

# Shanghai's Masterful Strides Elevate Innovation onto the Global Stage

While artificial intelligence (AI) has made significant advancements, Professor Florin Baeriswyl believes that humans still have a crucial advantage in understanding the context and subtleties of brand strategy.



**Shanghai, China Jun 7, 2023** ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - [The DeTao Masters Academy](#) has been shaping the mindset and skills of China's future leaders for more than a decade, with eleven recognized

undergraduate degree programs and an unrivaled force of world-renowned academics and business leaders from over 30 countries.

"We set out in 2006 to create a university-accredited academy that would drive China's next generation of thought leaders and build on the country's success in manufacturing, design and technology," explains George Lee, DeTao's founder. "We scoured the globe for the best talent, and today, the academy boasts a proud legacy of approximately 3,000 graduates who have gone on to assume leading positions in national and international companies."

DeTao's international faculty boasts about 300 'Masters' — or experts in fields ranging from business and management to industrial and graphic design, to sustainability, education, and brand strategy. The distinguished group assembled by DeTao includes luminaries such as Hartmut Esslinger, the inventor of Apple's Snow White design language; Haim Dotan, architect of the Zhangjiajie Glass Bridge; and Hollywood veteran Roger Christiansen, who directed big-hit sitcoms including Friends and Hannah Montana.

Lee's hand-picked faculty features academics from national science and engineering academies around the world and professors from universities such as Oxford, Harvard and MIT, including Robert G. Eccles, a Harvard professor of business ethics (ESG) and Florin Baeriswyl, an internationally renowned brand strategist.

Other DeTao Masters include artist, designer, educator and scholar Pan Gongkai; Shunmyō Masuno, a leading Japanese rock garden designer; Li Dun, the forefather of musical theatre in China; and Fernando Brandao, a Brazilian architect who designed the exotic and popular Brazilian Pavilion at World Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

The Academy's course curriculum spans hundreds of disciplines, from engineering and electronics to education, humanities, science, statistics and data analysis, computer science, medicine and pharmacology, economics and finance and management and leadership.

Schools in China collaborating on degree programs with DeTao include the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts; Peking University; Beijing Institute of Technology; Hong Kong Baptist University; Hainan University; and Shanghai Business School; among others, all of which are accredited colleges within China's Ministry of Education.

This year marks the ten-year anniversary of one of DeTao's most exciting programs, brand strategy and management, or BSM. In June, Swiss professor Baeriswyl, who joined DeTao as a Master in 2013, will oversee the graduation of a sixth cohort of students.

The four-year accredited degree, jointly implemented by the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts (SIVA) and DeTao, is the first bachelor program of its kind in brand strategy. The goal is that BSM's graduates will enhance the creativity and innovation of China's brands and provide leadership in design, culture and technology across a spectrum of industries, from automotives, electronics and heavy industry to luxury and fashion.

Professor Baeriswyl, a serial entrepreneur and consultant for international banks, brands and institutes including Nestle, Swissair, Red Bull, UBS and Deutsche Bank, founded a design agency ([dai Zurich](#)) providing corporate design services in Zurich, London and Shanghai. He later launched the Institute for Swiss International Branding ([ISIB](#)) in Shanghai.

Baeriswyl created the curriculum for the brand strategy and management degree program at DeTao based on the Swiss dual system called 'teaching and training' — meaning his students learn theory and strategy in the classroom and then combine intellectual concepts with case studies, business assignments, and internships. The Bachelor of Arts degree concludes with a thesis defense.

"Training my teachers and students over four years, I can see them think more long-term and strategically," says Baeriswyl, adding that his advanced methodologies combined with popular industry case studies on global brands like Bosch, Cisco, Apple, and K11 keep his students engaged and well-versed in industry trends.

Baeriswyl emphasizes the importance of human involvement in brand strategy and management, even in the age of artificial intelligence (AI). He believes that while AI can understand the subject matter, it falls short in comprehending the nuanced context required for effective brand communication.

"Brand strategy represents the core of a business, while design is the reflection of this strategy," Baeriswyl explains. "Therefore, innovative design is rooted in a brand's ambition. Despite recent advances in AI, human beings still possess a crucial edge in brand strategy and management. Our students are equipped with the fine-tuned capacity for innovative and analytical thinking that is essential in this exponential age."

To further enrich the educational experience, Baeriswyl established the annual international speaker's forum, [ITALK](#), in collaboration with PwC. ITALK connects BSM students with entrepreneurs and business leaders from around the world, fostering networking opportunities and the exploration of internships and employment prospects. Prominent speakers at ITALK have included industry experts such as Dr. Christian Camenzind, an investor and independent board member; Diana Chou, founder and chairman of Dragon General Aviation Group and the first woman to sell business jets in Asia; Laurent Megret, director of the board at Volevatch China, part of the French luxury designer group; and Oliver Peters, a senior technician at Robert Bosch GmbH, a German multinational engineering and technology company. Through the ITALK platform, IBM students can network and explore internship and employment opportunities.

Ian Town, a guest professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Peking University who judged the first SIVA-DeTao BSM thesis defense in June 2018, described the degree as "one of the most unique bachelor programs in China."

Baeriswyl's promise is that every student gets a job — or gains admission to some of the world's best universities for a post-graduate degree.

Li Xiaoning, who graduated four years ago in the first cohort of the BSM program, was offered places in the Masters' programs at The University of Leeds, University of the Arts London, and Loughborough University — all in the United Kingdom.

This year, Wang Zitong, a student who is graduating in June, is pursuing a Master's degree of professional studies in fashion management at the Parsons School of Design in New York.

Zitong's BSM thesis was a business development plan for a fashion designer brand. His strategy involved developing the brand's minimalist style and accentuating the 'gangster aesthetic' of its clothing products, as well as looking into future sources of revenue from furniture and jewelry lines. "The BSM's luxury brand management course is the most relevant to my thesis venture and I owe a lot to this course in terms of my development and brand positioning," he says.

"Professor Baeriswyl always advised us to 'take a bird's eye view'—high enough to see the whole landscape below you. That's what strategizing is all about."

Fellow graduate Chen Yitong, who has been accepted to graduate school at two universities, King's College London and the University of Edinburgh, says one of the key takeaways from the program is the importance of sustainability. "Professor Baeriswyl always advised us to optimize the issue of sustainability," Chen says. "The core part of a brand should reflect something that is aligned with sustainability."

Another aspect of the program was the emphasis on real-life projects. "The BSM program exposed students to lots of experiential learning opportunities," she says. "Before Covid hit in 2020, I was lucky enough to get immersed in real-world corporate projects. I was able to get a full sense of what it means to 'bring an idea to execution,' not with fancy/empty dreaming, but with solid execution capabilities instead."

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