

Former Torrellas Student Gives Back

BY LAURA SCHMITT

In January 1997, Bruce Ge attended a lecture at Tsinghua University in Beijing that would change the course of his life. Ge had come to hear Illinois CS Professor Josep Torrellas give an invited talk on how to design a highly programmable, high-performance multiprocessor. Having recently completed his bachelor's degree at Tsinghua, Ge interviewed with Torrellas after the presentation and was offered a graduate research assistant position.

"It was an easy decision to take the offer because it was the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign," said Ge, who spent the next 18 months writing database applications that leveraged the parallel nature of Torrellas' computer architecture.

When he graduated with his master's degree in 1999, Ge took a job with Siebel Systems, where he worked for eight years as a software engineer before deciding to strike out on his own.

"I was bored of being one of a million engineers," said Ge, referring to his desire to become an entrepreneur.

In 2007, Ge founded Jobirn, a referral-based recruiting web site that he developed with the idea that if he built it, the money would come. People certainly visited the site, Ge explained, but the endeavor failed to generate the expected revenue.

Ge revised the product, and a few years later, launched Jobs2Careers.com, an online job search engine that is sometimes referred to as the Google or Kayak of Internet career sites. More than six million job seekers visit the site each month in search of their next employment opportunity.

Although he lost touch with his advisor for more than a decade, Ge certainly did not forget Torrellas and the kindness he extended to him as a graduate student. "He was very friendly and forgiving," said Ge. "He had a lot of international students and we got along well."

Ge also realized that had Torrellas not given him the opportunity to study at Illinois, his life may have turned out quite differently. "He gave me an opportunity that changed my life," said Ge, referring to the fact that Siebel Systems recruited engineers exclusively from top 10-level schools. "Without the University of Illinois brand, I would probably not have gotten an offer from them."



Professor Josep Torrellas

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In the summer of 2012, Ge contacted Torrellas and told him that he was giving him a \$100,000 gift to support his research group. Torrellas was pleasantly surprised by the news.

"Obviously this gift was from his heart," Torrellas said. "It gives me a lot of satisfaction to know that he was happy here and that he found his experiences here were opportunities that have helped him in the rest of his career."

Torrellas is using Ge's gift to support his students and their research, and he may use some of the money to help with the administration of the two centers that he directs—the Center for Programmable Extreme Scale Computing and the Illinois-Intel Parallelism Center (I2PC).

"It always impresses me that people start companies and do well even though they may be alone in this country," Torrellas said. "Very impressive."

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