight tickets and reimbursement for miscellaneous fees."

Recipients of the Fellowship offered by the National Development Fund shall fulfill their obligations to work in Taiwan for a certain number of years based on the years of scholarship and aid they claim. The government will offer assistance to program participants to gain employment in Taiwan and to obtain permanent residency in a shorter period of time. During the employment obligation period upon graduation, students shall work for the collaborating enterprise in Taiwan. They shall not be seconded to the enterprise's overseas branch or work at any overseas Taiwanese enterprise. If a student is under any preceding circumstances where they fail to work in Taiwan, the student shall return the Fellowship in proportion to the months of their unemployment in Taiwan.

INTENSE Program focusing on the demands of enterprises, this initiative aims to encourage colleges/universities to increase the enrollment of international students and enhance the incentives for top-tier international students to study and establish their careers in Taiwan after graduation. The goal is to facilitate the influx of high-caliber talent into Taiwan. ■