



# MENTORING DESIGN AND BUSINESS STUDENTS

by Maz Zouhairi

**THE LUXURY EDUCATION FOUNDATION** (LEF) recently hosted *The Design and Marketing of Luxury Goods* – an interdisciplinary program with Columbia Business School and Parsons School of Design – where students collaboratively develop concepts for some of the world’s leading companies. This year the course featured projects from Lalique, Cadillac, Cartier, Ferragamo, and Van Cleef & Arpels.

Established in December 2004, LEF is a public not-for-profit organization that focuses on educational programs for undergraduate and graduate students in design and business related to the creation and marketing of luxury goods. LEF programs provide students with various platforms to engage with senior executives at leading luxury firms to understand and appreciate the unique properties of this industry.

Participating companies bring this semester-long course into play as an incubator for new ideas. This year, our goal for the project was to bring increased exposure to Lalique’s Interiors division by identifying high profile commercial design projects and partners. By combining their various skills and interests, the students created a stunning design concept along with a highly strategic plan for implementation and roll out. They not only addressed the project’s expectations, but also exceeded them by bringing out team ideas that will be considered for implementation as we prepare our marketing and design strategies for 2015.

In fact, during the 2005 LEF course,

*Maz Zouhairi is the president and CEO of Lalique North America, where he has been since 2005.*  
[www.lalique.com](http://www.lalique.com)

*Young and talented students are able to look at the industry with new eyes and develop fresh, new concepts, all the while getting the opportunity to learn from senior execs at the world’s leading luxury companies.*

for a different Lalique brief assignment, the students’ designs’ inspired the creation of an actual product, the *Mossi* votive, right, currently available for sale in the Lalique collection. In addition to their creative designs and solutions, these students also become desirable employees for luxury brands, some being hired after graduation.

Michael Malone, associate dean of Columbia Business School’s MBA programs, noted, “Through this innovative program in partnership with the LEF, our students have the unparalleled opportunity to collaborate with today’s leading players in the luxury market on real-world projects. As a result, students are able to convert strategy into implementable opportunities for the companies and have a considerable impact in taking their brands to the next level with today’s consumers. It’s exciting that Columbia Business School students have this kind of access and can work closely with Parsons stu-

dents on high-powered initiatives.”

Teams of six to eight – composed of both Columbia Business School MBA students and Parsons interdisciplinary design students – worked closely with top execs to develop strategies and concepts. Joel Towers, executive dean at Parsons, said, “Intensive, challenging, hands-on design experience is central to Parsons’ educational approach and that’s why we’re excited to continue our ongoing relationship with the LEF. They provide Parsons students with an invaluable

opportunity to work directly with some of the world’s most storied and influential design brands in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment.”

The LEF awarded its 2014 scholarships – which were given to students who exhibited an extraordinary level of leadership and innovation in their work – during the students’ final presentations in December. Lalique gave the recipients a clear heart paperweight.

Lalique is proud to have been a founding member in the creation of LEF ten years ago and we always look forward to working with students and hearing their inspirational ideas and strategic recommendations. LEF celebrates its 10 year anniversary with other member brands, including Hermes, Chanel, Cartier, Dior, Ferragamo, Graff, Louis Vuitton, and more. There’s a camaraderie and educational aspect that we can impart on some of the world’s most promising business and design students, all the while breathing new life into and enriching our heritage brands. □

