

# McDonnell Academy Alumni Mark S. Wrighton Award 2022 Recipient

MS. GÜLCAN YAYLA, completed her dual MSW/MBA degrees at Washington University in 2017, as an alum from McDonnell Academy partner university, Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. She has dedicated herself to solving problems regarding access to education and job opportunities around the world. Her professional and voluntary work has ranged from micro-projects that help local communities, to larger scale projects that promote education or employment for disadvantaged groups across the globe. Before arriving in St. Louis for her graduate studies, Gülcan co-founded the largest civil society organization in Turkey, creating a nonpartisan platform for civilians to monitor governmental elections. Today this organization serves more than a million members and remains critical for people to participate in elections.

Throughout her graduate life at WashU, Gülcan developed initiatives for local St. Louis communities as well as communities in Turkey. In particular, she co-founded and directed the East St. Louis Initiative, a social organization that connected entrepreneurs from East St. Louis with students from Washington University in St. Louis to support economic development in one of the most underserved regions in the U.S. She also co-founded *Kodluyoruz*, the first development organization in Turkey to find employment for promising but disadvantaged youth in the tech industry.

Upon graduation, Gülcan worked for the Malala Fund, World Bank Education Department, to support girls' education and to provide strategic directions to governments on how to adapt education systems to the third industrial revolution.

In 2021, Gülcan founded Patika, the final product of her years of work and iterations in the education sector. As co-founder and CEO, she is addressing the gap between the job market and education of millions of unemployed people around the world. By training new talent on Patika's education platform completely free, companies pay to have their own cohort and access the human capital that they need. The venture was deemed scalable, sustainable, and quick-to-market with profitability and broad impact, leading to Gülcan receiving the Global Impact Award from the Skandalaris Center, the home for WashU entrepreneurship.

Gülcan continues to remain actively engaged with the McDonnell Academy. She was a featured speaker for the McDonnell Academy Alumni panel, providing entrepreneurial guidance, personal development and career direction. Also, as a mentor for the Academy's Mentorship Network, she shares her professional and personal experience and insight with Scholars, helping to build and foster meaningful relationships among Scholars and McDonnell Academy alumni.

Gülcan is proactive and successful in cultivating relationships that promote cross-cultural understanding and multi-disciplinary collaborations. She continues to play a critical role in increasing the visibility and future success of the McDonnell Academy and global engagement of Washington University.



**I've dedicated myself to solving the large-scale skills gap and unemployment problems affecting millions of people around the world. I'm often amazed to see how some obvious solutions are ignored just because we are so used to the status quo. Changing this is very hard, but with the support of the McDonnell Academy and amazing people around me, I'm confident that we'll make a permanent dent in this world.**

**GÜLCAN YAYLA**