Shanghai’s Fudan University (Fudan Daxue), founded in 1905 as the Fudan Public School, is one of China’s most prestigious universities. As of 2007 the university comprised 17 schools with 70 departments and enrolled well over 40,000 fulltime degree candidates at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels, with an additional 15,000 students in schools of continuing and online education.

Established in Shanghai as Fudan Public School in 1905, Fudan is one of China’s most prestigious comprehensive universities. Fudan’s founder, Ma Xiangbo (1840–1939), an educator from a prominent Catholic family, alluded through the institution’s classical name, roughly translated as “constant heavenly light,” to hopes for a school directed by clarity of vision and inexhaustible self-reliance. These hopes are echoed in aims for Fudan’s contemporary development, summarized in the motto, “Rich in knowledge, tenacious in purpose, inquiring with earnestness, reflecting with self-practice.”

In 1917 Fudan Public School established undergraduate programs and was renamed Fudan University. At the onset of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Fudan was offering courses of study in the arts, sciences, law, and business, in addition to precollege education, and was temporarily relocated to the inland city of Chongqing, like many of China’s postsecondary institutions would be during World War II. The university was nationalized by the republican government in 1941 and moved back to Shanghai in 1946.

At the request of Chen Wangdao (1891–1977), Fudan’s first post-1949 president, Chairman Mao Zedong contributed the calligraphic rendering of “Fudan University” that is today featured on official university plaques and stationery. When China’s institutions of higher learning underwent major reorganization in 1952, Fudan lost its applied professional schools of law, business, and agriculture. At the same time, Fudan’s academic reputation was enhanced by the merger into its faculties of arts and sciences a number of departments and distinguished scholars from ten other universities. Following national reforms in 1978, Fudan restored its professional schools, including business and law.

Mirroring a decade of global reforms in higher education, Fudan has sought to strengthen its basic research and teaching capacities, as well as promote innovation in interdisciplinary and international education. Fudan was selected to participate in China’s 211 Project and Project 985, both of which were national initiatives to enhance the quality and international competitiveness of higher education institutions. In 2000 Shanghai Medical University merged with Fudan, adding for the first time a college of medical science to Fudan’s stable of professional schools.

As of 2007 Fudan consists of 17 schools with nearly 70 departments, 226 research centers and institutes, and 30 key laboratories. Fudan’s most prestigious academic specializations include philosophy, theoretical economics, Chinese language and literature, journalism, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, electronic science and technology,
basic medicine, and integrated traditional and Western medicine. The university has an enrollment of well over 40,000 fulltime degree candidates at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels, and an additional 15,000 students in schools of continuing and online education. Fudan has more than 2,300 fulltime faculty members and researchers, and significant global outreach with alumni from more than a hundred countries and regions. Fudan works collaboratively with a number of leading universities and is a member of Universitas 21, an international network of twenty leading research universities in twelve countries.

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Further Reading

