



**JADE LI, NCIDQ, IIDA, WELL AP**  
Senior Interior Designer at Lamar Johnson Collaborative

Jade Li is a multi-disciplinary interior designer experienced in designing high-end law firms, creative tech offices, corporate headquarters, and sports training facility projects.

On a national level, Jade is an NCIDQ Certified interior designer. She is also President for IIDA's Southern California Chapter. After graduating from the University of Missouri with a Bachelor of Science in Human Environmental Science and Minor in Entrepreneurship, Jade moved to Beijing, China to explore working as a designer internationally. She relocated to Los Angeles in 2014.

Jade became involved with IIDA Advocacy in 2017 to further contribute to the advancement of the interior design profession through participation in legislative efforts within California. She is also passionate about workplace wellness and brings human-centric design to projects. With her attention to detail and problem-solving approach, she is able to develop the best results based on the client's needs.

**Q: Brief intro/What type of work do you do/ where do you work?**

A: I am a Senior Interior Designer at Lamar Johnson Collaborative, with focus on corporate, entertainment and tech clients.

**Q: When did you decide to take the NCIDQ Exam? How did you decide what order to take them in?**

A: I have always been mentally preparing for the NCIDQ Exam since college but felt inexperienced to take it straight out of school. I decided to finally bite the bullet and sign up for the April 2020 test administration for all three sections.

**Q: Did you fail any exams/retake any? How did you stay motivated through that process?**

A: I did not fail or have to retake any section. The biggest struggle I had was studying very diligently for about three months before the exams and when the pandemic happened the April administration was canceled. It was hard to stay motivated without knowing if we could take the exam again in October.

**Q: How long did you study for the exams? What did you use to study?**

A: As mentioned before, I studied about three months before the April exams were canceled. I stopped studying for a while until we were

notified that the October exams were available. I spent another three months prior, to re-read the study books, work on practice exams multiple times. What really helped me was the flash cards. I was able to put in 2-3 hours on the weekends on reading and practice exams, and 15-minute intervals throughout the workday doing flash cards.

**Q: Has the practice of interior design lived up to your expectations that you had as a student? Any surprises or disappointments?**

A: The practice of interior design is very different from my personal expectation as a student. Part of the reason might be that when I was a student, my focus was on hospitality projects, but during my professional practice, it has shifted toward corporate interiors.

One essential aspect of the interior design practice that I felt would have benefited me as a student was more knowledge regarding business practices and code knowledge.

**Q: What advice would you give to current students that you wished you had received?**

A: One interesting statement that I have been hearing lately from students is that their thesis project will be the best project they ever work on, because there is no limitation to budget and

client. I was personally told the same as well. My advice on this is, view every project you work on as the best project ever. There is always so much to learn from each project, so much to re-learn. And if you leave school thinking that your thesis is the best project you ever worked on, it will only go downhill from there. It is a tough profession in terms of long hours and demanding responsibilities, so find the joy that sparked your original passion.

design certification will be crucial to the growth of the profession in California.

**Q: What are common misconceptions people have? How can we combat these misconceptions and communicate more effectively? How has having an NCIDQ Certificate benefited you and your career?**

A: I am going to answer all three questions in one. Some of the misconceptions a commercial interior designer faces is based on media representation and general lack of education to the public. Interior designers are sometimes referred to as furniture pickers or pillow fluffers, when what we do is so much more and we are responsible for the life, safety, and welfare of the occupants.

I was the VP of Advocacy for the IIDA Southern California chapter. To become a VP, one must be an NCIDQ Certified interior designer. During my role as a VP, even afterwards, I was able to work on local legislation regarding occupational licensure for interior designers in California, meet with law makers and educate them on what a commercial interior designer does, and also share that knowledge with industry friends and students.

**Q: Have you/are you interested in pursuing any other credentials/certifications or licensure/registration/certification in a jurisdiction? If so, please provide those details.**

A: I am also a Well AP. State of California is a complicated state where NCIDQ is not yet recognized, but we are working toward that goal and the stamp and seal privileges through different jurisdictions. In the meantime, I am starting the ARE process so I can better compare and contrast the exams and better discuss the reasons why a commercial interior