

Can liberal arts thrive in China? One college suggests they can

Despite holding its own at Peking University, Yuanpei College still encounters resistance to its approach, professor says

July 21, 2022

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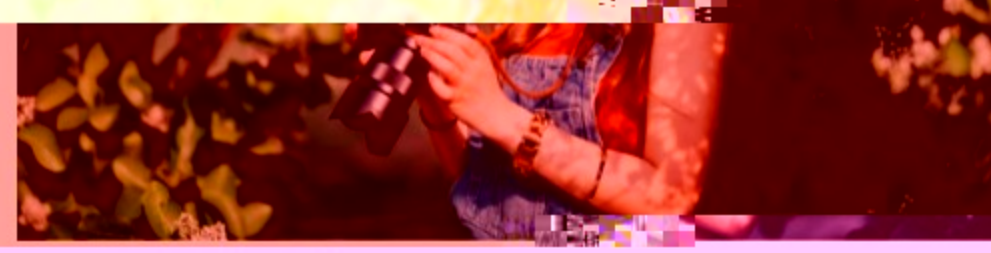


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As a new president takes the helm at Peking University (PKU), its liberal arts college is still struggling to find its footing.



Small, experimental programme within China's leading institution, Yuanpei College today is, by many measures, a resounding success. It has grown into a



Source: iStock

competition among Chinese graduates higher than ever before.

year of undergraduate education.

By design, the college doesn't have its own professors, a decision that still sometimes puts it in tension with the broader faculty at PKU, some of whom see Yuanpei students as lacking an commitment to a discipline and competing for limited resources with the students inside their own departments.

"This gave us a lot of challenges in the beginning because students and professors from other departments didn't want students from Yuanpei," Professor Sun said.

Since then, the students' performance in their classes has helped shift the dial, convincing reluctant professors "that a student not picking any major in beginning and who could change major without any restriction could perform even better than those students who study professional knowledge from the beginning", said Professor Sun.

He credits

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page seeks to address.

"We wanted to put students together to give them a public space so they could hang out, talk to each other, develop their many hobbies. We want to explore a style of university

in China. It's about creating a space where students can explore their interests and passions.

that the liberal arts approach in the internet era is not just about having a liberal arts department, but about creating a space where students can explore their interests and passions.

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Professor recently told

in the philosophy that a liberal arts education is not just about having a liberal arts department, but about creating a space where students can explore their interests and passions.

Professor