

6

ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

# Taking education to new heights

**WHEN GLOBAL ARCHITECTURAL FIRM GENSLER** strategized a new approach to nurturing burgeoning talent and expanding offices across the globe, the company's search led to **JUN XIA, MArch and MUD '89**. Considered one of the firm's most successful hires, Xia joined Gensler's Denver office in 1991 and immediately set to work helping with award-winning designs for a regional airport. He was appointed principal of Gensler in 1999 and became design director for the Shanghai office in 2004.

Xia and his team won an international competition to design Shanghai Tower, which will stand more than 2,000 feet high to be the tallest building in China and the second tallest in the world. The world's highest unenclosed observation deck is planned for its upper floors. The 128-story Shanghai Tower will be double-skinned—a double-glass wall system that improves insulation without reducing light. Further features in support of sustainable design include a series of windmills at the top that will generate energy for the building, as well as rainwater collection facilities.

Mechanical systems, common spaces and basic services will be located on every dozen floors for occupants' convenience.

Born and raised in Shanghai, Xia earned his undergraduate degree at Tongji University, Shanghai, China, and his master's at CU Denver. Coming to school in America is a big step for any international student, and Xia can't say enough good things about his experience.

"From my studies at CAP/CU Denver, I learned that the school has a passion for helping international students—I was very warmly accepted," says Xia. "When I first called my graduate advisor, I had never spoken English on the phone before, and had to write down everything I was going to say. When you first come here as a 'foreign' student, you really have to transform yourself. And you can. Through language classes and study programs, I was able to adapt, learn and graduate within a year."

Xia's appreciation for his education at CU Denver and his strong interest in helping today's students have led to building a new international internship

program with Gensler Shanghai, Tongji University and CU Denver. Classes start in summer and fall 2011.

"This architecture practice and study program will be one of the most important chapters for each school," says Xia. "The internship gives students from both countries an experience of a different culture and of different ways of thinking.

**"It teaches them to be adaptive and creative based on an expanded knowledge of an area's culture, history and people. That's what globalization is all about."**

Through the seven-month internship, CU Denver students enrolled in graduate programs in architecture, planning, landscape architecture or urban design will be able to explore varied approaches to design, technology and management in their respective discipline through the Gensler Shanghai office. Students from Tongji University will learn and practice in the Gensler Denver office. Each student will prepare presentations detailing his/her educational experience abroad and share the findings with colleagues and communities back home.

Graduates of the program are well-prepared to enter today's competitive global market.

Xia explains, "In doing business on a global scale, you can serve the clients well as well as learn and develop new forms of design. In China and India, for example, you can see lots of American heritage represented and an American way of doing things. Cultures and countries can inspire each others'



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GENSLER



When completed in 2014, Shanghai Tower (top photo, right; center photo, left; and bottom photo), designed by a team of Gensler architects, including CAP alum Jun Xia, will complete the city's super high-rise precinct. It is the most forward-looking of the three towers symbolizing Shanghai's past, present and future.

designs as they evolve naturally through interactions on a global level. A healthy back-and-forth trend can occur."

In advising students who are thinking about a global professional education, Xia advises:

- 1) students must have a strong inner desire to learn about not only design, but also about life—how other people think, live and work;
- 2) students should learn to be good communicators; it's fundamental to being a team player, and today's architecture world is based on collaboration.

To learn more about the cooperative program between CU Denver, Tongji University and Gensler, contact Christopher Nims, director of internship and mentor programs, 303-352-3998, Christopher.Nims@ucdenver.edu, or Yuk Lee, associate dean of academic affairs, 303-556-4232, Yuk.Lee@ucdenver.edu.



Alum Jun Xia (above) and his team at Gensler designed Shanghai Tower, which will be the second tallest building in the world.

For more information, visit online:  
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