

# OBITUARY

## Chunde DAI, 1986-2010

December 4, 2010; updated on December 7, 2010

Chunde Dai, who was a second year doctoral student at New York University's Stern School of Business, died on November 29, 2010, at the age of 24, in a tragic accident while swimming off the coast of Florida. He is survived by his father Shengsheng Dai, mother Aiping Li, brother Hu Dai, and sister Li Dai.

Chunde was born in 1986 in a small village of Jiang Xi province, where his father worked as a migrant worker earning the only source of income for his family. His older brother has been mentally disabled since a young age. Despite the difficult conditions in the family, Chunde worked hard during his early schooling and emerged as one of the top students from Jiang Xi province in the nationwide college entrance exam in 2005. With special scholarships for low income families from the provincial government and assistance from Tsinghua University, Chunde enrolled in the department of automation of Tsinghua University. While at Tsinghua, Chunde won a number of prizes and scholarships including the Excellent Undergraduate Student Award and the National Scholarship for his outstanding academic performance. In addition to his thesis research in his major department, Chunde performed research under the supervision of Professor Jian Chen in the School of Economics and Management. He was ranked among the top 6 students out of 168 students graduating from the department of automation in 2009.

Chunde Dai entered the Stern Ph.D. Program in Operations Management in August 2009. In less than 18 months of studies, Chunde emerged as an exceptional student. Even during his first year, he actively pursued research with a number of faculty members. With René Caldentey, Chunde was working on designing optimal joint operation and dividend distribution policies. Based on this work, Chunde gave a presentation on November 7, 2010, entitled "Integrating Production and Financial Decisions" at the 2010 INFORMS conference in Austin, Texas. This type of rapid progress in research is rare among first year Ph.D. students anywhere. According to Professor Caldentey, "Chunde was a unique bundle of talents, he was able to immerse himself in an advanced research topic in optimal control and produced high quality results in a very short period of time. But what really distinguished Chunde was the enthusiasm and energy that he brought to our project every single day". Josh Reed, Chunde's professor for a course on queueing theory lamented, "this is a very unfortunate loss for Chunde's family and friends and our department too. Chunde would always come to class with a bright smile on his face and I personally was looking forward to working with him on some research problems as well.". This semester, Chunde was taking an advanced Ph.D. course with Mor Armony. Professor Armony commented that "Chunde's passing is a big loss to our department. Without Chunde, tomorrow's class will be *very* different".

Anyone who met Chunde would remember his inspiration, kindness and big smiles; he

was unique. Professor Peter Henry, Dean of Stern Business School, noted in his memorial message that “by all accounts, he was not only a stellar student, but also a thoughtful, kind and warm-hearted person”. In a message to the Department of Information, Operations, and Management Sciences, Professor and Chair Mike Pinedo remarked that “I know that whoever has dealt with him liked him a lot. For those of you who had no personal contact with him, Chunde was the person on our floor who was literally always smiling. He was one of the most helpful people around. Chunde will be very much missed by all of us, students, staff, and faculty”.

A memorial service will be held at Greenwich Village Funeral Home, 199 Bleecker Street, New York, NY 10012 on Friday, December 10, 2010. Chunde’s father, accompanied by two relatives, will arrive at New York on Wednesday December 8. However, his mother has become mentally and physically unstable upon learning of the tragic news and is unable to travel. While crying, Chunde’s father said that “the family had put everything into Chunde’s education. He was our hope. But, now everything is gone.”

An account has been setup at CMAIN, Chinese Mutual Aid International Network, to receive monetary donations for the family. If you wish to make a contribution, please go to the website <http://cmain.org>, where you can donate through google checkout or paypal or a personal check at the *bottom* of the page. When you click the “donate” button, you should see “Donate to Chunde Dai 12-3-2010”. CMAIN is a 501(c) non-profit organization that is run by a group of volunteers. After your donation at the site, you will receive a receipt in two weeks that will allow your donation to be tax deductible in U.S. Except for the expenses charged by google or paypal, all of your donation will be transferred to Chunde’s family.

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