

# Bootstrapping Science? The Impact of a ‘Return Human Capital’ Policy on Chinese Research Productivity

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We study the impact of a large-scale scientist recruitment program – China’s Junior Thousand Talents program (青年千人计划) – on the productivity of recruited scholars and their local peers in Chinese universities. Using a comprehensive corpus of published scientific articles, we estimate effects on quantity and quality in a difference in-differences framework. While recruits who returned to China experienced a large boost in productivity, the incumbents at JTTP destinations experience a negative spillover effect. They produce around 2% less research output after the arrival of a Junior Thousand Talents recruit, compared to scholars in similar school without an arrival. The negative effect is concentrated in the incumbent scholars who are of a similar seniority with the incoming JTTP scholar.