

# McDonnell Academy Alumni Mark S. Wrighton Award 2025 Recipient

**Mr. Qiang Li**, earned his MBA from the Olin Business School at Washington University in 2009, where he also became a member of the McDonnell International Scholars Academy. After graduation, he began his career at Brown Shoe (NYSE: CAL) in St. Louis, where his exceptional leadership and communication skills significantly contributed to the company's international expansion. A few years later, Brown Shoe appointed him as General Manager to oversee their joint venture in China.

With the knowledge and skills gained from his MBA and the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, Mr. Li excelled in his role. He effectively collaborated with two shareholders to achieve common goals and organized numerous major PR events to promote the company's shoe brands, generating significant exposure to both media and consumers. Under his leadership, the joint venture experienced substantial growth in both revenue and profit. His work helped brands such as Naturalizer, Franco Sarto, and Sam Edelman become highly popular among Chinese consumers, and he shared these best practices with other Asian countries to increase market share there as well. Mr. Li's impressive achievements resulted in his promotion to the youngest Vice President at Brown Shoe.

Following his impressive tenure at Brown Shoe,

Mr. Li joined Steve Madden (NASDAQ: SHOO) as CEO in China. Notably, during the challenging period of COVID-19, he swiftly adjusted the strategy, identified emerging trends, and led the business to achieve remarkable growth. In a fast-moving market, innovation is essential for the development of international brands. Mr. Li's strategic thinking and strong execution transformed innovative ideas into reality, helping the brand to expand globally while retaining local relevance, which is essential for sustainable growth.

Mr. Qiang Li is the sole McDonnell alumnus in the WashU China CEO Club. He actively participates in WashU alumni activities in China, delivers speeches at various events, and shares his valuable experiences. Additionally, he maintains a close relationship with the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, providing insights to current scholars.

As an industry expert in building and expanding operations in China for multinational companies, Mr. Li consistently thinks and acts with a global perspective—a skill honed during his time at the McDonnell International Scholars Academy. This perspective has greatly benefited his career and personal life. His achievements have strengthened the connection between the U.S. and China, fostering global cooperation.

*The experience and learning in the McDonnell Academy trained me to think and behave with a global perspective, expanded my international networking, and was a great benefit to my career and life.*

**— QIANG LI**

